

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ    Wednesday, 10 December, 2025    UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

## BJP wants to destroy democracy: Rahul Gandhi

New Delhi

On Tuesday, during the Winter Session of the Lok Sabha, Congress MP and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi participated in the discussion on electoral reforms. Speaking on Khadi, Rahul Gandhi said, "The nation's attire reflects its image. Khadi is the



spirit of the nation. Our country is made up of 1.5 billion people. All the threads of the nation are the same." Rahul Gandhi said that

the RSS wants to take over all institutions. Nathuram Godse killed Gandhi. This is an uncomfortable truth.During the discussion on electoral reforms, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said in the House that on January 30, 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was shot three times in the chest. Nathuram Godse

assassinated our Father of the Nation. Today, our friends have pushed him away. That is an uncomfortable truth, but the project does not end there. As I said, everything comes from votes. All institutions come from votes. Therefore, it is clear that the RSS must take over all the institutions that emerge

from them. Rahul Gandhi said, "Everyone knows how Vice Chancellors are appointed in Indian universities. He added that it doesn't matter what a person's qualifications are; the only qualification is that they be associated with the RSS." This sparked an uproar from members of the ruling party.

## No law should become a burden on citizens, govt. reforms should make life easier: PM Modi



New Delhi

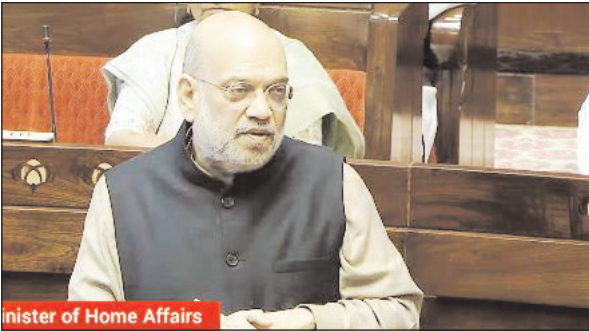
During the winter session of Parliament, a meeting of MPs from the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) parties was held in the Parliament complex today. Several senior leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Defense Minister Rajnath Singh, were present at the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, all MPs collectively felicitated PM Modi.The country is in the era of the "Reform Express," - Prime Minister ModiAt the NDA parliamentary meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the

country is now fully in the era of the "Reform Express," where reforms are taking place rapidly and with clear intentions. Prime Minister Modi emphasized that the government's reforms are completely citizen-centric, not merely economic or revenue-focused. According to sources, the aim is to alleviate the everyday difficulties of the people so that they can develop to their full potential. The Prime Minister urged MPs to actively share the real problems of the common people so that the Reform Express can reach every household and alleviate everyday difficulties.

## Opposition to Vande Mataram is in the blood of the Gandhi family: Shah

New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, inaugurating the discussion on the 150th anniversary of the national song Vande Mataram in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, said that the discussion on this immortal work in both houses of Parliament will connect future generations with its true significance, glory, and national consciousness. He emphasized that Vande Mataram is not just a song, but an eternal symbol of devotion, duty, and dedication to Mother India, which awakened the nation's soul during the freedom struggle. Shah said that in that era, Vande Mataram was the reason for the country's independence, and in the Amritkaal, it will become the slogan for developing and making the country great. He clearly stated that those



### Vande Mataram became the mantra of the freedom struggle

Shah said that when Vande Mataram completed 50 years, the country had not yet achieved independence. However, after independence, during its golden jubilee, the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru limited it to two verses, which he described as the beginning of appeasement. The Home Minister elaborated on Vande Mataram's historical background, cultural significance, and national impact.

linking the discussion on Vande Mataram to the Bengal elections are trying to underestimate its historical and cultural significance, whereas this issue transcends politics and is a matter of national pride.The Home Minister said that Vande Mataram

was relevant at the time of its composition, during the freedom movement, today, and will remain so even in the creation of a developed India in 2047. He explained that during the freedom struggle, wherever patriots gathered, every meeting

### Vande Mataram is the eternal spirit of devotion, sacrifice : Radhakrishnan

New Delhi. Before the discussion on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, Chairman CP Radhakrishnan, in his opening remarks, described it as the soul of the nation and the heartbeat of the freedom struggle. He said that Vande Mataram is not just a song, but an eternal spirit of devotion, sacrifice and indomitable courage towards Mother India, which kept the flame of freedom burning in the hearts of crores of Indians during the era of slavery.

began with Vande Mataram. Even today, when brave soldiers make the supreme sacrifice on the border, only one word is on their lips: Vande Mataram.



Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Rural Development, Shivraj Singh Chouhan interacting with the media during the special lunch hosted by Lakhpatri Didis during the Saras Food Festival held at Sunder Nursery in New Delhi.

## Lawyers protested in the court against Rakesh, who threw his shoe in the CJI court

New Delhi

Lawyer Rakesh Kishore, accused of throwing a shoe at Chief Justice BR Gavai in the Supreme Court courtroom, faced opposition from lawyers today. When Rakesh

Kishore arrived at the Karkardooma Court on Tuesday, lawyers attempted to assault him. In the video, Rakesh Kishore is seen defending himself.On the morning of October 6th, a lawyer named

Rakesh Kishore threw a shoe at Chief Justice BR Gavai, but the shoe failed to reach the Chief Justice. When he attempted to throw the shoe at the Chief Justice, a Delhi Police constable present in the courtroom immediately

apprehended him. As the police escorted him from the courtroom, he loudly declared, "India will not tolerate the insult to Sanatan Dharma." He was hurt by Chief Justice Gavai's remarks about Lord Vishnu.

## Country not for Rohingyas, Bangladeshis, SIR is necessary: Sanjay Jaiswal

New Delhi

The discussion on electoral reforms in the Lok Sabha was initiated by Sanjay Jaiswal, a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party from West Champaran, representing the ruling party. He stated that this country is not for Rohingyas and Bangladeshis, and that the SIR process is necessary. Supporting the SIR for updating the voter list, he said that 3.5 million people in Bihar did not fill out the

forms, indicating a large number of infiltrators. Jaiswal also welcomed the "One Nation, One Election" initiative and said that the Bharatiya Janata Party will not benefit from it, despite opposition members' objections. Holding separate elections benefits the BJP, and the entire organization works to ensure victory.Jaiswal said that our Home Minister has never gone abroad and the Prime Minister has not taken a single day off.

## Attack on Maoism, 1106 Naxalites killed in 1825 days

New Delhi

Under a strategy formulated by the Union Home Ministry, a strong crackdown on Maoism is underway. Since 2019, 1,106 Naxalites have been killed. Additionally, 7,311 Naxalites have been arrested, and 5,571 have surrendered. Since 2014, 9,588 Maoists have surrendered, with 2,167 of these surrenders occurring this year. Due to the positive results of various government initiatives, violent incidents have decreased



by 81 percent in 2024 compared to the peak in 2010.Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, in response to a question during a Parliament session, stated that Left Wing Extremists have no faith in the Indian Constitution or Indian democracy. They have

no faith in the founding principles of the Indian nation. These Left Wing Extremists have killed thousands of innocent people, orphaned thousands of children, and ruined the lives of thousands of women. The problem of Left Wing Extremism has been ongoing since 1967.

There was a time when the entire area from Pashupatinath to Tirupati was known as the "Red Corridor." Now, that area has shrunk to a small extent. Under the able leadership of the Prime Minister and the successful guidance of the Home Minister, Left Wing Extremism will be eradicated by March 2026. Previous governments considered Left Wing Extremism a state problem, which is why the central government did not formulate a concrete policy against Left Wing Extremism.

### Court refuses urgent hearing on IndiGo's recent crisis

New Delhi

During the discussion on electoral reforms in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, Congress member Manish Tewari made three demands for electoral reforms. He called for changes in the selection of Election Commission officials, the abolition of the Special Revision (SIR) of voter lists, and a ban on direct cash transfers before elections. Manish Tewari stated that on June 15, 1949, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar presented a draft of the Election Commission, and several members advocated for its permanent status. Following this, Dr. Ambedkar established it as a permanent institution.

## Census preparations begin, all states ordered to appoint staff by January 15, 2026

New Delhi

The Registrar General of India has directed all states and union territories to complete the appointment of census staff by January 15, 2026. Census staff are responsible for the massive data collection process. A circular has been issued regarding this. The circular states that enumerators and supervisors will be responsible for data



collection during the census. According to the circular, "One enumerator will be assigned the task of counting a population of approximately 700-800 people, and one

supervisor will be appointed for every six enumerators. In addition, there will be 10 percent reserve enumerators and supervisors for any emergency."

## CM Yogi met the citizens who came for Janta Darshan

Gorakhpur

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath called for caution against those who divide society and the country in the name of caste, region, and language, saying that such people are committing sins like those of Jaichand and Mir Jafar. He said that there are many people who want to divide. Some are dividing in the name of caste, some in the name of region, and some in the name of language. When these



elements who divide society and the country get the opportunity to come to power, they think only of themselves and their families. They buy property,

hotels, and islands abroad for their families. Such people conspire to impoverish the country. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the welfare of soci-

ety and the country cannot be achieved through immediate lollipops in the name of caste, region, etc. The welfare of the country will only be achieved when there is no discrimination and there is unity among all.CM Yogi was addressing the inauguration ceremony of the auditorium with a capacity of over 1,000, named after the country's first CDS (Chief of Defense Staff), General Bipin Rawat, at Sainik School, Gorakhpur on Tuesday.



## Nawabganj Police Reveal Adampur Incident, Case Registered Under Serious Sections



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** Nawabganj Police have taken major action in a case of assault related to a land dispute. Police have arrested nine wanted accused in the case. This action was taken under the direction of the Police Commissioner and Additional Commissioner of Police, and under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner of Police and Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police, Ganganagar. The incident occurred on December 8, 2025, in village Jhokri Adampur. A fight broke out between two sides of a family over a land dispute. It is alleged that the accused abused the plaintiff's brothers, threatened to kill them, and assaulted them with sticks and other weapons. The plaintiffs sustained serious injuries in the attack and were subsequently hospitalized for treatment. Based on the complaint, a case was registered at

Nawabganj Police Station under serious sections of the Indian Penal Code under case number 538/2025. Acting swiftly, the police arrested all nine wanted accused on December 9, 2025, near Adampur Jhokri village. The arrested accused include Birendra Kumar Shukla, Sachchidanand Shukla, Ashok Kumar Shukla, Anmol Shukla, Aditya Shukla, Yagya Narayan Shukla, Premshankar Shukla, Shivshankar Shukla, and Ramkumar Shukla. All are residents of Jhokri Adampur village, Nawabganj police station. According to police records, several of these accused have previously been charged with serious crimes, including assault, rioting, extortion, attempted murder, and fraud. Police officials stated that further legal proceedings are being initiated against the arrested accused. The police stated that strict action against criminals will continue to maintain law and order in the area.

## Auraiya Police Bust Fake Currency Gang, Six Arrested, SP Makes Major Revelation

### Auraiya

In a major crackdown on a counterfeit currency racket, a joint team of Kotwali Police, SOG and Surveillance Unit arrested six members of a cheating gang involved in circulation of fake notes on Monday. The arrests were made during a suspicious vehicle checking drive near the Devkali outpost following a tip-off from an informer. Police stopped a Hyundai Creta car without a registration number, fitted with a red-blue beacon and a fake judge emblem. Upon checking the vehicle, all six accused were taken into custody. Superintendent of Police Abhishek Bharti, while addressing the media at the Kotwali premises, identified the arrested accused as Manish Pachauri, Munesh Chandra, Rahul Sharma, Dilip, Akash Vichpuriya and Indrajeet Yadav. The police recovered counterfeit currency worth 2.20 lakh, several mobile phones, two bags containing "children bank" notes worth approximately 75 lakh and 5.07 lakh in genuine Indian currency from their possession. Additionally, a fake judge



they used a vehicle displaying a judge logo, red-blue beacon and some-times even impersonated journalists using a fake microphone ID. SP Abhishek Bharti appreciated the police team for their effective action. The arresting team included Kotwali In-charge Inspector Rajkumar Singh, SWAT Team In-charge Prashant Singh, Surveillance In-charge Samit Chaudhary, Sub-Inspector Jitendra Tiwari and SI Zakir Hussain who played a commendable role in the successful operation. Further investigation is underway to identify other members linked to the gang and trace their wider network.

To avoid arrest,

## Bail granted to female constable accused of bribery



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

### Prayagraj

The Allahabad High Court has granted bail to a female constable accused of bribery. Justice Sameer Jain issued the order on Archana Rai's bail application. The constable is accused of accepting a bribe to remove the name of an accused in a dowry harassment case from the investigation. On October 17th, the Anti-Corruption Team caught Inspector Sumitra Devi and Constable Archana Rai, posted as the Kotwali Police Station in Varanasi, accepting a bribe of ₹10,000 from complainant Meraj of Bhadohi. The complainant alleged that the two had demanded money to remove the names from the dowry harassment case during the investigation. On the complaint, the Anti-Corruption Team arrested both of them and filed a corruption case against them. The accused, Constable Archana Rai, who is currently in jail, had filed a bail application in the High Court. The petitioner's lawyer stated that the allegation of demanding a bribe primarily lies with Inspector Sumitra Devi, and Archana Rai, as a subordinate, merely followed the instructions of her superior. The lawyer stated that the allegations against the petitioner are false and she has been sent to jail as a co-accused.

## CM Yogi meets citizens at Janta Darshan, assures swift redressal of grievances

### Lucknow

Despite his packed schedule, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held the Janta Darshan. Committed to the welfare of all sections of society, he regularly reaches out to the public through this platform, listens to their concerns and ensures timely resolution. On Monday, he met each citizen who came with grievances, patiently hearing them out and instructing officials to provide effective solutions. Reassuring the attendees, he said, "Return home with peace of mind, every issue will be addressed properly."



A total of 42 people participated in the Janta Darshan.

Among them, five individuals submitted applications seeking financial assistance for medical treat-

ment.

The Chief Minister directed the concerned hospital to prepare a treatment estimate and emphasized that the government has been supporting medical care from

day one. He affirmed that no one treatment will be affected by financial constraints and that the government will stand with every person in need. Several citizens also raised issues related to police matters and illegal encroachment. CM Yogi accepted all applications and instructed officials to resolve public grievances on priority, while also ensuring that feedback is taken from complainants. Some attendees requested housing assistance, to which the Chief Minister responded by directing officials to extend benefits under the PM/CM Awas Yojana.

## MLA Subhash Tripathi launches third phase of Saubhagya Yojana

### Bahraich

The third phase of the Saubhagya Yojana, a scheme aimed at providing free electricity connections to poor families, was launched on Monday in Akraura village of the Payagpur assembly constituency. MLA Subhash Tripathi formally inaugurated the scheme by installing an electricity pole and unveiling a plaque. Assembly constituency coordinator Nishank Tripathi, BJP district vice-president Uma Shankar Tiwari, SDO Sunil Kumar Kushwaha, JE Shashikant Yadav and hundreds of villagers and BJP workers were present at the event. Addressing the gathering, MLA Subhash Tripathi said that after the formation of the BJP government in the state, the Saubhagya



Yojana was launched with the resolve to connect every household with electricity. Two phases of this scheme have been completed, benefiting thousands of poor families. He informed that the third phase is being started in 163 hamlets, while survey work is underway in 129 hamlets of the assembly constituency.

In total, free electricity connections will be provided in 292 hamlets under this phase. SDO Sunil Kumar Kushwaha informed the electricity consumers about the three-phase rebate

and interest waiver being offered by the government on outstanding electricity bills. The program was conducted by social worker Anand Bihari Shukla. On this occasion, Mandal President Pramod Pandey, Mandal President Vishnu Dayal Chauhan, General Secretary Ajay Tiwari, Vijay Shankar Dubey, Kailash Nath Dubey, Dinesh Singh, Saurabh Shukla, Mangal Shukla, Kapish Singh, Bablu Rawat, Dadau Shukla, Pradeep Tripathi, Suresh Tiwari, Ramji Pandey, Pawan Kumar Shukla, Munna Shukla, Sachit Shukla, Rohit Mishra from the Health Department, Rahul Singh, Mahesh Tiwari, along with BJP office bearers and a large number of villagers were present.

## Horticulture Minister Dinesh Pratap Singh launched the Makhana Vikas Yojana

### Lucknow

The Makhana Vikas Yojana will be an important means of increasing the income of Uttar Pradesh farmers by connecting them with high-value crops. This scheme will prove to be a milestone in making Uttar Pradesh a better state. Following the formation of the National Makhana Board by the Government of India in 2025, the scheme has been implemented in 10 states in the first phase, including Uttar Pradesh. This was stated by Dinesh Pratap Singh, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Horticulture, Agricultural Marketing, Agricultural Foreign Trade and Agricultural Exports, at a press



conference held at Gautampalli, Lucknow on Monday. On this occasion, he announced the launch of the Makhana Vikas Yojana in the state. The implementation of this scheme in the state will be undertaken by the Horticulture Department Uttar Pradesh. The Horticulture Minister informed that the action plan prepared by the Horticulture Department for the financial year 2025-26 has been approved by the Government of India. Despite limited time remaining in the financial year, the

Central Government has approved a sum of 158 lakh for implementation. This funding will be used to select and construct ponds for makhana cultivation, train farmers, conduct front-line demonstrations, buyer-seller meets, promotion through makhana pavilions, participation of exporters in international exhibitions, and conduct district and state-level seminars. Work will also begin toward establishing a "Center of Excellence for Makhana." Minister Singh stated that makhana is popular as a superfood due to its medicinal properties and high market value. Until now, it was cultivated primarily in Bihar, but the climate and waterlogged areas of Uttar Pradesh are particularly conducive to makhana.

## Strict vigil on illegal mining: 5000 vehicles inspected, over 1.5 crore in fines imposed

### Lucknow

Reviewing the special enforcement campaign conducted by the Department of Geology and Mining, Uttar Pradesh Secretary and Director Mala Srivastava issued strict and clear instructions to the interstate border districts. She stated that transportation of minerals from other states should be ensured only through an ISTP. She directed the concerned departmental officials to ensure that overloading is prohibited under any circumstances. Loading standards must be fully complied with at the source point. To prevent illegal transportation and overloading, checkgates equipped with IOT-based PTZ and ANPR cameras must be kept operational 24/7. She instructed the concerned officials that strict, consistent and effective enforcement,



in accordance with the government mandate, is the department top priority. It was reported that, as part of a special campaign launched by the Geology and Mining Department to completely control illegal mining, illegal transportation and overloading in the state, over 5,000 vehicles transporting minerals were inspected over the past three days. Most vehicles were found without the required transportation documents. Strict action was taken against approximately 400 vehicles found to be involved in illegal transportation/ over-

loading, resulting in fines totaling over ₹1.5 crore. Seven FIR were also registered during the campaign. Fines were imposed as per the rules on 54 vehicles in Sonbhadra, 23 in Mirzapur, 32 in Jalaun, 21 in Ballia, 15 in Gorakhpur and 255 vehicles in the remaining districts, totaling approximately 400 vehicles. For the successful conduct of this campaign, Special Secretary/Additional Director Arun Kumar directed all teams to ensure consistent and strict enforcement of illegal mining and transportation, with no laxity at any level.

## Assam Minister Krishnendu Paul Reviews Government Schemes in Kamrup District

### Assam

Minister Krishnendu Paul, in charge of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary and Public Works (Roads) departments of Assam,



held a review meeting on Monday at the inspection bungalow conference hall of the Public Works Department in Amingaon, Kamrup District, Assam. During the meeting the minister conducted a detailed evaluation of various government schemes implemented under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), fish production enhancement and advanced animal health services in Kamrup district. He instructed all departmental staff to execute these schemes in an organized manner with transparency and within the stipulated timelines. Minister Paul also urged for stronger coordination at the grassroots level between the Fisheries and Veterinary departments. He announced plans to develop cow reserves (Goo Reserves) across the state soon, focusing on establishing them with adequate production capacity. Highlighting Kamrup potential in fish production, the minister called on the Fisheries department to take special initiatives to develop Kamrup as an export-oriented district. To realize this goal, he emphasized the need to enhance production of improved fish species, modern training systems and expanded marketing networks. At the conclusion of the meeting, Minister Paul expressed satisfaction with the progress of government schemes in Kamrup and praised the efforts of the district administration and departmental officials. He encouraged continued collaborative work to further economic and social development and build a self-reliant Kamrup.



## Anti-Corruption Team Attacked While Arresting Bribe-Taking Officer

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj

Anti-Corruption Team Officers were attacked in Prayagraj. The team caught a clerk from the Prayagraj Development Authority red-handed accepting a bribe of ₹8,000 on Tuesday afternoon at around 3 p.m. The officers were trying to take the accused clerk away, but the clerk created a ruckus and started shouting. Hearing the noise, several of the accused's fellow employees also arrived and scuffled to free the bribe-taking clerk. When the team resisted, the employees kicked and punched them. Despite the employees' protests, the team apprehended the accused clerk. Police are now investigating CCTV footage installed at the Prayagraj Development Authority five years ago. He lost his job during the lockdown, and therefore faced difficulty in raising the money for the registration. After the allotment, the accountant and clerk kept the file pending for two months. Later, he went to the Prayagraj Development Authority office to register the land.



There, he met Junior Assistant Ayaj Kumar. Prashant Pandey explained that Junior Assistant Ayaj Kumar demanded 10,000 rupees to move the process forward. Frustrated, he contacted the Anti-Corruption Organization through the number printed in the newspaper and filed a complaint. Upon receiving the complaint, the Anti-Corruption Unit conducted a preliminary investigation. Upon finding the complaint to be true, a plan was developed to catch the accused clerk red-handed. A trap team was deployed. On Tuesday afternoon, Prashant Pandey went to the Prayagraj Development Authority to pay the bribe. He discussed his work with Junior Assistant Ayaj Kumar. Ayaj Kumar demanded a bribe.

The complainant asked him to pay only 8,000 rupees upfront and promised to pay the remaining amount after the work was done. The clerk agreed and took

the 8,000 rupees. Meanwhile, the Anti-Corruption Team, present nearby, caught the accused red-handed. PDA clerk surrounded and beaten by employees while being taken away. When the anti-corruption team was taking away Junior Assistant Ayaj Kumar, other employees became aware of the situation. They surrounded the team and tried to free the bribe-taking clerk. During this, the anti-corruption team was also assaulted. Nevertheless, the anti-corruption team apprehended the accused and took him to the Civil Lines police station. Officers there have initiated legal action against him. The facts related to the entire bribe-taking incident are being recorded at the police station. Officers from the Anti-Corruption Prayagraj unit stated that legal action is being taken against the accused and preparations are underway to send him to jail under the necessary sections. CCTV footage being scanned to identify the attackers. The Civil Lines police station is scanning CCTV footage installed at the Prayagraj Development Authority located at Indira Bhawan to determine who attacked the anti-corruption team.

## Democracy will only be strengthened through purity and transparency: Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj

In a review meeting held under the Special Intensive Revision Campaign (RAKF) in Yamunapur district, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brijesh Pathak said that in a democratic system, it is absolutely essential for every eligible citizen to be included in the voter list. He said that it is the priority of the BJP government to ensure that no genuine voter's name is left out of the list and that no fake or ineligible person's name should remain on the list. To achieve this, booth-level workers must work with utmost seriousness and responsibility. The Deputy Chief Minister said, "Comprehensive and transparent revision of the voter list is the hallmark of a strong democracy. This campaign is not just an administrative formality, but an important program related to the rights of the people." Work responsibly at each booth and ensure maximum eligible voters are included. He further stated that each voter should be identified and added in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution. The Rakaf campaign in Bihar exposed the addition of 6.5 million



fake, deceased, and minor voters by the opposition. BJP workers worked transparently there, resulting in the public rejecting the RJD's "jungle raj." The SP and Congress are experiencing the same fear regarding the 2027 elections in Uttar Pradesh. If elections are conducted with purity and transparency, the results will be clear in Uttar Pradesh as well. On the issue of infiltrators, he said, "The fake names added by the opposition should be identified and removed, and the names of eligible voters should be added."

The Rakaf campaign is a major means of strengthening democracy. BJP workers can shoulder even the heaviest of responsibilities—this is possible only in the BJP." Democracy can be strengthened by working with transparency and integrity at the booth level. Pathak instructed the workers, saying, "Every worker should be vigilant to ensure that the name of a genuine

eligible citizen is not left out and that of an infiltrator is not added." In the BJP, even a low-level worker can become the district president; this is the party's true strength. District President Yamunapur Rajesh Shukla chaired the meeting. He stated that the campaign will be accelerated by activating teams at every Mandal and Shakti Kendra, and that all relevant officials will conduct continuous review. Legislative Council Member Surendra Chaudhary, District Incharge Amarnath Yadav, MLA Deepak Patel, MLA Harshvardhan Vajpayee, District Co-Migrant Kavita Patel, Sushil Mishra, District General Secretary Pushpraj Singh Patel, District Coordinator Virendra Shukla, District Media Incharge Dilip Kumar Chaturvedi, District Minister Rajesh Dhangar, Yogesh Shukla, Indu Prakash Mishra, and other dignitaries, officials, and public representatives were present on the occasion.

## A new dimension of Mission Shakti awareness campaign launched by all police stations in the Ganganagar Zone

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Tharwari. Under Mission Shakti Phase 5.0, to ensure the safety and respect of women and girls, Mission Shakti beat officers from each police station, along with their



teams, are visiting educational institutions, major markets, and community centers to educate women, daughters, and girls on how to empower them regarding their rights and dignity under the umbrella of women's safety, women's respect, and women's self-reliance, and providing information on the provided helpline numbers, including Women Power Line 1090, Women Help Line 181, Child Help Line 1098, Chief Minister Help Line 1076, Police Emergency Service Dial 112, and Cyber Help Line 1930. Under the direction of Police Commissioner Prayagraj and Additional Police Commissioner and under the able supervision of Deputy Commissioner of Police Ganganagar Kuldeep Singh Gunawat and Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Ganganagar Pushkar Verma, on Tuesday, under Mission Shakti Phase 5.0, all the police stations of Ganganagar zone went to crowded places, educational institutions, major markets and made women, daughters and girls aware and while giving information about the given numbers, they were also told about the schemes being run by the government. In which detailed information is being given about many schemes including Kanya Sumangala Yojana, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, Chief Minister Mass Marriage Scheme, Destitute Women Pension Scheme.

## Administration's strictness in voter list revision, ensuring eligible citizen has the right to vote

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Gazipur.** To ensure a clean and fair electoral system in the district's Muhammadabad tehsil, the voter verification campaign is being rapidly advanced. In this regard, an important review meeting was held under the chairmanship of Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Dr. Harshita Tiwari at the middle school premises located at local booth number 137. Tehsildar Mahendra Bahadur, along with Municipal Council employees, councilors, ration dealers, accountants, and representatives of various political parties, were present. They discussed the progress report related to voter verifica-



tion and decided on the future strategy. The main focus of the meeting was on the speedy completion of data verification for voters belonging to the ASDD category—the disabled, senior citizens, and other special categories. Voters whose documents were incomplete were verified on the spot by the AERO in the presence of

the DLA team, and their details were updated. Officials meticulously scrutinized each application to ensure that no eligible voter is left out of the voter list. SDM Dr. Harshita Tiwari issued clear instructions, stating that transparency in the verification process should be a top priority. She said, "Voters are the

true power of democracy. Therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to include every eligible name in the voter list." She instructed the relevant teams to immediately process and add the remaining voter details. The tehsil administration assured that, with the cooperation of all departments, the work will be completed within the stipulated timeframe, ensuring a completely error-free voter list for the upcoming elections. This meeting has given a new direction to administrative preparations, and local citizens, encouraged by the campaign, are also actively verifying their details, strengthening the electoral process.

## A Kabaddi competition was held at Pt. Hanumant Dutt Tripathi College

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Tharwari. Under the aegis of Krida Bharti, Kanshi Province, Prayagraj, a boys and girls Kabaddi competition was held at Hanumant Dutt Tripathi Intermediate College, Ismailganj, on Tuesday. Principal Ved Prakash Mishra served as the chief guest, and Ram Prasad, the Kabaddi Coordinator Committee of Krida Bharti, Kanshi Province, Prayagraj, inaugurated the competition. Several schools



participated in this Kabaddi competition, with approximately 15 teams participating in three categories: Under-19, Under-14, Under-17. The winning team was honored with medals. The Best Player, Best Raider, Best Buy, and Best Catcher were also honored with medals. Best Player Sumit Kumar

was honored with a bag and a medal from Krida Bharti. This Kabaddi Sports Organizing Committee Prayagraj Ram Prasad and Krida Bharti member Dr. Vishnu Dev Singh conducted this competition. Kabaddi official Jitendra Kumar, Sumit Kumar, all the school staff etc. were present.

## Ensure the withdrawal of stored potatoes, strict instructions to cold storage owners

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Ghazipur.** The District Horticulture Officer, Ghazipur, stated that the withdrawal of potatoes stored in private cold storages in Uttar Pradesh is nearly complete, but some cold storages in the district still have stored potatoes. Currently, the potato storage period in private cold storages in the district is scheduled from February 15th to November 30th, so that farmers have ample opportunity to withdraw their stored potatoes from the cold storages. The Uttar Pradesh Cold Regulation Act, 1976 provides that if the renter/farmer does not lift the goods stored in the cold storage within a period of fifteen days from the date specified in the receipt, the licensee/cold storage owner shall immediately issue a notice to the renter/farmer, requiring him (renter/farmer) to surrender the duly dis-



charged receipt and lift the goods immediately after paying all the charges payable to the licensee/cold storage owner, and shall send a copy of such notice to the licensing officer/district magistrate. If the renter/farmer does not comply with the notice within a period of seven days from the date of service of the same, the licensee/cold storage owner may get the goods removed from the cold storage and sell it through public auction at the expense and risk of

the renter/farmer, but the licensee/cold storage owner shall inform the licensing officer/district magistrate of such sale at least forty-eight hours before the sale, and the licensing officer/district magistrate shall supervise such sale either himself or through an officer authorized by him in that behalf. The compliance of the above mentioned provisions laid down in the Uttar Pradesh Cold Regulation Act 1976 should be ensured by the concerned.

## Free Eye Service Festival Concludes at Mata Mahakali Dham

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Gazipur.** Embodying the spirit of "Service is the Best Religion," a massive free eye checkup camp was organized on Tuesday, December 9, at the Mata Mahakali Temple complex in Yusufpur, under the jurisdiction of the Muhammadabad police station. A large number of people from the city and surrounding rural areas arrived at the temple early in the morning to have their eyes examined by specialist doctors. Patients were also provided with free medicines and eye drops. The camp proved extremely beneficial for the elderly. Senior citizens over 70 years of age were also provided with the facility to obtain Ayushman Cards and Aadhaar Cards on the spot. During the checkups, 70 cataract patients were identified, who will be operated on free of charge by eye specialist Dr. Sneha Singh at the District Hospital Trauma Center, Ghazipur. Meanwhile, eye doctor Anivesh Kumar of



the Community Health Center, Tiwaripur, also provided his services, examining patients, and distributing free medicines. This inspiring initiative was taken by Meera Rai, a leader in the field of social service. Before the camp began, she worshipped Goddess Mahakali with the doctors and, inaugurating the program, personally distributed medicines to the patients. Numerous volunteers, including Vinod

Madheshiya, Himanshu Kushwaha, Sangam Singh Kushwaha, Chandan Chaurasia, and Gorakh Singh Yadav, played a significant role in the camp's success. At the conclusion of the program, temple priest Satya Prakash, also known as Mukesh, offered his blessings, wishing all patients good health. This service camp became a ray of hope for the area's needy patients, exemplifying human compassion and social responsibility.

## Kashi Tamil Sangam 4.0 Yatra receives grand welcome and seminar in Prayagraj

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** Kashi Tamil Sangam 4.0 Yatra in Prayagraj received an enthusiastic and grand welcome at Hotel Ravisa Continental. A seminar was also organized as part of the program, attended by several respected public representatives and social workers. Prayagraj Mayor Umesh Chandra Ganesh Kesariwani, City Magistrate Vinod Singh, former Block Chief of Soraon Alok Pandey, ABVP



Prayagraj Department Head Professor Vivek Nigam, Saurabh Agrahari, Saurabh Vaishya, and ABVP Metropolitan Minister Pratik Mishra Suraj were present. Mayor Umesh Chandra Ganesh Kesariwani stated that the Kashi Tamil Sangam Yatra is an important initiative of Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which has dispelled the misconceptions spread in the name of language, culture, and regional differences. This program will reawaken India's cultural unity. Referring to the magnificent statue of Thiruvalluvar installed at Prayagraj Railway Station, he invited Sangam guests to visit it. City Magistrate Vinod Singh said that the Kashi Tamil Sangam symbolizes the spiritual unity of Indian culture that connects us from north to south. It is a matter of pride for the Prayagraj administration that this yatra has arrived here and provided an opportunity for cultural exchange. ABVP Prayagraj Department Head, Prof. Vivek Nigam, said that Kashi and Tamil culture have shared spiritual and scholarly ties since ancient times. This Sangam is an excellent medium to connect the younger generation with our rich cultural heritage. He added that ABVP is always committed to strengthening the unity and cultural integrity of the nation through such programs. ABVP Prayagraj Metropolitan Minister Prateek Mishra Suraj said that the Kashi Tamil Sangam is a living example of our national values: unity, harmony, and cultural pride. This coming together of people from South and North India reflects the amazing breadth of Indian culture.



## Editorial

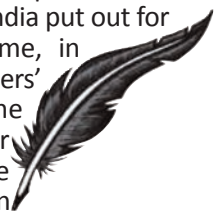
### France offers a welcome breather for India

**Prime** Minister Narendra Modi with chief guest French President Emmanuel Macron during the 75th Republic Day parade, at the Kartavya Path, in New Delhi, on 26 January, 2024. PTI Between them, US President Joe Biden and rival Republican Party's Nikki Haley seem bent on pushing India closer to France for a balanced relationship in the western world that has all the ingredients of strategic stability, both in the bilateral and multilateral contexts. That is if one were to leave out India's Russia relations, which many believed were rocky but became sort of rock steady all over again owing to the Ukraine War, where the long American arm was seen all over the place.

Yes, Nikki Haley, 51, is not even Biden's likely rival in the US presidential polls in November. She did not mean to question, challenge or rebuke India, either. Instead, by claiming that India was moving closer to Russia than the US, implying that the Biden presidency did not inspire confidence not only in New Delhi, but also in Tokyo and Seoul, Canberra and Wellington, Haley was only targeting the incumbent back home. But her choice of India, and not any of America's NATO allies, for example and her choice of words, gave the impression that she was trying to convince a certain section of Republican voters that she was all American, and not Indian. It has to be front-runner and former president Donald Trump. Haley is trailing the Republican primaries and polled lower than their kind of NOTA in Nevada, but that does not make sure that Trump's name will be on the ballot. Indications are that at some point, either the Republican Party bosses or American courts could make it embarrassing for Trump's name to be on the ballot. Haley seems hoping for that day and is persisting in the primaries precisely for this reason. Maybe, like a typical Indian-origin woman that she is, Haley is hoping for 'sympathy votes' or 'survivor's votes', first in the primaries and later in the presidential poll. Of course, there is a long way to go this time than any time in the past.

#### Disappointment for India

Biden kept India waiting and eventually turned down the invitation to be the chief guest at the annual Republic Day celebrations. Information about India's invitation having spread after a time (generally it is kept secret until accepted – which again used to be a formality), Biden's avoidably-delayed rejection was a disappointment for India. It is not known how the Indian-American supporters of Biden and the Democratic Party feel about it. Not-so-official news sources claimed that Biden's decision owed to the election year commitments on campaigns and other essentials. In his place, another Democratic president, Barack Obama, took a short break from his so-called pressing engagements back home to be present in Mumbai first and Delhi next, where he was the chief guest at the 2015 Republic Day. Of course, in true American form and style, it was not a visit confined to honouring contemporary India's tryst with destiny. Obama did hard-selling business in an election year and took back orders for Boeing, which he said would ensure 20,000 Americans did not lose their jobs. Biden was constrained by domestic perceptions, both inside the Democratic Party and outside. Maybe, Team Modi too thought that having Biden would be a high-profile commencement to the ruling BJP-NDA's campaign for the Lok Sabha polls in the summer. To an extent, it compares with the 'Namaste Trump' show that India put out for the US President of the time, in February 2020 amid the farmers' rally in New Delhi. The Ahmedabad rally in particular was only a mirror-image of the Trump show for the Indian prime minister, 'Howdy Modi' in Houston months earlier in Houston, Texas.



## Haldwani to Bareilly, seven decades of pseudo secularism has come home to roost

Haldwani, a small but bustling town in Uttarakhand, is the gateway to the Himalayas and ascent to tourist spots like Nainital and Bhimtal. Today, it is a far more dramatic dot on Bharat's map. On February 9, the town with an 18.55 percent Muslim population erupted with violence which left two dead and 250 injured. Islamist mobs attacked a demolition squad with accompanying cops and mediapersons when it went to demolish an illegally built mosque and madrasa. The mob hurled petrol bombs and stones, nearly set policemen on fire, and used women and chil-

dren as human shields.

#### Uniform Civil Code Bill tabled in Uttarakhand Assembly: How was the draft prepared?

Drone shots later revealed that the violence was unprovoked and planned. Images showed heaps of stones stored on rooftops. The very next day, 100 km away in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly, another Islamist mob attacked the police with stones after Muslim cleric Tauqeer Raza was detained for giving a 'jail bharo' over the Gyanvapi mosque issue. Raza did not forget to mention the Haldwani mosque demolition as ghee on fire. Earlier in the week, a mob

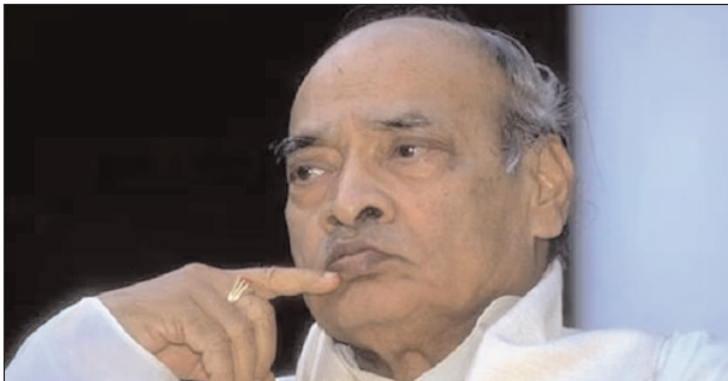
surrounded a police station in Madhya Pradesh's Damoh after a dispute between a tailor, his customer, and a cleric who intervened. A man in the crowd, Akram Khan, took a loudspeaker and threatened violence. The Left-Islamist ecosystem has been shaken by the Pran Prathistha at the Ayodhya Ram Mandir.

The legal challenge to the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, built after demolishing a part of Kashi Viswanath temple, has created further flutter. The mood of the nation after the Ram temple opening and a fast-crumbling Opposition alliance

point to another election victory for Narendra Modi.

One takes to the streets, of course, and with wanton violence, tries to overturn court orders or people's verdict. For seven decades since Independence, a perverted secularism actively supported by political parties have signalled to Muslims that they should never peacefully coexist with the majority, must always be in victimhood mode, and heed the law of the land only if it suits them. The community has been told that its power lies in existing as an impoverished and irascible mass.

## Narasimha Rao was a Batman of Indian politics, Bharat urgently needed to acknowledge



**Former** Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, in a true sense of the word, was a Batman of Indian politics. He became Prime Minister at a time when India's chips were badly down. In 1991, the country had to pledge its gold to pull the economy from the brink. He reoriented India's pro-Soviet Union foreign policy to bring it closer to the Western order. He reached out to Israel without leaving the Palestinian cause — an axis on which the Indian foreign policy still revolves around. And all this he delivered with a minority government. Still, Narasimha Rao remains largely forgotten and uncredited — Batman-like. Sanjaya Baru, in his book 1991: How PV Narasimha Rao Made History, emphasised at this phenomenon, with a tinge of sadness, when he recalled how "at an interaction with students at a university near Delhi, in the winter of 2015", he asked the audience "what the year 1991 meant to them". One student readily stood up to say he was born that year — and the entire audience burst into laughter. When Baru insisted on thinking more, there was silence. PV Narasimha Rao, Charan Singh, MS Swaminathan: Why they deserve Bharat Ratna Later, the same year, Baru addressed "a meeting of the Hyderabad Management Association" and he repeated

the same question. Many were quick to reply this time: The government that year had "introduced new economic policies that opened up the Indian economy", Baru was told. And who was responsible for this? "Manmohan Singh," pat came the reply! Some even credited P Chidambaram and Kamal Nath! Later, in an interaction with this author, Baru expressed his surprise at the height of Indian ignorance: "No one mentioned PV Narasimha Rao. Ironically, this incident took place in Hyderabad, which was Rao's own city."

When I asked Baru why Rao had been forgotten, he cited two reasons. "One, he faced several corruption cases, especially towards the fag end of his rule. But most importantly, the Congress decided to erase the memory of Narasimha Rao, to make the point that no person from outside the family can ever be a successful PM. After all, what did Rao prove? He

proved that someone doesn't need to be related to the Nehru-Gandhi family to be a successful prime minister. By becoming the first PM outside the family to run the country for a full term, he effectively challenged this notion." It's ironic to see the Congress disowning one of its own prime ministers, especially the one "whose impact on the nation's fortune went way beyond the economy", as Baru wrote in 1991. But then it was an obvious outcome for a non-Gandhi leader in the Congress. It had happened in the past with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and it took place after Narasimha Rao, as was the case with Pranab Mukherjee. Anyone seen to be eclipsing the halo of the Gandhi-Nehru family was systematically targeted to be pushed to the footnotes of the party's — and by extension, the nation's — history. This explains Sonia Gandhi's hostility for Rao, to the extent that the former Prime Minister was denied a well-

deserved memorial in Delhi, even when lesser worthies could find space in the national capital. Author Vinay Sitapati, in Half Lion: How PV Narasimha Rao Transformed India, gives a graphic detail on how the late Prime Minister was denied a rightful place and space in Delhi after his death. "The home minister, Shivraj Patil, suggested to Rao's youngest son, Prabhakara, that 'the body should be cremated in Hyderabad'. But the family preferred Delhi. After all, Rao had last been chief minister of Andhra Pradesh more than thirty years ago, and had since worked as Congress general secretary, Union minister, and finally prime minister — all in Delhi. On hearing this, the usually decorous Shivraj Patil snapped, 'No one will come'," Sitapati writes. Thereafter, Ghulam Nabi Azad and YS Rajasekhara Reddy reached out to Rao's family — Reddy, being the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, promised a grand memorial for Rao in Hyderabad! Later in the day, prime minister Manmohan Singh entered the room and asked Prabhakara: "What do you want to do with the body?" To this, Rao's son replied, "These people say it should be in Hyderabad... This (Delhi) is his karmabhoomi. You should convince your Cabinet colleagues." Manmohan nodded. Sonia Gandhi was standing near, but

mostly kept quiet. When Sanjaya Baru arrived, Ahmed Patel sought his intervention. Baru's bureaucrat father knew Rao from the 1960s — and he was close to the family. "Sonia's political secretary tapped him on the shoulder. 'You know the family,' Patel said. 'The body should be taken to Hyderabad. Can you convince them?'" Sitapati quotes Prabhakara as saying, "We sensed even then that Sonia-ji did not want Father's funeral in Delhi. She did not want a memorial (in Delhi)... She did not want him (to be seen) as an all-India leader." The next morning, when Rao's body, draped in the national flag, was being taken to the airport, it was planned to stop at 24 Akbar Road, the Congress headquarters. "As the body approached 24 Akbar Road, located adjacent to Sonia Gandhi's residence, the funeral procession slowed. The entrance gate to the compound looked firmly shut. There were several senior Congressmen present, but hardly any cadres had been rustled up. No slogans filled the air, just deathly silence. The carriage stopped on the pavement outside, as Sonia Gandhi and others came out to pay their respects." "It was customary for the bodies of past Congress presidents to be taken inside the party headquarters so that ordinary workers could pay their respects.

### Why India's \$100 bn proposed trade deal with Europe is different

In the pursuit of economic growth, the Maldives seems to have missed a crucial lesson: relying solely on a handful of major players isn't a sustainable strategy. The key to sustainable growth lies in opening up to broader economic participation.

#### India is a case in point

India stands on the brink of sealing a significant trade deal that could have far-reaching implications. Negotiations with Europe are nearing completion, with the potential for India to attract a staggering \$100 billion in investment. This proposed agreement with Europe is noteworthy for several reasons. Unlike conventional trade deals focused on tariff reduction, India is poised to open up its markets in exchange for substantial

investment, a move that could inject significant capital into its economy over the next 15 years. The pact, unlike typical free trade agreements, comes with binding investment guarantees, a rare feature that could set a precedent for future trade negotiations. The investment is slated to originate from a special bloc of European nations known as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), comprising Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. While negotiations involve this bloc rather than the entire European Union, the agreement could serve as a model for broader regional trade engagements.

The potential investments are earmarked for both new and existing manufacturing projects,

promising to create over a million jobs and bolster India's industrial landscape. Beyond the economic windfall, the deal offers additional perks for India, including enhanced visa provisions for Indian professionals seeking access to the EFTA countries. In return, the EFTA nations seek expanded market access for their goods in India, spanning processed foods, beverages, electrical machinery, engineering products, pharmaceuticals and medical devices. While the deal holds immense promise, its fruition has been a long time coming, with negotiations spanning back to 2008. However, recent reports indicate that key issues have been resolved, paving the way for a potential agreement, pending finalization.

### Anchored in Shivaji's spirit, India's naval operations get a desi touch in international waters

**By carrying** out back-to-back rescue operations in the past month, the Indian Navy has emerged as the bright spot in the otherwise unstable waters of the Red Sea. The Israel-Hamas war has not only thrown the Middle East into a flux but its effects are now also spilling over to South Asia and the wider expanse of the Indian Ocean Region. The worsening security concerns in the Red Sea due to constant attacks from the Yemen-based Houthis on cargo ships have further been exacerbated with Somali pirates also targeting the ships passing through this region. As the security situation in the Red Sea and also in the Arabian Sea has deteriorated, the Indian Navy has now emerged as the net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region. Indian Navy has always been exemplary in its duty and in particular, has always been proactive in benign causes like Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations. However, with the spill-over effects of the war in the Middle East threatening the security of the Indian Ocean Region, India is asserting its position as the resident power and as the primary stakeholder in the security architecture of the region. India's rescue



operations and in particular the role of the Indian Navy not only correspond to the existing global order. The current security concerns may have pronounced the role of the Indian Navy. But there is also a strong civilisational undertone to India's naval operations. This undertone could be considered from decolonisation and indigenisation perspectives.

The decolonisation narrative has been a major issue in the Indian political discourse for a long time. However, in the past few months, there has been a tangible and accelerated effort towards decolonisation and indigenisation across different spheres. Some important steps in this direction include the use of the name Bharat instead of India. This was the highlight when India hosted the G20 Summit in September 2023 as the placard in front of Prime Minister Narendra Modi displayed the name Bharat. Besides, three

criminal justice laws, the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, the Bharatiya Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Act, recently passed by the Indian parliament also seek to replace the colonial-era Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act. The recent consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is projected as one of the most prominent steps towards decolonisation. Also, the scope of the decolonisation narrative has now expanded. For decades, only the 200-year British rule in India was earmarked as the colonial period in the collective memory of the Indian people. Now the 200-year period is being replaced by a period of about 1,000 years which includes the Islamic invasions in India. This indigenisation process which is becoming visible in the political, legal and cultural domains is gradually gaining emphasis in the security domain as well. Just as the decolonisation debate had been restricted to British rule, the same principle was evident in Indian strategic thought as well for a long time. As one of the relics of British rule, the continental mindset had remained a norm in Indian strategic thought for a long time.



## Briefs

HAMIRPUR

## Girl Reunited with Family After a Month

A three-year-old girl, found unattended in Sumerpur on November 13 after her mother's suspicious death, has been reunited with her family. The Child Welfare Committee housed her in an adoption unit and later contacted her father, Babbli Rajput, who is incarcerated in Kanpur jail. Following his statement, the CWC handed over the girl to her grandfather and aunt on December 9, praising the chairperson's commendable effort.

LUCKNOW

## Mafatlal CEO Honoured with Industry Award

M. B. Raghunath, CEO of Mafatlal Industries, has been honoured with India's first "Uniform Revolutionary Person of India" award. He was recognised for transforming the uniform garment sector by conceptualising the Solapur Uniform Garment Exhibition. His leadership is credited with creating over 1,000 entrepreneurs and generating approximately 20,000 jobs across the industry in the last nine years.

KANPUR

## Book Fairs Open at Three Metro Stations

Month-and-a-half-long book fairs have commenced at Kanpur Central, Bada Chauraha, and Moti Jheel metro stations, running until mid-January. NCIMC GoSmart cardholders receive a 10% discount. Offering a range of literature, art, science, comics, and children's books, the fairs aim to promote a reading culture and enrich commuters' travel experience during the festive season.

KUSHINAGAR

## Man Gets 20 Years for Minor's Rape

A POCSO court in Kushinagar has sentenced Dhrup Rai to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment for raping a minor. The incident dates back to June 2022. The court also imposed a fine of ₹3.10 lakh, 80% of which is to be paid to the victim's parents. The court termed the crime heinous and also criticised the forensic lab for delays in the DNA report.

LALITPUR

## Consumer Alleges Wrong Electricity Meter

A consumer from Rajwara village, Abhishek Shrivastav, has submitted a memorandum to the District Magistrate alleging that the electricity department installed a faulty meter in 2011. He claims the meter is registered under another consumer's name, and despite complaints since 2015, no correction has been made. He has demanded an investigation and warned of a hunger strike if no action is taken.

BALLIA

## Man arrested for Sex on false marriage promise

Dokati police have arrested a man for allegedly sexually exploiting a woman for two years under the pretext of marriage. The victim filed a complaint stating the accused refused to marry her when pressured. A police team raided the accused's house and arrested him.

## CODEINE | Hidden trail of illegal syrup uncovered

## SIT formed to probe illegal cough syrup trade

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has set up a Special Investigation Team to probe the illegal storage and sale of codeine-based cough syrup and other misused pharmaceutical drugs across five districts. The decision follows large-scale seizures and expanding evidence of organised trafficking. Principal Secretary (Home) Sanjay Prasad said the case is being treated with "serious priority," with an IG-rank officer appointed to lead the SIT. Officials from the Food and Drug Safety Authority (FDSDA) will also be part of the team.

Authorities clarified that no deaths in Uttar Pradesh have been attributed to codeine-based cough syrup. The SIT will review all ongoing investigations, integrate intelligence gathered from arrested individuals, and conduct financial



## 5 lakh bottles seized; five districts under intensive investigation, 32 arrested

scrutiny of transactions associated with the illicit network.

DGP Rajeev Krishna said the probe has uncovered the operations of major "super stockists" allegedly involved in illegal movement of the syrup. Five key individuals have been identified, including Bhola

Jaiswal from Varanasi, Vibhor Rana from Saharanpur, and Saurabh Tyagi from Ghaziabad, all of whom have been arrested. Two more stockists remain under investigation. So far, around 3.5 lakh bottles valued at approximately ₹4.5 crore have been seized, and 32 people arrested.

Evidence points to trafficking across India-Nepal and India-Bangladesh borders, with consignments traced toward both countries. The DGP warned against misinformation on social media,

## Lawyers protest as accused presented in court

A Lucknow court witnessed tension when two accused in the codeine syrup case, dismissed constable Alok Singh and associate Amit "Tata," were produced amid heavy police presence. Lawyers raised slogans demanding strict punishment, prompting authorities to delay movement of the accused for security before presenting them in court.



noting that investigators are verifying banking channels and tracing undocumented financial transfers to individuals and establishments lacking valid licences.

Officials confirmed that the SIT will also pursue the possible extradition of key accused Shubham Jaiswal if necessary, after reports emerged that he fled abroad. The Enforcement Directorate has initiated a parallel inquiry into the financial aspects of the case.

FDSDA Commissioner Roshan Jacob said the Chief Minister has directed a thorough probe into illegal diversion of codeine-based syrup and other controlled drugs. She clarified that codeine syrup is not banned in India but falls under Schedule H and must be sold strictly on prescription. Violations arise when large quantities are supplied without documentation or proper sales records.

## Rushed SIR could delete millions of labour votes: Mayawati

LUCKNOW

The BSP chief Mayawati on Monday raised concerns over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter lists in Uttar Pradesh, stating that completing the exercise in haste could remove the names of poor and migrant workers who are currently employed outside the state. Although she did not oppose SIR itself, she said the timeline allotted to Booth Level Officers (BLOs) was "too short" considering the state's vast population.

Mayawati posted her remarks on X, where she said Uttar Pradesh has over 15.4 crore voters and any rushed revision may leave thousands deprived of their constitutional right to vote. She added that several BLOs have



## BSP chief warns that rushed revision could drop genuine voters from the rolls

reported excessive workload and pressure during the revision drive.

She further said that any attempt to complete SIR "too quickly" could violate the spirit of electoral inclusion envisioned by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. According to her, the Election Commission should extend the time period to ensure

**Bring back ballot** Mayawati reiterated her long-standing demand that elections should be conducted through ballot papers instead of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). She claimed that recurring complaints regarding EVM malfunction undermine public confidence. She said that if ballot voting cannot be restored immediately, all VVPAT slips should be counted at every booth and matched with EVM totals.

accurate verification.

Mayawati also repeated her stance that responsibility for disclosing criminal records should lie strictly with candidates, not with political parties.

## SBI cup media cricket league fixture draw set for Dec. 10

LUCKNOW

The fixture draw for the SBI Cup Lucknow Media Premier League 2025 will be held on December 10 at 2:00 PM at the KD Singh 'Babu' Stadium. Organized by the Lucknow Sports Journalist Association (LSJA), the league provides a platform for journalists from various print and electronic media houses. The tournament itself will take place from December 13 to 19, also at the KD Singh 'Babu' Stadium. LSJA Secretary S.M. Arshad confirmed that large-scale arrangements are underway for the event. Eight teams have confirmed their participation, including the defending champions Electronics Media XI and the runners-up Times of India.

## SC warns HC against chilling remarks in sexual assault cases

PRAYAGRAJ

The Supreme Court has strongly criticized the Allahabad High Court for remarks in a controversial verdict suggesting that "grabbing private parts or tearing a pajama string does not constitute attempted rape." A bench led by Chief Justice D.Y. Sunakant stated on Monday that the High Court order would be set aside and the trial would continue.

The CJ highlighted that such language can have a chilling effect on victims, potentially pressuring them to withdraw complaints. He emphasized that courts, especially High Courts, must avoid insensitive commentary during hearings or while writing judgments. The bench noted that



## SC refuses to stay trial, rejects HC's attempt to downgrade charges

detailed guidelines may be issued to prevent recurrence.

The case involves three accused—Pawan, Akash, and Ashok—who allegedly assaulted a 14-year-old girl in Kasganj in November 2021. The Allahabad High Court had previously downgraded charges of "attempt to rape" against two accused and

ordered the trial under lesser sexual assault provisions. This prompted widespread criticism from legal experts and public opinion.

The Supreme Court, taking suo motu cognizance, had stayed the High Court's order in March 2022. Notices were issued to the Central Government, Uttar Pradesh Government, and other parties for responses. Senior advocates cited similar insensitive remarks in other High Court judgments, prompting the Supreme Court to consider issuing standardized directions for courts handling sexual assault cases.

The trial is set to continue under the original charges, ensuring the legal process addresses the severity of the alleged crime while upholding victims' rights.

## Electric staff show "real power"



HAPUR

A routine electricity bill recovery in Hapur turned into an unintentionally comic standoff on Tuesday after a dispute between linemen and a bill defaulter escalated into a full-scale blackout at a police station. The incident took place in Bahadurgarh police circle, where two electricity department staff—Pradeep and another lineman—had gone to collect dues from a resident, Ramavatar. A heated argument

## Linemen switch off power at police station after receiving 151 challan

followed, and a family member dialed 112, prompting police to escort the linemen to the station. Once there, both linemen were booked under Section 151. The news travelled quickly to the electricity office, where staff reacted with the speed usually reserved for emergency faults.

## UP scales down mass drug administration for Filariasis

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh is shifting its strategy for Filariasis (Filariasis) elimination, announcing that the Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign will now be conducted only once a year instead of twice. This decision follows assessment reports indicating a significant reduction in infection rates across the state.

The scope of the campaign has narrowed substantially; originally covering 782 blocks in 51 districts, the MDA will now focus only on 52 high-priority blocks across 17 identified districts, including Lucknow, Barabanki, Ayodhya, Prayagraj, and Pilibhit, among others. The next round of MDA is scheduled for February.

State Filariasis Officer Dr. A.K. Chaudhary emphasized that this change—based on pre-



TAS, and Night Blood Survey reports—is a clear indicator that Uttar Pradesh is on the path to elimination. Master trainers for these 17 districts received virtual training, stressing that quality of drug administration will be prioritized. They will now train frontline health workers, including ASHAs and CHO, for the upcoming campaign. Authorities also stressed the importance of directly observing drug consumption, establishing MMDP clinics for existing patients, and assisting patients in obtaining disability certificates.

## Hindu group protests, demand Lucknow's renaming

LUCKNOW

The Rashtriya Hindu Raksha Parishad today organized a protest march from KD Singh Babu Stadium to GPO in Lucknow, opposing the alleged insults against Hindu deities and the reported construction of a "Babri Mosque" in Murshidabad.

Led by National President Mukesh Dubey and Mahamandaleshwar Baba Mahadev, a large gathering, carrying saffron flags, tridents, and the tricolor, participated in the march. Baba Mahadev declared that no mosque in India should be built in the name of Babar.

## Deputy CM targets one crore "lakhpati didi"

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya announced plans to empower one crore women under the "Lakhpati Didi" initiative. The program aims to connect three crore women with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and elevate one crore to the status of financially independent "Lakhpati Didi." Maurya highlighted the government's commitment to women's empowerment, poverty alleviation, and social welfare through the dual-engine administration.

Speaking at the Shakti Kendra meeting in Tikar Garhi, Unnao, the Deputy CM stressed the importance of accurate and clean voter lists to strengthen democracy. He urged officials and citizens to actively participate in the special revision (SIR)



## Keshav Prasad Maurya emphasizes women empowerment and SHG expansion

campaign, ensuring no eligible voter is left out. Priority will be given to newly eligible voters above 18 years of age.

Maurya also emphasized the government's mission to provide permanent housing to all deserving families, eliminate slums, and ensure transparency and efficiency in welfare scheme implementation.

## SGPGI begins heart screening drive for students

LUCKNOW

Following the recent death of a Class 6 student due to cardiac arrest on December 5, Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGI) has initiated an intensive screening programme in schools to detect Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) in children. The plan targets early identification of heart valve abnormalities among students aged 5 to 15, using AI-driven medical tools.

According to SGPGI's Cardiology Department Head,



Dr Aditya Kapoor, the first phase has already started in nearly a dozen schools across Lucknow. Under the RHD prevention campaign, children exhibiting symptoms such as fever, cough, fatigue, chest pain or difficulty breathing are being screened using an AI-

enabled digital stethoscope. The device provides heart sound analysis within seconds, allowing specialists to identify potential valve narrowing or leakage. Children requiring further evaluation will be brought to SGPGI for detailed investigations and treatment.

## AI stethoscopes to assist early detection of heart valve disorders in children

The plan—developed jointly by the state government and Stanford BioDesign—operates in four stages. Health workers from the National Child Health Programme first conduct a questionnaire covering symptoms like breathlessness, chest discomfort and exertional fatigue. This is followed by an AI-stethoscope examination

on school premises. Students showing abnormal heart rhythms or suspected valve issues undergo an immediate on-site echocardiogram. Confirmed cases are referred to SGPGI for specialist care. Dr Kapoor emphasised the importance of CPR awareness among both children and adults. He advised schools to train students, teachers and staff regularly in CPR techniques and to ensure the availability of AED machines on campus. Timely intervention, he noted, can significantly improve survival in cases of sudden cardiac arrest.

## Iraqi delegation praises shia college's academic excellence



LUCKNOW

A high-level delegation from Iraq, visiting India under the guidance of eminent scholar Ayatollah Sheikh Mohammed Yaqubi, conducted an inspection of Shia College, Lucknow, on Tuesday. The delegation,

composed of notable scholars including Maulana Syed Ali Naqi Qiblai and Maulana Kalbe Abbas, chose Shia College as its first educational stop in India. The scholars expressed profound appreciation for the institution's academic environment and organized management.



**FIRM STAND |** Ukrainian president insists he has no moral or legal right to surrender land despite US pressure, as Europe reaffirms strong support and Russia intensifies strikes

## Zelensky refuses to cede land, rallies Europe for backing

KARACHI

### Hindu woman, daughter abducted

A Hindu woman and her minor daughter were kidnapped in Sher Shah, Karachi. Authorities urged to act amid rising abductions and forced conversions in Sindh.

DHAKA

### BNP flags crisis in democracy

Bangladesh Nationalist Party warned of an "abnormal" period with democracy absent, banks and markets failing, factories closing, rising crime, and conspiracies undermining governance ahead of next year's election.

DHAKA

### Awami League slams Yunus govt

Bangladesh's Awami League condemned the Yunus-led interim government for human rights violations, arbitrary arrests, fear campaigns, mob violence, and curtailing dissent, warning democracy and civic life are at serious risk.

COLOMBO

### UN provides \$4.5m for Lanka

The UN released \$4.5 million to aid cyclone-hit Sri Lanka, supporting food, shelter, and sanitation, helping over 1.7 million affected people recover from Cyclone Ditwah's devastating impact.

VILNIUS

### Balloon emergency

Lithuania declared a national emergency over Belarusian balloons violating its airspace, disrupting flights, and threatening security. Army patrols will join police to monitor and investigate the hybrid attacks.

TEGUOIGALPA

### Honduras seeks ex-Prez arrest

Honduran authorities, following a US pardon for ex-President Hernández, issued a 2023 arrest order for fraud and money laundering. Interpol has been asked to assist in enforcement.

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON

### US committed to Quad

Secretary of State Rubio affirmed the US commitment to the Quad, highlighting ongoing meetings and cooperation with India, Japan, and Australia to strengthen Indo-Pacific security and disaster-response initiatives.

WASHINGTON

### IMF approves \$1.2B for Pak

The IMF approved \$1.2 billion for Pakistan under its EFF and R5F programs, supporting macroeconomic stability amid floods, rising inflation, and structural fiscal and energy-sector challenges.

DHAKA

### 15 hurt in BNP & Jamaat clash

Political tensions ahead of Bangladesh's 2026 election erupted in Sirajganj's Kazipur upazila, leaving 15 Jamaat workers injured in clashes with BNP supporters.

## Young Americans turn against Trump

### Reject OBBBA

WASHINGTON

Young American voters are increasingly turning against President Donald Trump and his flagship One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), while remaining divided on issues like gender roles and Israel, according to the latest Yale Youth Poll released Monday.

Trump's support among young voters has sharply declined. Respondents aged 18–22, 23–29, and 30–34 now disapprove of his job performance by 30, 34, and 36 points

ROME

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has firmly rejected any proposal to cede territory to Russia, resisting mounting pressure from the US administration for a compromise. In a WhatsApp interaction late Monday, he said Russia continues to demand territorial concessions, but Kyiv "doesn't want to give up anything," citing Ukraine's constitution, international law and a "moral right" to defend its land.

In a fresh interview with Politico, US President Donald Trump again pushed Zelensky to accept Washington's plan, arguing Russia holds the "upper hand" and urging Kyiv to "play ball." Trump claimed unnamed senior Ukrainian officials support the proposal. He also pressed for Ukrainian elections despite martial law restrictions, arguing the country risks no longer being a democracy.

Zelensky said Trump "certainly wants to end the war" but noted Ukraine sees the



Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky and Pope Leo XIV wave to journalists during their meeting in Castel Gandolfo of Italy on Tuesday

### Europe must cut security dependence on US: Merz

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said the Trump administration's new national security strategy reinforces the need for Europe—especially Germany—to become "much more independent" in security policy. The US document criticises European democracy, migration and free speech, prompting Merz to insist that Europe does not need Washington to "save" its democracy. He noted the strategy aligns with earlier remarks by US Vice President JD Vance and said it has strengthened Europe's resolve to boost defence spending. Merz added that while "America first" is understandable, the US still needs global partners, stressing that Europe—and at the very least Germany—should remain one.

conflict's nuances "much deeper." He confirmed the US peace plan now has 20 points, down from 28 after "anti-

### Weak people leading decaying Europe: Trump

AGENCIES/ WASHINGTON DC

US President Donald Trump has blasted Western Europe as "decaying" and led by "weak" leaders who have mishandled migration and failed to advance peace efforts in Ukraine. In an interview with Politico, Trump said Europe's political class is constrained by political correctness and "doesn't know what to do." He accused leaders of "talking too much" on Ukraine and allowing "unchecked, unvetted" migration that he believes is pushing some countries toward collapse. Trump said he remains friendly with most European leaders but bluntly described some as "stupid." He praised Hungary and Poland for strict border control while criticising Germany and Sweden for losing control of migration.

## Florida gov declares Muslim civil rights group a terrorist orgn

FLORIDA

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis on Monday designated one of the largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy groups in the US a "foreign terrorist organization," following a similar step by Texas last month.

The directive against the Council on American-Islamic Relations comes in an executive order DeSantis posted on the social media site X. It also gives the same label to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Neither CAIR nor the Muslim Brotherhood is designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the US government.

The order instructs Florida agencies to prevent the two

groups and those who have provided them material support from receiving contracts, employment and funds from a state executive or cabinet agency.

In an emailed statement, CAIR and its Florida chapter said the organization plans to sue DeSantis in response to what it called an "unconstitutional" and "defamatory" proclamation.

Founded in 1994, CAIR has 25 chapters around the country. CAIR last month asked a federal judge to strike down Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's proclamation, saying in a lawsuit that it was "not only contrary to the United States Constitution, but finds no support in any Texas law."

## Next phase of Gaza ceasefire impossible without more pressure on Israel: Hamas

JERUSALEM

A senior Hamas leader warned Tuesday that moving to the next phase of the Gaza ceasefire will be impossible unless more pressure is placed on Israel to reopen a key border crossing, halt deadly strikes and allow increased humanitarian aid into the territory.

Husam Badran of Hamas' political wing accused Israel of failing to fully implement the first phase of the agreement, citing continued home demolitions in Israeli-controlled areas of Gaza. The warning comes as Israel says it is ready for the next, more complex stage of the deal — but only after Hamas returns the remains of the last Israeli hostage.

Palestinian health officials say at least 376 Palestinians



### Israel hits Hezbollah sites in Lebanon

The IDF said it carried out airstrikes Monday night on Hezbollah infrastructure in southern Lebanon, including a "Radwan Force" training complex used to plan attacks on Israeli forces and civilians. The IDF said the facilities violated Israel-Lebanon understandings and posed a direct threat to national security.

have been killed since the Oct 10 ceasefire began. Israel accuses Hamas of violations and describes its strikes as responses to attacks or breaches of ceasefire lines, though many victims have been women and children and some strikes occurred in designated "safe

zones."

As the humanitarian crisis deepens, the UN says aid entering Gaza remains far below need. An international body to administer Gaza in the next phase is expected by year-end. Qatar has warned the truce is at a "critical moment."

change, though they are evenly split on which party represents it. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act is deeply unpopular among young Americans. Respondents most often associate OBBBA with "Trump" and "tax," alongside negative descriptors like "stupid," "bad," and "corruption." Thirty-three per cent believe the bill benefits billionaires, 20 per cent say high earners, and only 16 per cent think it aids the middle class, working class, or the poor.

Looking ahead to the 2028 primaries, Republican voters favor Vice President JD Vance without Trump, though Trump remains the front-runner if he

runs, securing 50 per cent support. Democrats favor California Governor Gavin Newsom, followed by Kamala Harris, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Pete Buttigieg. Strategically, Republicans mostly want to energize their base, while Democrats are split between moderation and mobilizing core supporters, with younger Democrats emphasizing base turnout.

The poll highlights a generational shift: young Americans are increasingly skeptical of Trump and his policies, highly polarized, and motivated by a desire for significant political and social change.

Ukrainian points" were removed. Zelensky met Pope Leo XIV on Tuesday at Castel Gandolfo before further talks with Italian PM Giorgia Meloni. The Pope reiterated the need for dialogue and a "just and lasting peace." The Vatican has maintained neutrality while urging both sides—especially Moscow—to make peaceful gestures.

The Ukrainian leader also met British PM Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Monday. All three reaffirmed strong backing for Kyiv and stressed securing solid European-US guarantees to prevent future Russian aggression.

Meanwhile, intense aerial attacks continued overnight. Ukraine said Russia launched 110 drones, of which 84 were intercepted. Emergency blackouts hit several regions. Russia reported destroying 121 Ukrainian drones, while a Ukrainian drone strike on an LPG terminal in Temryuk set ablaze more than 20 storage tanks and infrastructure, burning for over three days.

### Accept peace offers, Trump tells Zelensky

US President Donald Trump has called on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to start accepting peace proposals, stressing that Russia's larger size gives it a long-term advantage and could eventually overwhelm Kiev's forces. In an interview with Politico, Trump said Zelensky has yet to review the latest US draft, despite positive feedback from his top officials. He urged Ukraine to consider elections, noting it has been too long since a vote and the people deserve a choice. Trump's initial 28-point plan, which Kiev rejected, has been revised with input from Russia and Ukraine. Moscow has welcomed the proposals but insists on Ukraine recognizing new borders and committing to neutrality, while Zelensky continues to seek a "dignified peace."

## Fire in Jakarta office kills 22

Battery spark in drone storage area suspected to have triggered deadly blaze

JAKARTA

A massive fire tore through a seven-story office building in Indonesia's capital on Tuesday, killing at least 22 people, including a pregnant woman, authorities said. Thick black smoke engulfed Central Jakarta's Kemayoran neighbourhood after flames erupted

around midday, triggering panic among residents and workers.

Central Jakarta police chief Susatyo Purnomo Condro said the blaze began on the first floor of the building, used as a sales and storage facility for PT Terra Drone Indonesia, before rapidly spreading upward. Many employees were out for lunch when a drone battery began sparking in a storage and testing area, according to witness accounts.

"It is suspected that a short circuit or thermal failure in the drone battery triggered an explosion and fire," a survivor named Dimitri told local television.

More than 29 fire trucks and hundreds of personnel battled



A man cries at the site of a fire in Jakarta, Indonesia on Tuesday

the flames for three hours before extinguishing the inferno. Rescue teams recovered 22 bodies — seven men and fifteen women — which were taken to a police hospital in East Jakarta for identification.

Television footage showed firefighters carrying out a tense rescue of more than a dozen trapped workers from the sixth floor using an extended emergency ladder. Several victims struggled to breathe as heavy smoke filled the upper floors while they waited to be evacuated one by one.

Families gathered anxiously outside hospitals and near the burnt building, seeking information about missing loved ones.

## For family's safety: Mamdani to move to \$100mn mansion

NEW YORK

New York mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani has announced that he and his wife will move into the historic, \$100-million Gracie Mansion in Manhattan once he takes office in January, saying the decision was driven by "family's safety" and the need to fully focus on his affordability

agenda for New Yorkers. In a statement on social media, Mamdani said leaving their Astoria home was emotionally difficult, describing the neighbourhood's multicultural warmth, Adeni chai, and its mix of Spanish, Arabic and other languages as elements that will "always live inside" him.

Mamdani, who campaigned

on affordability and housing stability, won last month's election by a wide margin and is set to become the youngest New York mayor in over a century. The 34-year-old democratic socialist has faced political criticism for residing in a rent-stabilised Astoria apartment despite earning \$142,000 annually. His current 800-sq-ft unit, built in 1929, offers basic

amenities but remains modest.

Gracie Mansion, by contrast, offers sweeping East River views, a full-time chef, and heavy security — including fencing, surveillance and stationed officers. The New York Times notes that the security and official hosting space are key reasons most mayors ultimately choose to live in the mansion.

## Cambodia vows fierce fight against Thailand, toll 10

SURIN (THAILAND)

Cambodia's Senate President Hun Sen vowed a fierce fight against Thailand as renewed clashes along their shared border forced tens of thousands of civilians to flee affected areas. The violence erupted after a Sunday skirmish that killed a Thai soldier, shattering a fragile ceasefire reached in July following deadly clashes over disputed territory.

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said Cambodia had made no move toward talks and warned that military operations would continue. "We've got to do what we've got to do," he said, stressing that action was necessary to safeguard sovereignty and public safety. Hun Sen posted on Facebook and Telegram that Cambodia initially held its fire but launched counterattacks overnight, vowing to "weaken and destroy enemy forces."

Thailand accused Cambodia of striking Thai positions



Local people take refuge in Prey Chamkar Ta Doak market in Banteay Meanchey province in Cambodia, near the border with Thailand on Tuesday

### UN urges restraint

UN chief António Guterres urged Thailand and Cambodia to halt escalating border clashes that have killed eight and injured dozens, calling for a return to ceasefire and dialogue. Both sides accuse each other as airstrikes, evacuations and diplomatic tensions deepen the long-running territorial dispute.

with artillery, rockets, and drones, while Cambodia maintained that Thai forces fired first.

Cambodia's military reported seven civilian deaths and 20 wounded, while Thai-

land confirmed three soldiers killed.

Thai airstrikes targeted military sites along the frontier and will continue "until attacks stop," raising fears of a widening conflict.

### US revokes 85k visas citing safety risks

IANS/WASHINGTON

The US has revoked 85,000 visas across categories this year as part of tightened public-safety measures, a senior State Department official said. Over 8,000 student visas were cancelled — more than double last year's figure. Nearly half of all revocations were linked to DUIs, assaults and theft.

"These are people who pose a direct threat to our communities' safety," the official said, adding that vetting remains especially strict for applicants from high-risk regions, including Afghanistan. Security checks will "take as much time as needed," they stressed. The official also said visa decisions consider an applicant's overall circumstances, even under new policies targeting foreign nationals involved in censoring Americans.

## US-India relations stalled, expert warns

IANS/WASHINGTON

India and the United States risk undermining two decades of strategic progress unless growing political strains over tariffs and Washington's renewed engagement with Pakistan are urgently addressed, warned policy expert Dhruva Jaishankar.

In testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee ahead of Wednesday's hearing, Jaishankar, Executive Director of the Observer Research Foundation America, said the US-India partnership faces a "political standstill" driven largely by trade disputes and US outreach to Pakistan's military leadership. The relationship, strengthened since 1998 through economic convergence and Indo-Pacific coordination, now risks losing momentum amid China's expanding footprint and regional

instability.

Jaishankar noted that tensions escalated after India's retaliatory strikes on Pakistan following an April terrorist attack, coupled with Washington's high-profile engagement with Pakistan. He also flagged stalled trade talks and high US tariffs as "acts of political hostility" threatening exporters and investors on both sides.

Despite friction, cooperation continues in defense, space, and energy, including a new 10-year Defense Framework Agreement, major military exercises, the NISAR satellite launch, and India's \$1.3-billion LNG import deal.

He stressed that resolving current disputes is critical to maintain momentum in the bilateral partnership, particularly given the strategic challenge posed by China's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific.

## Hungary vows to defy EU migrant quotas

AGENCIES/BUDAPEST

Hungary will not comply with new EU requirements to take in immigrants starting from next year, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has said, blasting Brussels for launching "an absurd and unjust attack" on his country.

The EU Migration Pact, which was agreed upon on Monday and is expected to take effect next July, requires every member state to contribute according to its population size and GDP. The goal is to ease pressure on the most heavily affected countries, namely Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and Spain, the European Commission said.

States must either accept a set number of migrants relocated from the hotspots or pay €20,000 (\$23,000) for each person they refuse to take in.

"As long as Hungary has a national government, we will not implement this outrageous decision," Orbán, a long-time critic of Brussels' migration policy, wrote on X on Tuesday.

## Google facing new antitrust probe in Europe

AP/LONDON

Google is facing a new antitrust investigation by European Union regulators over how it uses online content to power its artificial intelligence models and services. The European Commission said it is examining whether Google violated competition rules by using material from web publishers and YouTube creators for AI Overviews and AI Mode without payment or opt-out options. Regulators are also looking into whether Google's use of YouTube videos for training its generative AI systems unfairly blocks rival AI developers.

Google said the complaint "risks stifling innovation" and argued consumers should benefit from fast-moving AI technologies. The probe is being conducted under EU's traditional competition laws, rather than newer Digital Markets Act.



# 'Tere Ishk Mein was so emotionally draining'

Kriti Sanon says Anand L. Rai's film "completely emptied" her emotionally, prompting her to choose fun *Cocktail 2*

A still from the sets



CJ Desk

**K**riti Sanon, who was recently seen in *Tere Ishk Mein* alongside Dhanush in the lead, played a dark, conflicted and emotionally complex role as Mukti, with the film currently performing well at the box office. The actress is set to star next in *Cocktail 2*, a sequel to the 2012 hit that featured Deepika Padukone, Saif Ali Khan and Diana Penty, and she has now revealed what made her say yes to the film after portraying such a dark character.

Speaking to Variety, Kriti said, "*Tere Ishk Mein* was so emotionally draining, it had completely emptied me emotionally. I felt I needed

something light and fun, and that's when *Cocktail* came my way. I thought, 'This is it. This is the space I want to be in.' It's also nice to play characters that are poles apart, to not get too much of the load on you emotionally, because going back-to-back with deeply layered roles can take a toll on you." Further, Kriti Sanon stated that *Cocktail 2*'s story is really fun, refreshing and modern, and reflects the kind of relationships and equations people have today.

She also clarified that the sequel has nothing to do with the story of the first film, *Cocktail*, but carries the same vibe, adding that her character this time is truly exciting.

Talking about her back-to-back flops, Kriti stated that she went through a phase where

her films simply didn't connect, and when that happened, she realised what had gone wrong, she had stopped listening to her gut.

"I was listening to all the chatter around me about what kind of films I should do: 'It's a big film, a big project.' One day, I realised that projects don't really work for me. I really need to feel it, the story, and the character; I need to have something to do in the film where I can add value," she added.

Kriti stated that her last few films have been the result of her finally listening to her gut. Sometimes, she added, one realises that their decisions are made purely on the basis of what they're feeling in that moment.



# Kritika celebrates female storytelling

Actress opens up about leading *The Great Shamsuddin Family*: "Being at the centre of a story written by a woman is a privilege"



CJ Desk

**T**he much-awaited trailer of *The Great Shamsuddin Family* has finally released, creating a buzz among audiences for Kritika Kamra's authentic and relatable performance. Set to premiere on 12th December on Jio Hotstar, the film marks the return of acclaimed filmmaker Anusha Rizvi, known for *Peepili Live*.

The movie features an ensemble cast including Farida Jalal, Shreya Dhanwanthary, Juhi Babbar Soni, and Sheeba Chadda, weaving together multiple generations of talent in a story rooted in humour, emotion, and social relevance.

Kritika Kamra, who plays the lead, shared her excitement about portraying a character written by a female filmmaker. "Being at the centre of a story written by a woman, especially someone as sharp and fearless as Anusha, is a privilege I deeply value. The characters are authentic, layered, and unapologetic—allowing women to be flawed, funny, messy, and vulnerable all at once," she said.

She added that working alongside seasoned actors and an incredible team of women both in front of and behind the camera made the experience even more special.

With its emotional depth, relatable humour, and strong ensemble, *The Great Shamsuddin Family* promises a heartwarming and meaningful family viewing experience this holiday season.

# Prem Chopra was diagnosed with aortic stenosis



Pics: Instagram\_@sharmanjoshi

Sharman Joshi, Prem Chopra's son-in-law, shares health update on Instagram

**W**eeks after veteran actor Prem Chopra was hospitalised at Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital, his son-in-law, actor Sharman Joshi, has shared details surrounding his health condition.

Taking to Instagram, Sharman Joshi, in a post, revealed Prem Chopra's diagnosis of "severe Aortic Stenosis", adding that he underwent a successful TAVI procedure - narrowing of the aortic valve without open-heart surgery. He also shared that the veteran actor has recovered quickly and is back home. "On behalf of our family, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude and admiration for the exemplary treatment my father-in-law Mr. Prem Chopra Ji received from esteemed cardiologists Dr. Nitin Gokhale and interventional cardiologist Dr. Ravinder Singh Rao. Dad was diagnosed with severe

Aortic Stenosis, and Dr. Rao successfully performed the TAVI procedure, replacing the valve without open-heart surgery. Dr. Gokhale's consistent guidance at every step gave us immense confidence. Their expertise ensured a smooth procedure, complication-free treatment and a fast recovery. Dad is now home and feeling much better. We will always be thankful for the exceptional support and care he received," Sharman wrote in his Instagram post. He also shared a couple of pictures from the hospital showing Prem Chopra visibly healthy with his doctors. Veteran star Jeetendra was also seen in the pictures, suggesting that he might have visited Prem Chopra at the hospital.



Sharman shares hosp pics of Prem Chopra, showing him healthy; Jeetendra also present



# Ali Fazal set to collaborate with Shakun Batra

**A**ctor Ali Fazal, currently busy with *Mirzapur: The Movie* and Aamir Khan's upcoming *Lahore 1947*, is reportedly set to collaborate with filmmaker Shakun Batra for his next project.

Ali recently shared a brief Instagram Story stating, "It's a wrap," sparking speculation that he has quietly completed a new film. Sources suggest that this project, under the direction of Batra, is a shift for both, exploring the world of social media and its impact on modern relationships. Insiders reveal



Filmmaker Shakun Batra

that the film may delve into the pressures, complexities, and dualities of digital life, offering a fresh, character-driven narrative.

A source close to the production said, "Ali has been quietly working on something very exciting. His 'It's a wrap' post has added fuel to the news. The collaboration with Shakun Batra promises a film that explores the influence of social media on identity and relationships. Fans are eagerly awaiting an official announcement."

With Ali Fazal and Shakun Batra joining forces, expectations are high for a project that blends nuanced storytelling with contemporary themes, making it one of the most anticipated films of the year.



Pics: Instagram

# Zeeshan Khan escapes unhurt in car accident



**T**elevision actor and former *Bigg Boss OTT* contestant Zeeshan Khan escaped unhurt when his car collided with another passenger vehicle in Mumbai when he was returning home from the gym, a police official said on Tuesday. Khan's driver was behind the wheel when the accident took place in Versova on Monday night, he said.



Pics: Instagram

# Saiyami Kher wraps up shoot

**F**ilmmaker Priyadarshan's much-anticipated drama *Haiwaan* has officially wrapped filming, concluding its final schedule at the iconic St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. The final day was particularly special for Saiyami Kher, who not only stars in the film but is also an alumna of the college.

Sharing a heartwarming picture from the last day of shoot, Saiyami expressed that filming at her alma mater felt like "coming back home." "Wrapping *Haiwaan* at St. Xavier's was

such a special feeling for me. Meeting professors, the watchmen, and staff who beamed with pride—it felt surreal. This college shaped me and let me dream of becoming an actor. Walking through those corridors again, this time as an actor shooting my film, felt like life had come full circle," she said.

The star-studded film also features Akshay Kumar, Saif Ali Khan, and Sharib Hashmi in pivotal roles. Shot across scenic locations including Kochi, Ooty, and Mumbai, *Haiwaan* promises a compelling cinematic experience rooted in Priyadarshan's signature storytelling style. With filming now complete, the project moves into post-production, and fans eagerly await its release, expected in 2026.



## Briefs

MUMBAI

## Sachin recalls Gursharan's gesture



Sachin Tendulkar on Tuesday recalled former India player **Gursharan Singh's** gesture to walk out at No 11 with a broken hand only to help him score a valiant 103 for the Rest of India in their Irani Cup match against Delhi in 1989-90. A rampant Delhi crushed the Rest of India by 309 runs in the contest played here at the Wankhede Stadium in which Tendulkar waged a lone battle scoring 103, with former India opener WV Raman's 41 being the other noticeable performance. Struggling at 209 for nine in pursuit of a mammoth target of 554, the former India, Delhi and Punjab player Gursharan walked out at No 11 with a broken hand to support Tendulkar as the two put on another 36 runs for the final wicket. ROI were bowled out for 245.

MUMBAI

## Batlivala emerges King at Janjira Cup



The Willingdon Golf Captain, **Riaz Batlivala** lifted the most coveted trophy of the Willingdon Sports Club Golf Section—The Janjira Cup, which is the Club Golf championship, on December 7, 2025. He battled it out over 36 holes over 10 hours back to back, defeating top contender Khushaal Thackersey (who has won the Janjira 10 times), Armaan Thapar (who came in second place), and threats from Ketan Desai and Rahul Dalwani who were in the reckoning right till the end. "I could not have imagined this in my wildest dreams" said Golf Captain Riaz Batlivala. An achievement par excellence, and one more feather in his cap, this was his 3rd Janjira victory.

KOLKATA

## Cheptegei to headline Tata Steel World 25k



Promoted by Procarm International, the landmark 10th edition of Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata 2025 will witness 23,000+ runners from across the world come together to celebrate the

FIRST T20I | Hosts beat South Africa by 101 runs after Pandya's pyrotechnics

## Hardik, bowlers star for India

CUTTACK

All-rounder Hardik Pandya's rearguard heroics and top-class bowling from the pacers and spinners helped India overwhelm South Africa by 101 runs in the first T20I, here on Tuesday.

Chasing a competitive 176 for victory, the Proteas were rattled by Jasprit Bumrah, (2/17) Arshdeep Singh (2/14), Axar Patel (2/7) and Varun Chakravarthy (2/19) as they capitulated for just 74 in 12.3 overs.

Earlier, ace all-rounder Hardik Pandya marked his return to competitive cricket with a blistering half-century that helped India recover from some early blows to post a healthy 175/6.

Coming back after 74 days following a left quadricep injury that forced him out of the Asia Cup, Pandya walked in at No. 6 and immediately changed the tempo of the match.

India had slipped in both the power play and middle overs losing six wickets, but Pandya, who had proved his fitness at the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy for Baroda with a 42-ball 77 not out, counter-attacked with clean, fearless hitting to finish on 59 not out off 28 balls, laced with six fours and four sixes.

It was his sixth T20I fifty.

He began with two towering sixes against Keshav Maharaj just after Tilak Varma (26) fell, and then ripped into Anrich Nortje with a 17-run over, even stepping out to a 149kph thunderbolt to punch it for four, summing up the raw pace versus brute power duel that lifted the mood in the packed Barabati Stadium.

Marco Jansen tried to rush him with short balls, but Pandya pulled one with vengeance before racing towards fifty.

He struck a six and four off



India's Hardik Pandya plays a shot during the first T20I against South Africa in Cuttack. PTI

Lutho Sipamla (2/38) in the 19th over, and reached his half-century in 25 balls with a ramped six over third man off Nortje in the final over, celebrating it with a muted raise of the bat.

Pandya's late fireworks helped India add 53 runs in the last five overs, while Nortje, returning from injury, conceded 41 in four, including 12 in the final over.

On a fresh red-soil surface offering two-paced bounce, India struggled early after being sent in.

Abhishek Sharma (17), Shubman Gill (4) and Suryakumar Yadav (12) all fell inside seven overs as Lungi Ngidi (3/31) exploited the conditions superbly with clever variations.

He removed Gill early as the batter chipped to Jansen at mid-off, and later had

skipper Suryakumar holding out to Aiden Markram.

Gill and Suryakumar took most of the strike in the powerplay, as Abhishek faced only nine balls in the first six overs.

The left-hander tried to force the pace immediately after the field restrictions lifted, but fell to Sipamla, thanks to a stunning sliding catch by the 2.06m Jansen sprinting across from long leg to fine leg. His brief stay of 17 off 12 ended just as he began to find rhythm with back-to-back boundaries.

India made notable selection calls, preferring Jitesh Sharma over Sanju Samson for wicketkeeper's slot, while Hardik returned to lead the all-round options.

The Gambhir-led setup also opted for another like-for-like all-rounder in Shivam Dube.

## Scoreboard

**India:** A Sharma c M Jansen b L Sipamla 17, S Gill c M Jansen b L Ngidi 4, S Yadav c Markram b L Ngidi 12, T Varma c M Jansen b L Ngidi 26, A Patel c D Ferreira b L Sipamla 23, H Pandya (not out) 59, S Dube b D Ferreira 11, J Sharma (not out) 10.

**Extras** (B-4, W-9) 13. Total (For 6 wkts, 20 overs) 175.

**Fall of wickets:** 5-1, 17-2, 48-3, 78-4, 104-5, 137-6.

**Bowling:** L Ngidi 4-0-31-3, M Jansen 4-0-23-0, L Sipamla 4-0-38-2, A Nortje 4-0-41-0, K Maharaj 2-0-25-0, D Ferreira 2-0-13-1.

**South Africa:** Q de Kock c A Sharma b A Singh 0, A Markram b Patel 14, T Stubbs c Sharma b A Singh 14, D Brevis c Yadav b Bumrah 22, D Miller c Sharma b Pandya 1, D Ferreira c Sharma b Varun 5, M Jansen b Varun 12, K Maharaj c Sharma b Bumrah 0, A Nortje b Patel 1, L Sipamla c A Sharma b Dube 2, L Ngidi (not out) 2. **Extras** (W-1) 1.

**Total** (all out, 12.3 overs) 74.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-0, 2-16, 3-40, 4-45, 5-50, 6-68, 7-68, 8-70, 9-72.

**Bowling:** A Singh 2-0-14-2, J Bumrah 3-0-17-2, V Chakravarthy 3-1-19-2, A Patel 2-0-7-2, H Pandya 2-0-16-1, S Dube 0.3-0-1-1.

## IPL auction to feature 350 players with 240 Indians

Quinton de Kock the late addition

MUMBAI

A total of 350 cricketers, including 240 Indians, will go under the hammer in the IPL auction to take place in Abu Dhabi on December 16, with South Africa's comeback man **Quinton de Kock** a surprise late addition to the final list.

Wicketkeeper-batter De Kock, who recently came out of his ODI retirement, has been kept at a base price of Rs 1 crore. The list also includes Australia batter Steve Smith at a base price of Rs 2 crore. Smith last played in the IPL in 2021.

A total of 1,390 players registered for the Player Auction. The number was pruned to 1,005 players before 350 were finally shortlisted to battle for 77 slots available including 31 for overseas players, across the 10 teams for the 19th edition of the world's biggest T20 league. The first set of players in the auction includes India and Mumbai batters Prithvi Shaw and Sarfaraz Khan, who both have kept their base price at Rs 75 lakh each. Shaw had a regular run in the IPL from 2018 to 2024 but had gone unsold in the auction for the last edition, whereas Sarfaraz has not played in the competition since 2021.

The list shared by the IPL features two Australians in Cameron Green and Jake Fraser-McGurk, along with New Zealand and former Chennai Super Kings opener Devon Conway and South Africa's David Miller, with each of them keeping a base price of Rs 2 crore. Venkatesh Iyer, who was released by Kolkata Knight Riders, has listed himself at a base price of Rs 2 crore. Among domestic players, Kunal



1390

Players who registered IPL 2026 Auction

Chandela and Ashok Kumar, who are among the leading run-getters and wicket-takers respectively in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy, are also in the final list.

Three-time winners KKR will go into the auction with the biggest purse of Rs 64.3 crores, followed by five-time champions CSK with Rs 43.4 crores. Sunrisers Hyderabad, who have won the IPL once, have the third highest purse of Rs 25.5 crores.

As many as 21 England players feature in the list, including wicketkeeper-batter Jamie Smith, pacer Gus Atkinson, Liam Livingstone and Test opener Ben Duckett.

Green, expected to garner a lot of attention in this auction, leads the list of 19 Australians, with Josh Inglis, Matthew Short, Cooper Connolly and Beau Webster being the other prominent names. De Kock and Miller are among the 15 Proteas players in the IPL auction, along with fast bowlers Anrich Nortje, Lungi Ngidi, Gerald Coetzee and all-rounder Wiaan Mulder.

## Pickleball and the dream of featuring at the Olympics

Leagues like Global Sports Pro &amp; Challenger League, from December 16-23, will created world-class set ups

MUMBAI

As pickleball continues its meteoric rise globally, the possibility of seeing it one day become an Olympic sport feels increasingly realistic.

The sport's rapid expansion, its universal appeal, and its rising competitive standards have positioned it as a contender for future Olympic inclusion. India, in particular, has become one of the nations leading this charge, both in terms of participation and player development.

Over the last few years, the number of skilled Indian players has grown sharply, and equally notable is the improvement in their quality and competitive temperament.

India's ambition is to establish itself as a global hub for pickleball talent, training and professional leagues, and this aspiration aligns with the sport's long-term Olympic vision.

The push toward Olympic recognition is strengthened



by platforms that raise the overall standard of competition. Initiatives like the Global Sports Pro & Challenger League, from December 16-23 at Andheri Sports Complex, have created world-class environments where top Indian players regularly compete alongside international stars. Such exposure accelerates skill development, sharpens mental resilience, and elevates the overall level of the sport in the country.

Young Indian players today find themselves learning not only from homegrown champions but also from seasoned international athletes, widening their perspective and

broadening their tactical knowledge.

The dream of Olympic participation becomes more tangible when backed by a solid ecosystem. This includes committed team owners, experienced administrators, and a passionate community that sees the sport's potential.

As professional opportunities expand, the talent pool deepens, and India positions itself as a nation capable of producing future medal contenders. If pickleball earns Olympic status, India's readiness, with its infrastructure, leagues, and emerging stars, will give it a strong competitive edge.

## Tendulkar exhorts ISPL players to be themselves

India legend was speaking on the sidelines of the ISPL Season 3 auction

MUMBAI

Indian cricket legend and core committee member of the Indian Street Premier League (ISPL) **Sachin Tendulkar** exhorted all ISPL players to be themselves and not compete with anybody else.

Tendulkar was speaking on the sidelines of the ISPL Season 3 auction.

"We have to remember why expectations are there. Expectations exist because of your past performances. You shouldn't suddenly start thinking, 'Oh, there is a lot of pressure on me, there are expectations. What should I do?' This can be seen in two ways: either you get bogged down and the weight of the

pressure freezes you, or you see that the expectations are there only because you have done well in the past.

So, my advice to all the ISPL players is this: be yourself. Don't look to compete with anyone else. Whatever you were yesterday, can you better yourself today? Can you continue that journey? It's a beautiful journey - to keep getting better and create that impression on the field. This is one such platform where you can go out, express yourself, and everyone is watching you and enjoying your talent," he added.

Talking about his love affair with cricket, Tendulkar spoke about his deep-rooted passion and desire to play the sport. "I started playing cricket because I was passionate. I

was madly in love with the sport, and all I wanted to do was play for India. For that, whatever I needed to do, I was prepared to do.

There were various stages in my life. When it was school cricket, I was prepared to work hard — possibly be on the field for 12 hours. There was a period when I did that for 55 days in a row during my summer holiday.



days, and I finally fell sick. But that is what it is. If the passion and that fire are not there, you're not going to be able to move forward," he added. The Indian cricketing icon emphasised on the importance of hardwork for attaining desired success.

"To move forward, you need hard work, you need planning, you need to be able to execute that. You need the right guidance and discipline. A number of elements come together and then, when the time comes, you have to go out and perform — and that is how you progress to the next level." The batting great gave the prominent ISPL examples of Abhishek Dalhor and Irfan Umar.

## Ashes

## Hazlewood out of the series; Cummins set to return

BRISBANE

Australian pace bowler **Josh Hazlewood** has been ruled out of the Ashes series with hamstring and Achilles injuries.

Hazlewood missed Australia's two eight-wickets wins over England in Perth and Brisbane but had been expected to return later in the five-match series.

Australia coach Andrew McDonald on Tuesday said the veteran paceman would

now be targeting a return for the Twenty20 World Cup early next year.

"He'll be out of the series and his preparation will then shift toward the World Cup, which is an incredibly important campaign for us," McDonald said.

"It's really flat for him. A couple of setbacks we didn't see coming - we thought he'd play a huge part in the series." Hazlewood has been a key member of Australia's regular bowling attack for a decade.

## Hazlewood missed Australia's two eight-wicket wins over England in Perth and Brisbane

There was better news for skipper Pat Cummins, who is expected to return for the third test in Adelaide starting Dec. 17 after missing the first two tests while he recovers from a back problem.

The 32-year-old paceman

increased his training workload at Allan Border Field in Brisbane while the Australians were playing the second test against England at the Gabba.

He is set to be recalled as captain when the match squad is announced Wednesday. Steve Smith has been



leading the Australia XI in the absence of Cummins. "We feel as though he'll be as best prepared as can be," McDonald said.

"Us seeing him further advanced, we feel he'll be

really well placed for the challenges of Adelaide. "We feel as though the simulation in the nets has got him skill ready. His body's ready to go. Barring anything else happening in the next week, I'd be expecting Pat to be tossing the coin and putting the blazer on."

## Wood out of series

Injured fast bowler Mark Wood has been ruled out of the Ashes in a major setback for an England lineup trailing 2-0 in the five-match series. Wood had limited

impact in the first test, bowling 11 overs without taking a wicket in the eight-wicket loss in Perth. He then missed the second cricket test in Brisbane because of his troublesome left knee.

The 35-year-old Wood's fitness had been an issue ahead of the Ashes tour after he only recently returned following knee surgery in March.

Matt Fisher, who made his only test appearance in the Caribbean in 2022, was drafted in as cover.