





# Quality Education is Possible Only Through the Vigilance of Teachers: Rajendra Singh Patel

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** Addressing the headmasters and village heads present at a one-day orientation workshop held in the town, the chief guest, Block Head of Saidabad, Rajendra Singh Patel, said that quality education is possible only through the vigilance of teachers. He said that all of us should strive for 100% student attendance. Teachers must bring about a change in their work and come forward to guide society in the right direction. On this occasion, Headmasters Poonam Kushwaha, Sangeeta Dubey, Sumitra



Chaturvedi, Shanti, Nisha Tiwari, Archana, Abhishek Kumar, Seema Srivastava, and Ragini

Singh were honored with certificates for their excellent work in the field of education.

Similarly, Gram Panchayat officers Arun Kumar Yadav, Aarti Pandey, Anuradha Singh, Dhirendra Patel, and Kamal Singh were honored for their cooperation in improving the func-

tioning of the schools. Village heads Samodipur Lal Gupta, Archana of Kanakpur, and Rita Tripathi of Garhwa were also honored for their support to the headmasters of primary schools. The program was presided over by Block Education Officer Akhilesh Yadav and conducted by Umashankar Vishwakarma. Several people, including Indresh Tiwari, President of the Primary Teachers' Association's block unit, Ram Ji Santoshi, President of the Junior Teachers' Association, and Alok Srivastava, were present on the occasion.

## Free Self-Defence Camp Concludes Successfully at Mahila Seva Sadan Inter College

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reflected the effectiveness of the training imparted over the last six months. The event was graced by the Chief Guest, Henshi Ajay R. Agarwal (Black Belt – 9 Dan), who motivated the young participants and demonstrated self-defence techniques using the lathi, leaving a lasting impression on

the students. The competition was organised in two categories – below 40 kg and above 40 kg. Winners were awarded Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals along with certificates, while all participants received participation certificates in recognition of their commitment and effort. Club President, Rtn. CA

Vinay Goel, appreciated Rtn. Smriti Shangloo, Programme Chairperson, for her dedicated efforts in consistently conducting and coordinating the self-defence classes over the past six months. Club Secretary, Rtn. CA Saurabh Agarwal, stated that the club will continue to work towards empow-

## Career Fair Organized Under Career Guidance Program

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**Prayagraj.** A 'Career Fair' was organized at P.M. Shri R.B.I. College, Phaphamau, Prayagraj, under the guidance of Principal Mrs. Neelam Mishra, as part of the career guidance program. The program commenced with the lighting of the lamp and offering of garlands to the idol of Goddess Saraswati by the chief guest, Station House Officer of Phaphamau. Mr. Ashwini Kumar Singh, and Principal Mrs. Neelam Mishra. Other distinguished guests, including Sub-Inspector Damini Singh, renowned motivational speaker Dr. Sugreev Singh from Allahabad University, members of the Career Club, and several parents, graced the occasion with their presence, boosting the morale of the students. The Principal welcomed the guests with bouquets of



flowers. She highlighted the details and importance of the career guidance program being conducted at the school. Chief Guest Mr. Ashwini Kumar Singh, through his inspiring address, encouraged the students and motivated them to fearlessly pursue a successful career. Special guest Dr. Sugreev Singh encouraged the students to become self-reliant and inspired them to adopt the necessary habits for achieving success in life.

Under the guidance of program in-charge Archana Tiwari and Ritambhara Shukla, students from classes 9 to 12 set up career stalls related to various professions. Various career-related

cards and charts were displayed in the Career Hub for the observation of guests, parents, and students.

At the conclusion of the program, the Principal expressed her gratitude to everyone. Maya Devi, Manisha Gupta, Sunita Gautam, Vandana Tiwari, Archana Kumar, Sunita, Pooja Kumari, Vartika, and Arunesh Mishra made significant contributions to the successful organization of the program. Through the fair, students gained information about various traditional, non-traditional, and skill-based careers.

The students and the entire school staff participated enthusiastically in the event.

## Successful Organization of National Innovation Campaign Program in the City Area

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The criminals kidnapped a young man and demanded one lakh rupees. They released him after receiving the money. The criminals abducted the young man in a Tata Safari. The next day, they demanded a ransom of one lakh rupees, and after receiving the money, they released him. The case is related to Tharwai police station in the Gangapur zone of Prayagraj district. About a week ago, on the evening of December 18th, around 8 PM, Abhayraj Kushwaha, son of Ramlal, a paan shop owner residing in Ram Nagar market under Tharwai police station area, and a resident of Meda village, Tharwai police station, was forcibly taken away in a four-wheeler Tata Safari by unknown persons. They took him to Jhansi and other places and demanded one lakh rupees for his release. After receiving the one lakh rupees, the victim Abhayraj Kushwaha was released near Pratagarh Sahson under Sarai Inayat police station area. Based on the complaint received, a case was registered under Section 140 (1) at the local Tharwai

police station, and teams were formed to investigate the matter and apprehend the kidnappers. After considerable effort, three accused involved in the case were arrested: Rajkumar Yadav, son of Datadeen Yadav, age 29, resident of Haribhanpur village, Phulpur police station; Raja Yadav, son of Virendra Singh Yadav, age 24, resident of Sonauti village, Jhansi police station; and Prem Kumar Sharma, son of Teerthraj, age 30, resident of Chak Bhikhari alias Parsadhi, Phulpur police station. All three accused are residents of Prayagraj district. They were arrested near a garden on the Dharampur Ghurwa to Hetapatti road under Tharwai police station area. Rs. 61,000 of the ransom money and the Tata Safari Storm vehicle used in the

kidnapping were recovered from their possession. Based on the aforementioned arrest and recovery, further legal proceedings were initiated, and they were sent to jail. The police team that arrested the accused included Inspector Santosh Kumar Pandey, SI Amar Dev Singh, Girish Chandra Maurya, Anil Kumar, and several other team members. ACP Tharwai Arun Parashar stated that three accused individuals have been arrested and sent to jail after further legal proceedings.

### Why the kidnapping?

Statements given by the accused during interrogation:

During interrogation, it came to light that the accused Raja Yadav had spent a considerable amount of money on the treatment of his child's illness.

## Poor People's Faces Light Up After Receiving Blankets: A Glimpse of Happiness on Everyone's Faces

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Tharwai.** A blanket distribution ceremony was organized in Tikri Nayepura village of Soraon assembly constituency under the auspices of Apna Dal (S). The chief guest at the event was Kishan Saroj, former state secretary of Apna Dal (S) and in-charge of Sareni (Rae Bareli) assembly constituency. The program began with a garland ceremony and musical welcome for the chief guest and Apna Dal (S) office bearers. The program was conducted by Ramamurti Patel, while Birha Emperor Devraj Patel captivated the audience with his melodious songs. Chief Guest Kishan Saroj encouraged the helpless and poor elderly women and men present by giving them shawls. He then distributed blankets to hundreds of needy people. The faces of the poor lit up with joy upon receiving the blankets. In his address, the chief guest paid homage to great personalities like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Chhatrapati Shivaji, Jyotiba Phule, and Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. He stated that the mission of Apna Dal (S) National President Anupriya Patel is to help the poor, Dalits, helpless, and laborers. Its objective is also to educate and empower the youth, as well as to empower women and make them self-reliant. The program organizer, Sham Lal Saroj, extended his greetings and gratitude to all those present. Also present on the occasion were Apna Dal (S) District Gangapar in-charge Bhanu Pratap Patel, Soraon Assembly President Sushil Patel, Jitendra Saroj, Rajendra Bahadur Singh, Monu Bharti, Chedilal Yadav, Satish Tiwari, Nanhe Lal Sahu, Shiv Lal Patel, Madhavrao Patel, Ram Kailash Pal, Satnu Nanku Bharti, Radheshyam, Radheshyam Maurya, Sajan Yadav, and a large number of women, men, and other dignitaries.

## Christmas: A Festival of Returning to Humanity



are empty. Living our lives online, we have begun to neglect real life—the person sitting next to us, the needy neighbor, the elderly, and the children. It is amidst this human brokenness that the message of Christmas speaks to us. Jesus was born in simplicity and vulnerability, and his arrival became a promise of hope and salvation for the poor, the sinners, and the oppressed. This message continues to inspire people across reli-

**Prayagraj.** Every year, the arrival of Christmas reminds us that while our world may have become faster and smarter, it hasn't necessarily become kinder. We live in a time where our screens are bright, but our compassion is dimming. Technology has made communication easier, but it has also created distance in relationships. Our phones are filled with apps, but our relationships feel empty. Today, we have smartphones in our hands, but relationships in our homes have become fragile. Scrolling has replaced conversation. We respond to messages instantly, but we are slow to show empathy. We count "likes," but we lose relationships; our timelines are full, but our hearts

## Editorial

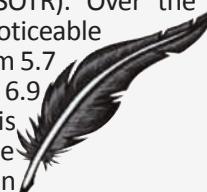
### The role of state fiscal capacities in national growth

India's economic progress is a composite reflection of the growth trajectories of its states. Given the federal structure of the country, each state operates with a degree of autonomy in implementing policies that drive their individual economies. This results in a broad spectrum of growth rates across states, highlighting significant disparities. For the nation to achieve holistic growth, it is imperative for all states to experience economic advancement. Despite this, there is a notable discrepancy in the attention paid to fiscal matters at different levels of government. The Union Budget, detailing the central government's finances, often garners substantial scrutiny and debate for its potential impacts on the nation's economic direction. In contrast, state budgets, which are crucial for addressing local needs and fostering regional development, do not attract a similar level of public and analytical scrutiny. Fiscal capacity, the government's ability to generate revenue from available tax and non-tax bases, is crucial for several reasons. First, it underpins a government's ability to provide essential public goods and services. These range from healthcare and education to infrastructure and defense, which are fundamental for the welfare of the citizenry and the smooth functioning of the economy. Without adequate fiscal capacity, governments may struggle to maintain these services at levels that meet public demand and expectations, potentially leading to social unrest or a decline in the quality of life. Second, fiscal capacity is vital for economic development and growth. Governments need resources to invest in infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, and digital networks, which are critical for enhancing productivity and competitiveness. Such investments not only improve current living standards, but also set the stage for future economic expansion. The Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) in 2017 and the World Bank in 2015 highlighted the risk of economies falling into a 'middle-income trap' where they are unable to transition to high-income status due to inadequate fiscal capacity among other factors.

Moreover, fiscal capacity is essential for macroeconomic stability. It allows governments to manage economic cycles more effectively, applying fiscal stimulus in downturns and restraint in booms to maintain economic stability. The Covid-19 pandemic's impact on Indian states underscored this point, as reduced fiscal capacities constrained their ability to respond effectively to the crisis and its economic repercussions.

Finally, a robust fiscal capacity enables equitable social development. It allows for redistributive policies that can mitigate income inequality and fund social safety nets for the vulnerable. Studies have shown that factors such as high per capita income, education levels, and low corruption contribute to higher fiscal capacity, which in turn can be used to foster a more inclusive society. Given that state governments account for over 60 per cent of general government expenditure in India, enhancing their revenue-generating capacity is imperative for the needed investment in areas such as education, research and development, and skill development.

The Reserve Bank of India recently released a report on state finances, which gives an insight into the state budgets of 2023-24. It has some important findings. First, revenue mobilisation in Indian states comprises both tax and non-tax revenues, with a significant portion coming from state's own tax revenues (SOTR). Over the years, there has been a noticeable increase in SOTR, growing from 5.7 per cent of GDP in 2003-04 to 6.9 per cent in 2022-23. This growth, particularly in the post-GST era, reflects a shift in the composition of tax revenues.



## Beyond Politics: Protecting Sanatana Dharma from Misguided Extremism

One of the primary issues of the 2024 national election campaign has become Sanatana Dharma. The BJP accuses the Opposition of insulting Sanatana Dharma. The Opposition rebuts this by saying that the BJP is deliberately politicising the issue, and misleading ordinary voters. Elections will come and go. Political parties will win and lose. But in a country where the overwhelming majority is Hindu, the debate is one of pivotal importance, transcending transient political dividends. It has a bearing on the very nature of Sanatana

Dharma, its evolution, its philosophical wisdom, its inherently eclectic and inclusive character, and all the factors which make it different from Abrahamic faiths. Let me clarify at the outset that I am a proud Hindu. The number of books I have written on the Hindu faith, and the sheer profundity of its thought as well as the remarkable achievements of Hindu civilization which forms the foundational period of our history, bears testimony to this. My real worry, however, is that this acrimonious political wrangling on

Dharma could reduce this great religion to a new level of fundamentalist illiteracy. And such a consequence goes far beyond the immediate political fortunes of expedient politicians. The crux of the matter is: what is Sanatana Dharma? Is it an unchanging monolith? Is it compiled in a single text, like the Bible or Koran, which cannot be transgressed by believers? Is it written in stone, to be interpreted by one Pope or Ayatollah? Or, has it evolved to be what it is precisely because it is none of the above? It is exceptionally significant that in its entire

history, not a single Hindu has been burnt on the stake or killed for blasphemy, as is not uncommon in some other faiths. What this means is that Sanatana Dharma has allowed for differences of opinion within its fold, including trenchant criticism of some aspects of it, by its own followers.

The Hindu faith had not one but six systems of philosophy attempting to understand the truth behind the vast and bewildering plurality of the cosmos. Each of them had a different interpretation.

## BJP is dreaming of returning to power by crushing the movements and opposing voices



**This time**, the first phase of voting for the Lok Sabha elections is to be held on April 19 and the entire BJP lobby including the Modi government at the Center is trying to win more than 400 seats. But it seems that by giving the slogan of 'This time we cross 400', BJP does not want to win so many seats but wants to snatch them. Otherwise, any government would not only get nervous due to so many protests from different sections of the people all over India, but would also try to pacify the angry people and also accept their legitimate demands. But despite opposition on many issues across the country, not only the Modi government at the Center and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but even a single BJP worker is not ready to bow down. Not only this, the Modi government at the Center is eager to come to power at the Center for the third time by crushing every protest, every movement and every person who opposes its policies like an intoxicated elephant. In fact, if we look at the two tenures of the Modi government at the Center in the last 10 years, we find that it has not refrained from crushing any movement, any protest or any opposition. Be it the movement by ex-servicemen demanding One Rank One Pension, be it the movement of farmers, be it the

movement of the country's daughters and women wrestlers, or any demonstration by unemployed youth demanding jobs, Be it the movement of women employees of Anganwadi centres, or the protests against EVM Tehellka, or the movements in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh to the North-Eastern states. In this way, if we look at the last 10 years of the tenure of the Modi government at the Centre, about twenty types of movements took place at various places; But most of the movements were either crushed badly by this government which suppressed democracy or they were suppressed to such an extent that their voice could not reach the country and abroad. The remaining work in ending these movements was done by a special group of Modiya and those people who have got contracts for various odd jobs in the country. However, if we look

at the movements going on in the country in the last 10-12 years, then first of all we have to look at the protests that took place across the country against the Anna movement and the Nirbhaya incident, due to which the UPA central government was ousted. However, the UPA central government of that time also tried to crush both types of movements; But not to the extent that the Modi government at the Center has done anything to crush all the movements. If we talk about the time after Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power at the Centre, then the Patel movement of Gujarat, Maratha movement of Maharashtra, farmers movement of Maharashtra, farmers movement of Tamil Nadu, Anganwadi movement, teachers' movements in different states.

Apart from the movement of unemployed youth and the movement of

women wrestlers, all the farmers' movements across the country and the farmers' movement that started in the year 2020 have been crushed by the Modi government at the Center and the BJP state governments. Their demands and problems have been ignored.

And the agitators and protesters have been kicked and water cannons have been used. In the first farmer movement against the three agricultural laws, an attempt was made to end the movement by putting all kinds of pressure on the farmers, and this time, when the central government did not fulfill its promises, the farmers decided to march to Delhi. So the attack on them was intensified. Attempts were made to harm them in every possible way, which again led to the martyrdom of 16 farmers.

There is still a ban on farmers coming to Delhi as if they are not food providers but terrorists. Recently, Section 144 was imposed in Delhi for more than a month to stop the farmers and even today Section 144 is applicable at some protest sites in Delhi. For example, after the protest by women wrestlers was crushed at Jantar Mantar, Section 144 is still in force and no victim can sit there and raise his voice. Recently, regarding crushing the farmers' movement, Rajasthan's Jat leader Hanuman Prasad Beniwal

wrote on Twitter handle '@narendramodi ji, the way he arrogantly wrote on India Is!

Let me remind you that you did not fulfill the promise made to the farmers during the farmers' movement. Therefore, the step to agitate again for the farmers and their rights was forced to be taken. On one hand you say that violence has no place in democracy. Farmers are being shelled at the behest of the other government, keeping in mind the current situation after the Rashtriya Lok Dal, which fought for the farmers of Western UP, joined hands with the BJP, it is your utmost responsibility to Take cognizance yourself and agree to the demands of the farmers! L

Leader of the main opposition Congress, Rahul Gandhi has spoken many times about suppressing the voice of the people by the Modi government at the Centre. Fearless and impartial journalists and intellectuals of similar nature are also unhappy with this attitude of the government.

Experts and scholars belonging to the rural context are also continuously opposing the policies of the government.

But the government does not care about all this. In fact, now even the police pick up people sitting in any protest and put them in jail, even if.

## Iran-Israel conflict will now be shaped by 3H—Houthis, Hamas, Hezbollah

### "Unprecedented"

"Unprecedented" is the adjective used in almost every global newspaper's description of Iran's retaliatory attack against Israel on 14 April, which the Benjamin Netanyahu government responded militarily by firing missiles at an Iranian airbase in Isfahan Friday morning. Iran's counter-attack last week wasn't exactly unpredictable—Tehran made it pretty clear it would respond to a suspected Israeli attack on its consulate in Syria on 1 April that killed two of its senior military commanders. It named its operation "True Promise", reflecting its vow to punish those who attacked its diplomatic mission. But the barrage of Iranian drones and missiles—approximately 300—had no precedent.

Neither did the suspected Israeli strike near an Iranian military base that followed. It was the first time, after 45 years of an icy shadow war, that we saw a direct confrontation between the regional archenemies. And that is why the new arc of violence in the Israel-Iran conflict, now marked by direct confrontation, is ThePrint's Newsmaker of the Week. Some view Iran as dealing the first hand or lighting the first match. But certain analysts suggest Tehran's calculation involved not just send-

ing a message to Israel but also to its own proxies in the region. Sanam Vakil, Director of the Middle East and North Africa programme at the Chatham House think tank, told The Guardian: "Iran's calculation was that if [it] didn't respond, Israel will keep trying to push back and degrade the axis of resistance across the region. This was about reinforcing its red lines and some measure of deterrence." For five days, the world waited with bated breath for Israel's response. The German and British foreign ministers flew into Israel earlier this week in efforts to prevent an escalation of the conflict, but it was clear that Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu was going to strike back. It was just a matter of when and how.

By launching direct attacks on each other's soil after decades of covert operations, cyber attacks and proxy wars, Israel and Iran have diverted from long-standing foreign policy strategies. On the one hand, Iran had always followed a policy of "strategic patience", which involves propelling up proxy forces in the Middle East to fight off Israel and its Western allies, while also projecting power in the region. Hezbollah in Lebanon is

a prime example of this. In 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon to expel the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) sent in what was known as the "Prophet Mohammad Corps" to Syria, which was then sent to Lebanon to fight against Israeli forces. This was the birth of Hezbollah. "The Islamic Republic is a survivalist regime," explains Arman Mahmoudian, a lecturer of Russian and Middle Eastern Studies and a PhD candidate in politics and international affairs at the University of South Florida, in an article for Gulf International Forum.

"Hezbollah's foundational purpose raises the question: why has the militant group thus far avoided confrontation? The brief answer is that Hezbollah is too valuable an asset to be deployed recklessly," he adds. By launching 300 drones and missiles into Israel, Tehran effectively abandoned this policy and any previous reluctance it had in attacking Israel directly. Similarly, Israel seems to have diverted from its "reverse periphery doctrine". Previously, under Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion, Israel followed the a bid to end its isolation in the Middle East. The idea.

## Briefs

KANPUR  
Successful completion of cataract surgeries

The Ophthalmology Department of Hallet Hospital has achieved success in treating complex pediatric cataract cases using advanced surgical techniques. Over the past month, four children with complicated cataracts underwent safe phaco surgeries with capsular support methods, resulting in significant vision improvement. The hospital continues to provide advanced eye care services free of cost.

KANPUR  
Divisional powerlifting championship begins

A two-day Divisional Classic Powerlifting and Bench Press Championship began at Bal Nikunj Bhawan in Kanpur. International players inaugurated the event. On day one, women lifters shone: Priya Shukla won gold and the 'Strong Woman' title in the 84+ kg class, while Ria Singh and Divya Gautam also secured golds in their respective weight categories.

LALITPUR  
VHP protests against minority atrocities in Bangladesh

Activists from Vishva Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal protested in Lalitpur against the alleged atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh and the brutal murder of Hindu youth Deepu Chandra. They marched from Company Bagh to Azad Chowk and burnt an effigy of the Bangladesh government. Protesters demanded India raise the issue internationally to ensure minority safety.

BALLIA  
District level millets fair held

A district-level millets fair and recipe development program was organized at the Officers Club under the Uttar Pradesh Millets Revival Program. Rajya Sabha MP Neeraj Shekhar inaugurated the event. Competitions were held for millet recipes and knowledge, with winners Sharada Devi and Ruby Verma securing first place in their respective categories.

JAUNPUR  
BJP holds tribute event on Vajpayee's jayanti

BJP leaders in Jaunpur paid tribute to former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the eve of his birth anniversary. District President Ajit Prajapati hailed Vajpayee as an 'ajatashatru' (one with no enemies) in Indian politics who gave a new direction to nationalist politics. Workers pledged to follow his ideals of governance and national service.

MAU  
Reflectors installed on trailers to prevent fog accidents

To prevent accidents in dense fog, reflectors were installed on sugarcane-laden trailers parked near the Ghosi sugar mill. Led by Sub-Divisional Magistrate Ashok Singh, the initiative aims to enhance the visibility of stationary trailers for oncoming vehicles during low-visibility conditions. The administration termed it a crucial step for road safety.

**STABILITY | CM claims law and order has stabilised, claims end to riots and curfews in the state**

# How to end riots? Someone ask Bareilly maulana: CM

LUCKNOW

**"Not here to do Bhajan"**

The Assembly proceedings concluded with both Houses being adjourned sine die. Leaders across parties placed their views on governance, welfare and administrative reforms. The government maintained that security and institutional discipline remain central to its policy framework, while opposition members continued to question implementation and accountability.

recent years.

The CM also spoke about action against illegal encroachments, asserting that no individual or group would be spared if public land, historical sites or government property were occupied unlawfully. He

individual or group would be spared if public land, historical sites or government property were occupied unlawfully. He

**Addresses supplementary budget discussion, outlines security, governance and development priorities**

said such measures were necessary to protect public resources and ensure fairness. According to him, the policy applies uniformly, without discrimination.

Responding to criticism from the opposition, the CM compared the present situation with previous administrations, alleging that earlier governments failed to control crime and instability. He said that the current government has prioritised institutional reforms, better training for police personnel and stricter monitoring at the district level. These steps, he added, have helped create a more predictable and secure environment

for residents and investors. The CM further highlighted employment generation, infrastructure expansion and welfare delivery as parallel focus areas. He said that transparent recruitment processes, expansion of road networks, expressways and improved urban facilities have supported economic activity. Welfare schemes, according to the government, are being implemented through direct benefit transfers to minimise leakages.

Towards the end of his address, the CM appealed to opposition members to avoid what he termed "unnecessary negativity" and to participate constructively in legislative discussions. He said public confidence depends on stability, accountability and cooperative governance, and reiterated that the government would continue to pursue these objectives through administrative and legal measures.

**Vande Mataram will always remain relevant: Deputy CM Maurya**



LUCKNOW

**Program showcased cultural traditions, cuisine and folk arts from multiple states**

the spirit of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat" by showcasing folk traditions, attire and cuisines from different states. He also referred to the birth centenary year of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, calling his contributions and speeches a lasting source of inspiration.

## After Thakurs, Brahmin MLAs organise 'Kutumb'

LUCKNOW



**Around 45-50 Brahmin legislators attend private gathering, voice concerns over lack of representation**

making structures.

Participants reportedly expressed the view that while other caste groups had strengthened their political

influence through collective platforms, Brahmins were increasingly feeling sidelined. The role and authority of the community's senior leaders, including the deputy chief minister from the Brahmin community, were also discussed. Several MLAs and MLCs from different regions attended the meeting, including sitting legislators and members of the legislative council.

## 48 booked for fake voter entries

SAMBHAL

In a major crackdown on electoral malpractice ahead of the upcoming Panchayat elections, authorities in Sambhal have unearthed a significant fake voter scam in Bilalpat village. The fraud was discovered during a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter lists, an exercise aimed at ensuring the accuracy of the electoral roll. The discrepancy first came to light after local residents raised concerns about suspicious names appearing on the list. Acting on these complaints, District Magistrate Dr. Rajendra Pensiya ordered a high-level probe. The investigation revealed that 48 individuals had managed to register themselves by misleading BLO and allegedly misusing Aadhaar documents to create fraudulent identities.

## 'One tree in mother's name, entire forest in Adani's name'

LUCKNOW



**Congress targets PM over Aravalli issue with hoardings outside Lucknow Office, display with bulldozer visuals**

Aravalli, or even air will be sold." The hoardings were put

up by NSUI East unit general secretary Aditya Shukla, who said the campaign aims to draw public attention to what the party describes as large-scale damage to the Aravalli ecosystem. He alleged that while the government promotes plantation drives, extensive forest areas are being opened up for commercial activities.

## PM to inaugurate 'Rashtra Prerna Sthal' in Lucknow

LUCKNOW



**National Inspiration Site built over 65 acres at Basant Kunj, statues and museum to be unveiled**

to draw more than 1.5 lakh attendees. The CM and senior ministers will be present during the inauguration. The Prime Minister is scheduled to arrive by helicopter in the afternoon and will address a public gathering after unveiling the statues and visiting the museum galleries.

The programme is expected

## UP reels under cold onslaught, fog halts daily routines

LUCKNOW

A severe cold wave and dense fog have gripped Uttar Pradesh, disrupting normal life, transportation, and leading to the closure of schools in 15 districts. The state recorded three cold-related deaths in the past 72 hours. Etawah was the coldest place with a minimum temperature of 6.8°C, while at least 25 cities, including Varanasi, Gorakhpur, and Jaunpur, were enveloped in dense fog, reducing visibility to near zero in several areas.

The adverse conditions have impacted rail and air travel significantly. Over 50 trains across the state are delayed by 2 to 10 hours, while seven flights from Gorakhpur were reported late. In response to the biting cold, authorities at Kanpur Zoo have installed heaters, blowers, and bulbs in the enclosures of lions, tigers, and leopards. Bears are

## Bioscope set to host 'Panno ke Bheetar' reading

LUCKNOW

**Three cold related deaths reported in 72 hours**

being given double the quantity of honey along with sweet potatoes and eggs, and bird enclosures have been covered with tarpaulin for warmth.

The Relief Commissioner has put district officials on alert and urged people to report accidents immediately on emergency numbers. Speed limits on expressways and highways have been reduced to 60-80 kmph as a precaution.

## Legal battle intensifies as court seeks reply from Gandhi family

LUCKNOW

A special MP/MLA court in Lucknow has issued notices to Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and Mallikarjun Kharge, seeking their response by January 5, 2026, in a sedition case. The case stems from a complaint regarding a statement made by Rahul Gandhi during the inauguration.

The complainant, lawyer Nripendra Pandey, has alleged that Rahul Gandhi's remark—"We are now fighting the BJP, the RSS and the Indian State itself"—was made knowingly and willfully against the Indian nation and its constitutional system. The complaint argues that the phrase "Indian State" refers not just to the ruling party but to Parliament, the judiciary, the executive, and the entire constitutional framework, thereby amounting to sedition.

Pandey further contended that the presence and silence of other senior Congress leaders at the event implied collective consent to the statement.

During the event, which saw participation from over 12,000 athletes across 34 sporting disciplines, the Vice President witnessed fencing and volleyball matches before honoring the winners. He highlighted India's improved Olympic performance since 2014, attributing the success to athlete-centric innovations and increased participation from women.

## initiative

## How NIDHI Yojana Is Powering Women Start-ups in UP

LUCKNOW



**25 women-led start-ups from UP receive direct support under the central NIDHI scheme**

structured support to women entrepreneurs. These centres offer mentoring, technical guidance, business planning assistance, intellectual property support and help with regulatory compliance.

Officials note that these incubators are playing a significant role in enabling women from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities to

launch innovation-based ventures. Districts that earlier had limited start-up activity are gradually witnessing increased participation from local entrepreneurs, particularly women.

The spread of start-up infrastructure beyond major urban centres aligns with the broader objective of promoting balanced regional development. By providing access to resources and institutional backing closer to home, the NIDHI Yojana is helping reduce entry barriers for aspiring women entrepreneurs and strengthening local economies across Uttar Pradesh.



Vice President CP Radhakrishnan arrived in Agra on Wednesday to inaugurate the third Sansad Khel Spardha at Eklavya Sports Stadium. Welcomed at Kheria Airport by Union Minister SP Singh Baghel and state Cabinet Minister Yogendra Upadhyay, the Vice President emphasized a healthy lifestyle, urging the youth to "say no to drugs and yes to sports." He shared personal anecdotes from his time as a long-distance runner and table tennis player, noting that sports cultivate essential life skills like discipline, patience,

and hard work. During the event, which saw participation from over 12,000 athletes across 34 sporting disciplines, the Vice President witnessed fencing and volleyball matches before honoring the winners. He highlighted India's improved Olympic performance since 2014, attributing the success to athlete-centric innovations and increased participation from women.

# Red-hot Christmas glam

**Katrina, Nargis, Jacqueline and more: The girls bring the fun, magic and red-hot sass this Christmas**

If there's one colour that captures the warmth, sparkle, and unmistakable joy of Christmas, it's red—bold, passionate, festive. This year, Bollywood's most stylish stars are embracing the shade in silhouettes that range from sculpted elegance to old-school Hollywood romance. Whether you're headed to a cosy Christmas dinner or a high-glam holiday bash, take cues from these stunning crimson moments.



### Kareena Kapoor Khan: Sculpted sophistication

Kareena Kapoor Khan commands attention in a striking one-shoulder dress in vibrant red. The gown features a beautiful asymmetrical drape across the bodice and a sophisticated knot detail at the waist. This ensemble highlights her figure while providing an air of Old Hollywood glamour and polished grace. Styling tip: Ideal for a formal Christmas Eve party or a high-profile holiday event where you want to make a powerful yet elegant statement.

### Alia Bhatt: Modern, minimalist

Alia Bhatt brings a new definition to sophisticated holiday dressing in a deep maroon slip dress. The look is defined by its minimal silhouette, thin spaghetti straps, and a subtle, romantic rosette detail adorning the bodice. It's a chic blend of modern fashion and rich holiday colour, making it the perfect choice for an intimate gathering or a stylish Christmas dinner where understated elegance is key.

STYLING TIP: Wear a playful headband to make the look more Christmassy.



### Jacqueline Fernandez: Dramatic glamour

Jacqueline Fernandez takes your festive palette to the next level in a breathtaking, fiery red gown. The look is a study in texture, featuring a strapless velvet corset bodice paired with extravagant, sculpted sleeves of voluminous satin. It's a majestic silhouette that delivers a magnificent, cinematic effect.

STYLING TIP: This is your inspiration for the ultimate high-octane holiday gala or a grand celebratory event that calls for uncompromising drama.

### Katrina Kaif: Cosy Christmas comfort

Katrina swapped red-carpet glamour for festive snugness in a soft, reindeer-patterned holiday sweater, proving that Christmas style isn't just about sparkle, but also about comfort, warmth, and quiet joy. With her easy charm and effortless glow, she makes the classic Christmas sweater feel undeniably chic—perfect for a laid-back holiday brunch, tree-decorating evening, or a cosy night in with hot chocolate.

STYLING TIP: Embrace the natural look by pairing a chunky knit with minimal makeup and loose, natural hair. Add a simple gold earring for a subtle festive sparkle.

### Nargis Fakhri: The Christmas muse

Nargis radiates festive sophistication in a striking red halter-neck gown—a colour that instantly channels classic Christmas glamour. The dress's clean, flowing silhouette gives her a timeless, graceful presence. Her gold earrings add just the right hint of holiday sparkle, elevating the look without overpowering it. With soft waves cascading around her shoulders and a naturally glowing makeup finish, she carries a celebratory charm: elegant, effortless, and perfectly Christmas-ready.

## Kapoor sisters spread Christmas cheer

On Christmas Eve, actor sisters Janhvi and Khushi Kapoor marked the festive season by decorating a large Christmas tree at their Mumbai home. The siblings were joined by a few close friends as they prepared for Christmas celebrations. A post of the decorated tree was shared on Instagram by their friend and socialite Orry. The tall tree featured a mix of traditional and fun decorations, including glittery ornaments, food-shaped pieces and trendy words such as "Happy Pill," "Chill Pill," and "Matcha." It also included miniature figures of their late mother, actor Sridevi, their father Boney Kapoor, and Janhvi Kapoor's boyfriend Shikhar Pahariya. Sharing the post, Orry praised the festive setup, calling it the best Christmas tree. Janhvi also reacted to the post, saying she was proud of the decoration.



### Jacqueline Fernandez spreads Christmas joy



Jacqueline celebrated Christmas 2025 by bringing joy to children in Mumbai. Dressed as Santa Claus, she visited underprivileged kids and gave them gifts, spreading happiness and smiles. Sharing the video, Jacqueline captioned the post, "Merry Christmas everyone ?? Thank you so much @jacquelinefernandez for sharing happiness with these angels this Christmas ?? #christmas #humanity #jacquelinefernandez #hussainmansuri." The post highlighted not just the celebration but also the larger message of kindness, compassion and giving back during the holiday season. Fans praised her gesture, saying it reflected the true spirit of Christmas.

# Puja Banerjee calls out 'insensitive' media trial

Television actress Puja Banerjee on being judged, targeted and put through a media trial during scam allegations with husband Kunal Verma

Television actress Puja Banerjee, who recently found herself at the centre of a major controversy, has finally opened up about the emotional toll of facing a public and media trial during one of the most difficult phases of her life. The actress and her husband, actor Kunal Verma, were previously accused by Bengal film producer Shyam Sundar Dey of kidnapping and extorting money—allegations that led to an FIR being filed against them and sparked widespread media outrage. However, Puja and Kunal later revealed that it was, in fact, they who were allegedly scammed financially by the producer, losing a substantial amount of money in the process.

As the controversy unfolded, public perception quickly turned against the couple, with sections of the media painting them as criminals even before the facts were fully out. In an exclusive conversation with

Puja spoke candidly about the harsh media scrutiny, the emotional impact it had on her family, and the insensitivity

she encountered during the ordeal.

Reflecting on being subjected to a media trial, Puja said, "It's the sad part of our industry. I won't blame the media completely because *jo dikhta hai vo bikta hai*. If you tell people, 'Good morning, today's good news is that everything is fine,' then people will stop reading the newspaper. Until and unless you don't show them something controversial or negative, they won't pick up the newspaper. As human beings, this is how we are. So then how can

we call the media wrong? But yes, some people definitely have been extremely insensitive. They don't even think that the person they're talking ill about is somebody's mom, somebody's wife, somebody's daughter. We also have families and unfortunately, they get the most affected in all this. They should think about our families. We are public figures, so we will manage all this, but what about our families? It's very sad that we had to go through this phase. But I'll just say that no matter what happens in life, never give up. You have only two choices in life—either to give up or to keep going no matter what, and I feel one should always fight back and never give up. Even we are fighting back despite knowing that maybe we won't get what we have lost, but still, we will not give up."

Speaking about how this difficult phase helped her identify who truly mattered, Puja shared that adversity made things clearer when it came to friendships and support systems. Answering whether she discovered her real friends during

this time, the actress said, "My low phase has taught me who my close ones actually are. With time, I've realised who my own people are. But honestly, I always knew who my true friends are. There are so many friends of mine who became my friends after I became an actor and so many who have been my friends since childhood. So I do know who my true friends are. Only my close friends have really stood by me during this tough time."

Puja also spoke about the unwavering support she received from her husband, Kunal Verma. "I totally support him, and I'm very fortunate that even Kunal has been very supportive towards me. One best thing about us is that we never discuss work, and this is the best thing because as a woman, it gives me complete freedom of what I want to choose."

Sharing the photo, Salman Khan, who often spends time at his Panvel farmhouse, frequently hosts parties with his close industry friends and family, where celebrities have a blast. Recently, Salman's brother-in-law, Atul Agnihotri, shared a striking throwback photo featuring Salman, cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni, and Punjabi singer AP Dhillon



## Throwback Wednesday

Salman Khan poses with MS Dhoni and AP Dhillon, all smiles and covered in mud after ATV ride at his Panvel farmhouse

at the actor's Panvel farmhouse near Mumbai.

In the photo, Salman was all smiles as he posed with Dhoni and AP Dhillon, the trio covered in mud, with Salman's all-terrain vehicle (ATV) in the background, hinting they had just enjoyed an adventurous ride together. The snapshot offers fans a rare glimpse into the actor's off-screen camaraderie with these celebrities.

Sharing the picture, Agnihotri wrote, "#throwback @beingsalmankhan

@mahi7781 @apdhillon. Meanwhile, this throwback photo comes ahead of Salman's 60th birthday on December 27.

Recently, Salman shared pictures on Instagram, showing him at his gym wearing a black vest and blue shorts. He confidently flexed his massive arms and toned legs, sporting a clean-shaven look and a physique that defies age. Alongside the pictures, he cheekily wrote, "I wish I could look like this when I am 60! 6 days from now."



### Views

An Indian woman has been murdered in Toronto, prompting police to probe and search for a suspect on charges of first-degree murder. The police located 30-year-old Himanshi Khurana's body on Saturday in a residence, a day after the missing report in the Strachan Avenue and Wellington Street W. area was filed, reported the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).

### Nursing home blast kills 2

A thunderous explosion at a nursing home just outside Philadelphia collapsed part of the building and left people injured and possibly trapped inside, authorities said. The explosion happened at Bristol Health & Rehab Center in Bristol Township, just as a utility crew had been inside looking for a gas leak, although the cause of the explosion was unclear several hours later, as was the extent of the casualties. A plume of black smoke rose from the nursing home, as emergency responders, fire trucks and ambulances from across the region rushed there, joined by earthmoving equipment.

### 'No aim to conquer land'

President Trump's new envoy to Greenland said the Republican administration is looking to begin a conversation with residents of the semi-autonomous Danish territory about the best way forward for the strategically important island. In his first extended comments since being appointed to the role this week, Louisiana Gov Jeff Landry said the Trump administration isn't going to "go in there trying to conquer anybody" or try to "take over anybody's country."

### Nat'l Guard in another city

The Trump administration is deploying 350 National Guard troops to New Orleans ahead of the New Year, launching another federal deployment in the city at the same time that an immigration crackdown led by Border Patrol is on. Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said Guard members, as they have in other deployments in large cities, will be tasked with supporting federal law enforcement partners, including the Dept of Justice and the Dept of Homeland Security. Parnell added the National Guard troops will be deployed through February.

### Anti-stir, gun laws in NSW

The state of New South Wales (NSW) will have the toughest gun laws in Australia as well as wide-reaching new restrictions on free speech in the wake of the Bondi Beach mass shooting, which left 15 people dead. Less than two weeks after the attack on a Jewish celebration, new legislation was passed by the state's legislative assembly in the early hours of Wednesday morning, including restrictions that appear to target speech in solidarity with Palestinians.

### Delaware trooper killed

After a gunman shot a Delaware state trooper inside a DMV office near Wilmington on Tuesday, the wounded trooper pushed a nearby employee to safety before the gunman shot the trooper again, killing him, authorities said. A New Castle County police officer then confronted, shot and killed the gunman. Delaware Police revealed the 44-year-old suspect entered the facility at 2 pm as a customer.

## LOTTERY GONE | Higher-skilled, higher-paid staff favoured US tweaks H-1B system

NEW YORK / WASHINGTON

better protect the wages, working conditions, and jobs for American workers.

The new rule will take effect from February 27, 2026, and will be in place for the FY 2027 H-1B cap registration season. The new system replaces the random lottery for selecting visa recipients with a process that gives greater weight to those with higher skills, it said.

The agency said the lottery system of selecting H-1B visa applicants was rife with abuse and was exploited by companies to bring in foreign labour at low wages. "The existing random selection process of H-1B registrations was exploited and abused by US employers who were primarily seeking to import foreign workers at lower wages than they would pay American workers," US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) spokesman Matthew Tragesser said.



### JUDGE UPHOLDS TRUMP'S \$100,000 H-1B VISA FEE

A US federal judge on Tuesday upheld President Trump's \$100,000 fee to process H-1B visa applications, acknowledging it could "inflict significant harm on American businesses and institutions of higher education".

In a 56-page opinion, US District Judge Beryl Howell wrote the president has "broad statutory authority" to address "a problem he perceives to be a matter of economic and national security". Trump argued the H-1B visa system was being abused to replace American workers with people willing to work for less money.

The US awards 85,000 H-1B visas per year on a lottery system. India accounts for around three-quarters of the recipients. The lawsuit was brought by the US Chamber of Commerce, a pro-business lobbying group, and the Association of American Universities, which represents 69 US-based research universities.

Together, the plaintiffs claimed the affected workers "contribute enormously to American productivity, prosperity and innovation". The Chamber is typically Republican-friendly, spending over \$76 million for lobbying in 2024 alone and nearly \$6 million to back Republican political groups and candidates with direct contributions, according to OpenSecrets.org.

At least two additional lawsuits against the \$100,000 H-1B visa application fee remain ongoing.

## B'desh govt to take care of slain Hindu man's kin

DHAKA

Bangladesh interim government's senior adviser has said the state will take responsibility of the family of the Hindu worker lynched on blasphemous charges last week.

Education adviser CR Abrar met the bereaved family of 25-year-old Dipu Das, killed by a mob and his body set afire on December 18 in Mymensingh.

### DHAKA BLAST KILLS 1

A man was killed on Wednesday evening after assailants threw a crude explosive from a flyer at Mogbazar in Dhaka. The explosive device was thrown from the flyer and exploded on the ground below, critically injuring one. He died shortly afterwards.

### AWAMI LEAGUE BAN: US LAWMAKERS TENSE

A group of US lawmakers has expressed concern over the total ban of the Awami League political party ahead of elections scheduled in Bangladesh early next year.

Lawmakers said Bangladeshi people deserve to be able to choose an elected government in a free and fair poll.

### BNP'S TARIQUE RAHMAN TO RETURN TODAY

Tarique Rahman, the acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and heir to the influential Zia family, is set to return home on Thursday, ending his 17+ years in exile in London, his party said.

### YUNUS WORKING TO IMPROVE INDIA TIES'

Interim govt signalled it wants to improve its ties with India, especially on economic matters. Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed said Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus is making efforts to calm tensions with New Delhi and is trying to strengthen trade ties by keeping economies separate from political statements.

A well-known fertility doctor, a technology entrepreneur and politicians with a track record at the European and local government level are among four new Indian-origin peers set to take their seats in the House of Lords in the New Year.

Professor Geeta Nargund, founder of CREATE fertility; Uday Nagaraju, founder of AI Policy Labs; Neena Gill, former member of the European Parliament (MEP) for the West Midlands region of England; and Shama Tatler, a councillor from Brent in north-west London were nominated as Labour Party peers by PM Keir Starmer.

Downing Street confirmed the latest set of political peers earlier this month, formally appointed by King Charles III to the Upper House of the British Parliament.

## Doctor & techie among new desi peers in House of Lords

LONDON

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PALM BEACH

Venus weds Italian model



Tennis legend Venus Williams, 45, married Danish-born Italian model Andrea Preti in Florida. The couple celebrated their union with a five-day event in Palm Beach following Williams' announcement on social media this Tuesday.

TOKYO

**Golf legend Jumbo Ozaki dies**

Japanese golf icon Masashi "Jumbo" Ozaki has died at 78 following a battle with colon cancer. A World Golf Hall of Famer, Ozaki recorded a record 113 worldwide wins and reached world number five in 1996.

NEW DELHI

**Neeraj Chopra turns 28**



India's "Golden Boy" Neeraj Chopra celebrated his 28th birthday on Wednesday. The double Olympic medalist and former world champion, who holds a personal best of 90.23m, was recently conferred the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Army.

MELBOURNE

**Archer ruled out of Ashes**



England fast bowler Jofra Archer has been ruled out of the final two Ashes tests due to a left side strain. Archer, who took nine wickets in the first three matches, will miss the upcoming games in Melbourne and Sydney.

BHUBANESWAR

**Tirkey opens photo exhibit**



Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey inaugurated a special photo exhibition in Odisha on Wednesday. Tirkey confirmed the state's commitment to sponsoring hockey until 2036, as preparations continue for the Hockey India League starting in January 2026.

KOLKATA

**J&K win deaf cricket title**

Jammu and Kashmir were crowned champions of the 4th IDCA Test National Cricket Championship for

**English Daily AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH**

**Title Code UPENG04488**

Prayagraj Printer & Owner Swami Shree Yogi Satyam for Yogi Satyam Samiti

Printed at PARASHAKTI OFFSET

118A/2A Chauhanlal

Kydganj, Prayagraj-211003

Uttar Pradesh

Published from Kriyayoga Ashram & Anusandhan Sansthan Jhansi, Prayagraj-211019

Editor:

SWAMI SHREE YOGI SATYAM

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