

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ    Thursday, 25 December, 2025    UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

**MINISTERS FALTER!** Two years on, performance audit exposes missing ministerial reports and weak departmental grip. Oppn cites fertiliser crisis, land demarcation delays & officer dominance as key failures

## Kansana, Panwar, Nagar fail to file reports, ministers under scanner

BHOPAL

Twenty-eight ministers took oath on December 25, 2023. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav completed two years in office on December 13, but other ministers are doing so on Thursday. The ministers are presenting their performance reports following instructions from the state government. But there are a few ministers who have failed to present their performance report. Agriculture Minister Aidal Singh Kansana has yet to lay hold of his department. He

### UNDERPERFORMERS

Aidal Singh Kansana (Agriculture), Nagar Singh Chouhan (SC Welfare), and Karan Singh Verma (Revenue) have shown little impact in their departments. does not regularly review the functioning of the department, and such a severe shortage of fertiliser has occurred in the state this year. The performance of the Minister for SC Welfare, Nagar Singh Chouhan, was not visible. He has not shown much interest in the department in the

### LAGGING

Narayan Singh Panwar, Narayan Singh Kushwaha, Inder Singh Parmar, Dileep Jaiswal, and Krishna Gaur have not delivered significant departmental outcomes. past two years. Since the day Chouhan was deprived of the Forest and Environment Department, he has been taking care of only the SC Welfare Department, but he has not done anything out of the ordinary. Revenue Minister Karan Singh Verma was in the cabinet earlier. Although there are

claims that the revenue department is improving, the ground reality tells a different tale. The people are facing problems in getting their lands demarcated and divided. Similarly, the Fishermen's Welfare Department of Narayan Singh Panwar is in the grip of officers. Panwar takes more interest in his constituency than the department. So, his performance has not been up to the mark. Among other ministers, Narayan Singh Kushwaha, Inder Singh Parmar, Dileep Jaiswal, and Krishna Gaur have not done anything special.

### CAUGHT IN ROW

A few ministers have courted controversies in two years. The Minister for the Tribal Welfare Department, **Vijay Shah**, raised controversies by issuing statements. His remark on Colonel Sofiya Qureshi and Ladli Behna kicked up a dust. Minister of State **Narendra Shivaji Patel** also hogged the limelight because of disputes. Whether it was related to creating a ruckus in a res-

taurant in Gwalior or threatening the cops at a police station, Patel drew attention. Similarly, the minister of state **Pratima Bagri** hogged the limelight for her brother's involvement in ganja trafficking and for demanding a probe into a road construction. Deputy Chief Minister **Jagdish Devda** and Minister **Govind Singh Rajput** have also been in discussion for raising disputes.

## India likely to scrap French Scorpene project, may go for German-origin subs

**NEW DELHI:** India may scrap the proposed project to build another three French-origin Scorpene submarines at Mazagon Docks (MDL), while it goes full steam ahead with the plan to construct six new German-origin diesel-electric stealth submarines at the same facility for over Rs

70,000 crore. The plan for the three additional Scorpene submarines, which would have cost around Rs 36,000 crore, "is not being pursued now" though the "final decision to scrap it has not yet been taken in black and white", top government sources told. While cost negotiations .

## Three new airlines poised for take-off

MUMBAI

The Indian aviation sector is set to expand soon as three new airlines are set to enter the commercial passenger aviation industry and dismantle the current duopoly in India's domestic skies. After Shankh Air, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has granted no objection certificates (NOCs) to two more aspiring airlines, including Alhind Air and FlyExpress.

The Indian aviation sector is set for expansion as three new airlines prepare to enter the commercial passenger market, challenging the current duopoly in domestic skies. After Shankh Air, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has granted no objection certificates (NOCs) to two more aspiring carriers, Alhind Air and FlyExpress. On Tuesday, Union Civil Avi-

ation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu announced that the ministry has granted NOCs to both airlines, while Shankh Air has received the NOC earlier and is expected to commence operations early in 2026. The announcement comes at a critical time for the industry as recent massive operational disruptions at IndiGo, which saw over 4,500 flight cancellations earlier this month, have intensified calls for greater competition and more robust consumer choice.

The three airlines will bring different regional focuses and business models to the table. The Noida-based Shankh Air's key focus will be on flying regionally from Uttar Pradesh, which will also be the first scheduled full-service airline from the state. It plans to link Lucknow, Varanasi and Gorakhpur to major metros.

## ISRO's Bahubali puts six-tonne sat in orbit

SRIHARIKOTA

In a historic Christmas Eve mission, ISRO on Wednesday successfully launched a 6,100 kg US communication satellite, the heaviest ever placed into orbit by an Indian launch vehicle, marking a major milestone for the country's space programme. The LVM3-M6 rocket, nicknamed 'Bahubali'

for its heavy-lift capability, lifted off at 8.55 am from the second launch pad at Sriharikota after a 24-hour countdown. After a flight of about 15 minutes, the BlueBird Block-2 satellite was successfully separated from the launch vehicle and injected into its intended orbit, triggering celebrations at the Mission Control Centre.

► Continued on | P8



ISRO launch vehicle LVM3-M6 lifts off from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, on Wednesday, carrying the BlueBird Block-2 communication satellite of AST SpaceMobile, US.

## Russia plans N-power plant on moon by 2036

MOSCOW

Russia plans to put a nuclear power plant on the moon in the next decade to supply its lunar space programme and a joint Russian-Chinese research station, as major powers rush to explore the earth's only natural satellite. Ever since Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to go into space in 1961, Russia has prided itself as a leading power in space exploration, but in recent decades it has

fallen behind the United States and increasingly China, Reuters reports. Russia's ambitions suffered a massive blow in August 2023 when its unmanned Luna-25 mission smashed into the surface of the moon while attempting to land, and Elon Musk has revolutionised the launch of space vehicles, once a Russian speciality. Russia's state space corporation, Roscosmos, said in a statement that it planned to build a lunar power plant by 2036.

## Shah to attend Abhyudaya MP Growth Summit today

BHOPAL/GWALIOR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will attend Abhyudaya Madhya Pradesh Growth Summit in Gwalior on Thursday, coinciding with the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. CM Mohan Yadav will also be present on the occasion.

During the programme, incentives will be offered to investors under the Industrial Promotion Policy, and land will be allocated for investment proposals exceeding Rs 2 lakh crore. Dedication and foundation stones will be laid for industrial projects worth more than Rs 10,000 crore. The summit theme, "Nivesh Se Rojgar - Atal San-kalp, Ujjawal Madhya Pradesh", aims to set a new direction for development in the state. Representatives of major industrial houses such as Godrej Industries, Gautam Solar, JK Tyre, Torrent Power and Dabur India are expected to attend. **Rewa farmers' convention:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah and CM Mohan Yadav will visit Rewa on Thursday to attend a farmers' convention.

## Co-op banks weakened by fake farmer loan waiver: Sarang

Rs 300 cr aid given, says min

BHOPAL

Cooperative and Sports Minister Vishwas Sarang said co-operative societies became financially weak due to fake farmer loan waivers carried out by former 15-month-old Congress government. To help cooperative banks recover, the BJP-led state government provided Rs 300 crore, distributed among six cooperative banks at an average of Rs 50 crore each. This doubled their loan distribution capacity to Rs 600

### FUTURE PLANS

**KHELO MP YOUTH GAMES 2025:** Scheduled from January 10-31; participants will get priority for state team selection.

**SPORTS TOURISM:** Initiatives underway to promote sports tourism and boost the state economy.



## Patwari slams Sarang

Congress State President Jitu Patwari criticised Minister Vishwas Sarang for calling farmers under the Rs 2 lakh loan waiver 'fake'. Patwari said 26 lakh farmers benefited under Kamal Nath's scheme and demanded that Sarang apologise to the farmers for his remarks in the Assembly.

## CAT 2025 result declared: 12 candidates score 100%ile

PERCENTILE	NO. OF STUDENTS
100	12
99.99	26 (2 from MP)
99.98	26 (2 from MP)

### INDORE STUDENT DEVAL MAHESHWARI

was among two state toppers with an outstanding 99.99 percentile. A large number of candidates from Indore also crossed the 99 percentile mark, raising hopes of calls from premier IIMs.



Deval Maheshwari



### Merry Christmas

Young girls celebrate at Red Church in Indore on Wednesday night

## US: Arunachal is 'core interest' for China

WASHINGTON, DC

A Pentagon report submitted to the US Congress has highlighted China's assertion that India's Arunachal Pradesh falls under Beijing's expanding list of "core interests." The report situates this claim within China's long-term national strategy of achieving the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by 2049, with 2049 also marked as a centenary milestone of the People's Republic. According to the document, China's leadership has widened the definition of its "core interests" to cover Taiwan, maritime disputes in the South China Sea, the Senkaku Islands, and Arunachal Pradesh—India's northeastern state. Chinese officials have portrayed the unification of contested territories, especially Taiwan, as a "natural requirement" for national reju-

venation, aligning territorial consolidation with national identity and strategic ambition. The assessment outlines three non-negotiable "core interests" central to China's rejuvenation: the continued control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), sustained economic development, and the defence and expansion of China's territorial and sovereignty claims. The report stresses that the CCP is highly sensitive to perceived threats to its rule, including domestic criticism or external narratives that challenge its legitimacy. Unfriendly political voices in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Tibet, and Taiwan's leadership are labelled by Beijing as "separatist elements" backed by "external forces," viewed as unacceptable risks to party authority.

## NGT halts tree felling for 10-lane project till Jan 8

BHOPAL

National Green Tribunal (NGT), Central Zone Bench, has ordered an immediate stay on tree felling for the proposed 10-lane widening of Ayodhya Bypass Road in Bhopal until the next hearing on January 8, 2026. Order came during a special hearing held on Wednesday.

The bench comprising Justice Pushpa Satyanarayana and Expert Member Sudhir Kumar Chaturvedi heard the matter. Project involves widening a 16-km stretch from Asaram Tiraaha to Ratnagiri Tiraaha, which may require felling 8,000-12,000 trees. Over 1,500 trees have already been cut by NHAI.

BRASILIA/NEW DELHI

## Lula likely to visit India

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva may visit India end-January or early-February 2026 to boost ties in trade, investment and defence.

## Ladakh admin counters Wangchuk wife

**New Delhi:** Refuting allegations made by activist Sonam Wangchuk's wife against.

## Tea, oath & an assassination in Iran: Nitin Gadkari recalls

MUMBAI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has offered a chilling, almost cinematic account of how he brushed past one of the Middle East's most audacious assassinations—hours before it happened. Speaking at a book launch "My Idea of Nation First: Redefining Unalloyed Nationalism" by Uday Mahurkar on Wednesday in New Delhi, Gadkari revealed that he had crossed paths with Hamas political

chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, shortly before Haniyeh was killed inside what was supposed to be one of Iran's most secure military facilities. Gadkari said his presence in Iran was at the behest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who asked him to represent India at the swearing-in ceremony of Iran's newly elected President Masoud Pezeshkian. The trip, intended to be a routine diplomatic engagement, took a dramatic turn even before the formalities



Gadkari & Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh

gathered informally over tea and coffee. Amid presidents, prime ministers and ministers, one figure stood out—not because he led a nation, but because he led a cause. That man was Haniyeh.

### Nothing seemed amiss during the swearing-in. Hours later, atmosphere changed abruptly

gathered informally over tea and coffee. Amid presidents, prime ministers and ministers, one figure stood out—not because he led a nation, but because he led a cause. That man was Haniyeh.

## RAINING RUNS

The first day of the 2025-26 Vijay Hazare Trophy saw records falling like nine pins as swashbuckling batsmen went on a run riot on Wednesday.

### VIRAT KOHLI

Playing for Delhi against Andhra, Kohli (131) scored 58th List-A ton to pip Sachin Tendulkar as the fastest player to reach **16,000 runs** in the format. He took 330 innings against Tendulkar's 391.

### VAIBHAV SURYAVANSHI

With a massive 190, against Arunachal, the 14-year-old Bihar sensation became the **youngest List-A centurion** (off 36 balls) and smashed AB de Villiers' 64-ball record to reach 150 in 59 deliveries.

### ROHIT SHARMA

The Mumbai star smashed 155 against Sikkim to hit his ninth **150+** score in the format and equal David Warner's record.

### ISHAN KISHAN

The Jharkhand skipper (125) narrowly lost the record to Gani after hitting a **100 in 33 balls** against Karnataka.

### SAKIBUL GANI

The Bihar captain (128 not out) hit the **fastest List-A century** by an Indian, reaching the three-figure mark in 32 balls.

## Brahmanad Kala Mahotsav Competition to be Organized under 'Chalo Man Ganga Yamuna Teer' Program; Winners to Receive Attractive Prizes

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Prayagraj.** Where the continuous streams of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers narrate the eternal story of Indian consciousness, the Magh Mela brings that consciousness to life through music, spiritual practice, and traditions. In the pristine morning hours at the confluence of the rivers, when the first waves of musical notes rise, the entire atmosphere transforms into music itself. With the objective of realizing this cultural experience, the North Central Zone Cultural Centre (NCZCC), Ministry of Culture, Government of India, is organizing the Brahmanad Kala Mahotsav competition under the 'Chalo Man Ganga Yamuna

Teer' program on the occasion of Magh Mela 2026. The Brahmanad Kala Mahotsav competition will include competitions in disciplines such as classical singing, classical dance, folk dance, folk songs, chanting, photography, rangoli, and painting. The minimum age for participants in the competition is 8 years. Winning participants will be awarded attractive prizes. Centre Director Sudesh Sharma informed that the competitions will be held from January 4, 2026. Registration is mandatory for artists interested in participating in the program through the prescribed Google form.

This Google form will be available on the official website of the North Central

Zone Cultural Centre and on the Centre's Facebook page. For more information, interested participants can contact mobile number 9306460376. The last date is December 28, 2025. Birha Danga - In addition, a Birha Danga (folk singing competition) will also be organized from January 4 to January 20, 2026, as part of Magh Mela 2026. Only artists from Prayagraj will be eligible to apply. Application forms can be obtained from the Centre's office and its Facebook page, and are also available on the Centre's website. The last date for application for the Birha Danga is December 31, 2025. The parties will be invited only after the center receives the applications.

## Meja Urja Nigam Private Limited Earns Recognition at PRSI Awards 2025



**Meja.**

Meja Urja Nigam Private Limited (MUNPL) achieved a significant milestone at the 47th All India PRSI – Public Relations Conference Awards 2025, held in Dehradun, by securing the Second Award in the E-Newsletter category and the Third Award in the "Best Skill Development Programme by PSUs" category. The award was formally handed over to Shri Aresh Kumar Chattopadhyay, CEO,

MUNPL, at the company's Meja premises by Shri Vivek Chandra, Head of HR, along with Shri Ajay Singh, DGM (HR). The E-Newsletter award was conferred in recognition of MUNPL Meja's monthly magazine, which effectively showcases the organization's activities, initiatives, and achievements. The Skill Development Programme award acknowledged the impactful work undertaken by MUNPL Meja's CSR initiatives

through skill development programmes implemented in association with reputed institutes, including CRISP and CIPET. The awards were received on behalf of MUNPL Meja by Ms. Prakruti Mishra, Executive (Corporate Communication), during the prestigious ceremony. This recognition underscores MUNPL Meja's commitment to excellence in public relations, meaningful community engagement, and inclusive, sustainable development.

## Meritorious Students Receive Sweaters at Primary School Badosarai



**Barabanki:** A free sweater distribution programme for meritorious students was organised at Primary School Badosarai. Sub-Divisional Magistrate/Joint Magistrate Tejas K attended as the chief guest, while DIET mentor R.P. Yadav was present as the special guest. Abhishek Singh, district president of the Uttar Pradesh Primary Teachers' Association and a teacher at the school, said that every year sweaters are distributed to 50 outstanding students (10 from each class) selected on the basis of proficiency, regular attendance, sports, cultural activities and overall performance. During the programme, Tejas K appreciated the school academic standards and physical infrastructure, while R.P. Yadav praised the quality of teaching. On this occasion, village head Nisar Mehdi, headmaster Dharmraj, assistant teachers Pooja Gupta, Poonam Verma, Arfa Khatoon, Shabina Ibrahim, Sangeeta and Arshiya Khatoon along with students were present.

## Gonda Police Nab Long-Standing Wanted Fraudster with 15,000 Reward

**Gonda**

Under the guidance of the Superintendent of Police, Additional Superintendent of Police, and Circle Officer the Kotwali Dehat police successfully apprehended a long-pending wanted criminal with a reward of 15,000. During a special operation, on December 21, 2025 Jagdish Yadav (age 41), son of Jagram Yadav, resident of Naushera village, Rehra Bazar, Balrampur district and currently at Barnala station, Punjab was arrested. The accused had been evading arrest for nearly three years in connection with multiple cases of fraud and cheating. The accused is booked under FIR No. 506/2023, sections 419, 420, 467, 468 and 474 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Following the arrest, he was brought to the police station and later produced in court for further legal proceedings. Arrest Team: Sub-Inspector Prashant Shukla, Sub-Inspector Golu Tiwari, Head Constable Shailendra Rai, Kotwali Dehat Police, Gonda District.



## Udaipur Files Producer Honored in London Parliament, Bharat S. Shrinet Overwhelmed

**Deoria**

Bharat S. Shrinet, the producer of the film "Udaipur Files," which was released on the Hindi cinema screen, was honored with the Best Distinction Leadership Award in the British Parliament in London. This achievement for "Udaipur Files" has brought glory to Uttar Pradesh and Deoria district in the world of cinema and film enthusiasts have congratulated Bharat S. Shrinet and wished him a bright future. It is worth mentioning that Bharat S. Shrinet, son of the late Kameshwar Singh, a native of Labkani village in the Gauribazar area of Deoria



district, also participated in the Zee Media Global Innovation and Leadership Summit held in London. The award ceremony was graced by the presence of distinguished members of the UK Parliament, including Lord Raminder Ranger, Baroness Sandip Verma and Lord Krishna Kumar Sureshchandra Rawal, OBE. Notably, when Bharat S. Shrinet announced the pro-

duction of this film, based on the brutal murder of tailor Kanhaiya Lal Sahu in Udaipur (Rajasthan) in 2022, he received various threats to deter him from making the film. However, Shrinet, determined to achieve his goal, persevered and continued with the film production. The film was completed, but then a petition was filed to ban it. After a long legal battle, the Ministry of

Information and Broadcasting lifted the ban on the film. It was then released after receiving certification from the Central Board of Film Certification. The film was released and received overwhelming support and appreciation from the public. This reflects strong support for India leadership and enterprise-based development approach. Bharat S. Shrinet honoring with the Best Distinction Leadership Award in the British Parliament not only reflects his courageous steps and dedication to his goal but also serves as a strong slap in the face to the opponents who tried to prevent the film release.

## Electric Poles Obstruct Road Widening, Accident Risk Increases

**Barabanki:** Electric poles standing in the middle of the ongoing road widening work on the Suratganj–Hetmapur road have become a major obstacle to development. This road connects dozens of villages and carries heavy traffic daily, but due to the poles not being shifted, the road now appears less widened and more dangerous. According to locals, vehicles are frequently colliding with these poles, causing them to tilt or break. As a result, power lines are repeatedly damaged, leading to hours-long power outages. This is severely affecting household work, agriculture,



small businesses and children studies. **(Many Complaints, No Solution)** Villagers say they have repeatedly complained to the electricity department and the contractor, but no concrete steps have been taken to remove the poles. Linemen are exhausted fixing faults again and again, while the root problem remains unresolved.

**(Risk Increases at Night)**

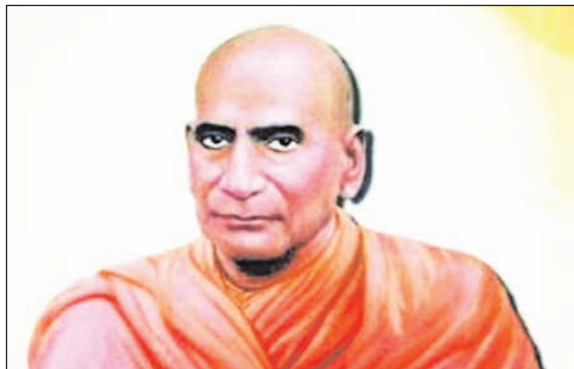
Residents warn that the poles standing in the middle of the road pose a serious accident risk, especially at night when visibility is low. If the project continues in this manner, the road will become more of an accident zone than a development project. **(Public Demand)** Local citizens have demanded that, to ensure safe and systematic completion of the road widening work, the electric poles be removed and shifted to appropriate locations at the earliest, so that development becomes a convenience rather than a Problem.

## In Hinduism, the path to Ghar Wapsi was opened by Shraddhanand through the Shuddhi movement- Aditya

**Ghazipur**

The 99th martyrdom day of Swami Shraddhanand, a prominent saint of the Arya Samaj, a nationalist thinker and a leading freedom fighter, was celebrated in the auditorium of Dayanand Anglo Vedic (DAV) Inter College the oldest school in the district and a nurturer of Indian culture.

Addressing the gathering, the school manager and district head of the Arya Up-Pratinidhi Sabha Ghazipur, Aditya Prakash Arya said that Swami Shraddhanand was a miraculous and inspiring personality of the twentieth century. He was a sacrificing man who dedicated everything to the country and religion. In 1902, he established Gurukul Kangri for the propagation of Vedic education. He was the most popular leader of his time. He was the uncrowned king of Delhi. He donated all his property for the service of the country and religion. In 1919 he led a procession against the British



draconian law, the "Rowlatt Act," which was called the act without a lawyer or argument. Even the British bayonets could not stop it. At the request of the Muslim community, he addressed a gathering at the Jama Masjid. He also addressed a gathering at the Golden Temple. He was a leading figure in communal harmony. On December 23, 1926 while he was ill at his residence in Delhi, a fanatical Muslim, Abdul Rashid, shot and killed him. Dr. Santosh Kumar Tiwari said that Swami Shraddhanand was a great saint of the Arya Samaj and a leading figure among patriotic ascetics.

His life was dedicated to education, independence, and the propagation of Vedic religion. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar called him "the greatest messiah of the Dalits." Mahatma Gandhi considered him like his elder brother. He gave India the idea of Lok Adalats (people courts). On this occasion, a film based on Swami Shraddhanand, "Aavahan," was also shown to the students. Following this, a general knowledge competition related to Swami Shraddhanand life was held. All the lecturers, teachers and staff members of the school were present on this occasion.

## 10th Meeting of Banke Bihari Temple High-Powered Management Committee Held

**Mathura**

The 10th meeting of the Banke Bihari Temple High-Powered Management Committee was held on Wednesday at the auditorium of Laxman Shaheed Smarak Bhawan in Vrindavan. The meeting was chaired by former Allahabad High Court Judge Ashok Kumar. Key issues related to the management of the temple and its surrounding areas were discussed in detail. Among the agenda items was a proposal to utilize Lalita Kund, located in Nidhivan Raj, for rain-water harvesting. The committee also deliberated on obtaining a detailed report from IIT Roorkee concerning various aspects of temple management. Arrangements for the New Year, in view of the expected surge in the number of devotees visiting the Banke Bihari Temple, were also discussed. A progress report present-



ed by the Assistant Divisional Officer (Administration) regarding the regulation of e-rickshaw operations in the temple area was reviewed. The committee further discussed the issue of non-compliance by temple servitors with the previously issued darshan schedule and emphasized the need to ensure smooth and disciplined arrangements. A comprehensive plan for live streaming of temple proceedings through authorized media agencies was also deliberated. The meeting also considered options to be offered to property owners whose privately owned structures may be affected by develop-

ment works around the temple, particularly in cases where relocation may occur without the owners' consent. The meeting was attended by former District and Sessions Judge Mukesh Mishra, District and Sessions Judge (Mathura) Vikas Kumar, Civil Judge (Junior Division) Shipra Dubey, District Magistrate and Member Secretary Chandra Prakash Singh, and Municipal Commissioner of Mathura-Vrindavan Municipal Corporation Jag Pravech. Representatives of the Rajbhog and Shayanbhog Goswami groups were also present.

## Three Arrested for Cruelly Transporting Animals in Max Pickup, 29 Goats Alive, 2 Dead Recovered

**Mathura**

Raya police have arrested three individuals for illegally and cruelly transporting animals in a Max pickup vehicle. Authorities recovered 29 live goats and two dead goats



from the vehicle. The accused have been booked under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and legal action is underway. According to Raya police, on December 23, based on a tip-off, a Max pickup (registration UP85 ET 5311) was stopped for checking near the Raya cut on the Yamuna Expressway, Bareilly Highway. The animals were being transported in an extremely inhumane manner. Armaan, son of Isfaq, resident of Gram Jawar, Iglas, Aligarh and Dilshad, son of Anwar resident of Dig Gate, Govindnagar Mathura were apprehended at the scene. A case (FIR No. 0482/2025) under Section 11(1)(g) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has been registered at Raya police station. During interrogation, another accused was identified, and a team was formed to trace him. On December 24, Pappu son of Hameed Khan, resident of Jangalgarhi Miyan Ki Sarai, Delhi Gate, Aligarh was arrested near the Bareilly Highway bridge beyond Koel Phatak. Police sources revealed that Pappu has a prior criminal record with several cases registered under serious sections at multiple police stations. The recovered animals have been shifted to a safe location. The operation was carried out under the supervision of Inspector Ravi Bhushan Sharma with the support of Sub-Inspectors Mahendra Singh Bhadouria, Ravindra Pal Singh and other police personnel. Police officials stated that strict action will continue against animal trafficking and cruelty and such offenders will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

# 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.

## 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 Bareilly) 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, Shyam Lal Saroj, extended his greetings and gratitude to all those present. Also present on the occasion were Apna Dal (S) District Gangapur in-charge Bhanu Pratap Patel, Soraon Assembly President Sushil Patel, Jitendra Saroj, Rajendra Bahadur Singh, Monu Bhartiya, Chedilal Yadav, Satish Tiwari, Nanhe Lal Sahu, Shiv Lal Patel, Madhavrao Patel, Ram Kailash Pal, Satnu Nanku Bhartiya, Radheshyam, Radheshyam Maurya, Sajjan Yadav, and a large number of women, men, and other dignitaries.

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

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Prayagraj :** The Closing Ceremony of the Free Self-Defence Camp, organised by Rotary Allahabad Midtown in association with Red Belt Academy, was successfully held on Wednesday, 24th December at Mahila Seva Sadan Inter College. The programme concluded on a high and inspiring note with a Self-Defence Competition, showcasing the confidence, courage, and skills developed by more than 100 girl students during the course of the camp. The competition



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-

ering young minds with confidence, safety, and self-reliance through such meaningful initiatives. The event was attended by School Trustee Purvika Agarwal, the Principal, and teachers of the school. The successful organisation of the programme was supported by Mr. Rizvi, Angel Sonkar, Archit Divyashy Yadav, Snigdha Gupta, and Anjali Kesarwani from Red Belt Academy. The ceremony concluded with a vote of thanks and a shared commitment to continue promoting safety awareness and self-defence training for young girls in the community.

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**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 Kumari, 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.

## Magh Mela: A Festival of Service and Devotion; DM Bakes Rotis at Satua Baba Ashram Community Kitchen

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Prayagraj:** The District Magistrate, who arrived at Tapasvi Nagar in Khak Chowk of the Magh Mela area, lent a hand in the community kitchen serving the saints. On Wednesday, the DM, Magh Mela Officer, and Municipal Commissioner toured the Mela area. During the inspection, the officials reached the camp of Mahamandaleswar Gopal Das Maharaj in Tapasvi Nagar, located on the southern side of Mahavir Marg in Sector-4. They sat down with Jagadguru



Santosh Das 'Satua Baba', the head of the Khak Chowk Management Committee, and helped bake rotis (flatbreads). The DM said that the Magh Mela is not only a festival of faith but also a vibrant symbol of service, devotion, and social harmony. Additional Mela

Officer Hears Grievances of 200 Sadhus and Saints. The Additional Mela Officer held a public hearing on Wednesday regarding land allocation and facilities related to the Magh Mela. It was claimed that 200 cases were resolved during this hearing. Additional Mela Officer Dayanand Prasad said that some plots of land had become available in the Arail area, and these have been started to be allocated to new organizations on a priority basis. Efforts are being made to expedite the settlement process.

## Priyanka Singh Wins Bahraich Title, Brings Pride to District

**Bahraich:** Under the guidance of Soni Srivastava, director of Metro Academy, Bahraich, Priyanka Singh won the prestigious Bahraich competition, bringing pride to the district. Priyanka Singh is not only a skilled homemaker but also a dedicated school teacher and successfully runs her own beauty parlour, Priyanka Makeover. Her confidence, personality and talent were highly appreciated during the competition.

## Police apprehend three accused who kidnapped a man and demanded a ransom of one lakh

**Tharwai**

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 Pratapgarh 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 Datadent 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 Parsadih, 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.

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

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Prayagraj.** Under the National Innovation Campaign, a grand educational program based on science, mathematics, and technology was organized today, December 24, 2025,



at the Block Education Office, CPI, in the Prayagraj city area. The program was inaugurated by the chief guest, the District Basic Education Officer, with the lighting of the lamp and garlanding of the idol of Goddess Saraswati. On this occasion, the chief guest, District Basic Education Officer Mr. Anil Kumar, was respectfully welcomed with a bouquet of flowers. Following this, Block Education Officer Mrs. Pratibha Singh delivered the welcome address and outlined the program. DIET lecturer Mrs. Vartika was also present on this occasion. All the winning and participating children were given science kits, stationery, certificates, and mementos by the chief guest. In his address, the District Basic Education Officer said that it is essential to think about daily activities from a scientific perspective, which broadens, strengthens, and makes children's thinking more logical. He also said that science and mathematics give a new direction to children's thinking. Children should develop an understanding of what they want to do, why they want to do it, and how they will accomplish it. When children think in this way, the path to innovation and success is paved. The program was successfully and effectively conducted by Mrs. Anuragini Singh. A total of 73 students from 28 schools in the city area enthusiastically participated in this competition. The competition was held in two phases, in which the top three performing children were given science kits, certificates, mementos, and stationery. All the remaining participating children were also encouraged with certificates and stationery. The program was attended by the Science Subject ARP from Bahadurpur and the City Area ARP, Mr. Manoj Kumar. The competition was conducted with the cooperation of the supporting teachers. A very attractive and creative rangoli based on the science theme was created by the city's rangoli team, which was the center of attraction for all those present.

## Christmas: A Festival of Returning to Humanity

**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



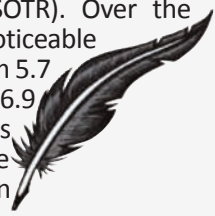
are empty. Living our lives online, we have begun to neglect real life—the person sitting next to us, the needy neighbor, the elderly, and the children. It is amidst this human brokenness that the message of Christmas speaks to us. Jesus was born in simplicity and vulnerability, and his arrival became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

gious boundaries today, reminding us that no one is neglected. Christmas teaches us that a compassionate society is built not on speed or success, but on care and connection. Experience shows that compassion begins not with grand gestures, but with small acts of humanity—listening attentively, forgiving unconditionally, and sharing joyfully. Such simple acts mend relationships and restore trust. In a diverse society, the values of Christmas—peace, goodwill, generosity, and service—are for everyone. This Christmas, if we can offer the gift of our full and compassionate presence, we can create a more humane and connected society.

## 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 macro-economic 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.



## 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 Tehelka, 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 eader 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.

### Why China Blocks the Dalai Lama's Sri Lanka Visit

China has been blocking His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visits to Sri Lanka. Recently, a renowned Sri Lankan Buddhist monk revealed this in a media interview. When asked about China's view on the Dalai Lama, the most venerable Dr. W a s k u d u w e Mahindawansa said, "We respect him and invited him to Sri Lanka, but China did not like that. China pressed against our government as well, we don't like that. He is a Buddhist leader, he has freedom, and we have the freedom to invite." This incident wasn't an exception; China has been blocking His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visits to Sri Lanka since 2015. In fact, China has never shied away from expressing its displeas-

ure whenever the Dalai Lama moves from one place to another or meets any person of repute. For China, the Dalai Lama, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, is a 'separatist'. China has even called him 'wolf in monk's robes'. Why does a benevolent exiled leader agitate an aspiring superpower so much? The answer lies in the complex history of Tibet and the Chinese subjugation of the same over the last 70 years Tibet lies in the confluence of Central, South and East Asia. It has a recorded history dating back to 602 AD when Namri Songsten became the first king of Tibet, uniting the central Tibetan states. There are records of conflict between China and Tibet, which was ended by the China-

Tibet Peace Treaty 821 AD. The treaty famously mentions, "Tibetans shall be happy in Tibet, and Chinese shall be happy in China." After more than 700 years, China and Tibet both sustained subsequent Mongol invasions. In the latter half of the 16th century, Altan Khan, the Mongol ruler, gave the title of Dalai Lama to Sonam Gyatso, leader of the Gelugpa school of Buddhism. In return, the Dalai Lama decreed that Altan Khan be reincarnated as Kublai Khan, which gave legitimacy to his rule. This event marks the founding of modern Tibet. For the next two hundred years Chinese tried to take hold of Tibet but could not succeed, and their influence declined in the first half of the 20th century.

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

"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 proping 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.

## 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 Sanatana

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.

## 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 Chandradas. 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 'ajataashtr' (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

During the winter session of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, the Chief Minister, while replying to the debate on the supplementary budget, said that maintaining law and order and ensuring public safety remain the government's top priorities. He stated that the state has moved away from an era marked by frequent curfews and disturbances, and that administrative control and policing reforms have strengthened governance.

Addressing members of the House, the CM said the government's focus has been on establishing the rule of law, creating a sense of security for citizens, and improving the state's image at the national level. He claimed that consistent enforcement and coordinated action by the police and administration have helped prevent large-scale unrest in

**"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 indi-

vidual 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.

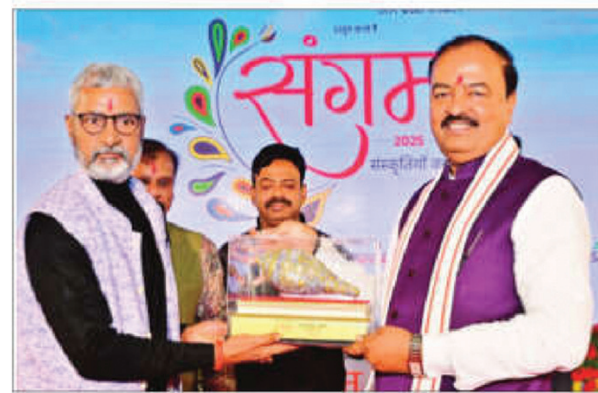
Responding to criticism from the opposition, the CM compared the present situation with previous administrations, alleging that earlier governments failed to control crime and instability. He said the current government has prioritised institutional reforms, better training for police personnel and stricter 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

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya on Tuesday said that Vande Mataram was relevant in the past, remains relevant in the present, and will continue to be relevant in the future. He was speaking as the chief guest at the "Sangam: Mahakumbh of Cultures" programme organised jointly by the Department of Culture and Dainik Amar Ujala at the Gomti riverfront in Lucknow.

Maurya appreciated the event, stating that it reflected

**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

Amid the ongoing winter session of the Uttar Pradesh legislature, a closed-door meeting of around 45-50 Brahmin MLAs has drawn political attention in the state. The gathering was held on Tuesday evening at the Lucknow residence of Kushinagar BJP MLA P.N. Pathak, reportedly under the pretext of a family function.

Legislators from eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bundelkhand attended the meeting, which was described by participants as a "sahbhaj" (community meal). Sources said the discussions focused on concerns that Brahmin leaders and legislators were not receiving adequate attention within the party organisation and government decision-

**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

The political row over the Aravalli mountain range intensified on Tuesday after the Congress installed hoardings outside its state headquarters in Lucknow, directly targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi over alleged environmental clearances linked to the Adani Group.

The hoardings display a photograph of Prime Minister Modi with industrialist Gautam Adani, alongside visuals of bulldozers cutting through hills and trees. Prominent slogans read, "One tree in mother's name, the entire forest in Adani's name" and "Votes were taken by showing one tree, forests were handed over to Adani." Another line warns, "Save

**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

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Rashtra Prerna Sthal in Lucknow on December 25. The site has been developed under the Basant Kunj scheme and includes 65-foot-tall bronze statues of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Syama Prasad Mukherjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, along with a dedicated museum showcasing their lives and contributions.

The programme is expected

**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.

## 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

**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.

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

LUCKNOW

Lucknow Bioscope is set to host "Panno ke Bheetar," a specialized book reading session featuring the work Paandaan by Mujtaba Khan. Scheduled for December 26, 2025, at 5 PM, the event will take place at their venue on J.C. Bose Marg in Kaiser Bagh. The narrative of Paandaan delves into the intricate social fabric, linguistic nuances, and traditions of old Lucknow through the lens of Mumtaz Begum, whose life mirrors the grace and resilience associated with her titular paandaan.

Author Mujtaba Khan, a Rampur native and curator of the Urdu-centric Instagram page 'Sabr Se', will discuss the preservation of Urdu culture.

## 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 inaugura

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

**Court seeks over Rahul Gandhi's "Fighting the Indian State" remark**

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.

**initiative**

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

LUCKNOW

The central government's National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI) Yojana is emerging as a key support mechanism for women-led start-ups in Uttar Pradesh, contributing to the expansion of entrepreneurship across the state, including smaller cities and towns.

Launched in 2016 by the Department of Science and Technology, the NIDHI Yojana focuses on providing financial, technical and institutional sup-

port to early-stage science and technology-based start-ups. The scheme aims to strengthen innovation-driven enterprises by assisting them during their initial and most vulnerable phases. According to official data, a total of 714 women-led start-ups across India have received assistance under the NIDHI framework. Of these, 25 start-ups are based in Uttar Pradesh, indicating the state's growing participation in the national innovation ecosystem. Year-wise figures show a steady rise in support, with 23 women-led start-ups assisted in 2017-18, 152 in 2023-24, 140 in



2024-25 and 84 in 2025-26.

In Uttar Pradesh, the impact of the scheme is supported by the establishment of Technology Business Incubators (TBIs) and Inclusive Technology Business Incubators (ITBIs). Seven such incubators are currently operational in the state, providing

**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.

## VP urges youth to embrace sports

AGRA

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.



## 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 Bengali 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 Banerjee and Kunal Verma

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."



## Throwback Wednesday

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

Bollywood superstar 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 Puniabi singer AP Dhillon

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 @beingalsalmankhan

@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."

## Briefs

## PIO woman murdered

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

In a significant change to the H-1B visa programme, the Trump administration is replacing the random lottery system that selected visa beneficiaries with a process that will prioritise allocation of visas to higher-skilled and higher-paid individuals.

The new guidance is the latest amid an intensifying crack-down by the Trump administration on immigration, both legal and illegal, as well as the H-1B visas, used by corporations in the US to hire foreign talent. Indian professionals are the largest cohort of H-1B visa holders in the US.

Department of Homeland Security said it is amending regulations governing the H-1B work visa selection process to prioritise the allocation of visas to higher-skilled and higher-paid individuals to

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 blasphemy 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 flyover at Mogbazar in Dhaka. The explosive device was thrown from the flyover 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 economics separate from political statements.

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

LONDON

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 peerages earlier this month, formally appointed by King Charles III to the Upper House of the British Parliament.

"Professor Geeta Nargund



From left: Geeta Nargund, Uday Nagaraju, Neena Gill and Shama Tatler

is a women's health expert, academic, founder, diversity champion and a campaigner for gender equality," reads her official citation from the UK PMO.

Uday Nagaraju has been a Labour Party adviser and technology consultant and has been elevated to a peerage for his "strong commitment to AI for societal good".

Neena Gill, awarded a CBE honour for services to the community, was born in Ludhiana and moved to the UK aged 10.

As an MEP pre-Brexit, she is credited with steering various major pieces of legislation as a rapporteur in the

## US and Ukraine reach consensus on key issues

## Peace plan yet to address territorial disputes

KYIV

The US and Ukraine have reached a consensus on several critical issues aimed at bringing an end to the nearly four-year conflict, but sensitive issues around territorial control in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, along with the management of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, remain unresolved, Ukraine's president said.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke as the US showed the 20-point plan, hammered out after marathon talks in Florida in recent days, to Russian negotiators. He briefed journalists on each point of the plan on Tuesday. His comments were embargoed until Wednesday morning. The draft proposal, which reflects Ukraine's wishes, intertwines political and com-

## 2 COPS DIE IN MOSCOW BLAST

Three people, including two police officers, were killed in a bomb blast in Russia on Wednesday near the spot where a high-ranking general was killed days before. The blast happened after two cops spotted a suspicious individual near a police car on Yeletskaia Street. When they approached the suspect, an explosive device was detonated. The two police officers succumbed, along with an individual standing nearby. The blast took place close to the location where a Russian general was killed in Moscow.

mercial interests to safeguard security while boosting economic potential.

At the heart of the negotiations lies the territorial dispute concerning Donetsk and Luhansk, known as the Donbas. This is "the most difficult point", Zelenskyy said. He said the matters will be discussed at the leaders' level.

To facilitate compromise, the US has proposed transforming these areas into free economic zones. Ukraine

insists any arrangement must be contingent upon a referendum, allowing the Ukrainian people to determine their own fate. Ukraine is demanding the demilitarisation of the area and the presence of an international force to ensure stability, he said. "We did not reach a consensus with the American side on the territory of the Donetsk region and on the ZNPP," Zelenskyy said, referring to the power plant in Zaporizhzhia.

## Border patrol nabs 30 'illegal' Indians

NEW YORK

US border patrol agents have arrested 30 Indian nationals, living illegally in America, operating semitrucks with commercial driver's licences.

Border Patrol agents in California arrested 49 illegal immigrants with commercial driver's licences during vehicle stops at immigration checkpoints and in interagency operations, US Customs and Border Protection said.

Between Nov 23 and Dec 12, agents arrested 42 illegal individuals operating semitrucks with commercial driver's licences on interstate or traversing immigration checkpoints. Of the arrestees, 30 were from India, 2 from El Salvador, and the remainder were from China, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Russia, Somalia, Turkey and Ukraine. California issued 31 of the commercial driver's licences; 8 licences were issued by

## ICE PLANS TO HOLD 80,000 IMMIGRANTS IN WAREHOUSES

The Trump administration aims to build 7 large-scale holding centres to speed up deportations, internal ICE documents show. The Trump administration is seeking contractors to help it overhaul the US's immigrant detention system in a plan that includes renovating industrial warehouses to hold 80,000+ immigrant detainees at a time. 'The Washington Post' reported.

Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Maryland, Minnesota, NJ, NY, Pennsylvania, and Washington. Also, immigrant truckers sued California's Dept of Motor Vehicles on Tuesday, alleging the state violated workers' rights.

## IMRAN, WIFE'S INTERIM BAIL EXTENDED

ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani court has extended the interim bail of former premier Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the May 9 cases and five other matters.

The court also directed the 73-year-old former premier should appear at the next hearing either in person or through video link. Additional District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka heard the pre-arrest bail applications on Tuesday, where advocate Shamsa Kayani appeared on behalf of Khan and Bibi, Dawn reported.

Consequently, the court extended the interim bail and adjourned the hearing till January 27, directing that the PTI founder's appearance be ensured on the next date.

## SISTERS PROTEST NEAR ADIALA JAIL

Imran's sisters Aleema Khan, Noreen Khan Niazi and Uzma Khan held a sit-in near Rawalpindi's Factory Naka on Tuesday, after they were denied permission to meet the incarcerated their brother in Adiala jail, the 'Express Tribune' reported.

The protest, which began at 3.30 pm, ended on Tuesday night.

## 'PREPARATIONS ON FOR STREET MOVEMENT'

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CM Sohail Afridi said preparations have begun to initiate a street movement across the province with the sole aim of getting jailed former prime minister Imran Khan released.

PTI founder, has been in jail since August 2023, facing multiple corruption cases.

## EU warns of action as US bars 5 Europeans accused of censorship

BRUSSELS

The EU's executive on Wednesday warned it would take action against any "unjustified measures" after the US State Dept barred five Europeans it accuses of pressuring US technology firms to censor or suppress American viewpoints.

The Europeans were characterised by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio as "radical" activists and "weaponised" nongovernmental organisations. They include the former EU commissioner responsible for supervising social media rules, Thierry Breton.

Breton, a businessman and former French finance minister, clashed last year on social media with tech billionaire Elon Musk over broadcasting an online interview with Trump in the months leading up to the US election.

The European Commission, the EU's powerful executive branch, which supervises tech regulation in

The Europeans were characterised by US Secy of State Marco Rubio as "radical" activists and "weaponised" nongovernmental organisations.

Europe, said that it "strongly condemns the US decision to impose travel restrictions" and that it has requested clarification about the move. French President Emmanuel Macron also condemned it.

"If needed, we will respond swiftly and decisively to defend our regulatory autonomy against unjustified measures," the commission said, without elaborating.

Rubio wrote on X that "for far too long, ideologues in Europe have led organised efforts to coerce American platforms to punish American viewpoints they oppose."

"The Trump Administration will no longer tolerate these egregious acts of extra-territorial censorship," he posted. The European Comm-

ission countered that "the EU is an open, rules-based single market, with the sovereign right to regulate economic activity in line with our democratic values and international commitments."

"Our digital rules ensure a safe, fair, and level playing field for all companies, applied fairly and without discrimination," it said.

Macron said the visa restrictions "amount to intimidation and coercion aimed at undermining European digital sovereignty," he posted on X. Macron said the EU's digital rules were adopted by "a democratic and sovereign process" involving all member countries and the European Parliament.

The four others are: Imran Ahmed, chief executive of the Centre for Countering Digital Hate; Josephine Ballon and Anna-Lena von Hodenberg, leaders of HateAid, a German organisation; and Clare Melford, who runs the Global Disinformation Index.

## Libya's military chief, 7 others killed in plane crash in Turkiye

ANKARA

A private jet carrying Libya's military chief, four other officers and three crew members crashed on Tuesday after takeoff from Turkiye's capital, Ankara, killing everyone on board. Libyan officials said the cause of the crash was a technical malfunction on the plane.

The Libyan delegation was in Ankara for high-level defence talks aimed at boosting military cooperation between the two countries, Turkish officials said.

Libyan Prime Minister Abdul-Hamid Dbeibah confirmed the death of Gen Muhammad Ali Ahmad al-Haddad and the four officials, saying in a statement on Facebook the "tragic accident" took place as the delegation was returning home. The prime minister called it a "great loss" for Libya.



A first for aviation automation

## Aeroplane lands itself after in-flight emergency

An aeroplane has, for the first time, automatically landed itself after an in-flight emergency, according to the system's manufacturer, CNN reported.

Two people emerged unscathed from the Beechcraft Super King Air 200 after it stopped on the runway at Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport near Denver, according to video posted by emergency responders.

The twin-engine turboprop landed under the control of Garmin's Autoland system, which the company says is

now installed on about 1,700 airplanes. "This was the first use of Autoland from start-to-finish in an actual emergency," Garmin said in a statement.

The operator of the plane, charter company Buffalo River Aviation, says the Autoland system automatically engaged during a flight from Aspen with no passengers on board. "The aircraft experienced a rapid, uncommanded loss of pressurization" and the pilots put on their oxygen masks, said charter company CEO Chris Townsley in a statement.

## Syrian church marks Xmas, reaffirms faith

DWEIL'A (SYRIA)

At a church in Syria where a suicide attack killed 25 people in June, hundreds of worshippers gathered before Christmas to remember those they lost and reaffirm their faith.

With a small detail of security forces standing guard outside, members of Mar Elias Church held Mass on Tuesday evening and lit an image of a Christmas tree made of neon lights on the wall of the courtyard outside. The tree was



hung with pictures of those who were killed in the attack.

They include three men the congregation hails as heroes for tackling the bomber, potentially averting a much higher death toll in the June 22 attack. A man opened fire and then detonated an explosive vest inside the Greek Orthodox church in Dweil'a on the outskirts of Damascus as it was filled with people praying on a Sunday.

Before he detonated the vest, brothers Boutros and Gergis Bechara and another

congregant, Milad Haddad, tackled the shooter and pushed him out of the centre of the church, congregants said. "If it weren't for the three of them, maybe not one person would remain out of 400 people," said Imad Haddad, the brother of Milad Haddad, who attended Tuesday's Christmas tree lighting.

He hasn't decorated for Christmas or put up a tree at home, but gathering at the church was "a message of peace and love" and a message that "we are believers and we

are strong, and we are steadfast in spite of everything," he said. Thana al-Masoud, the widow of Boutros Bechara, recalled searching frantically for her husband after the explosion, but she never found him, alive or dead. His body had been ripped apart by the blast. "There's no holiday, neither this year nor next year nor the one after it," she said.

She takes comfort in the belief that her husband and the two other men who confronted the attacker are martyrs for their faith.

**TEEN TORNADO** | Suryavanshi-Gani carnage powers historic 574/6

# Bihar batting blitz shatters World Record

## RO-KO RECORD RAMPAGE

**V**irat Kohli and Rohit Sharma marked their much-awaited Vijay Hazare Trophy comeback with scintillating centuries, reasserting their ODI dominance and etching new records in the List-A record books.

**VIRAT'S CHASE MASTERCLASS**  
Scored 131 off 101 balls (14 fours, 3 sixes) to guide Delhi to a 4-wicket win over Andhra Pradesh.

**ROHIT'S JAIPUR JAUGGERNAUT**  
Unbeaten 155 off 94 balls\* (18 fours, 9 sixes) vs Sikkim. Mumbai chased 237 in 30.2 overs (won by 8 wickets). Joint-most 150+ scores in List-A (9) – tied with David Warner.

RANCHI

Bihar rewrote the global white-ball record books on Wednesday, unleashing an unprecedented batting storm to hammer a world-record 574/6 against Arunachal Pradesh in a Vijay Hazare Trophy Plate Group match — a knock-out blow that announced the state's arrival on the biggest domestic stage.

At the heart of the carnage was 14-year-old prodigy Vaibhav Suryavanshi, who played a once-in-a-generation knock, and skipper Sakibul Gani, who turned acceleration into annihilation.

**RECORD RAIN**

**574/6** – Highest team total in List A cricket (world record)  
**3 CENTURIES** – Suryavanshi, Gani, Loharuka  
**49 FOURS & 38 SIXES** – Boundary avalanche  
**68 BALLS** – Combined fastest hundreds by Bihar duo

**TEEN TORNADO**

Opening the innings, Vaibhav Suryavanshi (190 off 84 balls) ripped apart the bowling.

**VIRAT'S LIST-A MILESTONES**

16,000 runs – 2nd Indian after Tendulkar, 9th overall.  
58th List-A century – just 2 shy of Sachin's 60.

Fastest to 16k runs (330 inns vs Sachin's 391).  
Blasted 16 fours and 15 sixes. His century came off just 36 balls, making him the youngest centurion in List A history and setting the tone for the run massacre.

**CAPTAIN CARNAGE**

Skipper Sakibul Gani escalated the destruction with a ferocious 128 off 40 balls, reaching his hundred in 32 deliveries — the fastest List A century by an Indian, eclips-

Delhi's Virat Kohli plays a shot during the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2025-26 match against Andhra at BCCI Centre of Excellence Ground in Bengaluru on Wednesday PTI

ing Anmolpreet Singh's record. His innings featured 10 fours and 12 sixes, leaving the attack shell-shocked.

**TRIPLE-THREAT ASSAULT**

Wicketkeeper-batter Ayush Loharuka ensured

there was no respite, smashing 116 off 56 balls with 11 fours and eight sixes, as Bihar obliterated the pre-

vious List A team record of 506/2 (Tamil Nadu vs Arunachal Pradesh, 2022-23). The onslaught came after Bihar won the toss and chose to bat — a decision that turned historic within hours.



Mumbai's Rohit Sharma and Musheer Khan celebrate the wicket of Sikkim's Palzor Tamang during the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2025-26 match at Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Wednesday PTI

**YEAR-END ODI FORM**

**VIRAT IN 2025 ODIs:** 651 runs, avg 65.10, 3 tons.

**ROHIT IN 2025 ODIs:** 650 runs, avg 50.00, 2 tons.

Both topped India's ODI charts this year.

**BOUNCE-BACK BOY**

Suryavanshi's innings carried extra weight, coming just days after his failure in the U-19 Asia Cup final against Pakistan, marking a stunning domestic redemption.

## A WILD VHT WEDNESDAY

**413 chased! Kohli returns! Spinners debut!**

**Run-fests, spin webs and vintage brilliance set the Vijay Hazare Trophy alight on Wednesday, as Devdutt Padikkal, Uttar Pradesh's debutant spinners and a resurgent Virat Kohli delivered statement performances across Groups A, B and D — underlining the explosive depth and drama of India's premier domestic one-day competition**

**Padikkal's 147 tames Kishan's 125 in 413-run chase thriller**

**AHMEDABAD:** In a Vijay Hazare Trophy classic, Devdutt Padikkal's majestic 147 outshone Ishan Kishan's ballistic 125 as defending champions Karnataka chased down a mammoth 413, defeating Jharkhand by five wickets in a breathtaking Group A run-fest.

Kishan, celebrating his T20 World Cup recall, smashed 125 off just 39 balls (7 fours, 14 sixes), propelling Jharkhand to 412/9, with solid support from Virat Singh (88) and Kumar Kushagra (63).

Padikkal anchored Karnataka's reply with a sublime 147 off 118 balls (10 fours, 7 sixes), stitching a crucial 114-run stand with Mayank Agarwal (54 off 34). Finishers Abhinav Manohar (56\*) and Dhruv Prabhakar (40\*) sealed the chase, adding an unbeaten 88 off 41 balls.

**Brief Scores**

**JHARKHAND** - 412/9 lost to **KARNATAKA**: 413/5 in 47.3 overs by 5 wickets (15 balls to spare)

**GROUP B****UP skittle Hyderabad by 84 Runs**

**Rajkot:** A dominant batting display followed by a spin masterclass from debutants powered Uttar Pradesh to an emphatic 84-run victory over Hyderabad in their Group B opener.

UP's top order fired in unison as Abhishek Goswami (81), Aryan Juyal (80), Dhruv Jurel (80) and Rinku Singh (67) lifted the side to 324/5.

In reply, Hyderabad folded for 240, despite Tanmay Agarwal's 53, as UP's spin trio ran riot. Debutant Zeeshan Ansari starred with 4/31, while fellow debutant and Rs 14.2-crore CSK pick Prashant Veer grabbed 3/47.

**Brief Scores**

**UP** - 324/5 beat **HYDERABAD** - 240 all out by 84 runs

**GROUP B ROUND-UP**

**Bengal beat Vidarbha by 3 wickets** (Shorey 136, Easwaran 71)  
**Baroda beat Assam by 5 wickets** (Solanki 88\*)  
**J&K beat Chandigarh by 10 wickets** (Khajuria 129\*)

**GROUP D****Vintage Kohli 131 powers Delhi to thrilling win**

**Bengaluru:** Virat Kohli marked his return to the Vijay Hazare Trophy after 15 years with a vintage masterclass, smashing 131 off 101 balls to guide Delhi to a four-wicket win over Andhra Pradesh in a high-scoring Group D opener.

Earlier, pacer Simarjeet Singh (5/54) restricted Andhra to 298/8, despite Ricky Bhui's 122. Delhi chased down the target in just 37.4 overs, with strong support from Nitish Rana (77) and Yash Dhull Arya (74).

**Brief Scores**

**ANDHRA** - 298/8 lost to **DELHI** - 300/6 in 37.4 overs by 4 wickets

## Yash Dubey century fires MP to commanding 99-run win

**SOLID BATTING & CLINICAL BOWLING** | MP kickstarts VHT campaign with dominant all-round display

INDORE/AHMEDABAD

Madhya Pradesh began their Vijay Hazare Trophy (VHT) campaign emphatically, overpowering Rajasthan by 99 runs in their opening league match here on Tuesday, displaying clear

authority with both bat and ball.

Opting to bat first in the Elite Group A match played at Ahmedabad, Madhya Pradesh posted a competitive 287 for the loss of five wickets on the back of a masterful century by Yash Dubey (103). He was well-

supported by Harsh Gawli (35) and an unbroken 78-run stand between Shubham Sharma (42) and Saransh Jain (29), which provided a strong finish.

In reply, Rajasthan's chase never gained momentum. Despite a fighting 60 from MN Singh, they were

bundled out for 188 in 43.2 overs. MP's bowling unit delivered a disciplined performance, with Saransh Jain (3 wickets) leading the charge, ably supported by Aryan Pandey and Kumar Kartikeya with two scalps each.

This comprehensive vic-

tory sets a positive tone for Madhya Pradesh in the tournament. The batting line-up showcased depth, while the bowling attack demonstrated precision and control—a combination that will boost confidence as they advance in the competition.

**BRIEF SCORES**

**MADHYA PRADESH** - 287 for loss of five wickets in 50 overs (Yash Dubey 103 (132), Harsh Gawli 35, Venkatesh Iyer 34, Shubham Sharma 42 not out; Manav Suthar 2/54, Deepak Hooda 2/25) beat **RAJASTHAN** - 188 all out in 43.2 overs (Manender Singh 60, Ram Chouhan 20; Saransh Jain 3/37, Aryan Pandey 2/28, Kumar Kartikeya 2/43) by 99 runs

## Tilak breaks into Top 3 of ICC T20I Rankings

**India's young guns rise as Proteas series dominance rewards batter & spinner in charts**

NEW DELHI

Following India's emphatic 3-1 T20I series victory over South Africa, young batter Tilak Varma has achieved a significant career-high, rising to the third spot in the latest ICC Men's T20I Batting Rankings. Meanwhile, mystery spinner Varun Chakravarty has further solidified his supremacy at the top of the bowling charts.

Varma's brilliant 73 off 42 balls in the series decider at Ahmedabad propelled him past Sri Lanka's Pathum Nissanka. He now sits with 805 rating points, trailing only behind the top two ranked batters globally.

**VARUN - UN-CHALLENGED AT THE TOP**

The mystery spinner, named Player of the Series, strengthened his grip on the No. 1 bowling ranking with a rating of 804—a commanding 105-point lead over second-

placed Jacob Duffy. **Series Performance:** 10 wickets at 11.20 avg | **Best:** 4/—  
**Ranking Status:** Continues as world's top-ranked T20I bowler

**OTHER INDIAN MOVEMENTS**

**Jasprit Bumrah:** His economical spell of 2/17 in the final T20I saw him leap 10 spots to a joint 18th position. **Dewald Brevis:** The South African batter's quickfire 31 helped him break into the top 10 of the batting rankings.

**TILAK - SERIES & RANKING**  
**New ICC Ranking:** 3rd (805 points)  
**Series Performance:** 187 runs in 4 innings | **Avg:** 62.33 | **SR:** 131.69 | **2 fifties**  
**Key Knock:** 73 (42) in the Ahmedabad decider  
**Rise:** Jumped over Pathum Nissanka to enter top three

**WHAT THIS SIGNIFIES**

This dual climb highlights India's successful blend of youth and experience. While Chakravarty's consistent dominance reaffirms his status as a world-class T20 weapon, Tilak Varma's rapid ascent marks the arrival of a dependable, high-impact batter ready for global stages.



## SHAFALI'S SURGE

**RISE** | Young gun tops Mandhana, joins Mithali & Harman in elite POTM Club

VISAKHAPATNAM

Continuing her explosive form, Shafali Verma has stormed into an elite club of Indian women's cricket, securing her eighth Player of the Match award in T20Is to become the third-highest behind only legends Mithali Raj (12) and Harmanpreet Kaur

**BY NUMBERS: SHAFALI'S RISE**  
POTM Awards: 8 (in 92 T20Is)  
Ahead of: Smriti Mandhana  
Behind: Mithali Raj (12), Harmanpreet Kaur (11)

(11)—surpassing star opener

Smriti Mandhana in the process.

The 21-year-old dynamo achieved the milestone with a blazing 69 not out off 34 balls, studded with 11 fours and a six, powering India to a seven-wicket win over Sri Lanka in the second T20I and a 2-0 lead in the series.

**SHAFALI'S MINDSET**

Speaking after the match, Verma highlighted her adaptability: "The ball was holding a bit at the start, so I tried to play along the ground... Acceptance is everything; if you accept (your weaknesses), then only you become a better cricketer."

## 'GROVEL' GRIEF & 'BAUNA' APOLOGY

**TOUR TALK** | Bavuma opens up on South Africa's tense India tour

JOHANNESBURG

South African skipper Temba Bavuma has broken his silence on the verbal flashpoints that shadowed his team's recent tour of India, revealing apologies from Jasprit Bumrah and Rishabh Pant for a height-related slur, while admitting coach Shukri Conrad should have chosen his words more carefully.

**THE 'BAUNA' APOLOGY**

During the Kolkata Test, Bumrah and Pant referred to Bavuma as "Bauna" — a Hindi term referencing his short height. Bavuma wrote in his column: "Two senior players, Rishabh Pant and Jasprit Bumrah, came and apologised." He added: "What happens on the field, stays on the field but you don't forget what is said. You use it as fuel."

**CONRAD'S 'GROVEL' CONTROVERSY**

Coach Shukri Conrad had said before the Guwahati Test that South Africa wanted to "make India grovel" — a phrase carrying historical racial connotations linked to former England captain Tony Greig.

Bavuma acknowledged: "The first time I heard about it, it had that unsavoury taste to it... In hindsight, he could have chosen a better word."

Conrad later apologised publicly.

**TOUR IN PERSPECTIVE**

South Africa ended a 25-year wait to win a Test in India. Lost both ODI and T20I series.

Bavuma admitted: "There are scars that still kind of live there... you know how tough it's going to be."

**CAPTAIN'S TAKEAWAY**

Despite the verbal clashes, Bavuma emphasised moving forward without grudges, using on-field exchanges as motivation while appreciating the spirit of the game.

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 world-wide 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

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