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UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

Honour for Suryavanshi



NEW DELHI

Fourteen-year-old batting prodigy Vaibhav Suryavanshi, who has taken the cricket world by storm with his audacious stroke-play, was on Friday conferred with the prestigious Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar by President Droupadi Murmu here.

Seven-year-old chess prodigy Vaka Lakshmi Pragnika and swimming sensation Dhinidhi Desinghu were also among a host of children honoured for exceptional achievements in the fields of sports, bravery, social service and environment.

Just a few days ago, Suryavanshi slammed 190 runs off 84 deliveries, studded with 16 fours and 15 sixes, for Bihar against Arunachal Pradesh in a Vijay Hazare Trophy Plate group match in Ranchi.

RIPOSTE | MEA rejects allegations prevalent in Bangladesh that there was Indian involvement in the clashes. India also underlines elections have to be inclusive

Delhi flags false Dhaka version

NEW DELHI

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal on Friday declared Bangladesh's claims that there was Indian involvement in the ongoing clashes in the country were false. Speaking at a media briefing, Jaiswal said that New Delhi had already issued a number of statements regarding the anti-India rhetoric in the country.

"On the anti-India rhetoric, we have already issued a couple of statements. We have rejected the false narrative that has been projected in Bangladesh. You would also understand that the law and order and security situation and everything else that



happens in Bangladesh is the responsibility of the government of Bangladesh. To portray a narrative that goes in some other direction is false, and we reject that," he said. Jaiswal's response

comes as Bangladesh interim home minister Jahangir Alam Chowdhury indirectly alleged that there was an Indian hand behind the clashes.

H1B visa concerns: US aware of distress

NEW DELHI

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal responded to the concerns that Indian H1-B visa holders were facing. Speaking at a media briefing on Friday, he said that India was working with the US to alleviate the distress caused to Indians who were facing delays in the scheduling or rescheduling of US visa appointments.

"The government has received several representations from Indian nationals

who are facing delays following the scheduling and rescheduling of their visa appointments. We have flagged these issues to the US side both here in New Delhi and in Washington, D.C., and we hope these delays and disruptions will be addressed," said Jaiswal.

Jaiswal added that a recent announcement from the US issued on December 15 could provide some relief to Indian families in the near future.

PM promises more vigorous reforms

NEW DELHI

PM Narendra Modi on Friday said the government's reform trajectory will continue with greater vigour, reiterating its commitment to improving 'Ease of Living' for citizens. He also highlighted the supreme sacrifice of the Sahibzade, describing it as the ultimate expression of India's courage against religious fanaticism and terror.

Modi made the remarks while responding to a series of posts by the Centre showcasing its initiatives across sectors. "Ours is a Government committed to boosting 'Ease of Living' and this thread below gives examples of how we have worked in that direction. Our reform trajectory will continue with even more vigour in the coming times," he said.

The Centre, using hashtags #ReformInAction and #Good-Governance, said 2025 marked a shift in governance with a sharper focus on outcomes rather than complexity. Reforms were aimed at simplifying everyday interactions between citizens, businesses, and the state. The posts said simpler tax laws, faster dispute resolution, modern labour codes, and decriminalised compliance have reduced friction for individuals and enter-



PM Narendra Modi called on President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Friday.

prises, while promoting trust, predictability, and growth.

Direct benefits to taxpayers were highlighted, with incomes up to Rs 12 lakh now attracting zero tax. "This has allowed middle-class families to retain more of what they earn, giving them greater flexibility to spend, save and invest with confidence," the posts said. The Income Tax Act, 2025, has streamlined compliance and brought clarity, transparency, and fairness to the direct tax system. Higher investment and turnover limits helped MSMEs expand while retaining incentives, reduced compliance for firms up to Rs 100 crore, and encouraged innovation, growth, and easier access to finance.

2.89 cr names deleted from UP voter lists

LUCKNOW

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Uttar Pradesh has been completed, resulting in the deletion of nearly 2.89 crore names from the voter list, officials said on Thursday.

Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said that before the SIR exercise began, the state had a total of 15.44 crore registered voters. With the completion of submission and digitisation of enumeration forms under the first phase on December 26, the voter count has seen a sharp

drop. He said the draft electoral roll and the final figures would be released on December 31. According to official sources, a large number of deletions took place due to migration and verification-related reasons. Around 1.26 crore voters are reported to have permanently shifted out

of Uttar Pradesh. About 45.95 lakh voters were found to be deceased, while 23.32 lakh names were identified as duplicate entries. Nearly 84.20 lakh voters were marked as untraceable, and 9.37 lakh voters did not submit their enumeration forms. Officials said the extension

of the SIR timeline in the state led to the addition of around two lakh voters during the process. The Uttar Pradesh Election Commission had sought an extension of the SIR schedule from the Election Commission of India.

Under 16? No social media: Madras HC

MUMBAI

The Madras High Court has urged the Central government to consider enacting a law similar to Australia's recent legislation that bans children under 16 from using social media platforms, citing concerns over children's vulnerability to harmful online content, including pornography.

However, the Court refrained from issuing any major directions or guidelines, noting that the Supreme Court had last year made suggestions to the Centre and other stakeholders in a similar matter concerning the rights of child sexual abuse victims, Bar & Bench reports.

A Bench of Justices G. Jayachandran and K.K. Ramakrishnan observed while disposing of a petition filed over the easy



Union of India may explore possibility of passing legislation like Australia. Till such legislation is passed, the authorities concerned shall accelerate their awareness campaign more effectively, they shall take the message to the vulnerable group through all available medias. - Madras High Court

availability of pornographic material on the internet. The plea also sought directions to internet service providers (ISPs) to offer parental control

or a "parental window" service to users, Bar & Bench reports. Referring to the Australian law, under which social media companies must prevent

children under 16 from having accounts or face heavy fines, the Court said the Union government may explore the possibility of passing similar legislation in India. "Union of India may explore possibility of passing legislation like Australia. Till such legislation is passed, the authorities concerned shall accelerate their awareness campaign more effectively, they shall take the message to the vulnerable group through all available medias," the Court said.

It further expressed hope that the Commission for Protection of Child Rights, at both the State and Central levels, would draw up an action plan and implement it "in letter and spirit" to tackle the menace of child pornography.

Centre against GST cut on air purifiers

NEW DELHI

The Central government on Friday told the Delhi High Court that directing a reduction in goods and services tax (GST) on air purifiers without following the prescribed process could "open a Pandora's Box", leading to similar demands for tax exemptions in other cases.

A Division Bench of Justices Vikas Mahajan and Vinod Kumar was hearing a public interest litigation filed by advocate Kapil Madan, seeking directions to classify air purifiers as a 'medical device' and reduce the GST on them from 18% to 5%, Bar & Bench reports.

Additional Solicitor General N Venkataraman, appearing for the Centre, said the issue was being examined "at the highest level" but sought more time to file a detailed response.

"This will open a Pandora's Box. Parliamentary committee has recommended something to us. It will be considered. There is a process. We are not saying anything. We are not saying whether it will be done or not. Constitution issue is involved," the ASG told the court.

US strikes IS base in Nigeria

PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

The United States carried out a strike against Islamic State militants in northwest Nigeria at the request of Nigeria's government, President Donald Trump and the U.S. military said on Thursday, claiming the group had been targeting Christians in the region.

"Tonight, at my direction as Commander in Chief, the United States launched a powerful and deadly strike against ISIS Terrorist Scum in Northwest Nigeria, who have been targeting and viciously killing, primarily, innocent Christians, at levels not seen for many years, and even Centuries!" Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

The U.S. military's Africa

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Command said the strike was carried out in Sokoto state in coordination with Nigerian authorities and killed multiple ISIS militants, Reuters reports. Nigerian Foreign Minister Yusuf Maitama Tuggar told the British Broadcasting Corp the strike was a "joint operation"

targeting "terrorists", and it "has nothing to do with a particular religion".

Without naming ISIS specifically, Tuggar said the operation had been planned "for quite some time" and had used intelligence information provided by the Nigerian side. He did not rule out further strikes, adding that this depended on "decisions to be taken by the leadership of the two countries".

The strike comes after Trump in late October began warning that Christianity faces an "existential threat" in Nigeria and threatened to militarily intervene in the West African country over what he says is its failure to stop violence targeting Christian communities.



The US defence department posted a short video that appears to show a missile being launched from a military vessel.

DGCA submits its confidential report

INDIGO FIASCO

MUMBAI

The four-member committee appointed by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) submitted its investigation report to the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) on Friday. The report, which has been kept "confidential" details the root causes of the massive operational collapse that paralysed India's largest domestic carrier during the first week of December.

The panel, led by Joint Director General Sanjay K Bramhane, was granted an extension from its original December 20 deadline to process what officials described as "massive volumes of operational data" provided by IndiGo.

While the final report remains confidential, the investigation focused on three primary failure points including crew planning, regulatory compliance, and crisis communication.



The investigation centered on IndiGo's transition to the revised flight duty time limitations (FDTL) norms, which became mandatory on November 1, 2025. These rules increased mandatory weekly rest for pilots from 36 to 48 hours and capped night landings to reduce fatigue.

The Civil Aviation Ministry is expected to review the panel's findings over the weekend. Possible outcomes include heavy financial penalties, a permanent reduction in flight slots, or stricter oversight of the airline's crew management software.

CJI Kant pushes for mediation pathway

PANAJI

Friday called for a transition towards a "multi-door courthouse," envisioning courts as comprehensive centres for dispute resolution rather than just venues for trials.

Addressing the Bar Council of India's National Conference

and Symposium on Mediation in South Goa, he emphasised the need for a larger number of mediators at all levels, from district courts to the apex court. He said mediation, which can help reduce judicial pendency, is "not a sign of the law's weakness but its highest evolution."

MULTI-DOOR COURTHOUSE



MUMBAI

An unpublished novel about a 1960s housewife who secretly circulates erotic fiction through Tupperware parties has set off a fierce battle for television rights, highlighting a growing appetite among streamers and production companies for stories by female authors.

Wet Ink, a novel by the 33-year-old London-based author Abigail Avis, is not scheduled

Tupperware erotica

Unpublished novel sparks streaming gold rush

to be published until spring 2027. Yet industry insiders say it has already triggered a heated auction, with six major production companies vying for the rights, The Guardian reports.

Dubbed "Tupperware erotica" by those close to the deal, the novel has become the latest example of a broader trend: books by female writers attracting intense competition as producers hunt for bankable, globally marketable stories in an increasingly

A novel about a 1960s housewife who secretly circulates erotic fiction through Tupperware parties has set off a fierce battle for TV rights

crowded streaming landscape. The contest for the TV rights follows an earlier battle over the book's publishing rights,

which were ultimately secured by Hodder & Stoughton, owned by Hachette UK, for a six-figure sum. The publisher is now planning a global marketing blitz.

Set in 1960s London, Wet Ink follows Mitzy Barlow, a housewife and mother of two trapped in a loveless marriage and worn down by the monotony of domestic life. For more money, she hosts Tupperware parties, which were popular social events of the 1950s and 60s, selling plastic containers

to neighbourhood women.

Simultaneously, each night Mitzy starts writing sexual fantasies in a journal to cope with her dead-end marriage. As her confidence grows, under the pseudonym Queen B, she begins crafting her own stories. Soon, her Tupperware business doubles as a front for smuggling erotic writing to her customers, with the stories hidden inside the airtight containers.

Good Governance Day and Developed India - G-Ram-G: A Grand Program Organized

Prayagraj. Under the direction of the Central Bureau of Communication, Prayagraj, a grand and inspiring program on the theme of "Good Governance Day and VB-G-Ram-G" was successfully organized today, December 25, 2025, at the premises of Enlightenment Indian School, Sarai Pitha, Dhanupur, Handia, Prayagraj. This program was organized on the occasion of Good Governance Day. The chief guest of the program, Block Head Mrs. Jyoti Yadav, in her address, provided detailed and valuable information to the students, teachers, and villagers about the importance of Good Governance Day and the concept of VB-G-Ram-G. The main speaker, Ram Bahadur, Assistant Teacher, also shared in-depth information on Good Governance Day and VB-G-Ram-G. He inspired everyone present with his impactful speech. To ensure the active par-



ticipation of the students, a quiz competition, essay writing competition, and speech competition were also organized. All the winners who performed exceptionally well in the various competitions were awarded by the chief guest and other dignitaries.

As a special attraction of the program, a performance of melodious folk songs by Harbind

Kumar Yadav Folk Song Party, Prayagraj, and an entertaining magic show by Magician Ravindra Kumar and Party, Prayagraj, were organized, which delighted and captivated all the spectators. The program was successfully conducted through M/s N.A. Media under the guidance of Balmukund Singh, Sunil Kumar, and Harilal Yadav of CBC, Prayagraj.

Prayagraj Division: Timings of 19 Trains to Change, New Schedule Effective from January 1st

Prayagraj

Attention passengers... From January 1st, the timings of 19 trains, including the Sangam Express, Kalindi Express, Prayagraj-Dr. Ambedkar Nagar Express, and Prayagraj-Lalgarh Express, will be changed. The timings of 19 trains arriving at various stations in the Prayagraj division will be changed by five minutes to one hour, effective from January 1st. The new timetable of Indian Railways is going to be effective from January 1st, 2026. In the new timetable, the timings of 54 trains operating in the Prayagraj, Jhansi, and Agra divisions of North Central Railway will be changed. According to the new timetable, the arrival time of 14164 Meerut City-Subedarganj Sangam Express will be 8:25 AM instead of 8:30 AM. Similarly, the 14118 Kalindi Express, coming from Bhiwani Junction to Prayagraj



Junction, will arrive five minutes earlier at 12:50 PM. Train number 12403 Prayagraj-Lalgarh Express will depart at 11:05 PM instead of 11:10 PM. The 14116 Prayagraj-Dr. Ambedkar Nagar Express will also depart at 3:10 PM instead of 3:20 PM. The 13310 Prayagraj-Chopan Express will depart at 2:50 PM instead of 3:00 PM. In addition, the arrival and departure times of several trains at Kanpur, Aligarh, Hathras Kila, and Manikpur railway stations will also change from January 1st. Meanwhile, LHB rakes will be introduced in nine pairs of trains in the NCR zone,

including the 14117/14118 Prayagraj-Bhiwani Kalindi Express, replacing the ICF rakes. The new timetable includes 20 pairs of new trains in the NCR zone, extension of 11 pairs of trains, an increase in the frequency of one pair of trains, changes in the numbers of 30 trains, revision of operating days for five trains, increase in halt times for five trains, experimental stoppages for 24 trains, changes in the timings of 54 trains, and an increase in the speed of seven trains.

- Shashikant Tripathi, CPRO, NCR

Additional Chief Conservator of Forests Dr. Renu Singh inspects area after tiger attack



Bahraich: On Friday, Additional Chief Conservator of Forests, Central Region, Dr. Renu Singh met with the families of Ram Dheeraj Yadav, 50, and Nage Kashyap, 35, who were injured in a tiger attack on Thursday in Chanaini village under Nawabganj police station area and inspected the incident site. Dr. Singh also met with the family of Ansh, son of Ram Manohar, who died five days ago in a wild animal attack in Rasulpur Darehta of Fakharpur block and offered her condolences. She advised the villagers to sleep inside their homes, keep an eye on their children and keep their doors closed. She also said that those whose houses do not have doors should make temporary security arrangements. She also visited the Rupaidiha area and instructed to increase patrolling and surveillance in the potential tiger movement area. Dr. Singh appealed to the villagers not to put themselves in danger to take photos or videos of wild animals and to maintain a safe distance from wild animals until the Forest Department and police teams arrive. On this occasion, Conservator of Forests Devipatan Division Dr. Semmaran M., DFO Bahraich Ram Singh Yadav, SDO Rashid Jameel, Ranger Kaiserganj Onkar Nath Yadav, Ranger Rupaidiha Atul Srivastava, Forest Officer Pankaj Kumar Sahu, Station House Officer Ramashankar Yadav, Outpost In-charge Amit Tripathi and other regional village heads were present.

Awareness Camp on PM Surya Ghar Free Electricity Scheme Held in Ward No. 04 LalPur

Etah

Following the directions of District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh, an awareness camp under the Prime Minister Surya Ghar Free Electricity Scheme was organized in Ward No.04 Lalpur under the Municipal Council, Etah. The camp aimed to inform residents about the benefits and procedures of the scheme. Addressing the gathering, Sub-Divisional Magistrate and Project Officer, NEDA, Piyush Rawat provided detailed information about the scheme. He stated that this ambitious initiative of the Central Government has been launched to provide affordable and almost free electricity to common citizens, significantly reducing household electricity bills. He informed that substantial subsidies are being provided by the government for the installation of solar panels, which are transferred directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system. Under the scheme, maximum subsidy



is available for domestic solar plants ranging from 1 to 3 kilowatts. Explaining the cost structure, he said that a 1-kilowatt solar panel costs approximately ₹65,000 on which a subsidy of ₹45,000 is provided. Similarly, a 2-kilowatt solar panel costs around ₹1.30 lakh with a subsidy of

₹90,000 while a 3-kilowatt solar panel costs about ₹1.80 lakh attracting a subsidy of ₹1.08 lakh. As a result, installing a 3-kilowatt solar plant requires an expenditure of only about ₹72,000 by the consumer. Piyush Rawat further stated that the total cost of the solar panel system is typically

recovered within 2 to 2.5 years after which consumers receive almost complete relief from electricity bills. He also informed that banks are providing loan facilities for the installation of solar systems. Interested citizens can contact the NEDA department or apply online through the national portal at <https://pmsuryaghar.gov.in>. In his message District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh said that the PM Surya Ghar Free Electricity Scheme is a significant public welfare initiative of the Central and State Governments. Along with providing relief from electricity bills, the scheme promotes clean energy, environmental protection and energy self-reliance. He appealed to residents of the district to take maximum advantage of the scheme and avail the subsidies and loan facilities offered by the government. He also directed officials to ensure wide publicity of the scheme. The camp was attended by Ward No. 04 Lalpur resident Mahendra Pal Singh other dignitaries and a large number of local citizens.

Barabanki

At the Obari MP residence, MP Tanuj Punia paid floral tributes to Bharat Ratna Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Maharaja Bijli Pasi and Chakravarti Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) on their birth and death anniversaries. Addressing the gathering, MP Punia said these great personalities always gave a new direction to the nation. He highlighted Malaviya role as a four-time Congress president and social reformer, Bijli Pasi valor and resistance symbol for the Pasi community and Rajagopalachari contri-



bution as a freedom fighter, last Governor-General of India and renowned writer. Those present included District Congress President Md. Mohsin, City President Rajendra Verma Spokesperson K.C. Srivastava, Ajit Verma,

Vijay Pal Gautam, Ramharakh Rawat, Md. Irfan Qureshi, Kamal Bhalla, Anurag Yadav, Shabnam Warsi, Sana Chaudhary, Md. Zishan, Arvind Verma, Sushil Verma, Gopi Kannaujia, Shrikant Mishra and others.

Jalesar Tehsil Bar Association Elections: Two Nominations Each Filed for President and General Secretary Posts

Etah

The nomination process for the Jalesar Tehsil Bar Association elections commenced on Friday, marking the beginning of the electoral activities for the new office bearers. On the first day, a total of four candidates purchased and formally submitted their nomination papers for the posts of President and General Secretary. Providing details, Election Committee Chairman Rajgopal Singh and member Vishnu Gopal Dixit stated that the sale and submission of nomination papers began as per the scheduled election programme. On the opening day, two nomination papers



were purchased for the post of President, following which advocates Subhash Babu and Rameshwar Singh filed their nominations for the top post. Similarly, for the post of General Secretary, advocates Rajeev Singhal and Dwijendra Singh Yadav submitted their nomination papers. During the nomination process, Election Committee mem-

bers Vishnu Gopal Dixit, Ramesh Pal Singh, K.P. Singh Yadav, along with other office bearers were present to ensure smooth conduct of the proceedings. The Election Committee informed that the remaining stages of the election process will be conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner in accordance with the prescribed schedule.

Attempted Burglaries and Theft Reported Near Lalpur Outpost in Barabanki



Barabanki

Wednesday Night: Thieves attempted to carry out three incidents under the Mohammadpur Khala police station area, taking advantage of dense fog. In the Lalpur police outpost area, burglars tried to break into a jeweller shop but failed, while a nearby paan kiosk was looted of cash and goods worth thousands of rupees. According to information, thieves targeted Saksham Jewellers, owned by Kanhaiya Lal

Soni of Basantpur village, located at Lalpur crossing. The shop shutter was damaged in an attempt to break in, but no theft was reported. A similar attempt was made at the shop of Akhilesh Bajpai, where the shutter lock was found broken in the morning. Another incident occurred near the Bank of India, close to Lalpur police outpost, where thieves broke into the paan kiosk of Kiran Devi and stole cash, cigarettes, gutkha and other items before flee-

ing. The incident has created panic among local traders and villagers, who questioned night patrolling and demanded stronger security. On receiving information, Lalpur outpost police and Station House Officer Ashutosh Mishra reached the spot, inspected the sites and began collecting evidence. Police said CCTV footage from nearby areas is being examined and the accused will be identified soon. Investigations are underway.

Women Making Special Contributions Honored on Kalam Foundation Foundation Day, Annual Magazine Released

Bahraich: The Kalam Foundation, a socially conscious organization, celebrated its Foundation Day on December 25 at Kisan Mahavidyalaya, Bahraich. The date also coincides with the birth anniversaries of Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya and Bharat Ratna, former Prime Minister Pandit Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The celebration was organized as a grand event. On this occasion, the Foundation also released its annual magazine, "Bahraich Smarika". Divya Porwal, President of the Kalam Foundation stated that this year edition focuses on the inspiring stories of women who have struggled to establish themselves in society and have become role models for other women. The program was enriched by devotional songs and performances by the district renowned bhajan singer Pandit Dharmendra Shastri and his team members Aastha Mishra, Chandan Chanchal and Suraj Tiwari, which captivated the audience. Several notable dignitaries attended the event, including former MLA Ram Achal Singh Sengar, Municipal MLA representative Ashok Jaiswal, President of the Advocates Association Rajesh Shukla, Social Harmony Head Rajkishore, former President of the Advocates Association Pandit Ramji Bajpai, popular leader from Mahsi Pandit Devesh Chandra Mishra, President of Pramukh Sangh Ajit Pratap Singh Bablu, District President of Secondary Teachers Association Rajendra Prasad, District President of Kshatriya Mahasabha Dr. Jitendra Kumar Singh, Jitendra Singh Jeetu, Pandit Yogendra Mani Tripathi, journalist Ajay Tripathi, litterateur Ramesh Tiwari, educationist Pandit Pundarik Pandey, Rais Siddiqui, Amit Sharma, Jitendra Bajpai, Engineer Saurabh Sharma, Jasveer Singh, along with a large gathering of social workers and literature enthusiasts. At the conclusion of the program, the Kalam Foundation's founder Amar Singh Visen, Vice Presidents Akash Singh and Brijesh Mishra, and District President Ram Achal Manjhi, along with Vice President Abhay Pratap Singh Prince, collectively expressed their gratitude and thanks to all the attendees.

Divisional Road Safety Committee Meeting Concludes Under the Chairmanship of the Divisional Commissioner

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: A meeting of the Divisional Road Safety Committee was held on Friday at Gandhi Auditorium under the chairmanship of Divisional Commissioner Soumya Agarwal. In the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner reviewed point-wise the compliance of decisions taken in the previous Divisional Road Safety Committee meeting, meetings of district-level road safety committees, comparative details of road accidents in the division, review of road-wise accidents within the limits of each district, investigation of road accidents with three or more fatalities, identified black spots, Rahveer Yojana, Road Safety Friends, enforcement activities, and other related issues. The Divisional Commissioner expressed strong displeasure over illegal cuts made by establish-



ments located on national highways and other roads. She directed the Regional Transport Officer and the Police Department to inspect the roads and register FIRs against establishments that have made illegal cuts on the highways, and to provide information about the same. She also directed that bushes be cleared at the intersections of rural roads and national highways, and that speed breakers and signage be installed at these locations. The Divisional

Commissioner directed that proper lighting arrangements be made on highways, with the Municipal Corporation responsible for areas within its jurisdiction and solar lights to be installed in rural areas. Regarding the issue of motorcycles being driven on the footpaths of Shastri Bridge and Phaphamau Bridge, she directed that view cutters and other necessary arrangements be made to prevent motorcycles from being driven on the footpaths of these bridges. He

said that wherever new national highways are being constructed, all necessary measures should be ensured from a road safety perspective. For this, he instructed a joint team comprising the concerned Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Circle Officer, Station House Officer, and Assistant Regional Transport Officer to conduct inspections, assess road safety measures, inform the implementing agency about the suggestions, and take necessary action to ensure compli-

ance. He said that preventing road accidents through every possible effort is everyone's responsibility. All necessary actions should be ensured for this. Reviewing the formation and meetings of the Rural Road Safety Committee in the previous meeting, the Divisional Commissioner instructed the concerned Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Block Development Officer, Circle Officer, and Assistant Regional Transport Officer at the tehsil level to compulsorily hold meetings and provide the minutes before the next divisional review meeting. This report should include the identification of critical spots and other road safety measures. Reviewing the Rahveer Yojana (Road Safety Volunteer Scheme), the Divisional Commissioner instructed all Chief Medical Officers and Assistant Regional Transport Officers in the division to

ensure 100% identification of Rahveers (road safety volunteers) against the set target. Reviewing the action taken under the "No Helmet, No Fuel" campaign, he instructed that 100% recovery of fines should be ensured. He also instructed that fuel should not be given to those who do not wear helmets. The Divisional Commissioner instructed that to prevent road accidents during the winter season due to smog and fog, it should be ensured that retro-reflective tapes are installed on tractor-trolleys, tractors operating in markets, and goods vehicles as per the standards, and that this measure is widely publicized. He stated that due to the slow speed of tractor-trailers and the lack of adequate lights and retro-reflective tape on the front and rear, drivers of vehicles traveling at night face difficulties.

Submit Form-6 to register your name in the voter list: District Election Officer

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A meeting was held on Friday at the Sangam Auditorium under the chairmanship of District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma, in the presence of representatives of recognized national and state political parties, regarding the special intensive revision program of the electoral rolls of the assembly constituencies. The District Magistrate informed that the mapping work of a total of 32,05,981 (90.78 percent) voters, according to digitization, has been completed by 8:00 AM on December 26th. The District Magistrate told the representatives of the political parties that today is the last day for digitization, and the list will be frozen today. The District Magistrate said that the draft electoral roll will be published on December 31st. The District Magistrate told all the representatives of the political parties that Form-6 is available with the BLOs (Booth Level Officers). Those who have completed 18 years of age but their names are not yet in the voter list, or those who will complete 18 years of age by the qualifying date of January 1, 2026, or those voters who were previously voters but their names are not in the voter list for some reason, can fill and submit Form-6. The names of all such voters will be included in the final draft roll of February 28, 2026. A campaign is also being run to register new voters. He requested all the representatives to cooperate in this campaign and to contact the BLOs and provide them with Form-6 along with Annexure-4 and the declaration form. On this occasion, Deputy District Election Officer Pooja Mishra, representatives of political parties, and election-related officers were present.

In Kareli, Son-in-law Shoots Mother-in-law in Broad Daylight, Woman Dies on the Spot



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. Panic spread in the Akbarpur neighborhood of the Kareli police station area on Friday afternoon when a young man shot and killed his mother-in-law in broad daylight. This audacious crime, committed in broad daylight, caused chaos in the area. After committing the crime, the accused fled the scene. Upon receiving the information, the police took the body into custody, sent it for post-mortem

examination, registered a case, and launched a search for the accused. According to the police, 55-year-old Ayesha Khatoon, wife of the late Mushtaq, who lived near the old mosque in Akbarpur, supported her family by working as a domestic helper in other people's homes. After Mushtaq's death, she had four sons and three daughters, the youngest of whom, Chand Bibi, was married to Irfan from the same neighborhood about ten years ago. The couple has one son

and one daughter. It is reported that for some time, Chand Bibi had been living with her mother, Ayesha Khatoon, due to a dispute with her husband, Irfan. Chand Bibi alleged that Irfan did not work and was pressuring her into prostitution. When Chand Bibi told her mother about this, Ayesha Khatoon brought her daughter to live with her. Irfan was angry with his mother-in-law because of this and often came to the house, verbally abusing and physically assault-

ing her. On Friday afternoon, around 3:30 PM, Ayesha Khatoon left her house to get a gas cylinder refilled. As soon as she reached near the Kali temple, Irfan, who was lying in wait, shot her in the chest with a pistol. Ayesha Khatoon fell to the ground immediately and died on the spot. After committing the crime, the accused fled the scene.

Upon receiving information about the incident, the police and senior officials reached the spot. Considering the tension

in the area, police forces have been deployed. The police are examining the footage from nearby CCTV cameras and conducting raids at possible hideouts. DCP City Manish Shandilya stated that the woman was murdered by her son-in-law, Irfan. A family dispute is believed to be the motive for the crime. Several police teams have been formed to apprehend the accused. The suspect will be arrested soon, and the entire case will be solved.

Educational Trips Essential for Holistic Development: Arun Kumar Awasthi



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. Under the National Innovation Campaign, students from Kaudhiyara block were taken on an exposure visit. They first visited the Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology and then Shringverpur Dham, the hermitage of Sage Shringi, which is a symbolic monument of the friendship between Lord Rama

and Nishad Raj Guha. There, students were told the story of the meeting between Nishad Raj and Lord Rama, and a message of social harmony was conveyed to them. Block Education Officer Arun Awasthi told the students that equality in society can only be achieved by rising above caste and social hierarchies, and that such trips are essential for holistic development.

ARP Anit Kumar Mishra, Rambabu Patel, Neeraj Mishra, Satish Saroj Matadeen, Assistant Accountant Durgesh Mishra, and nodal teachers Alok Singh, Anurag Jaiswal, Rashmi Singh, Mamta Kanojia, Shalini, Rashmi Katiyar, Rizwan Ahmed, Surendra Mishra, and Geeta Rani played a key role in successfully conducting this educational trip.

Trial Court Overturns Juvenile Justice Board's Order, Releases Gang Rape Accused to His Mother's Custody

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: The district court overturned the Juvenile Justice Board's order and released a minor accused in a gang rape case into his mother's custody. The order was passed by Additional Sessions Judge, Special Judge Anju Kanojia. The accused's mother had challenged the Juvenile Justice Board's order in the special court. A case was registered against the minor accused at the Phaphamau police station in connection with the gang rape of a nurse. The petitioner's lawyer argued in court that the accused was 16

years and 7 months old at the time of the incident and did not understand the nature of the crime. The psychological report, social investigation report, and the district probation officer's report also recommended that the boy be kept under the protection of his family. Despite this, the Juvenile Justice Board rejected the application for custody. The district court stated that the Juvenile Justice Board's conclusion was based on apprehension and was not in line with the intent of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. Overturning the

Juvenile Justice Board's order, the court ordered the release of the minor accused into his mother's custody on a personal bond of Rs. 50,000 and a surety of the same amount. The court also stated that the boy would be kept away from the company of criminals, his education would continue, and he would appear before the Juvenile Justice Board and the competent court as required. The court directed the District Probation Officer and the Station House Officer of Phaphamau police station to monitor the boy and ensure the safety of the victim's family.

High Court's Observation: It is necessary to crush the growing trend of exploiting women under the pretext of marriage

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The Allahabad High Court has stated that it is essential to nip in the bud the growing social trend of exploiting women under the pretext of marriage. With this observation, the court refused to grant anticipatory bail to Prashant Pal, who is accused of having a physical relationship with a woman for five years on the false promise of marriage. This order was passed by a single-judge bench of Justice Nalin Kumar Srivastava. A young woman had filed a case against the accused, Prashant Pal, at Auraiya police station in Auraiya district, alleging that he had a relationship with her by falsely promising marriage.

The accused had filed an application for anticipatory bail in the High Court in this case. The accused's lawyer argued that the relationship between the two was consensual and that the victim was an adult. They had been living together since 2020, and the applicant had never promised marriage. The Additional Government Advocate opposed the bail application, stating that the accused had exploited the victim for five years. He is also accused of threatening the victim based on obscene videos. Therefore, the accused cannot be granted the benefit of anticipatory bail. The accused's intention was fraudulent from the beginning. After hearing both sides and considering the seriousness of the

case, the court observed that the material on record shows that the accused's intention was fraudulent from the beginning. He only entered into the relationship to fulfill his own desires. He had no intention of marrying the victim. Citing the Supreme Court's case of Deepak Gulati vs. State of Haryana, the court said that if the promise of marriage is false from the outset and its purpose is merely to obtain the woman's consent for a physical relationship, then such consent is considered void. The court considered this a serious crime against society and said that no leniency can be shown in such cases. Accordingly, the court rejected the anticipatory bail application.

Zonal Magistrates Appointed for the Successful Conduct of the Magh Mela

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: A meeting was held on Friday at the Sangam Auditorium under the chairmanship of District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma with the zonal magistrates, sector magistrates, and other concerned officers appointed for the successful conduct of the Magh Mela. Necessary instructions were given during the meeting. He directed the Additional District Magistrate (City) to request additional magistrates and to ensure that officers from departments providing essential services are not assigned to Magh Mela duties. He instructed all zonal and sector magistrates to visit their respective duty areas, assess the necessary basic facilities and arrangements, and ensure that all necessary tasks are completed on time. He also directed the zonal and sector magistrates to remain on high alert, keep the contact numbers of key officers and the control room readily available, and create WhatsApp groups for communication. Magh Mela Officer Shri Rishiraj, Municipal Commissioner Shri Seelam Sai Teja, all Additional District Magistrates, and zonal and sector magistrates were present on this occasion.

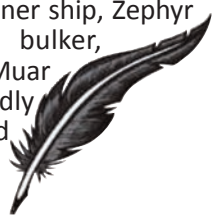
Women Making Special Contributions Honored on Kalam Foundation Day, Annual Magazine Released

Bahraich: The Kalam Foundation, a socially conscious organization, celebrated its Foundation Day on December 25 at Kisan Mahavidyalaya, Bahraich. The date also coincides with the birth anniversaries of Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya and Bharat Ratna, former Prime Minister Pandit Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The celebration was organized as a grand event. On this occasion, the Foundation also released its annual magazine, "Bahraich Smarik". Divya Porwal, President of the Kalam Foundation stated that this year edition focuses on the inspiring stories of women who have struggled to establish themselves in society and have become role models.

Editorial

Great Nicobar Project is a trade game-changer for India

It is surprising that the strategic islands of Andaman, Car Nicobar, and Great Nicobar have not been developed all these years into ports and military bases to enhance trade and security in India's maritime zone. Nicobar offers excellent connectivity to at least five countries to the east—Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka—as well as Indian ports on the eastern coast. Some islands in Nicobar and Lakshadweep are out of bounds for outsiders, as these are inhabited by tribes that have not had any contact with the outside world. The scenic Barren Island is also out of bounds, as it is the only active volcano in India. There can be no two opinions as far as the need to protect the privacy of the tribes inhabiting some of these islands. There are reports of earlier attempts to establish contact with them and draw them into the civilisational mainstream, which were unsuccessful. Rules and regulations were made considering their resistance and respecting their right to continue with their unique lifestyle. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956, designates tribal reserves and restricts entry for outsiders. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, provides a legal framework against exploitation, while the Forest Rights Act, 2006, recognises their land rights. The Ministry of Home Affairs has put in place several restrictions and announced specific policies for the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) such as the Jarawas and Shompen. So, several laws and restrictions are already available to protect and preserve the identity of the tribal communities. In this scenario, there is hardly any need to shelve strategically important projects and infrastructure development schemes that will boost trade and commerce, tourism and maritime economy, and connectivity. Out of the 10 busiest container terminal ports in the world, six are in China, and one each in Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These account for as much as 60 to 70 per cent of the 20-foot and 40-foot (1 TEU and 2 TEU) containers transshipment. Apparently, nearly all these container terminals and other ports in Asia and the Indian subcontinent, as well as in China and the Far East, depend on the shipping lanes through the Malacca Strait, which accounts for nearly \$3.5 trillion in global trade. The Strait of Malacca is also an important maritime highway for the stakeholders of Indo-Pacific as it connects the Indian and Pacific Oceans. For the Quad and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), this sea lane of communication, accounting for nearly 60 per cent of the global GDP, becomes the lifeline to trade, commerce, and connectivity. There is no reason why India should not have a technologically equipped, functional, state-of-the-art port in Nicobar to tap into the trade happening through its precincts. Besides the economic uplift, a port facility in Nicobar and on other islands in the Indian Ocean can help India resolve other challenges too. By virtue of the gigantic number of ships—about 90,000—passing through a narrow Strait, the sea lanes of communication and the ports have become choke points in the Indian Ocean. Interestingly, in spite of the vast expanse of the sea, ships follow a designated route guided by navigation software, GPS, and Electronic Charting System (ECS), very much like the flight path in the sky. This often results in ships cruising very close and colliding due to massive waves, ocean currents, or simply not following the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS). In 2021, a container ship, Zephyr Lumos, collided with the bulkier, Galapagos, off the port of Muar in the Strait of Malacca, badly damaging the Galapagos and resulting in a huge oil spill.



Lifting night shift ban increased female employment in India—only among big firms

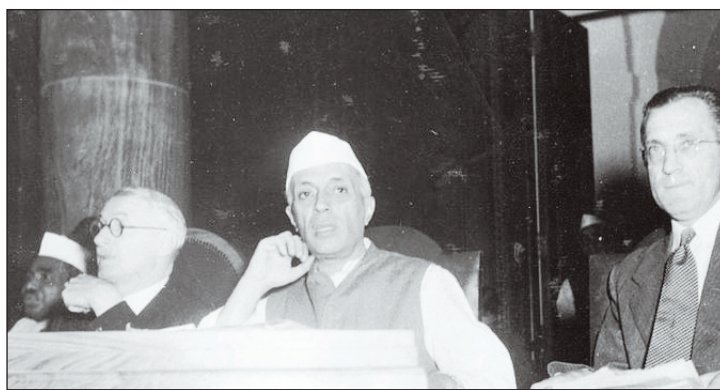
Do laws designed to protect women from unsafe working conditions constrain the demand for their labour? This question sits at the centre of global debates about protective legislation in labour markets. Our recent research (Gupta et al. 2025) examines what happened when Indian states lifted long-standing bans that prevented women from working night shifts in factories. Our findings offer important lessons for policymakers seeking to expand female employment, particularly considering the significant labour reforms that

have been recently initiated by many state governments. Do laws designed to protect women from unsafe working conditions constrain the demand for their labour? This question sits at the centre of global debates about protective legislation in labour markets. Our recent research (Gupta et al. 2025) examines what happened when Indian states lifted long-standing bans that prevented women from working night shifts in factories. Our findings offer important lessons for policymakers seeking to expand female employment,

particularly considering the significant labour reforms that have been recently initiated by many state governments. This “paternalistic discrimination” (Buchmann et al. 2023) reflects a global pattern. At least 20 countries still prohibit women from working at night, while 45 countries ban women from sectors deemed “unsafe” by lawmakers (World Bank, 2024). These restrictions, however well-intentioned, assume women lack agency to make their own employment choices and that employers are unable to provide safe workplaces for

all workers. India's experience is particularly important given its strikingly low female labour force participation rates and the potential for manufacturing to provide formal employment opportunities for women. In the early 2000s, a series of High Court judgements held that prohibitions against women working at night were unconstitutional because they deprived women of economic opportunities. Following these judgements, between 2014 and 2017, seven Indian states—Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh,

Russian-style socialism dominated Nehru's imagination. It was disastrous



Hemingway has a short story set in the Spanish Civil War context in which an old man leaving his town on the approach of rebel armies sits on the outskirts and shows concern, to a questioner (a foreign correspondent) with the fate of his old cat that he was obliged to leave behind than with the tragedy of the people involved in the horrors of the unusually savage civil war! We know that all through the long national liberation movement in India the British could find quite a number of Indian collaborators at the expense of their own countrymen. They did not feel the passion for freedom to any marked extent. They could not imagine how the country could manage without the British to govern them! To the large majority of people everywhere the status quo and the customary round seem to be as much part of nature as the stars, the sun and the moon. They cannot imagine a different state of affairs. In moral experience we are keenly aware that people have the greatest difficulty in realising in imagination the inward feelings and attitudes of their own neighbours. A great writer has a short story showing how the heads of husband and wife on adjacent pillows entertain widely different thoughts that seem to belong to separate worlds! The great problem of human life is this one of increasing understanding of men of each other's inward life by means of a more sensitive imagination. Socialist (communist) propaganda takes full advantage of this failing

of human beings. It depicts the ideal state of affairs under their Utopia in such a complete fashion that nothing is left to the imagination of those who are carried away by the promises of socialism regarding its new heaven and new earth, regarding its abolition of poverty, its reign of equality, its opportunity for self-realisation for all and so on. No schemes of logical criticism of the economics, psychology and philosophy of communism can have any effect on the believer and the fellow traveller. He comes to believe in the Marxist Gospel as in a new Bible or Koran as an infallible revelation for the scientific age of the present and future. The picture presented by the propaganda of the communist-socialists occupies the imagination of the intelligentsia of the present age, by and large, by reiteration, emphasis and appeal to humanitarianism as the only way of redeeming the under-dog. It benumbs the critical faculties. Moreover, criticism presupposes knowledge of alternatives. The greatest service that philosophy as a systematic science of reflection on ultimate reality and ultimate values renders

to civilisation, as pointed out so impressively by Dr. A. N. Whitehead, is the suggestion of alternative vision of society and natural relations or structure. Such alternative ideas release the mind from the stranglehold of custom or dogma, new or old and create an attitude of mind more open and hospitable to new ideas and rival hypotheses. It is therefore necessary to break the spell of socialist dogma on the imagination of fellow travellers and those attracted by its Utopia as the only way of progress based on science. This can be done by showing alternatives. Professor Bauer (specialist in the economy of backward peoples in the University of London) has said after a study of Indian Plans and Policies that the Indian Government seems more interested in realising socialism than in economic development itself! He has recorded his deliberate opinion that in the absence of the elaborate structure of controls and regulations, cribbing, cabinning and confining Indian enterprise in the private field, a faster and more many-sided progress in development would result.

That is to say, his special knowledge of economic facts and ideas enabled him to see other alternative possibilities in the Indian scene at present blocked by official programmes and policies and their acceptance as good and inevitable by the public. Even the opposition parties have failed to present sufficiently well-informed and comprehensive schemes of development making for better results without curbing individual initiative, repressing capital formation and freezing investment in the private sector. Another reason for this state of affairs, that is, for the failure of imagination on the part of critics and the general public to visualise their own schemes of development inspired by their own principles, views of social ideals and economic well-being and to present them to the electorate in rivalry to the official policy is their inability to think of alternatives. There was an opportunity before Indian leaders at the advent of independence in August 1947. But unfortunately India had a leader, sold body and soul to socialism at the moment of national self-government. Even before the first Five-Year Plan was launched under the auspices of the Planning Commission in perfect imitation of the Soviets, Parliament was enacting the Industrial Policy Resolution (1949) which laid down the outline of socialist policy reserving the commanding heights of the economy, as the phrase goes (in British Socialist parlance) meaning nationalisation or otherwise taking control of

the key industries, transport, insurance, railways, communications, mines, steel and other heavy industries for government ownership and management. The imagination of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru was completely dominated by the socialist programme of centralised economy after the pattern of Soviet Russia. The other members of Parliament had not the imagination to visualise the deleterious consequences for production and liberty, price levels, tax levels, misery depths and so on of such socialism as was realised through the years. They did not think out the rationale of the policies of socialism afresh. They took the European programmes for granted. They betrayed slave mentality in the intellectual and temporal field to an astonishing extent, for which the country is suffering even today. For one thing, the policies have not been reviewed from a rationalist and experiential point of view in the light of Indian conditions. The results of the Plans in terms of actual effects on the economy—prices, taxes, production, redistribution, national income, prosperity all round etc. have not been assessed from an independent point of view even yet. The founding of the Swatantra party is one sign of the awakening on the part of the intelligentsia that an alternative policy is possible and necessary. The work of the Libertarian Social Institute of Mr. Lotvala has been earliest in the field with its own independent and critical rethinking of Marx and communist programmes.

Qatar played all sides, peacemaker to Islamist safe haven. Now there's no place to hide

There, standing in a grey puddle of light under the glass-domed lounge at the Bayerischer Hof in Munich, Germany, former Afghan spymaster Amarullah Saleh understood the nation he had given his life to build was about to die. For almost a decade, the Taliban had enjoyed safe haven in Doha, operating a de facto embassy there with diplomatic protections. They received funds, drew up combat plans, and travelled to meet their top leaders in Karachi and Peshawar. The killing in Afghanistan, however, had continued without interruption—and President Ashraf Ghani wanted the jihadists gone. He said as much to the Emir of Qatar during the Munich Security Conference in 2020. A smile on his face, the Emir replied: “Well, we have only permitted them to stay in Qatar. Everything else, including their expenses, is managed and overseen by the Central Intelligence Agency. If you want this to end, ask the CIA to stop.” This week, Qatar's

role as peacemaker in the Middle East came under assault, as a squadron of Israeli combat jets targeted terrorist group Hamas' headquarters, not far from Doha's famous Corniche. The bombing took place just as Hamas was discussing a Gaza ceasefire proposal made by US President Donald Trump. There was no reaction from the formidable air defences at Al-Udeid air base, home to the Qatar Emiri Air Force, the United States Air Force, and the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force. For decades, Qatar has sought security and prestige as the mediator between the United States and nations in conflict across the Middle East—sending billions of dollars to Hamas with the complete approval of the Israeli Prime Minister, funneling cash to Benjamin Netanyahu's aides, helping the Islamists who seized power in Syria, and exerting influence from Egypt to Libya and Tunisia. As the world order threatens to buckle under new strains.

The key difference between India and China's response to Gen-Z protests in Nepal

The Generation Z-led protests in Nepal have caught the global attention, and international agencies as well as countries have come forward to condole the loss of around 30 lives and hundreds who were injured. While the United Nations noted, “We are shocked by the killings and injury of protesters in Nepal today and urge a prompt and transparent investigation.” How did Nepal's closest neighbours, India and China, respond? A day after the protests began in Nepal on 8 September, India stated the next day that it was “closely monitoring the developments in Nepal...(and) our thoughts and prayers are with the families and deceased. India also added that “as a close friend and neighbour, we hope that all concerned will exercise restraint.” The same evening, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, “The violence in Nepal is heart-rending. I am anguished that many young people have lost their lives. The stability, peace and prosperity of Nepal are of utmost importance to us. I humbly appeal to all my brothers and sisters in Nepal to support peace.” There was a divided crowd on social media about India's

approach, whether it was helpful and friendly or interventionist, but this came as no surprise, as the so-called border blockade of 2015 had already set the social media toolkit on India with hashtags like #BackoffIndia #GoBackIndia. It would not be an exaggeration to say that small-state syndrome became an intense public mood in Nepal as it approached relations with India, especially after Nepal promulgated the constitution in 2015. In a carefully worded statement, India added that it had “noted” the new constitution and avoided using words like “welcome” to acknowledge the promulgation. In the same statement, India had urged that “issues on which there are differences should be resolved through dialogue in an atmosphere free from violence and intimidation and institutionalised in a manner that would enable broad-based ownership and acceptance” as it was deemed as external interference. However, these hashtags often resurfaced. While India quickly reacted to current developments, some in Nepal eagerly awaited a statement from China—its northern neighbour. Interestingly, China's response to Gen Z to

the current political developments appeared cautious and calculated, reflecting its broader regional strategic interests. After 2008, Beijing has carefully treaded with the Communist leadership in Nepal to deepen its diplomatic ties and goodwill in Nepal. The move has been viewed as a key element for strategic influence over the region. Leaders like KP Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias Prachanda did not hesitate to use the China card to stoke the nationalistic sentiments in Nepal. Finally, on 10 September, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson issued a statement saying, “China and Nepal are each other's traditional friends and neighbours. Hope the various sectors in Nepal will approach the domestic issues properly and restore order and stability in the country soon.” This was a typical Chinese statement—deliberately vague, refraining from specifying the events or parties involved, and notably omitting any reference to the human cost of the unrest. The carefully crafted words reflect China's preference for cautious diplomacy and projects that they do not comment.

Tiger Terror: Two Women and Rescuers Mailed in Village

Bahraich

Panic gripped Chanaini village under Nawabganj police station area on Thursday morning after a tiger attack. Around 6:30 am, a tiger suddenly attacked women who had gone outside the village to defecate. Two villagers who rushed to their rescue after hearing their screams also fell victim to the tiger's attack. Ram Dheeraj Yadav 50 and Nage Kashyap 35 residents of Chanaini village, were seriously injured in the attack. The tiger fled into the forest after the villagers raised an alarm. A climate of fear prevails throughout the village after the incident. Upon receiving the information the villagers took the two injured men to the nearest community health center for treatment. After primary treatment, they were referred to the district hospital. The police and forest department were informed about the incident. A forest department team, led by Forest Range Officer Pankaj Kumar Sahu,



reached the spot and began an investigation. Station House Officer Ramashankar Yadav also arrived at the scene and inquired about the condition of the injured. Villagers say that tigers have been frequently sighted in the area for a long time, but despite this, no concrete security measures have been taken. The villagers have demanded that the forest department increase patrolling and make adequate security arrangements. In this regard, SDO Forest Department Nanpara Rashid Jameel said that the forest department team reached the spot as soon as they received information about the incident. Chanaini vil-

lage is located near the Abdullahganj range. Therefore, people have been advised to remain vigilant. According to the forest department, after examining the paw prints, it has been confirmed that the wild animal has returned to the forest. The team is continuously patrolling and conducting awareness campaigns in the surrounding villages. Villagers have been advised to stay indoors from evening till morning. However, the forest department team is identifying the wild animal as a leopard, while the injured villagers and local people say that the attack was carried out by a tiger. The investigation is ongoing.

When PM Modi praised CM Yogi work from the stage

Lucknow

Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised CM Yogi during his speech. "There was a mountain of garbage accumulated on more than 30 acres of land here for decades, which has been completely eradicated in the last three years," he said at the inauguration ceremony of the Rashtra Prema Sthal. Congratulations to Yogi Adityanath, workers, artisans, planners for this project. Moreover, Defense Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for setting up a spectacular inspiration site in Lucknow, the capital of UP. Yogi government again made 'pride feeling' Uttar Pradesh got the 'Atal' award for the second time in the BJP government led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government of Yogi Adityanath has given the people of the state a 'sense of pride in heritage'. This is not the first time the people of the state have felt this, but the second time in six years under the Yogi rule, when the Prime Minister unveiled the statue of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Exactly six years ago, the statue of Atal Ji was unveiled at Lok Bhavan. Atal Ji love for Lucknow was not hidden



from anyone. Throughout his political career, he always kept Lucknow as a priority. The Yogi government has still preserved the memories of Atal Ji. For the first time, a 25 feet high bronze statue of Atal Bihari Vajpayee was unveiled at Lok Bhavan on December 25, 2019 under the leadership of CM Yogi. Exactly six years later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated a 65-foot-tall bronze statue of Atal Ji to the nation on December 25, 2025 on the occasion of his birth centenary. Modi- Yogi and Rajnath address to honor the nation, Ram and great personalities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Defense Minister Rajnath Singh also paid tribute to the nation, Ram and great personalities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defense Minister Rajnath Singh began their address with Bharat Mata Ki Jai

while Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath connected himself with the feelings of the people of the state by chanting Lord Ramachandra. The three leaders met Pt. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Pt. He highlighted the works of Deendayal Upadhyay and Atal Bihari Vajpayee while remembering the birth anniversaries of Mahamana Madan Mohan Malviya and Maharaja Bijli Pasi and introduced the present generation to the glorious history. Nation Inspiration Sites (at a glance) Lotus Flower Shaped Nation Inspiration Site 230 crore, developed over an area of 765 acres 65-65 feet high bronze statues (Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay and Atal Bihari Vajpayee) The capacity of 200,000 people, the museum in 6300 square meters. Huge amphitheater with a capacity of 3000 people.

VHP-Bajrang Dal Protest in Bidhuna Against Killing of Hindu Youth in Bangladesh

Auraiya: Activists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal staged a protest in Bidhuna town of Auraiya district against the killing of Hindu youth Dipu Charan Das in Bangladesh. The protesters took out a procession and burned an effigy of Bangladesh at Bhagat Singh Square on Thursday. A large number of activists from various Hindu organizations participated in the demonstration. Holding placards, they raised slogans such as "Hindu Unity Zindabad" and "Bangladesh Murdabad." The procession passed through the main roads of the town before



culminating at Bhagat Singh Square, where the effigy was set ablaze. Addressing the gathering, speakers expressed deep concern over the alleged atrocities being committed against minorities, particularly Hindus in Bangladesh. They strongly condemned the killing of Dipu

Charan Das and termed it a grave violation of human rights. Leaders of the organizations demanded that the Government of India raise the issue at the international level, ensure strict punishment for the perpetrators and take effective steps to safeguard the lives and rights of

Hindus living in Bangladesh. Several political and social leaders were present during the protest, including BJP leader Anil Shukla, Bajrang Dal block president Rishi Tiwari, Siddhant Vikram, Vijay Chauhan, Shani Bhadauriya, Avadhesh Mishra, Sanjay, Deepak Verma, Kamlesh Tiwari, Rajshekhar Shukla and Anshu from the Gau Raksha Dal. Adequate police force was deployed at the site to maintain law and order. The protesters warned that if attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh do not stop, the agitation would be intensified in the coming days.



Bahraich

Ex Cooperation Minister and senior BJP leader Mukut Bihari Verma visited the Krishi Bhawan (Agriculture Department building) and the District Health Office (DHO) in Bahraich on Thursday. During his visit, he reviewed various schemes and activities of the Agriculture Department and held discussions with officials. At the Krishi Bhawan, he gathered information about farmer development programs, seed distribution schemes and initiatives aimed at improving irrigation and crop techniques. He also observed how the department is providing assistance to farmers related to irrigation, organic farming and crop protection. At the DHO office he discussed health and nutrition schemes for local farmers and villagers with officials from the agriculture and health departments. Verma instructed the officials to ensure that farmers receive timely information about all schemes and services according to their needs.

Youth in Kaiserganj protest, demanding reconstruction of dilapidated Sanjay Bridge

Bahraich: Local youth are expressing strong resentment over the dilapidated condition of the Ghaghra Ghat Sanjay Bridge in the Kaiserganj area. Due to cracks, open joints and loose nuts and bolts in the Sanjay Bridge, the bridge vibrates violently when heavy vehicles pass over it, raising fears of a major accident at any time. Despite this, the construction of a new bridge has not yet begun. The poor condition of the bridge frequently causes long traffic jams, leading to immense difficulties for pedestrians and motorists. The police also face considerable challenges in managing traffic. Local residents say that the dilapidated condition of the bridge is affecting both the safety and movement of people in the area. To highlight this problem, the youth of the Kaiserganj area staged a protest in front of the Sanjay Bridge to draw the attention of the administration. The protest-



ers demanded that the old bridge be repaired immediately and that the construction of a new bridge be started without delay. They also demanded that the current single-lane road be converted into a six-lane road to facilitate traffic flow and reduce the risk of accidents. The protesting youth said that the government has already sanctioned funds for the six-lane road, but the fact that construction has not yet started is a matter of serious concern. They warned that if work does not begin soon, the agitation will be intensified.

Leopard terrorizes residential area, three people including an elderly man injured

Bahraich

Panic spread in Pachpakdi village under Rupaidiha police station area of the district on Wednesday morning when a leopard entered a residential area and attacked three people. Three people, including an elderly man, were injured in the incident. All the injured have been referred to the Bahraich District Hospital after receiving first aid. According to villagers, Radheshyam, a resident of the village, was going out for his morning routine when the leopard suddenly attacked him. Hearing Radheshyam cries, villagers rushed to the spot and tried to chase away the leopard with sticks and clubs. During this time, the leopard also attacked 14-year-old Sanjana and 25-year-old Ankit, injuring them. After that the leopard fled towards the fields. Upon receiving information about the incident, Rupaidiha Station House Officer Ramesh Rawat reached the spot with a police force. The forest department was also informed. A team from the forest department, led by Ranger Atul Srivastava, arrived at the scene. Leopard footprints were also found there. The forest department is searching for and monitoring the leopard. Information has also been received about the leopard being sighted in the



Bhumipatan area. Villagers are being advised to remain vigilant through announcements. In this regard, Bahraich DFO Dr. Ram Singh Yadav said that police and forest department teams are continuously deployed to monitor the leopard. Intensive patrolling and awareness campaigns are being conducted in villages adjacent to the forest. The affected families have been provided assistance by the department. Foot patrolling was conducted along the Indo-Nepal border to search for footprints and combing operations were carried out with a rescue vehicle in the ICP area. So far, no concrete evidence of the presence of the wild animal has been found and coordination has also been established with the Nepal Forest Department, appealing for vigilance in the border areas.

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma Recent Attacks on Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has targeted the Congress party, resurfacing an old demand from the assembly elections. He claimed that a close aide of Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi had demanded reservation of 48 assembly seats for the Muslim community in Assam. Labeling it as a classic case of the party vote-bank politics, the CM stated that such demands undermine the state unity and development. He made these remarks at a recent public rally. In addition, CM Sarma launched a sharp attack on Gaurav Gogoi alleged Pakistan connections. Raising questions about the Congress leader foreign ties, he urged the party to clarify its intentions. This statement is intensifying political buzz ahead of the upcoming Assam assembly elections. While Congress has not yet responded, the BJP appears geared up to turn it into a key electoral issue.



Salman
60
@
December 27

The fresh romantic debut (Maine Pyar Kiya, 1989)
Salman Khan entered Bollywood with a youthful, clean-shaven appearance, simple clothing and an innocent charm. This boy-next-door look instantly connected with audiences and established him as a promising romantic lead.

The ideal family hero (Hum Aapke Hain Koun, 1994)
Dressed in traditional Indian attire, Salman appeared graceful and refined. This look resonated strongly with family audiences and became emblematic of 1990s family-oriented cinema.

The artistic romantic lead (Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam, 1999)
Vibrant costumes and emotional intensity defined this phase. The look reflected sensitivity and artistic depth, marking a shift towards more complex romantic roles.

The wrestler's physical transformation (Sultan, 2016)
For this role, Salman underwent significant physical changes. His rugged beard, earthy attire and athlete's build reflected realism and discipline.

The light-hearted comic persona (Andaz Apna Apna, 1994)
With casual outfits, expressive gestures and a playful demeanour, Salman portrayed a carefree urban youth. This comic look highlighted his versatility beyond romantic roles.

The tragic and intense figure (Tere Naam, 2003)
One of his most impactful transformations, this look featured long straight hair and a rugged appearance. It left a lasting cultural impression and became widely imitated.

The swaggering cop icon (Dabangg, 2010)
The khaki uniform, thick moustache and signature sunglasses created the unforgettable character of Chulbul Pandey. This look became a pop-culture phenomenon.

The aged character experiment (Bharat, 2019)
With prosthetic makeup, grey hair, and altered body language, Salman portrayed an elderly character. This was among his most experimental visual transformations.

The international spy star (Ek Tha Tiger/Tiger Zinda Hai, 2012-2017)
Featuring tactical outfits, a beard, and intense expressions, this look positioned Salman as a global action hero and strengthened his international appeal.

The macho action revival (Wanted, 2009)
With a muscular physique, cropped hair and commanding screen presence, Salman reinvented himself as an action star. This look marked a major career resurgence.

Compassionate simplicity (Bajrangi Bhaijaan, 2015)
Clad in simple kurta-pyjamas with a clean-shaven face, this look conveyed innocence and warmth. It showcased Salman in a restrained and emotionally driven role.

The real-life superstar persona (Public appearances, 2020s)
In tailored suits, styled beard, and minimal accessories, Salman's off-screen look reflects authority, maturity, and enduring star power.

Salman Khan's evolving looks mirror the changing landscape of Hindi cinema. From a romantic debutant to an action icon and mature performer, his visual journey underscores his ability to adapt while maintaining a strong connection with audiences across generations

Salman Khan through the years

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan celebrates his birthday today, marking decades of stardom, iconic roles, mass appeal and unmatched influence worldwide

For over three decades, Salman Khan has remained one of Indian cinema's most recognisable faces. His journey is not only defined by box-office success but also by the remarkable transformation of his on-screen appearance. Each phase of his career introduced a new look that reflected changing audience tastes and cinematic trends.



'Time will give its answer'

Veteran actor Manoj Joshi expressed concern over recent incident of violence against Hindus in Bangladesh and described it as a disturbing lack of global attention when minorities are targeted in the neighbouring country. His remarks came after the brutal killing of 27-year-old Dipu Chandra Das in Bangladesh's Mymensingh district on December 18.

Speaking to ANI on Friday, Joshi compared between international reactions to conflicts elsewhere and the relative silence surrounding violence against Hindus in Bangladesh. "Everyone comes forward when something happens in Gaza or Palestine, but when a Hindu is killed in Bangladesh, it is very sad that nobody comes forward. Time will give its answer," the actor said.

The long goodbye from Hawkins



TITLE: *Stranger Things Season 5 Volume 2*

DIRECTORS: Frank Darabont, Shawn Levy and the Duffer Brothers

CAST: Winona Ryder, David Harbour, Sadie Sink, Millie Bobby Brown, Finn Wolfhard, Gaten Matarazzo

WHERE: Netflix

RATING: ★★★

Volume 2 of *Stranger Things Season 5* arrives with the peculiar burden of being neither a beginning nor an end. It is the long inhale before the final plunge; a stretch of storytelling that knows it must explain itself even as it strains to entertain. Spanning across three dense episodes, this penultimate act leans heavily on mythology, consequence, and emotional accounting. The narrative circles Hawkins like a restless ghost, aware that the clock is ticking but unsure whether to sprint or linger.

At the centre of this uneasy balance looms Vecna, no longer just a monster of veins and vengeance but a bleak thesis on control, memory and grievance. He functions less as a villain to be vanquished and more as a psychic infection that re-



fuses to clear. The show's willingness to finally articulate the rules of the Upside Down lends these episodes intellectual heft, even if the constant clarifications threaten to slow the pace. There are moments when the storytelling feels like a teacher pausing an exciting experiment to explain the syllabus, but when the plot clicks into gear, the old electricity returns. Hawkins once again feels like the centre of pop-cultural attention, if only in flashes.

Actors' performance
Performance remains the show's strongest currency. Sadie Sink once again commands attention, bringing both ferocity and fragility to Max's psychological ordeal. Her scenes ground the cosmic stakes in something recognisably human. Millie Bobby Brown plays Eleven with a calmer authority now, less explosive but more assured, as if the character finally

understands the weight of her own legend. Among the younger cast, Noah Schnapp shoulders an emotionally demanding arc with restraint, while the older ensemble continues to oscillate between sincerity and self-aware humour. Gaten Matarazzo's timing keeps the exposition from becoming terminally dull, and David Harbour and Winona Ryder, though underused, still inject lived-in warmth into their scenes. A few new and returning faces feel sketchy rather than shaded, but the core cast carries the load with seasoned ease.

Music

Visually, the series remains confident in its retro-apocalyptic identity. The production design moves effortlessly between small-town Americana and cosmic horror, while the colour palette grows increasingly sombre. The music, both score and

continues to do heavy emotional lifting, deploying nostalgia and dread with precision. Occasionally, the reliance on familiar sonic cues feels self-conscious, but the overall effect remains immersive, especially when silence is allowed to speak louder than synth.

Season 5 Volume 2 is not flawless, nor is it entirely satisfying on its own terms. It explains too much, carries too many players, and risks mistaking preparation for payoff. Yet it also delivers genuine emotional resonance, sharp performances and a villain who feels disturbingly human beneath the supernatural veneer. As a bridge to the finale, it is crowded but sturdy. Whether it leads to transcendence or collapse is a question the show leaves deliberately unanswered. Hawkins, once

Dhurandhar in 1000 cr club

Filmmaker Aditya Dhar's latest directorial *Dhurandhar* has crossed the mark of Rs 1000 crore at the worldwide box office, the makers said.

Featuring Ranveer Singh alongside Sanjay Dutt, Akshaye Khanna, Arjun Rampal, Sara Arjun, R Madhavan and Rakesh Bedi, the film has been produced by Dhar and his brother Lokesh Dhar through their banner B62 Studios alongside Jyoti Deshpande of Jio Studios.

The makers shared the box office numbers with a post on their Instagram handle on Friday. "Entering

the 1000 CR club, loud and proud. Book your tickets. (Link in bio). #Dhurandhar Frenzy Continues Worldwide," read the caption.

The total collection of the film at the worldwide box office stands at Rs 1006.7 crore. It has grossed Rs 789.8 crore at the domestic box office.

The film revolves around an underworld saga following a network of criminals, informants and operatives whose lives intersect, navigating covert operations, espionage and betrayals.

It released on December 5 in theatres. The makers have also confirmed the second part of the film, which is set to release on March 19.



TV writer Satyam Tripathi dies at 45

Television scriptwriter and dialogue writer Satyam K. Tripathi passed away on Thursday morning in Mumbai due to cardiac arrest. He was 45. Tripathi was a prominent figure in the television industry and also served as the Joint Secretary of the Screenwriters Association (SWA). He was known for his work on several popular TV shows.

The sudden passing of Satyam Tripathi has left a profound impact on the TV industry and his countless admirers. An acclaimed scriptwriter, Satyam was known for his exceptional storytelling abilities that transcended conventional boundaries, bringing characters to life in ways that resonated deeply with audiences.

Briefs

Tarique visits father's grave



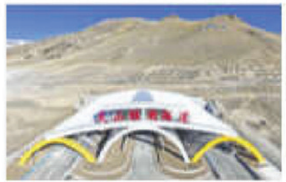
BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman on Friday visited the grave of his father and Bangladesh's former president Ziaur Rahman in Dhaka, 17 years after he returned home from self-exile in the UK. Rahman reached Zia Uddin in a red-and-green bulletproof bus and paid floral tributes at the grave, offering 'dua' and 'munajat' for the eternal peace of his father's soul, reports said.

Balananda Nepal EAM

Lt Gen (ret'd) Balananda Sharma was appointed Nepal's foreign affairs minister on Friday. President Ramchandra Paudel administered the oath to Sharma. This is the fifth cabinet expansion by PM Shushila Karki, who leads an interim government mandated to hold general elections on March 5. With Sharma's induction, the strength of Karki's council of ministers has risen to 15. A report in The Kathmandu Post newspaper said Sharma played a key role in the integration of Maoist combatants into the Nepal Army. After the then CPN (Maoist) joined the peace process in 2006, he served as coordinator of the technical committee on army integration.

China opens e-way tunnel

China on Friday opened to traffic a 22.13-km-long tunnel, which it claimed to be the "world's longest", in Xinjiang province. The



Tianshan Shengli tunnel, which traverses through the central Tianshan Mountains in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, has reduced a treacherous mountain journey of several hours to 20 minutes, media reported. According to Song Hailiang, chairman of China Communications Construction Company, the tunnel has "set two world records". "It is the longest expressway tunnel in the world and has the deepest vertical shaft for a highway tunnel," Song said.

'2m Afghans still in Pak'

Over 2 million Afghan refugees are still living in Pakistan despite over a million returning to their country in 2025. In November alone, 171,055 Afghans returned to Afghanistan, with 37,899 deported through the Chaman, Torkham and Barabcha borders, Dawn reported from the statistics of a UN refugee agency. Also in November, over 31,500 Afghan Proof of Registration Cards card holders were sent to Afghanistan through UNHCR's repatriation centres.

Mecca suicide attempt foiled

A tense moment unfolded at Masjid al Haram in Makkah when a man tried to jump from the upper floors of the Grand Mosque. A prompt action by Saudi security man foiled his suicide attempt. Videos show the man edging towards the boundary of the elevated level before officers rushed in and restrained him. One security officer sustained injuries. Makkah Region Emirate confirmed the special force for the security of the Grand Mosque intervened after the man attempted to leap from the upper level.

1MDB CORRUPTION TRIAL | Malaysian ex-PM found guilty on four counts of abuse of power, penalised a hefty \$2.8 billion

Najib gets 15 yrs in jail

PUTRAJAYA

Imprisoned former Malaysian PM **Najib Razak** was sentenced to 15 years and a hefty 13.5 billion ringgit (US \$2.8 billion) in fines after being convicted on Friday in his biggest corruption trial tied to the multibillion-dollar looting of the 1MDB state investment fund.

The nation's High Court found Najib, 72, guilty on four counts of abuse of power and 21 charges of money laundering related to over \$700 million channelled into his personal bank accounts from the 1MDB fund. Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah sentenced Najib to 15 years in prison for each charge of abuse of power, and five years for each of the money laundering charges.

The sentences are to run concurrently which means he will face another 15 years in prison. The new sentence will run after his current term for an earlier 1MDB case ends, the judge said. He also imposed a fine of 13.5 million ringgit. If Najib fails to pay, he faces another 10 years in prison.



Najib's lawyer said they plan to appeal the verdict. Dressed in blue suit, Najib stood up and was calm when the sentencing was announced, slumping later back in his chair in the dock.

DENIES WRONGDOING

The ruling marked a major milestone in one of the world's largest financial scandals, which rippled across global markets and triggered investigations in the US and other nations. Najib denied any wrongdoing and maintained the funds were a political donation from Saudi Arabia and he had been misled by rogue financiers led by Low

Taek Jho. Low, thought to be the scandal's mastermind, remains at large.

Sequerah said Najib's claim of a Saudi donation was "incapable of belief". Four letters purportedly from the Saudi donor were forged and evidence clearly showed the funds originated from 1MDB, he said. He rejected defence arguments Najib was an unwitting victim, duped by former 1MDB officials and Low. Witness testimonies had pointed to an "unmistakable bond" between Najib and Low, who had played a pivotal role in the scandal and operated as "the proxy, the conduit, the intermediary and the

Razak set up the 1MDB development fund in 2009. He chaired 1MDB's advisory board, held veto power as finance minister while serving as PM.

facilitator" for Najib in 1MDB, the judge said.

The judge noted Najib failed to take steps to verify the origin of the massive funds nor took action against Low. Instead, Najib used the money despite its suspicious origins and took steps to protect his position, including by removing the then-attorney general and anti-corruption chief investigating the case, he said.

While Najib returned most of the funds to an offshore account where they came from, he said this was clearly staged to conceal the illicit origin of the funds. "The accused was no country bumpkin," said Sequerah, who took five hours to read the ruling.

"Any attempt to paint the accused as an ignoramus who was hopelessly unaware of the misdeeds going around him must therefore, fail miserably."

Indian student shot dead near Toronto University campus

TORONTO

A 20-year-old Indian doctoral student was shot dead near the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus in Canada, with authorities probing the case as a homicide, officials said.

The shooting took place on Tuesday, and the Toronto police on Wednesday identified the victim as **Shivank Avasthi**, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

Police were called to the area of Highland Creek Trail and Old Kingston Road at 3:30 pm on Tuesday for a report of an injured person lying on the ground duty. Inspector Jeff Allington told reporters near the scene on Tuesday night.

A person walking through the woods discovered the victim on a paved trail and called 911, Allington said. When officers arrived, they found a person with a gunshot wound. That person was pronounced dead at the scene, the report added. Police are probing the case as a homicide. "Our immediate focus is on preserving evidence at the scene, determining what hap-



pened and notifying this individual's next of kin. Because of that, there is very little information I am able to share with you tonight," Allington said. Toronto police said the suspect fled the area prior to police arrival. No suspect description has been released. Anyone with information is asked to contact police.

Meanwhile, India's Consulate in Toronto expressed "deep anguish" over the student's "tragic death".

"We express deep anguish over the tragic death of a young Indian doctoral student, Shivank Avasthi, in a fatal shooting incident near the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus. The Consulate is in touch with the bereaved family during this difficult time, and is extending all necessary assistance in close coordination with the local authorities," the Consulate posted on X.

Japan OKs \$58b defence budget

TOKYO

The Japanese cabinet on Friday okayed a record defence budget plan exceeding 9 trillion yen (\$58 billion) for the coming year to fortify its strike-back capability and coastal defence with cruise missiles and unmanned arsenals as tensions rise in the region.

The draft budget for fiscal 2026 beginning April is up 9.4% from 2025 and marks the fourth year of Japan's ongoing 5-year programme to double annual arms spending to 2% of gross domestic product.

The rise comes as Japan faces elevated tension from China. PM Sanae Takaichi said in November her country's military could get involved if China were to take action against Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing says must come under its rule.

Takaichi's government,

Knife-chemical attack: 15 hurt

A man was arrested after stabbing 8 people and injuring 7 others with what was believed to be bleach at a rubber factory in Japan. Eight people were taken to hospitals after being stabbed by the man with a knife at Yokohama Rubber Company in Mishima, west of Tokyo. The attacker, 38, was arrested for alleged attempted murder. Seven others were injured by the bleach thrown at them during the attack, police said.

under US pressure for a military rise, vowed to achieve the 2% target by March, 2 years earlier than planned. Japan also plans to revise the security and defence policy by December 2026 to further strengthen its military.

Justice for Hadi: Protesters block key Dhaka junction

DHAKA/NEW DELHI

Bangladesh's slain radical leader Sharif Osman Hadi's party activists on Friday blocked one of Dhaka's busiest intersections, demanding justice for his killing, disrupting traffic in capital Dhaka for several hours.

After Friday prayers, leaders and supporters of Inqilab Moncho and July Moncho, joined by students and members of the public, brought out a protest procession from the Dhaka University Central Mosque and marched towards Shahbagh, where they staged a sit-in demonstration, 'The Daily Star' newspaper reported.

Md Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, said the agitators began blocking the intersection at around 2:30 pm local time and traffic has remained



suspended since then.

The protesters blocked the main roads at Shahbagh, bringing vehicular movement in the area to a complete halt.

Addressing the demonstrators, Inqilab Moncho Member Secretary Abdullah Al Jaber said the group would continue the blockade until justice was ensured for Hadi's killing, adding, protesters were prepared to stay overnight at the site if necessary.

"From today, we declare this Shahbagh as 'Shaheed Osman Hadi Chatter'. Our movement will not leave the streets until justice is ensured for Hadi's killing," Al Jaber was quoted as saying by 'The Dhaka Tribune' newspaper.

Shahbagh is a strategic junction connecting several key parts of Dhaka, and blockades there often cause widespread traffic congestion across the city.

Iran seizes oil tanker in Strait of Hormuz

Tehran: Iran seized a foreign oil tanker as it travelled the strategic Strait of Hormuz, media said on Friday. Mojtaba Ghahramani, a provincial chief of the justice department, said the oil tanker was carrying some 4 million litres, or 25,000 barrels, of smuggled fuel when the Revolutionary Guard naval forces seized the vessel, the IRNA news agency reported.

Ghahramani said the forces detained 16 foreign crew members, and the seizure was a remarkable "blow" to smugglers. He did not disclose their nationality or the flag.

Iran occasionally seizes oil-carrying vessels

over similar charges in the region. In November, Iran seized a ship as it travelled through the narrow Strait of Hormuz over what it said were violations, including carrying an illegal consignment.

The West has blamed Iran for a series of limpet mine attacks on vessels that damaged tankers in 2019, and for a drone attack on an Israeli-linked oil tanker that killed two European crew members in 2021. The attacks began after US President Trump, in his first term in office, unilaterally withdrew from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. —AP

Palestinian man kills 2 in car-ramming and knife attack in northern Israel

Jerusalem: A car-ramming and stabbing attack by a Palestinian man left two people dead in northern Israel on Friday, police said. They said the attacker first crashed his vehicle into people in the northern city of Beit Shean, killing one man, and then sped onto a highway, where he fatally stabbed a young woman. The attacker was heading towards nearby Afula when a civilian bystander intervened and the attacker was shot.

Both of the victims were pronounced dead at the scene by paramedics. Israel's rescue services said. A teenage boy was hospitalised with minor wounds sustained in the car-ramming, according to bystanders. —AP

Mexico Xmas eve bus crash kills 10



Mexico City: A tragic bus crash in eastern Mexico has resulted in the deaths of at least 10

people and 32 injured in Veracruz on Thursday. A probe had been launched, police said.

The crash occurred on Christmas Eve in Zontecomatlan, while the vehicle travelled from Mexico City to Chicontepec village.

Fatal traffic accidents, especially involving buses and trucks, are common in Mexico. Authorities suggest speeding or mechanical issues may have played a role in this latest incident. In late November, 10 people were killed and 20 hurt in a similar mishap in Michoacan.

Kim unveils North Korean plan to boost missile, shell production

SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has unveiled a plan to build new munitions factories to expand the production capacity of missiles and shells, stressing raising their production is critical in bolstering the war deterrent, state media reported on Friday.

The report came a day after the North's media said Kim had inspected an 8,700-tonne "nuclear-powered strategic



guided missile submarine" under construction.

The North's leader ordered expanding the production capacity of missiles and shells

during his visit to major munitions industry enterprises as he inspected the missile and shell production in the fourth quarter, according to the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). It did not elaborate on the date of his inspection or the factories' locations.

Kim noted plans to construct new munitions factories will be decided at the upcoming party congress, stressing the importance of modernising the munitions industry, as per the KCNA.

'Putin indicated Russia could be open to territory swap'



MOSCOW

President **Vladimir Putin** told some of Russia's top businessmen he might be open to swapping some territory controlled by Russian forces in Ukraine but that he wanted the whole of Donbas, the Kommersant newspaper reported.

Andrei Kolesnikov, the Kremlin correspondent for the Kommersant, one of Russia's top newspapers, said Putin briefed top businessmen on the details of the plan at a late-night Kremlin meeting on December 24.

"Vladimir Putin asserted that the Russian side is still

ready to make the concessions that he made in Anchorage. In other words, that 'Donbas is ours'," Kommersant reported.

In essence, Putin wants the whole of Donbas but outside that area "a partial exchange of territories from the Russian side is not ruled out," Kolesnikov wrote.

ZELENSKY, TRUMP TO MEET TOMORROW

Meanwhile, AP reported that Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelenskyy** (R) said on Friday that he would meet his US counterpart **Donald Trump** in Florida over the

weekend. Zelenskyy told journalists that the two leaders would discuss security guarantees for Ukraine during the Sunday's talks, and the 20-point plan under discussion "is about 90% ready".

An "economic agreement" also will be discussed, Zelenskyy said, but he was unable to confirm "whether anything will be finalised by the end". The Ukrainian side will also raise "territorial issues", he said. Zelenskyy said Ukraine "would like the Europeans to be involved," but doubted if it would be possible at short notice.



Taiwan arms sales: China sanctions 20 US def firms

Beijing: China on Friday imposed sanctions on 20 US defence firms in response to the Trump government's approval of a record \$11.1 billion arms sales package to Taiwan.

It warned any attempt to provoke China on the Taiwan issue would be met with a firm response. In response to the US announcement of arms sales to what it dubbed "China's Taiwan region", the foreign ministry said Beijing has decided to take countermeasures against 20 American military-related firms and 10 executives involved in arming Taiwan in recent years. "The Taiwan question is at the very core of China's core interests and the first red line that must not be crossed in China-US relations. Anyone who attempts to cross the line and make provocations on the Taiwan question will be met with China's firm response," it said, urging the US to abide by the one-China principle and to "stop the dangerous moves of arming Taiwan, stop undermining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, and stop sending wrong signals to 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces". —PTI

8 die, 18 hurt in Syria mosque bombing

BEIRUT

A bombing at a mosque located in the Syrian city of Homs during Friday prayers killed at least 8 people and wounded 18, authorities said.

Images released by Syria's state-run Arab News Agency showed blood on the mosque's carpets, holes in the walls, shattered windows and fire damage. The Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib Mosque is located in a predominantly Alawite area of the Wadi al-Dhahab neighbourhood in Homs, Syria's third-largest city.

ANA, citing a source, said initial probes indicate explosive devices were planted inside the mosque. Authorities were searching for the perpetrators of the attack. A security cordon was placed around the mosque, Syria's interior ministry said.

Tensions have flared across Syria in recent weeks as long-

running sectarian, ethnic and political fault lines continue to destabilise the country, even as major fight has subsided.

The nation has experienced waves of sectarian clashes since the fall of President Bashar Assad last year in attacks by insurgents led by the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, headed by now interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa. Assad, himself an Alawite, fled to Russia. Members of his sect have been subject to crackdowns. In March, an ambush carried out by Assad's supporters against security forces triggered days of sectarian attacks killing hundreds of Alawites.

On Monday, clashes erupted intermittently between Syrian forces and Kurdish-led fighters, the Syrian Democratic Forces, in mixed neighbourhoods in Aleppo, forcing temporary closures of schools and public institutions and prompting civilians to shelters.



The aftermath of an explosion in a mosque in Homs, Syria, on Friday. —AP

Saudi Arabia has launched airstrikes, say Yemen rebels

Aden: Separatists in southern Yemen accused Saudi Arabia on Friday of targeting their forces with airstrikes, something not acknowledged by the kingdom after it warned the forces to withdraw from governorates they recently took over.

The Southern Transitional Council, backed by the UAE, said the strikes happened in Yemen's Hadramout governorate. It wasn't clear if there were any casualty from the strikes that further raise tensions in the war-torn nation and risked a fragile Saudi-led coalition that has been battling the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in the country's north for a decade.

Amr Al Bidh, a foreign affairs special representative, said its fighters had been operating in Hadramout after facing "multiple ambushes" from gunmen. The attacks killed 2 fighters with the Council and hurt 12 others. —AP

Briefs

JAIPUR

Raghuvanshi gets injured while fielding



Mumbai opener **Angrish Raghuvanshi** was rushed to hospital on Friday after a heavy fall while attempting a difficult catch left him with an injury just below the neck and a concussion during his team's Vijay Hazare Trophy match against Uttarakhand here. The 21-year-old has since been discharged and returned to the team hotel after scans revealed nothing serious. The incident occurred in the 30th over, bowled by off-spinner Tanush Kotian. Right-handed batter Saurabh Rawat attempted a slog-sweep and Raghuvanshi, stationed at deep mid-wicket, sprinted in towards mid-wicket to get hold of the top edge. However, his one-handed effort didn't yield the result but in the process he had a nasty fall and his head hit the ground, resulting in a concussion.

NEW DELHI

Iyer may not be in RCB XI at start: Anil



Venkatesh Iyer was bought by Royal Challengers Bengaluru for ₹7 crore in the IPL mini auction but former captain Anil Kumble said that the pace-bowling all-rounder may not find a place in their playing XI in the initial phase of the lucrative T20 league. Earlier this month, defending champions RCB were involved in a bidding war with Iyer's former side Kolkata Knight Riders before securing his service. "Venkatesh Iyer will not be in the playing eleven at the start. You do not want to create doubt in a winning team. That is probably why they did not go after a Ravi Bishnoi, so that Suyash Sharma does not feel threatened by a senior India spinner," JioStar expert Kumble said on Friday.

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Deepti equals T20I record with 151 wkts

Star India all-rounder **Deepti Sharma** on Friday became the joint highest wicket-taker in T20 Internationals along side Megan Schutt of Australia after returning impressive

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY | Player of the Match, Virat scored 77; Chasing modest 254, Gujarat folded for 247 in 47.4 overs

Kohli, Pant fifties carry Delhi to tight 7-run win

BENGALURU

Star batters Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant made solid fifties, while Gujarat batters pressed the self-destruction button as Delhi eked out a tight seven-run win in their Elite Group D match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here Friday.

Player of the match Kohli (77, 61 balls) and Pant (70, 79b) carried Delhi to a modest 254 for 9 in 50 overs.

Despite looking solid in pockets, Gujarat made heavy weather of it and folded for 247 in 47.4 overs.

Kohli and Pant offered the main story thread of the day with knocks of contrasting nature. Kohli had to walk in earlier in this match too after the early departure of opener Priyansh Arya, and looked in excellent touch.

After blocking the first ball, Kohli straight drove pacer Chintan Gaja for a four, manifesting his rich vein of form.

While other Delhi batters were often pushed to a tight corner by Gujarat bowlers, Kohli was fluency personified in his pet format of the game.

A pulled six off Gaja and a stunning flicked four off Arzan Nagwaswalla followed as Kohli slipped into the top gear. The 37-year-old reached his fifty in 29 balls that had 10 fours and a six in a wonderful exhibition of shot-making.

The veteran batter brought up his 85th List A half-century off Ravi Bishnoi, carving the leg-spinner for a boundary over the covers.

A second century on the trot looked a certainty but a lovely ball from left-arm spinner Jayswal (4/42) ended his tenure.



Delhi's Virat Kohli plays a shot during the Vijay Hazare Trophy match against Gujarat at BCCI Centre of Excellence Ground in Bengaluru on Friday. PTI

Group D, Brief Scores:

Delhi: 254/9 in 50 overs (Virat Kohli 77, Rishabh Pant 70, Harsh Tyagi 40; Vishal Jayswal 4/42) **beat Gujarat: 247** all out in 47.4 overs (Aarya Desai 57, Saurabh Chauhan 49; Prince Yadav 3/37, Ishant Sharma 2/28)

Services: 83 all out in 21.5 overs (Rajesh Mohanty 4/25, Sambit Baral 4/21) **lost to Odisha: 84/6 in 24.3 overs** (Sandeep Pattnaik 32 not out; Poonam Poonia 4/27)

Railways: 266/9 in 50 overs (Ravi Singh 76, Ansh Yadav 59, Zubair Ali 48; Satyanarayana Raju 3/41, Narasimha Raju 3/68) **beat Andhra: 271/4 in 44.4 overs** (Ricky Bhui 76, Nitish Kumar Reddy 55 not out, Hemanth Reddy 41 not out; Karn Sharma 3/46).

Saurashtra: 253 all out in 50 overs (Harvik Desai 101, Sammar Gajjar 83; Anshul Kamboj 3/30) **lost to Haryana: 256/4 in 39 overs** (Yashvardhan Dalal 164 not out, Parth Vats 67; Ankur Panwar 3/51).

Rinku stars as UP hammer Chandigarh by 227 runs

RAJKOT

T20 World Cup-bound India star Rinku Singh continued his prolific run with a blistering century, while Aryan Juyal also struck a hundred as Uttar Pradesh cruised to a commanding 227-run victory over Chandigarh in their Vijay Hazare Group B match on Friday.

Rinku smashed an unbeaten 106 off 60 balls, while Juyal anchored the innings with a composed 134 off 118 deliveries and wicket-keeper batter Dhruv Jurel chipped in with a brisk 67 off 57 balls as Uttar Pradesh piled up a formidable 367 for four.

The bowlers then ensured there was no contest. Leg-spinner Zeeshan Ansari (4/29) once again starred with the ball, claiming his second successive four-wicket haul, as Chandigarh were bundled out for 140 in 29.3 overs.

Mumbai ride on Tamore 93 to beat Uttarakhand

Sarfaraz and Musheer score half centuries, younger brother also takes two wickets in 51-run victory

JAIPUR

Rohit Sharma suffered a golden duck but Mumbai had enough firepower in its arsenal to quell the Uttarakhand challenge by 51 runs in a Group C match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy, here Friday.

Batting first, Mumbai scored a healthy 331 for seven with useful contributions from keeper-batter Hardik Tamore (93 not out off 82 balls), Sarfaraz Khan (55 off 49 balls) and Musheer Khan (55 off 56 balls).

Later, Musheer (2/57) also did his bit with the ball, snaring a couple of wickets as Uttarakhand managed 280 for 9 in the end largely due to left-handed opener Yuvraj Choudhary's run-a-ball 96.

Onkar Tarmale, a surprise pick by Sunrisers Hyderabad, on List A debut picked 2 for 40 and seemed steady third seamer.

The 5000 odd crowd was in for a disappointing day as their hero Rohit was dismissed off the very first delivery he faced.

Lanky medium fast bowler Devendra Bora (3/74) scalped the most memorable victim of his career when he dug one short and the former India skipper instinctively went for a pull shot.

Jagmohan Nagarkoti stationed at deep fine leg juggled before taking it on second attempt.

While Rohit left even before crowd had gathered in full steam, none of the 6000 to 7000 odd left the ground waiting for their man's fielding session. Rohit took a sharp catch at first slip off Shardul Thakur to dismiss opener Kamal Singh.



Mumbai's Hardik Tamore plays a shot during the Vijay Hazare Trophy match against Uttarakhand at Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Friday. PTI

Group C, Brief Scores:

Mumbai: 331 for 7 in 50 overs (Hardik Tamore 93, Sarfaraz Khan 55, Musheer Khan 55; Devendra Bora 3/74).

Uttarakhand: 280/9 in 50 overs (Yuvraj Choudhary 96; Onkar Tarmale 2/40).

Goa: 285 for 9 in 50 overs. (Lalit Yadav 104, Deepraj Gaonkar 71; Rohit Kumar 5/55)

Himachal Pradesh: 277 all out (Pukhraj Mann 126; Deepraj Gaonkar 5/50).

Sikkim: 150 all out in 40.2 overs (Kranthi Kumar 40; Rajvardhan Hangargekar 4/21, Ramakrishna Ghosh 3/22)

Maharashtra 153 for 2 in 18 overs (Prithvi Shaw 51).

Chhattisgarh: 253 all out in 48.4 overs (Amandeep Khare 70, Mayank Verma 64; Krish Bhagat 3/33)

Punjab: 254 for 1 in 42.1 overs. (Harnoor Singh 115 not out, Anmolpreet Singh 105 not out).

The crowd in a mood for a bit more started chants of 'Ek Do, Rohit ko bowling do' but skipper Thakur didn't pay heed to their demand.

During the 49th over when Mumbai had sealed the game, Tushar Deshpande in fact asked his senior colleague if he would like to roll his arm over but he refused.

Earlier, when Mumbai batted, the Khan brothers

Sarfaraz and Musheer added 107 runs for the third wicket to lay the platform for a big total.

While Sarfaraz mainly hit shots square of the wicket including a big six off left arm spinner Mayank Mishra, his younger brother Musheer played a lot within the 'V' with some straight hit over seamer's head.

Both were guilty of throwing away starts.

20 wickets tumble on first day

Australia who were bowled out for 152 bounce back to skittle England out for 110 in the fourth Ashes Test

MELBOURNE

Australia collapsed for 152 yet still claimed a 42-run lead over England on the first innings in a remarkable opening day of the fourth Ashes test Friday in which 20 wickets fell.

The day's play unfolded before a world-record crowd for a day of cricket at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The attendance figure of 94,199 beat the 93,013 for the 2015 World Cup final between Australia and New Zealand at the MCG.

Australia was 4-0 in its second innings at stumps, an overall lead of 46 runs, after having to bat through one nervous over before stumps.

The 20 wickets on the first day was also a record for a Boxing Day test, beating the 18 in the 1998 Ashes match. The all-time test record is 27 for the 1888 Ashes test at Lord's.

England lost each of the first three tests to allow Australia to retain the Ashes in just 11 days of on-field action.

Josh Tongue claimed a career-best 5-45 as England



Australia's Steve Smith is bowled by England's Josh Tongue in the 4th Ashes Test in Melbourne on Friday. AP

bowled Australia out after winning the toss and bowling. In reply, England made 110 in 29.5 overs as Michael Neser grabbed 4-45.

Tongue, in his eighth test, took three early wickets as Australia stumbled to 72-4 at lunch.

Travis Head (12) and Jake Weatherald (10) fell cheaply as Australia reached 31-2 in the 10th over. Capitalizing on a pitch offering sideways movement, Tongue deceived Marnus Labuschagne (6) who edged to first slip at 34-3.

In a key breakthrough, cap-

tain Steve Smith lost his middle stump while attempting to drive Tongue with the total on 51.

"He's an amazing player. I've grown up watching him," Tongue said of Smith. "Getting him out is a very special feeling. It has been an amazing day of test-match cricket."

Australia aimed to rebuild through veteran Usman Khawaja, but the 39-year-old was caught behind to Gus Atkinson's bowling for 29 at 89-5. Alex Carey clipped a catch to leg gully two runs later.

India take unassailable 3-0 lead over Sri Lanka women

Shafali sizzles as hosts win the third Women's T20I by eight wickets

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Shafali Verma sparked with a whirlwind unbeaten fifty to power India to an emphatic eight-wicket win over Sri Lanka in the third Women's T20 International and help the hosts take an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series here on Friday.

Opting to bowl, pacer Renuka Singh returned with a four-wicket haul on comeback, helping India restrict Sri Lanka to a modest 112 for seven.

Shafali then stole the lime-light with her power-hitting, remaining unbeaten on 79 off 42 balls to single-handedly take India to the series win.

Earlier, Renuka accounted for four Lankan batters after skipper Harmanpreet invited the visitors to take the first strike, while all-rounder Deepti Sharma dismissed three batters.

Hasini Perera (25), Imesha Dulani (27) and Kabisha Dilhari (20) put up some resistance against the Indian bowlers.



India's Renuka Singh bowls a delivery during the third T20I match against Sri Lanka Women in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday. PTI

Scoreboard

Sri Lanka Women Innings: H Perera c Deepti b Renuka 25, C Athapaththu c Harmanpreet b Deepti 3, H Samarawickrama c & b Renuka 2, Dulani c Jemimah b Renuka 27, N Silva lbw b Renuka 4, K Dilhari c Amanjot b Deepti 20, K Nuthyanga (not out) 19, M Shehani b Deepti 5, M Madara (not out) 1 **Extras:** (B-1, LB-2, W-3) 6 **Total:** (For 7 wkts, 20 Overs) 112 **FoW:** 25-1, 31-2, 32-3, 45-4, 85-5, 90-6, 98-7.

Bowling: Renuka Singh 4-1-21-4, Kranti Gaud 4-0-22-0, Deepti Sharma 4-0-18-3, Vaishnavi Sharma 3-0-14-0, Amanjot Kaur 4-0-23-0, Shree Charani 1-0-11-0.

India Women Innings: S Verma (not out) 79, S Mandhana lbw b Dilhari 1, J Rodrigues b Dilhari 9, H Kaur (not out) 21 **Extras:** (LB-1, W-3, NB-1) 5 **Total:** 115-2 (in 13.2 Overs) **FoW:** 1-27, 2-67

Bowling: Malsha Shehani 2-2-0-28-0, Malki Madara 2-0-11-0, Nimesha Madushani 2-0-29-0, Kavisha Dilhari 3-0-18-2, Inoka Ranaweera 4-0-28-0.

World Cup

Cummins sets sights on T20Is after missing Ashes Tests



Australia's captain Pat Cummins during the third Ashes Test against England in Adelaide last week. AP

MELBOURNE

Australia Test and ODI captain Pat Cummins will cool his heels after his successful hit-and-run Ashes appearance in Adelaide as he sets sights on the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka in February next year.

Cummins missed the first two Ashes Tests due to a lower-back injury he suffered during the West Indies tour in June-July, but made a brilliant return in the third

match in Adelaide to pick up six wickets in the series-clinching win.

With the Ashes urn in their hands, Australia decided to rule Cummins out of the two remaining Tests.

The 32-year-old Cummins said on Friday he will now take rest before targeting the T20 World Cup which begins in early February.

"Feeling good, so got through Adelaide unscathed so pretty happy," he told Channel 7 during the lunch break on the first day of the

Boxing Day Test here.

"As of a few weeks ago, was still coming back from a back injury so playing back-to-back Test matches was pretty high risk.

"Cool our heels for a little bit with T20 World Cup next month," Cummins added.

His optimism came after coach Andrew McDonald said earlier this week that Cummins was not a certainty for Australia's T20 World Cup campaign.

Australia's first match is on February 11 against Ireland

in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Although Cummins captains the Test and ODI teams, all-rounder Mitch Marsh leads Australia in the shortest format. Cummins also said veteran spinner Nathan Lyon is facing a lengthy period on the sidelines following surgery on his hamstring. Lyon suffered the injury on the final day of the Adelaide Test and immediately went under the knife.

Australia's next Test assignment after the Ashes isn't due until August, giving

him plenty of time to recover.

"He had surgery a couple of days ago, so he'll have a lengthy layoff, I don't know exactly, but will be at least a few months," Cummins said. "Bit of a long road ahead for him, but he's done it before so hopefully he'll be back."

"It was a big one, so surgery, and he has his crutches in the change room at the moment so we wish best ... it was a shame but he put a brave face after the Test."