

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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

## Briefs

**NEW DELHI**  
**Last Cabinet meeting at South Block**  
 Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair a special meeting of the Union Cabinet at South Block on Friday, the last such gathering at the British-era secretariat building before the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) shifts to its new complex, 'Seva Teerth'.  
 Official sources confirmed this will be the Cabinet's final meeting in the PMO located in the imperial complex designed by British architect Herbert Baker in the early 1900s to meet the requirements of the British Raj.  
 The cabinet meeting, scheduled for 4 pm on Friday, will be followed by the PMO's relocation to 'Seva Teerth'. The move will mark the end of an era, as all government departments vacate the North and South blocks -- the seat of power since 1921.

**NEW DELHI**  
**₹3.4 cr for air navigation upgradation**  
 The State-owned Airports Authority of India (AAI) has earmarked Rs 3,490 crore for upgradation of air navigation infrastructure, including Rs 1,532 crore for automation of air traffic management systems at airports.

AAI is the only Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) in the country. On Thursday, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol told the Lok Sabha that AAI continuously undertakes modernisation of air navigation infrastructure and upgradation of Air Traffic Management (ATM) systems to cater to the growing air traffic demand.

**CHENNAI**  
**Old Tamil inscriptions found on Egypt tombs**  
 In a discovery that rewrites the maritime history of ancient India, researchers have identified 2,000-year-old Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions inside the high-security royal tombs of the valley of the Kings in Egypt.

The findings, which confirm that ancient Tamil traders travelled deep into the Egyptian interior for exploration and tourism, were presented by Swiss scholar Professor Ingo Strauch on the inaugural day of the four-day International Conference on Tamil Epigraphy here on February 11.  
 Professor Strauch, from the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, along with Professor Charlotte Schmid of the French School of Asian Studies, Paris, documented approximately 30 inscriptions in Tamil-Brahmi and Prakrit across six rock-cut tombs, including the tomb of Ramesses VI. The most significant discovery is the name 'Cikali Korran', which appears in eight different locations.

**BENGALURU**  
**No meat sale for Maha Shivratri**  
 The Greater Bengaluru Authority on Thursday issued a notification prohibiting animal slaughter and the sale of meat in slaughterhouses under their jurisdiction on the occasion of Mahashivratri.

The ban will only be imposed on February 15 in Bengaluru.  
 Earlier, Ayodhya Food Commissioner Manik Chandra Singh announced a strict ban on non-vegetarian food in hotels and restaurants within Ayodhya Dham.

## STRIKE BY UNIONS | Normal life is unaffected

# Bandh evokes sparse response

NEW DELHI

A one-day nationwide strike called by trade unions on Thursday to protest alleged anti-worker policies of the central government had a muted impact, leaving most services largely unaffected.  
 Public transport, banks, and government offices continued to operate normally in most regions, while only pockets of certain states saw demonstrators joining the protest or work disruptions.  
 Trade unions mostly held gate meetings and demonstrations across many states, and at some places, workers reported late for duty to show their solidarity to the agitation.  
 According to reports, a mixed response was seen in states including Odisha, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab. Trade unions claimed "a big



Trade union members at a protest in Gurugram. - PTI

resistance against the anti-people, anti-national policies of the Union Government", and stated that more than 30 crore workers, farmers and other sections joined the agitation.  
 The joint platform of the Central Trade Unions and Independent Sectoral Federations and Associations, along with the constituents of Samyukt Kisan Morcha and the joint front of agricultural workers' unions, succeeded in organising strike actions and massive mobilisations in more than 600 districts of the country, the forum stated.  
 In Delhi, trade unions organised processions in all industrial areas as part of strike actions. A meeting was held at the Jantar Mantar, addressed by central trade union leaders.  
 The Confederation of All India Traders said that "markets across the country are open, trade is normal".

## FUNDS SPAT: B'LURU TECHIE KILLS PARENTS

BENGALURU

A 33-year-old software engineer has been arrested on the charge of stabbing his parents to death around 7 am on Wednesday in their Vignan Nagar home, allegedly for not funding his start-up venture.  
 Police said the accused, Rohan Chandra Bhat, was working as a software engineer in the USA and returned to Bengaluru three years ago. He lived separately from his parents — Naveen Chandra Bhat (60), a retired Navy Captain, and his wife Shyamala Bhat (55), a dentist — and had worked for a year, but had then stopped.  
 He had reportedly been seeking financial support from his parents to launch a start-up, but they insisted that he secure a job first.  
 Police said Rohan allegedly stabbed both parents multiple times, inflicting deep abdominal injuries. They were rushed to hospital but were declared dead at around 8.15 am. A neighbour alerted the police.  
 The post-mortem examination will be conducted when the Bhat's daughter arrives from the USA.

## Nipah-affected nurse dies due to complications

KOLKATA/NEW DELHI

A nurse who had recovered from Nipah virus infection died of cardiac arrest at a private hospital in West Bengal's Barasat on Thursday, a state health department official said.  
 The woman had been in a prolonged coma, which severely affected her immunity, and later developed a lung infection. She had been taken off ventilator support at the end of January.  
 "She died of cardiac arrest this afternoon. Though she had recovered from the Nipah infection, she was suffering from multiple complications," the official said.  
 Two confirmed cases of Nipah Virus Disease have been reported from West Bengal since December, according to reports from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). The other one, a male nurse, has been cured of the disease.  
 The deceased, who was a resident of Katwa in Purba Bardhaman district, also con-

tracted a hospital-acquired infection during treatment.  
 "She was trying to regain consciousness, move her limbs, and speak before her condition suddenly deteriorated. She died at around 4.20 pm," he said.  
 The nurse had fallen ill in early January after returning home on December 31 for the New Year holidays and was initially admitted to Burdwan Medical College and Hospital before being shifted to the private hospital in Barasat.  
 The Union Health Ministry had earlier said that following confirmation of the two cases, the Centre, in coordination with the West Bengal government, initiated prompt and comprehensive public health measures in accordance with established protocols.  
 "A total of 196 contacts linked to the confirmed cases have been identified, traced, monitored, and tested. All traced contacts have been found asymptomatic and have tested negative for Nipah Virus Disease," the ministry had said in its earlier statement.

## Maharashtra village vows to be caste-free

AHILYANAGAR

The gramsabha of Saundala in Maharashtra's Ahilyanagar district has unanimously passed a resolution declaring the village as "caste-free" in order to eliminate discrimination, untouchability and social injustice.  
 According to an official resolution dated February 5, a meeting of the gram panchayat was held under the chairmanship of the sarpanch where members engaged in a detailed discussion on creating a humanitarian social system based on the principles of equality, brotherhood and social justice as enshrined in the Constitution.  
 The resolution stated that there will be no discrimination in Saundala, a village in Newasa taluka, on the basis of caste, religion, creed or lineage and that all residents will be treated as equal.  
 "All public places and facilities, including government services, water sources, temples, cremation grounds, schools and social functions, will remain open to all residents without discrimination," the resolution stated.

## Bail for tobacco tycoon's son

KANPUR

The main accused in the high profile Lamborghini crash in Kanpur, Shivam Mishra, son of tobacco businessman KK Mishra, was granted bail on a personal bond of Rs 20,000 on Wednesday.  
 The court of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate not only allowed Mishra's bail plea but also rejected the police application seeking his remand.  
 Shivam Mishra was arrested on Thursday in connection with the crash on Sunday.

## A171: Italian news report says captain was monitoring flight

MUMBAI

According to the report in Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*, Western assessments suggested that the captain was monitoring the flight, noting that the left engine shut down first, followed by the right, and that the captain occupies the left seat in the cockpit. It further claimed that flight data recorder inputs showed that while first officer Clive Kunder attempted to regain altitude, the captain's control stick "remained stationary" in the final seconds.  
 The report also cited Boeing 787 simulator tests

conducted in the US, where experts reportedly failed to identify any mechanical failure scenario that could cause both engines to shut down simultaneously in the manner recorded. It claimed the "only reasonable explanation" was human intervention, whether intentional or accidental.  
 The Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, en route to London Gatwick, crashed on June 12 last year shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad, killing 260 people, including 19 on the ground. A preliminary AAIB report confirmed that both fuel switches moved to cutoff within one second of each other. The CVR captured one pilot asking, "Why did you turn off the engines?" and the other replying, "It wasn't me."  
 Following the uproar, the AAIB issued a clarification rejecting the Italian daily's claims. It said reports suggesting that the investigation had been finalised were incorrect and speculative, adding that the final report would be released only after the probe is completed in line with international norms.  
 The agency urged media organisations to exercise restraint, warning that premature speculation causes unnecessary public anxiety and undermines the integrity of the investigation.

## Agitated Rahul snaps at reporters

NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi lost his cool at a section of media persons on Thursday, as they questioned him about a possible privilege motion against him by the ruling party in the ongoing Budget session.  
 Rahul, visibly agitated at the question, snapped, "Have you been given this code word for today?" In the same breath, he asked them to "stay objective" in their work and uphold the sanctity of their profession.  
 As Rahul walked to his car outside the Parliament com-

plex, the scribes gathered around him to seek his reaction on the privilege motion being proposed against him.  
 This apparently triggered him, and he asked, "Is privilege the code word for today? Have you been given this word for today?"  
 He said further, "Yesterday the word was authentication, today it is privilege. You should try to do some objective stuff. You are not totally employed by the BJP; it gets really shameful."  
 "You are responsible people, you have media people, you have a responsibility to stay objective," he said.

## CBI takes over case of NEET aspirant's death

PATNA

In a significant development, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday formally took over the case related to suspected rape and death of a 17-year old NEET aspirant in Patna early last month, and also registered an FIR in this connection.  
 Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on January 31 had urged the Centre to hand over the investigation to the CBI.  
 The girl was found unconscious in her hostel room on January 6, and died at a private hospital five days later.

## Saini luring MLA to join BJP: AAP

CHANDIGARH

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab on Thursday accused Haryana chief minister Nayab Saini of "attempting to lure one of its MLAs to resign from the party and join the BJP".  
 Addressing media here, AAP MLA from Sangrur Narinder Kaur Bharaj, along with party state media incharge Baltej Pannu, accused the BJP of approaching the former with inducements under its "Operation Lotus".  
 Stating that Haryana chief minister Nayab Saini tried to contact her a few days ago, Bharaj alleged that he tempted her with a BJP ticket from Sangrur and a promise to fulfil any demand.  
 Stating that she joined AAP in 2014 at the age of 19, inspired by the policies of Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Singh Mann, Bharaj said that she was that worker who put up posters for the party.  
 "Only the Aam Aadmi Party can give a small farmer's daughter the honour of becoming an MLA at the age of 27," she added.

## IAF makes history at Moran highway

DIBRUGARH (ASSAM)

The state of Assam is going to witness a historic event, the inauguration of an Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) on the Moran bypass in Dibrugarh district, on February 14.  
 The facility opens an identified stretch on the highway as an alternative runway during contingencies, which can handle emergency landing and take-off operations of fighters, transport aircraft and helicopters as well as disaster relief teams.  
 The occasion holds profound significance towards



## SC chastises 'Ghooskhor' filmmaker

NEW DELHI

Observing that a section of society cannot be denigrated in the name of freedom of expression, the Supreme Court on Thursday rapped filmmaker Neeraj Pandey over the title of his movie *Ghooskhor Pandat*.  
 The top court was hearing a plea seeking a stay on the release of the Manoj Bajpayee-starrer film on OTT platform Netflix.  
 A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan directed Pandey to file an affidavit that the film doesn't denigrate any section of society.

## Bengal bust-up over compulsory singing of 'Vande Mataram'

KOLKATA

The political row between Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Trinamool Congress (TMC) remains unabated even on Thursday over compulsory singing of 'Vande Mataram' before the national anthem 'Jana Gana Mana'.  
 State education minister Bratya Basu told a press conference that Hindu outfits including the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) don't like Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore.  
 "RSS and other Hindu outfits never liked the open-

mindedness of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore is still taught in several countries. Now making 'Vande Mataram' compulsory before 'Jana Gana Mana' is a push towards hierarchy," said Basu.  
 Notably, for the last few elections TMC has called the BJP 'outsiders' and portrayed themselves as 'custodians of Bengali pride'. Now ahead of the Assembly elections this notification of compulsory singing of 'Vande Mataram' has been termed an attempt to "restore it to its full dignity" by the saffron camp.

## Didi cries foul over Bengal worker's death in Pune

KOLKATA

After a migrant worker from Bengal was allegedly murdered at Maharashtra's Pune for speaking in the Bengali language, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee called it a "hate crime".  
 Demanding strict action against the perpetrators, Mamata said on social media, "I am shaken, enraged, and sickened beyond words by the barbaric murder of Sukhen Mahato, a 24-year-old migrant worker from Bandwan in Purulia, the sole earning member of his family, in Pune, Maharashtra. This is nothing short of a hate crime. A young man was hunted, tortured, and murdered for his language, his identity, his roots. This is the direct consequence of a climate where xenophobia is weaponised and innocents made into targets."  
 The Pune rural police identified the victim as Sukhen Dhiren Mahato, Tumrasole village in West Bengal's Purulia District.  
 According to the primary investigation the Pune rural police suggested that Sukhen was killed over a dispute with local people, and the initial autopsy report said he died due to a severe head injury.  
 BJP MP Jyotirmoy Singh Mahata alleged that neither the present Trinamool Congress (TMC) government nor the former Left Front government has done any development of the state for which people have to go to other states for work.  
 Sukhen's father said that due to poverty he and his brothers could not study and had to leave for work. He also said that Sukhen didn't understand Hindi or Marathi.

## Rijiju shares clip claiming it shows abusive MPs; Priyanka denies charge

NEW DELHI

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday shared a video which he claimed was an "illegal video clip" taken by a Congress MP when 20-25 Congress MPs had allegedly entered the chamber of Lok Sabha Speaker, abused him and threatened the Prime Minister of India.  
 Sharing the video on X Rijiju, who had on Wednesday claimed that the Speaker was threatened in the presence of senior Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and KC Venugopal.  
 He added, "Our party believes in debate and discussion and never encourages MPs to threaten physically."  
 Vadra meanwhile rejected Rijiju's allegation on Thursday, saying, "We did not abuse anyone," and adding that she had only spoken peacefully towards the end of the meeting.

## 16L held since 2016 for violating prohibition in Bihar

PATNA

those found guilty of violating prohibition law in the state during the period. Around 4.5 crore litres of illicit liquor and 1.6 lakh vehicles have also been seized.  
 Replying to a query by MLC Ravindra Prasad Singh in the state legislative council on the issue of a rise in other forms of intoxicants following enforcement of prohibition, state rural works minister Ashok Choudhary admitted that there had been some increase in the use of thinners and drugs among children, but the government was taking strict action to check it.  
 "We have seized 15,800 kilogrammes of ganja (marijuana), 240 kilogrammes of opium, 350 kilogrammes of charas, and 40,000 litres of cough syrup during this period," he added.



Replied to Yadav's query, the minister asserted that the state government had established 22 checkpoints along the border with Uttar Pradesh, 19 along the Jharkhand border, eight along the West Bengal border, and 17 along the international border with Nepal.  
 "CCTV cameras and breathalysers are available at all checkpoints. The government agencies are conducting raids, searches and seizures along the Nepal border to crack down on illicit liquor and narcotics," he added.  
 Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had decided to enforce prohibition law following a demand from Jeevika Didis (women members of self-help groups constituted under the Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project), and other women's organisations.

### offgrid

## 16L held since 2016 for violating prohibition in Bihar

Banning liquor in Bihar seems to have had limited effect, if statistics are anything to go by. As many as 16 lakh people have been arrested till December 31 last year since the imposition of total prohibition in Bihar in April, 2016.  
 Similarly 10 lakh FIRs have also been registered against

those found guilty of violating prohibition law in the state during the period. Around 4.5 crore litres of illicit liquor and 1.6 lakh vehicles have also been seized.

## Five men beat a young man with sticks and attempted to strangle him to death



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** In Prayagraj, a young man was severely beaten with sticks and rods over a minor dispute. An attempt was also made to strangle him. The attackers fled when people nearby rushed to the scene. The injured man filed a complaint with the police, based on which a report was filed against five named and unidentified individuals, and a search has been launched for them. Rishabh Kesharwani, a businessman from Lookarganj, told the police that he was returning from his shop around 1-1:30

a.m. Wednesday night. He stopped when he saw his aunt's son, Shailendra, standing on the road. It is alleged that Manish Kesharwani and Shabhit Gupta, who were standing there, began abusing him. When he objected, they began beating him. Manish then called out to Prashant Kesharwani, Sagar Kesharwani, and Krishna Kesharwani, telling them to take him to the garage. Allegedly, the five men took him inside the garage, beating him with sticks.

Two of them attempted to strangle him with the intention of killing

him. The five men, along with some other relatives, beat him so badly that he fell unconscious. Then, assuming he was dead, they removed a 24-gram gold chain from his neck and left. Calling his brother with the help of a passerby, he managed to escape and, with the help of a passerby, called his brother. His wallet, which contained 3,400, also disappeared in the incident. Khuldabad police stated that an investigation has been launched. A video of the incident has surfaced and is being viewed.

## 21 year old Student seriously injured in Pickup Collision, Dies.



**Councilor Pradeep Yadav Showed humanity, took the student to the hospital**

**Bhadohi.** A student going to school in a pickup met with an accident at around 9:30 in the morning at Indramil intersection in the city. The girl had left her home to study at Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Government Degree College, Ramraipur. On the other hand, a pickup coming at high speed near Indramil intersection hit Anjali Yadav hard due to which Anjali Yadav was

seriously injured. As soon as the accident happened, a huge crowd gathered and councilor Pradeep Yadav also came while doing his morning walk.

The councilor, Showing humanity, took the injured Anjali Yadav to the Community Health Center located at Chauri Road for treatment. Councilor Pradeep Yadav told that Aadhaar card was found in the bag of injured Anjali Yadav in which the address was found to be 21 year old Anjali Yadav, daughter of Chandrashekhar Yadav, resi-

dent of Makhdumpur. The councilor somehow called the family and informed them about the accident. Meanwhile, doctors declared the injured Anjali Yadav dead during treatment. The family members who reached the spot were in bad condition and started crying. Anjali Yadav was the only sister among two brothers. At the same time, advance legal action is being taken by the police team by taking possession of the said vehicle including filing the Panchayatnama of the Dead Body.

## Chairman Nargis Athar order issued regarding Mahashivratri festival

Bhadohi

The order was issued by Municipal Council Bhadohi Chairman Nargis Athar in view of the Mahashivratri festival. He said that on the occasion of the holy festival of Mahashivratri, about 40 temples of the city should be decorated with grand fringes and facilities should be provided to the devotees and devotees by better cleaning of those roads and sprinkling of lime. While giving strict instructions to all the officers and employees of the Municipal Council



**Chairman Nargis Athar said that the Municipality should make the best and most wonderful arrangements in the district on every festival, if it is disturbed then it will not be forgivable. Said holy Mahashivratri festival will be celebrated on 15th February. The entire city should be cleaned and sprinkled with lime from early morning and every temple should be decorated with electric chandeliers**

Bhadohi office, he said that on the day of the holy Mahashivratri festival, while talking about decorating all the temples and keeping the roads clean, the arrangement for drinking water should be made smoothly so that any devotee and devotee can get water easily. Do not have to face difficulties. Chairman Nargis Athar said that the Municipality should make the best and most wonderful arrangements in the district on every festival, if it is disturbed then it will not be forgivable. Said holy Mahashivratri festi-

val will be celebrated on 15th February. The entire city should be cleaned and sprinkled with lime from early morning and every temple should be decorated with electric chandeliers. So that the devotees do not face any problem when the Shiva procession takes place in the evening. Said that after the festival of Mahashivratri, the month of Ramzan Sharif will start, in that month also the cleanliness system will be strengthened for which the concerned people of the municipality have geared up.

## High Court grants relief to Mukhtar Ansari's two sons Trial stay in Ghazipur's infamous Ghazal Hotel case



**Prayagraj.** The Allahabad High Court has granted a major relief to Abbas Ansari and Umar Ansari in the Ghazipur Ghazal Hotel case, staying the trial proceedings in the trial court. Justice Samit Gopal granted the state government a final opportunity to file a response in the matter and set

February 24th for the next hearing. An FIR was filed on September 19, 2020, at the Kotwali police station in Ghazipur against Mukhtar Ansari's wife, Afsha Ansari, and his sons, Abbas and Umar Ansari, along with 12 others. It is alleged that the Ghazal Hotel was constructed using a forged deed. The

case is pending in the CJM court. Abbas and Umar Ansari have filed a petition seeking the quashing of the trial court proceedings. During the hearing, the court granted the state government a final opportunity to respond and ordered a stay on the trial proceedings until then.

## The budget gives new impetus to the metro project, which had been pending for decades; the DPR was prepared in 2016

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** The metro project, which had been stuck in files for nearly ten years, has received a new lease of life in the state government's new budget. Prayagraj is among the cities where the budget calls for advancing metro operations. This has raised hopes among city residents that the long-pending project will now be implemented. In Prayagraj, a detailed project report (DPR) for the metro project was prepared in 2016. It proposed two corridors—one from Bamrauli Airport to Jhansi and the other from Phaphamau to Naini-Chhivki. However, even after the DPR was prepared, the project could not move forward and remained entangled in paperwork for a decade. Now, with its inclusion in the budget, the project is likely to gain momentum. Emphasis on the formation of the Prayagraj-



Chitrakoot Development Authority. Given the growing importance of religious and cultural tourism, the budget plans for integrated development by connecting Prayagraj with surrounding districts. In this regard, the formation of the Prayagraj-Chitrakoot Development Authority, along with Chitrakoot, has been proposed. The draft has already

been submitted to the government by the Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA). A provision of ₹800 crore has been proposed in the budget for infrastructure projects across all development authorities in the state. Furthermore, 10 cities in the state have been included under the Central Government's Smart City Mission. These include

Prayagraj, along with Lucknow, Kanpur, Varanasi, Agra, Aligarh, Bareilly, Jhansi, Saharanpur, and Moradabad. Focus on Dairy Production Companies and Disabled Welfare Under the Mahila Shakti Yojana, provision has been made for the formation of five dairy production companies, including Prayagraj. A budget of ₹2,140 crore has been proposed for the welfare of persons with disabilities, an eight percent increase compared to the previous financial year. The establishment of a new Bachpan Care-Day Center in Fatehpur district of Prayagraj division is also part of this plan. In addition, the budget also mentions a plan to develop 17 municipal corporations of the state as solar cities. It is clear from the budget announcements that the government is taking steps towards establishing a new identity for Prayagraj in terms of religious, cultural, and infrastructure

# A grand Nishadraj Cultural Center is taking shape in Shringaverpur, with construction 70% complete

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** Following the example of Ramnagari Ayodhya, Shringaverpur, the city of Nishadraj Guhya, is now being given a grand facelift. Nearly 70 percent of the construction work on the Nishadraj Guhya Cultural Center, being built at a cost of ₹19.61 crore at this ancient site in Prayagraj district, has been completed. The Uttar Pradesh Culture Department is preparing to complete this ambitious project soon. The cultural center's main attraction will be the museum block, where the meeting of Lord Shri Ram and Nishadraj will be presented through modern technology and paintings. The museum will showcase their intimate relationship, their message of sacrifice, and social harmony. The museum's structure is complete, and finishing work is in its final stages. Plastering has been completed. A state-of-the-art auditorium with a capacity of approximately 400 people is also being constructed within the complex, where cultural programs and



seminars will be held. Brickwork in the auditorium has been completed, while step slab work is in progress. In addition, the electrical system, internal water supply, and boundary wall construction have been completed. Stonework curtain cladding, landscaping, the main gate, guard room, interlocking roads, a rainwater

harvesting system, septic tanks, soak pits, and underground tanks are being developed. Pump rooms and other supporting structures are also being constructed. Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh said that Shringaverpur is not only a historical site but also a symbol of sacrifice, dedication,

and social harmony. It was here that Lord Shri Ram and Nishadraj Guhya had their historic meeting, which gave the message of equality and true friendship in Indian culture. He said that in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Ramrajya, this event is being presented in a modern form so that the new generation can become

familiar with its cultural glory. Shringaverpur, located about 45 kilometers on the Prayagraj-Lucknow route, is described as the capital of Nishadraj in the Ramayana. Archaeological excavations here have also uncovered a temple dedicated to sage Shringi, after whom the town is named. It is believed that during his

exile, Lord Rama rested here for a night, and Nishadraj expressed his devotion by washing his feet with Ganges water. The government claims that after the completion of this project, Shringaverpur will become a major center of faith, culture, and tourism, and the Nishad community will gain a new national identity.

## "Farmers' Revolution" Jail Bharo Andolan to be held at Dhoomanganj Police Station on February 14

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** A "Farmers' Revolution Jail Bharo Andolan" will be held at Dhoomanganj Police Station on February 14 to protest alleged police harassment, false cases, and administrative repression against farmers. The protest will be led by Anuj Singh. According to the organizers, farmers and their supporters will peacefully approach the police station and voluntarily submit to arrest. Announcing the



protest, Anuj Singh said that farmers are raising their voices for their demands and rights, but they are facing police action and lawsuits. He alleges that even peaceful protests are being treated as crimes. Therefore, the Jail Bharo Andolan is being adopted to register protest in

a democratic manner. He clarified that this protest will be completely peaceful and its purpose is not to create any kind of chaos. The demand is for dialogue and just action from the government and administration to resolve the farmers' problems. Organizers have warned that if the crackdown on farmers continues, the movement will expand further. They say this struggle is being waged to protect democratic rights and farmers' interests.

**Prayagraj.** The Allahabad High Court stated that police cannot invoke the Gangster Act against citizens for self-praise and self-aggrandizement. This Act is not an upgraded version of the general sections that can be invoked in every case. With this observation, a division bench of Justice Ajay Bhanot and Justice Tarun Saxena stayed the arrest of Basti resident Usman under the Gangster Act. They also summoned a reply affidavit from the investigating officer and the station house officer within four weeks. The court stated that declaring someone a gangster solely to improve the police's image or show better statistics is contrary to the intent of the law. The Gangster Act is a very stringent law that must be applied judiciously and based on solid evidence. Therefore, a detailed procedure



has been established for proceedings under the Gangster Act, which must be followed. The case is from the Purani Basti police station area. The police filed a Gangster Act case against the petitioner

based on a previously filed case. The petitioner's counsel argued that the petitioner is out on bail in the previously filed case. Despite this, the police invoked the Gangster Act against him solely to improve their own

records and show off their achievements. The mandatory provisions of the Gangster Act were not followed before filing the FIR, and this action is entirely motivated by malice.

## This budget is beneficial and will fulfill the dream of a developed Uttar Pradesh: Yogesh Shukla

Senior BJP leader expressed his happiness over the budget presented by the UP government. He expressed his gratitude to UP CM Yogi Adityanath, Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya, and Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna. He described the budget as one that will propel Uttar Pradesh forward

Akhand Bharat Sandesh Meja. Senior BJP leader Yogesh Shukla, reacting to the budget presented by the Uttar Pradesh government on Wednesday, expressed his happiness and said that this budget is beneficial for everyone, realizing the

dream of a developed Uttar Pradesh. He expressed his gratitude to Uttar Pradesh's popular Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Maharaj, Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, and Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna, and described the

budget as effective in moving Uttar Pradesh forward. Mr. Shukla, taking into account various aspects, expressed gratitude to the UP government for the following budgetary schemes presented: potential employment of 10 lakh, No. 1

in the country in mobile manufacturing (65 percent production), Mission Shakti expansion, working women's hostels, employment generated by 4.22 lakh Abhyudaya centers, 163 tablets/smartphones, 49.86 lakh, Chief Minister's

Fellowship Scheme, police recruitment of 2.19 lakh, teacher recruitment of 34 thousand, health and medical education budget of 14,997 crore, medical colleges 81, new colleges 14, MBBS seats 12,800, PG seats 4,995, total budget for

health facilities 37,956 crore, energy and infrastructure, thermal power capacity of 9120 MW, trauma center, girls' hostel, reduced prices of medicines, labor welfare, labor camps, labor insurance, and mobile health vans.

## Editorial

### Buying Russian oil, misreading Trump—3 points will define India's next energy strategy

India's crude oil trade has evolved from a purely economic exchange into both a geopolitical test of strategic autonomy and a measure of the constraints in its energy policy. Over the past three years, India has gone from being a marginal buyer of Russian crude to one of its largest importers, carefully balancing ties with the US, Europe, and shifting global energy markets. That balance is now under pressure from Donald Trump's 50 per cent tariff offensive, aimed selectively at India and leaving little ambiguity about his objectives—and in Trump's world, what he wants, he usually gets. Yet the national debate has taken too many assumptions for granted. It is worth applying a deconstruction approach to India's famous oil bargains with Russia—a decision once hailed as tactical brilliance, but one now risking entanglement in overlapping economic and diplomatic challenges. While public commentary has focused heavily on Trump, tariffs, and New Delhi's indignation, the more pressing task is to interrogate the rationale behind these choices. To navigate the road ahead, India must revisit three fundamentals: why it embraced Russian oil, how it misread Trump's European recalibration, and where future India-Russia energy engagement should head. Clarity on these three points may well define the next chapter of India's energy strategy. Despite close political ties and deep defence cooperation, India and Russia were never bound by energy dependence. Even with India's heavy reliance on imports—currently 88 per cent of its daily crude requirement of 5.5 million barrels—its primary suppliers have traditionally been Gulf countries. The earlier chapter of India capitulating to Trump 1.0's sanctions on Iran and Venezuela is well known; today, however, the challenge is starker. Russia entered India's energy equation only after the geopolitical earthquake of President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. That act shattered the European order painstakingly built since the Second World War and crystallised after the Soviet Union's collapse. Central to this upheaval was Putin's weaponization of energy: Europe's decades-long dependence on cheap Russian oil and gas became a vulnerability. In response, Europe diversified away from Russia, while the G7 imposed a \$60 per-barrel price cap on Russian crude in December 2022. The logic was clear: as one of the world's top three oil producers, Russia could not be cut off overnight. The aim was instead to squeeze Moscow's revenues, which were funding its war machine, while keeping prices stable and securing alternative supplies for Europe. India saw opportunity in this upheaval. With vast import needs, it began rerouting Russian oil at supposedly lower prices, rejecting G7 sanctions and arranging direct and indirect deals through intermediaries. Early reports spoke of a "free on board" discount of 30 per cent, though never confirmed.

Brent crude fell from \$86.51 in January 2022 to \$80.92 in December, peaking briefly at about \$90 in June 2023 before sliding again. While some credit India's purchases with stabilising prices, Russian oil for India almost always remained way above the \$60 price cap. The critical question is whether India ever bought below that threshold. Reports suggest an average discount of only \$5 per barrel—hardly transformative—and potentially offset by hidden costs and surcharges. Even so, large volumes (peaking at over 2 million barrels per day before dropping to 1.5 million) meant cumulative savings. But if cheap oil was the goal, why not join or informally align with the price cap, securing crude closer to \$60 without the complications of shadow fleets and sanctions risks?



## Government's outreach ties need renewed focus

India has enjoyed historical, cultural and civilisational links with Central Asia for several millennia. Brisk trade of goods, ideas and thoughts took place from India to Central Asia and beyond over the Silk Road from 3rd century BC to 15th century AD. Buddhism travelled to Afghanistan, Central Asia and western China from India over this route. India and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) viz. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan shared vibrant economic, people-to-people and cultural ties till recent times when the latter were a part of the Soviet Union. India has not been able to take full advantage of its close ancient linkages with this region after their independence from the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1991 because it does not share a de facto land boundary with any of these countries (although de jure it shares a border with Tajikistan through the Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir). To overcome this obstacle, several initiatives which have been in the pipeline for many years have now been fast-tracked. Two of the most significant are the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chabahar port.

### Evolution of relations

In current times, Central Asian Republics constitute the extended neighbourhood of India. Peace and security in Central Asia is



critical to peace and stability in India. This is intimately connected with peace and security in Afghanistan. Three Central Asian Republics — Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan — share borders with Afghanistan. India and Central Asia need to collaborate with other regional powers like Russia, Iran, China and Pakistan as also with the US and the EU to promote security and stability in Afghanistan. The advent of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in August 2021 after the sudden and unceremonious withdrawal of the US and NATO troops has introduced further complications in promoting connectivity between India and Central Asia. In addition to the

above, the region is also richly endowed with natural and mineral resources like oil, gas (Turkmenistan contains the world's fourth largest reserves of natural gas), uranium (Kazakhstan is the world's largest producer of uranium ore and has the world's second largest reserve of this mineral), lead, iron ore, coal, rare earths, water, etc. The region can contribute to India's energy security through fossil fuels and hydro-power.

and meet its need of many critical minerals and metals. The area is ideally situated for providing seamless connectivity between Europe and India. It encompasses the "heartland" of Halford Mackinder's "Heartland Theory" propounded in his

article "The Geographical Pivot of History" in 1904. Moreover, the region harbours great potential for promoting trade and investment, tourism, people-to-people connect, cultural, business and academic exchanges between India and these countries. India and Central Asia started on a strong and robust note when these countries attained freedom from the Soviet Union in 1991. The then Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao sensed the strategic significance of the region and visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in 1993, and Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1995. The next twenty years however witnessed a relative neglect of the region by the Indian leadership

owing to its preoccupation with domestic affairs, absence of a strong, single party government in New Delhi and its focus on expanding ties with major, strategic powers. The 20 years from 1995 to 2015 witnessed only four prime ministerial visits from India to the region — in 2002 by PM Vajpayee to Kazakhstan for the CICA (Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia) Summit followed by a half day bilateral visit, and in 2003 to Tajikistan; in 2006 by PM Manmohan Singh to Uzbekistan, and in 2011 to Kazakhstan for an overnight visit on his way back from Sanya, Hainan after the BRICS Summit. **Relations expand in Modi era**

This indifference was corrected after PM Narendra Modi assumed power in May 2014, becoming the first Prime Minister after 30 years with a full majority in the lower house of Parliament (Lok Sabha). In just a little more than a year after becoming PM, he travelled to all five Central Asian countries in July 2015, the first Indian Prime Minister to do so, sending out a clear message about India's intent in expanding its ties with these countries. The last 10 years of PM Modi's rule have witnessed a significant upswing in bilateral partnership and engageThe rapidly changing dynamics of Central nomic architecture provide a bright opportunity.

### Good politician, bad statesman — what Muhammad Yunus' one year in power reveals

If Sheikh Hasina had her way, Muhammad Yunus would have been dunked into the Padma River by now. Not once but twice. But it has been a year since the ousted Bangladeshi prime minister hasn't had her way. In that time, not only has Yunus avoided a plunge into the Padma, but also dashed Hasina's dreams of returning to Bangladesh, all while sitting pretty in the chair she was forced to vacate. In the one year since Yunus took over as the caretaker to the interim government of Bangladesh on 8 August 2024, the accidental politician has proved himself a consummate one. Detractors who had claimed he won't last three months are now worried if he will even vacate his chair. Not only has Yunus deftly navigated the choppy waters of Bangladeshi politics, he has even turned foes into friends. Plunged into chaos after Hasina's hasty exit on 5 August 2024, Bangladesh, though, is in desperate need of a statesman. There has been no love lost between Sheikh Hasina and Muhammad

Yunus, much before the latter replaced the former as Bangladesh's premier last year. On 18 May 2022, Hasina had allegedly said, "He (Yunus) stopped funding for a project like the Padma Bridge because of one managing director post. He should be given two dunks in the Padma River, but lifted up so he doesn't die. Then maybe he will learn a lesson." Hasina had said this while blaming Nobel Peace Prize winner, economist Dr Muhammad Yunus, for blocking the World Bank's funding of the Padma bridge project. That's not all. As recently as 1 January 2024, a court in Bangladesh had sentenced the Nobel laureate to six months in jail for violating Bangladesh's labour laws. Yunus' supporters said the case was politically motivated. The acclaimed economist and three colleagues from Grameen Telecom—one of the firms Yunus founded—were found guilty of failing to create a welfare fund for their workers. I call for the Bangladeshi people to speak in one voice against injustice.

### Dharali floods a wake-up call for IMD, NDMA to buck up

The deadly flash floods and landslides in Uttarkashi on 5 August, in which 16 people were killed, highlight the problems of illegal riverbank constructions and inadequate warning systems. Videos of submerged villages, ravaging floods sweeping up buildings and cars in their tide, and stranded people have become an almost annual occurrence now in the Himalayan region. Dharali's floods struck in the absence of any weather warning, and authorities are still confused about the actual cause. While the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority called it a cloudburst, the India Meteorological Department could not confirm it with the available data. Uttarkashi district recorded 12.7 cm of rain in 8 hours on 5 August; it is still lower than districts such as Haridwar and Dehradun, which got 15-30 cm of rain on the same day. In a state that sees frequent cloudbursts and floods during the monsoon, and has been explicitly marked as a 'high vulnerability zone' for landslides by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the damage from the Dharali floods is not merely nature's fault. The blame also rests squarely on building norms, mass road construction and mining projects, and other anthropogenic activities that have exacerbated Uttarakhand's fragility. The floods should be another wake-up call for the IMD and the NDMA to buck up and ensure the safety of people and ecology in the Himalayas. Dharali is a small hamlet 2,680 metres above sea level, situated 18 km from Gangotri, and is a common stopover for tourists and pilgrims going to one of the Char Dhams of Uttarakhand. It is dotted with hotels, restaurants, and homes built precariously close to the banks of the Kheerganga River that runs through the village. On Tuesday afternoon, a barrage of water descended upon the village and

damaged houses, roads, and the one bridge connecting Dharali and Hershil, another area affected by the landslide. Satellite images from ISRO now show that deposits of mud and sediments from the floods cover all of the village. Alongside civilian settlements, an Army camp near Hershil too was impacted by the floods, although the number of people missing there hasn't been reported. The IMD had issued warnings of heavy to extremely heavy rainfall in all of Uttarakhand, including the Uttarkashi district, from 1 August onwards. But compared to other districts, Uttarkashi's rainfall during this monsoon was still pretty low. From 1 to 5 August, Uttarkashi's recorded rainfall was 6 per cent lower than the average rainfall it gets during this period. Over the monsoon season so far this year in the state, Uttarkashi has recorded 7 per cent lower rainfall than average. If there was indeed a cloudburst—100 mm of rain falling in one hour in a small area—then the IMD is not aware of it. The closest Automatic Weather System (AWS) station that could record this cloudburst is 7 km from Dharali, and it did not catch a cloudburst. But experts say that even without a cloudburst, the possibility of heavy rainfall,

causing this disaster is not unfounded. Dharali's location and slope explain it. "The 'cloudburst' may have happened much higher at 12,000 ft above sea level, and Dharali is at 8,000 ft. Even this slope of 4,000 ft makes a huge difference to the intensity of the water flow," Mahesh Palawat, vice president of meteorology and climate change at SkyMet Weather, told ThePrint. "The canal is very narrow, and a lot of trees and mud could have been uprooted and swept along with the water." If extremely heavy rainfall can cause such damage without a rare event like a cloudburst, it should leave the system working toward India's disas-

### Bank nationalisation will be a blow to India's mixed economy, lead to totalitarianism: Phiroze Shroff

Every now and then we hear the cry that banks should be nationalised. The taking over of banks by the State is urged on various grounds, namely, that it is necessary in order "to mobilise resources" for the economic development of the country, "to prevent the concentration of economic power", "to check malpractices in the working of banks" and to put a stop to profiteering" by banks. All these arguments will be found to be untenable on a dispassionate scrutiny of the issues involved. The primary function of banks

is to mobilise resources for economic development and that is exactly what the banks in our country have been doing. They have been working to attract deposits from those who have funds to spare on [a] long or short term basis. They have been making loans for industrial as well as agricultural expansion in accordance with numerous legislative requirements. During recent years, they have opened numerous branches in order to extend credit facilities to people even in remote areas, even though the banking business

in several branches has proved unremunerative. They have invested more than Rs 600 crore in Government securities. They have been broadening their capital base and increasing their reserves in accordance with statutory requirements. The enormous increase in their deposits during recent years bears testimony to the confidence which the public have in their working. By undertaking the foreign exchange business, our banks render considerable help in promoting exports. An occasional appearance of a black

sheep in the sphere of banking, as in any other sphere, does not detract from the value of the service which the banks as a whole are rendering to the country. What is regrettable is that though the Reserve Bank is invested with extensive powers to prevent malpractices, in one or two cases it failed to exercise them to protect the interests of the depositors as well as shareholders. Ninety-five per cent of bank advances in India are secured loans. The corresponding figures for the USA, is only thirty per cent.

## Zomato's Q4 net profit falls 77% to Rs 39 crore

Delhi : Eternal Ltd. (previously Zomato) announced a 77% drop in overall net profit to Rs 39 crore in Q4 FY25 from Rs 175 crore the year before. Zomato, which owns Blinkit, lost 33% of its quarterly net profit to Rs 59 crore in October-December. Overall expenditures rose 67% to Rs 6,104 crore from Rs 3,636 crore. QoQ, costs rose over 10%. Food delivery company consolidated income from operations rose 64% to Rs 5,833 crore from Rs 3,562 crore in the January-March quarter of the previous financial year. Zomato earned Rs 6,201 crore in the quarter, up from Rs 3,797 the year before. Its expenses rose from Rs 3,636 crore to Rs 6,104 crore. Zomato shares finished at Rs 232.5 on the BSE, up 0.58 percent. According to its stock exchange filing, Blinkit opened 294 net new stores in Q4 and is on track to reach 2,000 by



December 25. Deepinder Goyal, Founder and CEO, Eternal, said, "We don't see any long-term structural reason for this slowdown, as the fundamentals – low penetration of restaurant food and increasing urbanisation and per capita income in India – remain unchanged." The company has several promising initiatives in the pipeline and hopes some will work and lead to higher growth without compromising profitability. The company began reporting NOV and GOV for its B2C activities (food delivery, rapid commerce, and going-out) in Q4 FY25.

### Coconut oil prices rise, hurting users

Delhi : Coconut oil, a staple in most Indian households, may be raising your grocery expenditures. Due to rising coconut oil inflation, Marico and Dabur raised prices by 40% in the past year. According to Saugata Gupta, MD & CEO of Marico, commodity prices have 'peaked' and are unlikely to climb much unless a 'black swan event' occurs. He expects higher volume growth in the FMCG sector this financial year. For Marico, which creates Parachute coconut oil, copra dominates its commodity basket.

## Supreme Court rejects Airtel and Vodafone's requests to waive AGR fees

Delhi : Airtel and Vodafone Idea were denied a waiver of interest and penalty on their outstanding adjusted gross revenue (AGR) debts, totaling Rs 80,000 crore, by the Supreme Court. The order would have an effect on Tata Teleservices as well. After the initial SC order in 2019, which aimed to recover industrial dues, the outstanding AGR is now little less than 1.5 lakh crore.

Since it entered the telecom market in 2016 with only a



minor exposure to past dues and adjustments, Reliance Jio was the only company that walked out relatively unscathed.

The businesses' request for a postponement was denied by a panel of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan, who

deemed the companies' petitions "shocking and misconceived" and rejected them. Multinational corporations' filing procedures for petitions seeking remedies for enforcement of rights under Article 32 were also examined by the court.

## High prices reduce India's January-March gold demand by 15% to 118.1 tonnes

Delhi: The WGC predicts 700-800 tons of gold demand from India in 2025. Since 2025, gold prices have increased 25%, approaching the psychological threshold of ₹1,000,000 per 10 gm, impacting consumer purchasing behaviors. Price increases have hurt

affordability. However, gold's cultural significance, especially ahead of Akshaya Tritiya and the wedding season, supports buying sentiment. "WGC India CEO Sachin Jain stated in its quarterly report. Experts say the gold market is buzzing on Akshaya

Tritiya, a culturally significant day in India that generally boosts gold buying. Record costs have driven shoppers toward smaller, lighter pieces, with some delaying purchases awaiting price drops. Wedding demand remained consistent.

## Brokers can now invest in new business

Delhi : Brokers can now invest their own cash in enterprises beyond their jurisdiction after the government changed the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Rule. They can't invest clients' money in those businesses. They cannot borrow to invest in other firms either. Brokers indicated they'll await Sebi's rules. Brokers couldn't float subsidiaries before now. Top broking house officials stated the new rules allow that. "Given the growth in the scale and interconnectedness of the financial sector and the evolution of the nature of business of brokers with time, the DEA (Dept of Economic Affairs) felt it necessary to review the appropriateness of safeguards



embedded in the rules so that the intent of the rules is served without constraining activities of the stakeholders," the government said in a release. Broking house executives believe this SCRR modification is a major regulatory change. Leading broker

Motilal Oswal said stock brokers could only invest in securities and commodity derivatives until now. "This amendment allows stock brokers to invest in any firm without using client funds or securities or creating financial obligation.

### The cancellation of fleet talks by Uber is bad news for BluSmart.

Delhi : Two sources familiar with the matter have confirmed that Uber has canceled plans to transfer approximately 5,000 electric vehicles owned by Gensol Engineering Ltd. from BluSmart to its platform. The negotiations broke down because everyone was unhappy with the asking price for the autos. Discussions had begun as part of BluSmart's strategy to revitalise its taxi business. It was expected that BluSmart would partner with Uber's fleet. One of the individuals mentioned earlier asserted, "Uber has now withdrawn its interest," while requesting anonymity.

## Promoters of Prudential, HCL to form health insurer

Delhi: Prudential and HCL Group promoters announced a separate health insurance joint venture. Prudential Group Holdings, Prudential's UK affiliate, would own 70% of the joint venture, while HCL Group promoter Vama Sundari Investments will own 30%. HCL founder Shiv Nadar gave his daughter Roshni Nadar Malhotra large shares in Vama Sundari Investments, giving her power. Prudential had its first branch in Kolkata in



1923, making India a critical market, according to CEO Anil Wadhvani. "Today, we have a significant presence with life insurance and asset management businesses providing a comprehensive offering of insurance and wealth products," Wadhvani. ICICI Bank has partnered with Prudential, a FTSE 100

company, for over two decades in life insurance and asset management. The Prudential cooperation intends to provide quality health insurance in India, according to Vama executive director Shikhar Malhotra. "Through this collaboration, we aim to advance our common mission to enhance access to quality health insurance and drive greater penetration across the country," stated. If approved by regulators, Amar Joshi will lead the joint venture..

## Automakers from other countries are searching for ways to cut electric vehicle tariffs

Delhi: In March 2024, India offered to let international automakers import a certain number of electric cars with low duties in exchange for a commitment to invest a certain amount in the country. Meanwhile, three industry officials have stated that manufacturers are now focusing on anticipated tariff reductions in free trade agreements (FTAs) that are currently being discussed, as the scheme's criteria have not been finalized by the Centre. Following CEO Elon Musk's public criticism of India's high import levies on autos, the country's



plan to promote manufacturing of electric passenger cars in India (SPMEPC-Cl), also known as the "Tesla Policy," was viewed as an effort by New Delhi to entice the American automaker. The plan called for authorized automakers to be able to import 8,000 EVs per year for a 15% tariff, as opposed to the typical 70-110% tariff on

fully assembled cars, also known as CBUs. Minimum investments of ₹4,150 crore were required to qualify for the incentive. People and companies said to be interested in the project include Tesla, Vinfast of Vietnam, Toyota Kirloskar, Hyundai Motor Ltd., Volkswagen Group, and Hyundai Motor Ltd.

## Indian tourists boycott Turkey, Azerbaijan

Delhi : According to two travel agencies, Indian tourists are canceling vacations to Turkey and Azerbaijan after the two countries supported Pakistan in a recent armed war with New Delhi. India is considering boycotting Turkey and Azerbaijan after both publicly



supported Pakistan amid mounting tensions after Operation Sindoor and the April 22 Pahalgam terror assault. Turkey supported Pakistan's call for an international probe into the Pahalgam incident, while Azerbaijan repeated

Pakistan's position. Turkish weapons have also been given to Pakistan. "Bookings for Azerbaijan and Turkey decreasing by 60% (over the last week) while cancellations have surged by 250%," a MakeMyTrip spokeswoman told

## The 'Faster Service' Advance Tip Feature of Uber is Baffled by CCPA Notice

Delhi : In response to a contentious policy found inside the Uber app, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has given the company a notice. The app allegedly encouraged users to tip drivers in advance to potentially gain quicker pick-up services, according to Union Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi. According to Joshi, this method is exploitative and unethical. Feel free to become one of our three million satisfied clients. Free brokerage



For first 30 days" Publicly voicing his disapproval, the Minister said that gratuities should be an after-service, optional gift of appreciation rather than a prerequisite for better service. Uber is being asked to provide an official explanation by the CCPA about this behavior. Users alleged-

ly see a suggestion to tip ₹50, ₹75 or 100 when they book a ride on Uber. The app's messaging implies that tipping drivers ahead of time would improve the likelihood of faster acceptance. "Tip for faster pickup" is the message that appears in the alert. If you provide a gratuity, the driv-

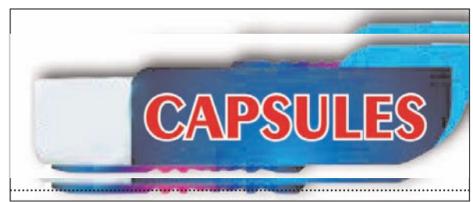
### NBD Bank PJSC gets RBI approval for India wholly owned subsidiary

Delhi: Emirates NBD Bank PJSC, a renowned UAE banking firm, received "in-principle" approval from the RBI to create a wholly owned subsidiary (WOS) in India. This is part of the RBI's Scheme for Foreign Banks to Set Up WOS

in India. In India, Emirates NBD has branches in Mumbai, Chennai, and Gurugram. The RBI has allowed the bank to transform these branches into wholly owned subsidiaries, subject to regulatory compliance.

er could be more inclined to accept the journey. It elaborates by saying that the tip is final once chosen and belongs solely to the

driver. The present scrutiny is a result of this prompt, which seems to position the tip as a way to influence service speed rather than a reward.



## Meta releases standalone AI app to challenge ChatGPT

Delhi: competing with ChatGPT creator OpenAI with a standalone AI app. Meta said that its new AI assistant will use Llama AI. The Discover stream shows how others are using the tool and provides prompts. The AI arms race pits Meta's new software against ChatGPT and other AI platforms. Claude, Grok, and Gemini from Anthropic, xAI, and Google are also leading contenders. In September



2023, Meta debuted an AI chatbot as a generative AI-powered digital assistant that can respond to user questions and produce graphics in its apps. Meta AI became prominent in April when it replaced Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Messenger's search feature with a chatbot. Zuckerberg claimed in January that 2025 "is going to be the year when a highly intelligent and personalized AI assistant reaches more than 1 billion people, and I expect Meta AI to be that leading AI assistant." Meta finance head Susan Li said Meta AI has 700 million monthly active users in January. It rose from 600 million in December. Meta launched a standalone AI app after Google and Elon Musk's xAI. Both firms released Gemini and Grok applications recently.



## Dhurandhar producer compares success to Sholay

Aditya Dhar's *Dhurandhar*, starring Ranveer Singh in the lead role, has become the highest-grossing Bollywood film to date

Aditya Dhar's *Dhurandhar*, starring Ranveer Singh in the lead role, broke records at the box office, and became the highest-grossing Bollywood film. It has been more than two months the film was released, but till now, it is running in theatres despite getting an OTT release. Recently, in an interview with Fortune India, the producer of *Dhurandhar*, Jyoti Deshpande, opened up about the success of her film, and also compared *Dhurandhar* to *Sholay*.

She said, "This is not just a maker's success; it is as much the audience's as it has been decades since we have taken up the imagination of the movie-going public. They have made it a success by watching the film multiple times and talking about it. It has been in the theatres for 60-plus days."

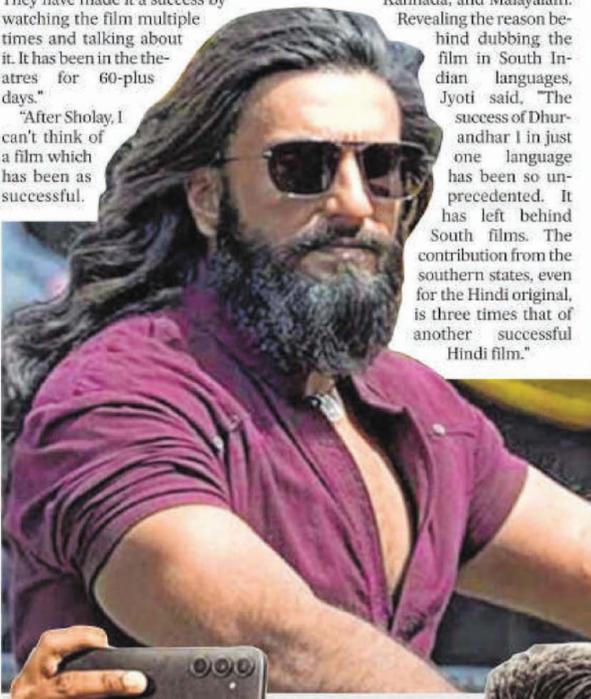
"After *Sholay*, I can't think of a film which has been as successful."

There is no greater accolade as filmmakers we can receive than this. It is something that we can't script, it's something marketing money can't buy, something that money can't achieve," Deshpande added.

Jyoti revealed that if Part 1 had not received such a great response, the second part would have sat in their cupboard. But, they were sure that part 1 would take the box office by storm. She said, "We are so happy the audience took a shine to it. We believe *Dhurandhar-2* would be bigger than the first part. It's going to be in five languages."

While *Dhurandhar* was released only in Hindi, *Dhurandhar 2* will be dubbed and released in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam.

Revealing the reason behind dubbing the film in South Indian languages, Jyoti said, "The success of *Dhurandhar 1* in just one language has been so unprecedented. It has left behind South films. The contribution from the southern states, even for the Hindi original, is three times that of another successful Hindi film."



Views

According to a latest report, Thalapathy Vijay starrer *Jana Nayagan* has been sent to the Revising Committee amid the legal battle with the Central Board of Film Certification



Prakash Raj

## Prakash Raj breaks silence on Spirit

National Award-winning actor Prakash Raj, who was reported to have left the film *Spirit* due to creative differences, has clarified that the rumours are false

National Award-winning actor Prakash Raj, who was initially announced as a key cast member of the upcoming film *Spirit*, directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga and starring Prabhas and Tripti Dimri, has reportedly been removed from the project due to 'creative differences.'

The development came while *Spirit* was already being filmed in Hyderabad, with reports suggesting that the decision followed is-

issues that had arisen on set, leading to an unexpected change in the cast at that stage.

Now, finally, Prakash Raj reacted to the rumours of him quitting *Spirit*. Taking to his X handle (formerly Twitter) the actor wrote, "To all the toxic #Fakenews peddlers... On #Spirit the movie. We have not even started shooting for my scenes, and you whatsapp factories speculate stories. Grow up and have a life. #justasking."

Speaking to Hindustan Times, the 60-year-old actor said, "Some nonsense speculations these are. I am not aware of it," confirming that he was indeed part of the film and denying the rumours.

According to a report in OTT Play, the latest chatter suggested that things reportedly took an un-



Sandeep Reddy Vanga

expected turn on set. Reports claimed that Prakash Raj and Vanga were involved in a heated disagreement, reportedly over the script and the execution of a particular scene. The situation is said to have escalated, which led to friction between the actor and the makers.

Adding to the speculation, it was also alleged that certain behavioural issues during the shoot did not sit well with the production team, eventually prompting the decision to part ways with the veteran actor.

## The rise of the silent villain

How Akshay Dogra's 'Keshav' in *Vadh 2* reflects Bollywood's changing antagonists

For decades, Bollywood villains thrived on spectacle, from booming laughter, dramatic monologues, and unmistakable theatrics. From the flamboyance of Mogambo to the stylised menace of *Shakaal*,

antagonists were designed to be larger than life. But as storytelling evolves and audiences lean toward realism, a quieter, more unsettling archetype has begun to dominate Hindi cinema: the silent villain. In *Vadh 2*, Akshay Dogra's portrayal of Keshav stands as a striking example of this transformation.

Keshav is not a villain who announces his presence with grand speeches or exaggerated violence. Instead, he operates through stillness, psychological manipulation, and calculated silence. Set largely within the confines of a prison system, Akshay Dogra's character wields power through subtle intimidation, exploiting institutional cracks and bending authority figures to his will. His menace emerges not from what he says, but from what he does.

Akshay's performance leans heavily into restraint. His expressions are minimal, his tone measured, and his presence unnervingly calm. The result is a character that feels disturbingly real.

Today's audiences are increasingly drawn to

stories that examine institutional breakdowns, power dynamics, and the grey areas between right and wrong. Keshav functions as the film's moral corrosion point, exposing how authority can be manipulated and how fear can become a weapon.

This shift has been building over the past decade, particularly with the influence of OTT storytelling. Streaming platforms have normalised slow-burn narratives and layered character arcs, allowing villains to exist in shades of grey. Performances now emphasise nuance over noise, psychological tension over physical confrontation. Actors like Akshay Dogra, who bring subtlety and emotional control to their roles, fit naturally into this evolving landscape.

Today's antagonists are not merely obstacles for heroes to overcome; they are reflections of societal fears and systemic flaws. Their silence is often more powerful than dialogue, their stillness more frightening than aggression.

His journey itself reflects the industry's changing dynamics. Having built his career across television and behind-the-scenes work before stepping into complex screen roles, Akshay embodies a generation of performers who prioritise craft and character over star image.

Also starring Sanjay Mishra and Neena Gupta with Kumud Mishra, Amitt K Singh, Shilpa Shukla and Yogita Bihani, *Vadh 2* has released in theatres today.



## Jana Nayagan sent to revising committee: Report

Thalapathy Vijay's last film *Jana Nayagan*, which was supposed to release on January 9, 2026, was postponed as the movie didn't receive a certificate from the Central Board Of Film Certification. Ahead of the release date, the makers moved to the court, and currently, a legal battle is going on between the *Jana Nayagan* makers and the CBFC. Now, according to a report in India Today, the film has been submitted to the Revising Committee for certification.

A source told the news portal that the H. Vinoth directorial was sent to Revising Committee on Monday. The source further stated that due to this development, the makers might withdraw the

case. However, there's no confirmation from the makers of the movie yet.

A single-judge bench at the Madras High Court ordered the CBFC to issue a U/A 16+ certificate. However, the board challenged the judgment, and a division bench stayed the order the same day. The makers approached the Supreme Court against the stay order. But the SC refused to intervene and ordered the makers to pursue the matter in the Madras High Court.

On January 27, the Madras HC announced its verdict, and the division bench sent the matter back to the single judge. While the single judge is yet to give a verdict, the report of the film being sent to the Revising Committee has now come up.

So, let's wait and watch whether the film will hit the big screens or not!

## Konkona, Pratibha navigate trust and betrayal

According to a latest report, Thalapathy Vijay starrer *Jana Nayagan* has been sent to the Revising Committee amid the legal battle with the Central Board of Film Certification

What happens when belief becomes a choice, and standing by someone comes at a personal cost? Directed by Anubhuti Kashyap, starring Konkona Sen Sharma and Pratibha Ramta, *Accused* brings to the screen a layered, emotionally charged story that interrogates truth, power and trust in the face of accusation. The film premieres on Netflix on 27 February.

Produced by Dharma Productions, *Accused* follows a celebrated doctor in London whose carefully constructed life begins to fracture after she is accused of sexual misconduct. As scrutiny intensifies and public opinion hardens, the film explores the strains this places on her closest relationships, and how quickly perception can take hold when certainty is out of reach. By centring on a woman as the accused, *Accused* asks viewers to sit with discomfort and doubt, unfolding as a story of one woman's word against another.



## US V-P's Ohio house windows found broken, suspect nabbed

Washington: One person was arrested and a probe was launched following an incident that caused property damage at the Ohio residence of V-P JD Vance, authorities said, CNN reported.

The Vance family was not in Ohio at the time, as per the US Secret Service. Photos from news outlets showed damage to the windows of the residence. A Secret Service spokesperson said the suspect was detained "for causing property damage, including breaking windows on the exterior of a personal residence associated with" Vance.

The incident happened shortly after midnight. "The US Secret Service is coordinating with Cincinnati Police Dept and the US Attorney's Office as charging decisions are reviewed," spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi said.

Officials are probing if the suspect was targeting Vance or his family, an official said. They don't believe the person entered the V-P's home. A White House official said the Vance family had already left the town before the incident happened. "A crazy person tried to break in. We try to protect our kids as much as possible from the realities of this life of public service. In that light, I am skeptical of the news value of plastering images of our home with holes in the windows," said Vance.

## 'RUNNING' VENEZUELA | POTUS says won't station troops if new president toes the line

# Trump warns Delcy of 'big price'

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump in an interview with The Atlantic on Sunday said Venezuela's Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez could "pay a very big price" if she did not do what he thought was right for the South American country.

That contrasted with the Republican president's comments about Delcy on Saturday when he said Secretary of State Marco Rubio had spoken to her and she was willing to do what the US thought was needed to improve the standard of living in Venezuela.

Notably, Delcy criticised Maduro's removal and sought his immediate return.

Trump told the magazine, "if she doesn't do what's right, she is going to pay a very big price, probably bigger than Maduro." The president told the 'New York Post' in an interview the US wouldn't need to station troops in Venezuela if she "does what we want".

Meanwhile, in an Instagram post, Delcy said, "A message from Venezuela to the world, and to the US: Venezuela reaffirms its commitment to peace and peaceful coexistence. Our country aspires to live without external threats, in an environment of respect and international cooperation. We believe global peace is built by first guar-

## HISTORY WILL TELL WHO TRAITORS WERE, SAYS MADURO'S SON

Caracas: Nicolas Maduro Guerra, son of deposed

Venezuelan dictator Nicolas Maduro, said history will tell who the traitors are after a US military operation led to the capture of his father and First Lady Cilia Flores, who have been transferred to New York to face trial, local daily El-cooperativo reported.

In an audio message circulated on social media, Maduro Guerra warned of possible betrayal within the ruling movement and said history would expose those responsible. "History will tell who the traitors were, history will reveal it. We will see," he said, hinting at an internal conspiracy. Maduro Guerra, a lawmaker from La Guaira state and a member of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), said the party would remain united despite the recent developments. He spoke of the need for "political and military coordination" to respond to what he described as "external aggression".



—Agencies

anteering peace within each nation. We prioritise moving towards balanced and respectful international relations between the US and Venezuela, and between Venezuela and other countries in the region, premised on sovereign equality and non-interference. These principles guide our diplomacy with the rest of the world."

Despite the US's indication Delcy would be their choice of leader in a post Maduro scenario, she indicated loyalty to Maduro, saying her message of peace and dialogue had also been his message.

"We invite the US government to collaborate with us on

an agenda of cooperation oriented towards shared development within the framework of international law to strengthen lasting community coexistence. President Donald Trump, our peoples and our region deserve peace and dialogue, not war. This has always been President Nicolas Maduro's message, and it is the message of all of Venezuela right now. This is the Venezuela I believe in and have dedicated my life to. I dream of a Venezuela where all good Venezuelans can come together. Venezuela has the right to peace, development, sovereignty and a future," she said.

## Guterres 'deeply concerned'

At the emergency meeting of the UN security council, UN secretary general António Guterres issued a statement that was read out by diplomat Rosemary DiCarlo. "I am deeply concerned about the possible intensification of instability in the country, the potential impact on the region, and the precedent it may set for how relations between and among states are conducted," Guterres said. "The latest developments follow a period of heightened tensions, beginning in mid August, as discussed in this council on two previous occasions. I have consistently stressed on the imperative of full respect by all for international law, including the Charter of the UN, which provides the foundation for the maintenance of international peace and security. I remain deeply concerned rules have not been respected."

**CHINA, RUSSIA SLAM US** At the UNSC's emergency meet, China condemned the US action. "As a permanent UN member, the US has disregarded the grave concerns of the international community, wantonly trampled upon Venezuela's sovereignty, security and legitimate rights and interests, and seriously violated the principles of sovereign equality. No country

## PRESIDENT'S ARREST KIDNAPPING, RELEASE HIM: DEFENCE MINISTER

Caracas: Venezuela's Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez strongly condemned the Maduro's arrest, dubbing it a "kidnapping" and demanding his immediate release along with that of First Lady Cilia Flores, reported Elcooperante.

At a press conference, Padrino Lopez said the detention of Maduro amounted to a serious violation of Venezuela's sovereignty and constitutional order. "Yesterday they kidnapped the person whom the Venezuelan people chose as their president, elected for the 2025-2030 term. Maduro is the genuine constitutional leader of all Venezuelans," he said.

## '32 Cuban officers died in operation'

Havana: The US operation in Venezuela killed 32 Cuban officers over the weekend, Cuban government said on Sunday in the first official death count provided in the South American nation. The Cuban military and police officers were on a mission the Caribbean country's military was carrying out at the request of Venezuela's government, according to a statement read on Cuban state TV on Sunday night. What the Cubans were working on in the South American nation was unclear, but Cuba is a close ally of Venezuela's government and has sent military and police forces to assist in operations for years. Rumours of the deaths circulated on the island over the weekend. "You know, a lot of Cubans were killed yesterday," US President Trump said aboard Air Force One as he flew on Sunday night from Florida back to Washington. "There was a lot of death on the other side. No death on our side."

can act as the world's police," Fu Cong, China's representative to the UN. China called for the US to release Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores from detention. Russian envoy to the UN condemned the US "act of armed aggression" and called for Maduro's release.

"There is no and can be no justification for the crimes cynically perpetrated by the United States in Caracas. We firmly condemn the US act of armed aggression against Venezuela, in breach of all international legal norms," the Russian envoy said.

WASHINGTON

# Maduro betrayal: Bodyguards who sold prez

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's capture by US forces wasn't just a military victory. It was a major security failure that began with his own bodyguards. Multiple intelligence sources confirmed members of Maduro's personal security detail handed him over to American forces. These were elite bodyguards handpicked for their loyalty, Prime News 24 reported.

As explosions were heard across capital Caracas, Venezuelan forces scrambled to respond to attacks on Fort Tuna and La Carlota airport. But a much smaller operation was unfolding elsewhere. A

team of Delta Force operators, transported by stealth helicopters, landed near Maduro's location.

According to sources, these US commandos just walked in as the outer perimeter guards had been told to stand down, security cameras had been disabled, alarm systems had been deactivated. When the US team reached Maduro's personal quarters, they found only two bodyguards still at their posts, and they immediately surrendered.

The entire extraction took less than 12 minutes from landing to take off. Maduro and his wife were aboard a US

aircraft before Venezuelan military command even understood what was happening.

US operatives working through CIA and Defence Intelligence Agency had been studying Maduro's security apparatus for months and found his bodyguards, despite their elite status, were facing the same economic hardships as ordinary people. US intelligence identified three bodyguards. The first was a senior member of the presidential security team, a man in his late 30s. He had a sick daughter who needed medical treatment unavailable in Venezuela.

The second was younger,

frustrated by the lack of advancement opportunities in a system based entirely on political loyalty rather than merit. The third was a veteran security official who had served under Hugo Chavez and had grown disillusioned with what he saw as Maduro's betrayal of Chavez's vision.

The US offered life-changing sums of money — approximately \$10-20 million per person. More importantly, they offered escape from Venezuela and a future for their families. The first bodyguard was promised treatment for his sick child in a US hospital. The second was offered US citizen-

ship. The Chavez loyalist was told he could live his days in peace, knowing he had helped free Venezuela from tyranny.

To gain their confidence, the US extracted their families first. But the plan required more men. So, the three were asked to identify others. By the time the operation was ready to execute, at least eight members of Maduro's security detail were compromised.

Some were active participants who would facilitate the US insertion. Others simply agreed to look the other way at critical moments. A few were just given instructions to keep them away from their

posts at the crucial time.

There were several false starts when Maduro changed his schedule or location unexpectedly. The breakthrough came when one of the compromised bodyguards was assigned to overnight duty at the safehouse where Maduro would be sleeping. He was able to provide real-time updates on the president's location and the disposition of security forces. He confirmed the number of guards present, their position and critically, who were part of the plan.

When the US team received the final green light, they knew exactly what they were walk-

ing into. They moved through the building, encountering no resistance. When they entered Maduro's bedroom, the president was apparently asleep. There are conflicting reports about Maduro's reaction. Some sources say he immediately understood he had been betrayed and went quietly. Others claim he thought it was a training exercise of his security team. One dramatic account suggests he tried to appeal to his bodyguards' loyalty.

Soon, Maduro and wife were flex cuffed, hooded and carried to the choppers. The team was airborne in minutes. By the time the rest of Maduro's security apparatus realised something was wrong, it was far too late to respond.

## Indian woman, 27, found dead in America

Cops allege ex-BF

Las Vegas/New York: A 27-year-old Indian woman, reported missing last week, was found dead and police were looking for her former boyfriend. The cops alleged he killed her and fled to India.

Nikitha Godishala of Ellicott City was reported missing on January 2. Police said she was found deceased with stab wounds in the Columbia, Maryland apartment of her ex-boyfriend Arjun Sharma, 26. An arrest warrant for Sharma on first and second-degree murder charges was issued.

The Indian Embassy in Washington said it was in touch with Godishala's family and extending all possible consular assistance. It was in touch with local authorities.

Authorities said Sharma made the missing person police complaint, and he last saw Godishala on December 31 in his apartment in Maryland.

Police learnt on the same day when the report was filed, Sharma fled the country on a flight to India. The next day, detectives executed a search warrant for his apartment and located Godishala dead. Detectives believed Sharma killed Godishala after 7pm on Dec 31. —PTI

## Andhra techie, wife killed in US car crash

Washington: A Telugu couple from Palakollu in Andhra's West Godavari died in a car crash in the US, while their two kids were wounded, authorities said.

The accident took place in Washington, where software engineer Krishna Kishore and his wife Asha were travelling by road with kids. The couple lost their lives on the spot after their car was involved in a crash.

The couple was living in the US for work. They visited their hometown Palakollu 10 days ago and returned to the US recently. During the return, the family reportedly celebrated the New Year in Dubai. The couple's son and daughter were stable.

## Briefs

### UK to seize phones, SIMs of illegals

Mobile phones and hidden SIM cards can be seized from migrants arriving illegally in the UK on small boats across the English Channel under new powers enforced from Monday. Law enforcement agencies can now seize electronic devices like mobile phones and SIM cards from illegal migrants without needing to arrest them. This is intended to help them gather intelligence to track down and arrest people smugglers.

### Guinea's junta leader prez-elect

Supreme Court in Guinea upheld the poll win of Gen Mamadi Doumbouya, cementing the junta leader's transition to a democratically elected president 4 years after staging a coup in West African nation. Doumbouya won the country's first poll since 2021 coup after polling 86.7% votes, according to the General Directorate of Elections. His victory, which had been predicted by analysts, was confirmed by SC in capital Conakry.

### 3 kids dead in Iran protests

At least three children are reported to have been killed and more than 40 minors arrested after eight days of the ongoing protests across Iran, as human rights groups accuse the regime's security forces of "indiscriminate targeting of civilians".

## Don: Ukraine didn't target Putin house

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE

President Donald Trump on Sunday told reporters US officials have determined Ukraine did not target a residence belonging to Russian President Vladimir Putin in a drone attack last week, disputing Kremlin claims that Trump had initially greeted with deep concern.

Trump said "something happened nearby" Putin's residence, but American officials didn't find the Russian president's residence was targeted. "I don't believe that strike happened," Trump told reporters as he travelled back to Washington on Sunday after spending two weeks at his home in Florida. "We don't believe that happened, now that we've been able to check."



### ZELENSKYY REPLACES SECURITY CHIEF

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy replaced the head of Ukraine's security service on Monday, continuing a top-level reshuffle ahead of a trip to Paris where he hoped to finalise agreements with allies on how to ensure that Russia doesn't repeat its invasion if a peace agreement is signed.

Zelenskyy is trying to revamp his administration as the grinding war of attrition with Russia marks its fourth anniversary next month. He is keen to keep up the momentum of US-led peace talks as well as sharpen Ukraine's focus on defence if those efforts collapse.

## 10 guilty of cyberbullying Macron wife: Paris court

PARIS

A Paris court on Monday found 10 people guilty of cyberbullying France's first lady Brigitte Macron. The court convicted all defendants to sentences, ranging from a cyberbullying awareness training to 8-month suspended prison sentences.

The court pointed to "particularly degrading, insulting, and malicious" comments referring to false claims regarding alleged trans identity and alleged pedo criminality targeting Brigitte Macron.

The defendants, eight men and two women aged 41 to 65, are accused of posting "numerous malicious comments" falsely claiming President Emmanuel Macron's wife was born a man and linking the 24-year age gap with her husband to paedophilia. Some posts were viewed tens of thousands of times.

Brigitte Macron did not



attend the two-day trial in October. Speaking on TF1 national television on Sunday, she said she launched legal proceedings to "set an example" in the fight against harassment. Her daughter, Tiphaine Auziere, testified about what she described as the "deterioration" of her mother's life since the online harassment intensified.

"She cannot ignore the horrible things said about her," Auziere told the court. She said the impact has extended to the entire family, including

Macron's grandchildren.

Defendant Delphine Jegousse, 51, who is known as Amandine Roy and describes herself as a medium and an author, is considered to have played a major role in spreading the rumour after she released a four-hour video on her YouTube channel in 2021.

The X account of Aurélien Poirson-Atlan, 41, known as Zoé Sagan on social media, was suspended in 2024 after his name was cited in several judicial investigations.

## SEDITION CASE AGAINST HASINA

# B'desh court to frame charges on January 21

DHAKA

A Bangladesh court on Monday set January 21 as the date for framing charges in a sedition case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 285 others.

The case relates to allegations that Hasina and several hundred Awami League members took part in a virtual meeting of a group called the 'Joy Bangla Brigade' in December 2024, during which they allegedly plotted to overthrow the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government, news portal tbsnews.net reported.

The group is a strong supporter of Awami League and the legacy of Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Judge Abdus Salam of Dhaka Special Judge's Court-9 set January 21 as the date for

framing charges against Hasina and 285 others, it said.

### FINAL CHARGESHEET IN HADI MURDER BY JAN 7: B'DESH INTERIM GOVT

The final chargesheet in the murder case of student leader Sharif Osman bin Hadi will be submitted on Wednesday, the Bangladesh interim government said on Monday, asserting that justice will be delivered within its tenure.

General elections are scheduled in Bangladesh on February 12.

The interim government is treating Hadi's case with utmost importance. Home Affairs Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury told reporters after a meeting of the Advisory Council on law and order at the Secretariat.

The final chargesheet in his murder case will be submitted on January 7.

## Finland's battle against fake news starts at preschool

HELSINKI

The battle against fake news in Finland starts in preschool classrooms.

For decades, the Nordic nation has woven media literacy, including the ability to analyse different kinds of media and recognise disinformation, into its national curriculum for students as young as 3 years old. The coursework is part of a robust anti-misinformation pro-



gramme to make Finns more resistant to propaganda and false claims, especially those crossing over the 1,340-kilometre border with neighbouring Russia.

Now, teachers are tasked with adding artificial intelli-

gence literacy to their curriculum, especially after Russia stepped up its disinformation campaign across Europe following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly 4 years ago. Finland's ascension into Nato in 2023 also provoked Moscow's ire, though Russia has repeatedly denied it interferes in the internal affairs.

"We think having good media literacy skills is a very big civic skill," Kiia Hakkala, a pedagogical specialist for the City of Helsinki, said.

## Holocaust survivor Eva Schloss, stepsister of Anne Frank, dies

LONDON

Auschwitz survivor **Eva Schloss**, the stepsister of teenage diarist Anne Frank and a tireless educator about the horrors of the Holocaust, has died. She was 96.

The Anne Frank Trust UK, of which Schloss was honorary president, said she died on Saturday in London, where she lived.

Britain's King Charles III said he was "privileged and proud" to have known Schloss,



who co-founded the charitable trust to help young people challenge prejudice.

"The horrors she endured as a young woman are impossible to comprehend, and yet she devoted the rest of her life to overcoming hatred

and prejudice, promoting kindness, courage, understanding and resilience through her tireless work for the Anne Frank Trust UK and for Holocaust education across the world," the king said.

Born Eva Geiringer in Vienna in 1929, Schloss fled with her family to Amsterdam after Nazi Germany annexed Austria. She became friends with another Jewish girl of the same age, Anne Frank, whose diary would become one of the most famous chronicles of the Holocaust.

## Swiss police identify all 116 hurt in bar fire

Crans-Montana: Swiss police said on Monday they had identified all the people injured in the bar fire. They put the total at 116, more than two-thirds still in hospitals.

They are 68 Swiss citizens, 21 French, 10 Italians, 4 Serbs, 2 Poles and 1 each from Australia, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Portugal and Republic of Congo. There were 4 dual nationals: of France and Finland, France and Italy, Switzerland and Belgium, Italy and the Philippines.

## Briefs

PALLEKELE

**Rathnayake, Shanaka star in SL victory**



Blazing fifties by Pavan Rathnayake and skipper Dasun Shanaka along with Kusal Mendis' assured half-century helped Sri Lanka register a statement 105-run win over Oman in their T20 World Cup Group B clash, here on Thursday. Rathnayake (60 from 28 balls) and skipper Dasun Shanaka (50; 20b) returned to form, while Kusal (61; 45b) anchored the innings with successive World Cup half-century as Sri Lanka piled up 225/5 -- their second highest in T20 World Cup.

CHENNAI

**Netherlands look to stay alive in WC**



Netherlands will look to blend batting explosiveness and bowling discipline for a victory against the dangerous United States of America, essential to keep their T20 World Cup Super Eights hopes alive during a Group A match here on Friday. Having lost their tournament-opener against Pakistan narrowly, the Dutch bounced back in commanding fashion against Namibia in their previous outing. Chasing 157, they sealed a seven-wicket win with two overs to spare.

COLOMBO

**Australia eye win over Zimbabwe**



Skipper Mitchell Marsh's fitness will be watched closely as an injury-hit Australia try to ward off a tricky Zimbabwe and move closer to the Super Eights in a Group B match of the T20 World Cup here on Friday. Marsh missed his side's big win over Ireland on Wednesday with an internal testicular bleeding and, according to Cricket Australia, the all-rounder will require a considerable period of rest before returning to action. Steve Smith has joined the squad as his cover, but the absence of Marsh did not feel in Australia's 67-run romp here as they produced

**CLINICAL** | Ishan and Hardik powered the hosts with the bat and the latter with the ball as well to help India win by 93 runs

## Kishan, Pandya star as India outplay Namibia

NEW DELHI

Ishan Kishan and Hardik Pandya played stellar roles to help India register a convincing 93-run victory against minnows Namibia in their ICC Men's T20 World Cup Group A match, here at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, on Thursday.

Chasing India's mammoth target of 210, Namibia were always struggling and eventually folded for 116 in 18.2 overs.

Varun Chakravarthy was the best bowler scalping 3/7 while Pandya and Axar Patel picked up two wickets apiece.

Earlier, if Sanju Samson's three-sixes innings was akin to a short-lived Instagram reel, Kishan's batting was a gripping web series, full of drama, action and anticipation.

Kishan smashed the day-lights out of a club class Namibia attack to score a 24-ball-61 but Indian batters struggled against Gerhard Erasmus' side-arm off-breaks before posting 209 for 9.

Kishan muscled five sixes and half a dozen boundaries for a 20-ball-50 that set the foundation for a marauding Hardik Pandya (52 off 28 balls) to take the team to a total that looked well beyond the reach of this Namibian batting lineup.

However, Namibia skipper Erasmus (4/20 in 4 overs) gave a fantastic account of himself and would certainly keep Pakistan's lethal weapon Usman Tariq interested come Sunday.

Erasmus bowled side-arm deliveries in between the stock ball which is round arm. As a variation, he also bowled



India's Ishan Kishan plays a shot during the match against Namibia in Delhi. PTI

### Scoreboard

**INDIA:** I Kishan c Shikongo b Erasmus 61, S Samson c Steenkamp b Shikongo 22, T Varma c Smit b Erasmus 25, S Yadav st Green b Scholtz 12, H Pandya c sub b Erasmus 52, S Dube (run out) 23, R Singh c Erasmus b Smit 1, A Patel b Erasmus 0, V Chakravarthy (not out) 1, A Singh (run out) 2. **Extras** (LB-1, W-9) 10. **Total** (For 9 wkts, 20

overs) 209. **Fall of wkts:** 1-25, 2-104, 3-120, 4-124, 5-205, 6-205, 7-206, 8-206, 9-209.

**Bowling:** R Trumpelmann 4-0-38-0, B Shikongo 3-0-41-1, JJ Smit 4-0-50-1, M Heingo 1-0-18-0, G Erasmus 4-0-20-4, B Scholtz 4-0-41-1.

**NAMIBIA:** L Steenkamp b Varun 29, J Frylinck c Dube b A Singh 22, Loftie-Eaton c Patel b Varun 13, G Erasmus c T Varma b Patel 18, JJ Smit b Varun 0, Z Green hit

wicket b Dube 11, M Kruger c Bumrah b Patel 5, R Trumpelmann b Bumrah 6, B Scholtz c Patel b Pandya 4, B Shikongo lbw Pandya 0, M Heingo (not out) 0. **Extras** (B-1, NB-3, W-4) 8. **Total** (all out, 18.2 overs) 116.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-33, 2-67, 3-86, 4-86, 5-88, 6-94, 7-111, 8-116, 9-116

**Bowling:** H Pandya 4-0-21-2, A Singh 3-0-36-1, S Dube 2-2-0-11-1, J Bumrah 4-0-20-1, V Chakravarthy 2-0-7-3, A Patel 3-1-20-2

from behind the crease to shorten the length, as a set Tilak Varma (25) couldn't reach to the pitch of the delivery.

It was a flat Kotla deck but Sanju Samson (22 off 8 balls)

and skipper Suryakumar Yadav, with a run-a-ball 12, missed out on scoring big with the African side making some sort of a comeback with the ball during the middle overs.

Surya certainly got the best delivery of the innings from left arm spinner Bernard Scholtz, who got one to dip and turn as the skipper gave the charge, missed and was duly stumped.

## Italy coach John Davison emotional after historic win

Mosca brothers Justin and Anthony gave Nepal little cheer as they knocked off required runs in 12.4 overs

MUMBAI

Nepal fans outnumbered the Italy fans at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday. They created an atmosphere, were louder and behind their team, and cheered every run in the first innings. But Nepal batters couldn't thrill them and collapsed in the middle overs to eventually be all out for 123.

Mosca brothers Justin and Anthony gave them little to cheer in the chase as they knocked off the run in 12.4 overs with both scoring unbeaten half centuries. Italy is known for winning FIFA World Cups, but on Thursday then announced themselves on the World cricket stage.

"Everything went our way today, and nothing went our way the other day (against Scotland). It is a massive win, and hopefully, we make it to the front page of newspapers in Italy, or at least the back pages. It is a big day for Italian cricket," said Italy head coach John Davison.

Davison, a former Canadian



Italy's Ben Manenti celebrates after taking the wicket of Nepal's Lokesh Bam. PTI

Everything went our way today, and nothing went our way the other day (against Scotland). It is a massive win, and hopefully, we make it to the front page of newspapers in Italy, or at least the back pages. It is a big day for Italian cricket

John Davison, Italy coach

cricketer, comes from Australia, and so do the Mosca brothers Justin and Anthony, and the Manenti brothers Harry and Ben. "We have strong Italian connections. We bring a different set of emotions to the field. With

two sets of brothers on the side, it unites the team more. We are currently 27, and we don't like to be there. We know we are better than that and have won five of six games coming into the tournament."

## Chase is a versatile player: Hope

MUMBAI

West Indies have won three straight T20 World Cup matches at the Wankhede stadium, and skipper Shai Hope, who missed out with the bat again, was a happy man at the end of the day with a 30-run win over England.

"We won today. There is something in Wankhede. I'm just happy that the guys got off the line. We've been playing some good cricket in patches. Nice to see we've got more of a complete game today," Hope said during the post-match press conference on Wednesday.

West Indies made a tactical one-change against England by bringing in all-rounder Roston Chase in place of Matthew Forde. Chase obliged by scoring to take Windies out of trouble after they lost two quick wickets. He then proved an ideal foil to Gidakesh Motie by picking 2/29 with his off-spin bowling. "He's a versatile player. With the bat, he can come in and stabilise the innings, and with the ball, he can come and give some crucial overs."

## Mosca brothers star as Italy beat Nepal

Both openers, Justin and Anthony strike half centuries to star in Italy's maiden World Cup win

MUMBAI

Debutants Italy scored their maiden win in ICC World Cup history after beating Nepal by 10 wickets in the Group C match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup at Wankhede Stadium on Thursday.

Mosca brothers Justin and Anthony launched a brutal assault on Nepal bowlers, chasing a mediocre 124 in 12.3 overs. Nepal, whose batters were impressive against England in a big chase at the same venue, could not find momentum as Italy's spinners strangled them. They were eventually all out for 123 in 19.3 overs.

Anthony made an unbeaten 62 in 32 balls with three boundaries, and Justin remained not out on 60 in 44 balls with five boundaries and three sixes as Italy reached the target in quick time to get two crucial points and better their net run rate.

Italy spin trio of Crishan Kalugamage (3 for 18), Ben Manenti (2 for 9), and JJ Smutts (1/22) took six wickets between them, almost like the West Indies spin trio of Gudakesh Motie, Roston Chase, and Akeal Hosein, who also shared six wickets between them against England on Wednesday.

Right-handed Anthony launched a six over midwicket to give Italy wings in strike bowler Karan KC's first over. Left-handed Justin also got into the groove with six and four off Karan KC as Italy raced to 30/0 in three overs.

By the time Nepal's premier bowler Sandeep Lamichhane was introduced in the sixth over, Italy had raced to 58 in five overs. Lamichhane troubled



Italy's Anthony Mosca (left) and Justin Mosca during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup match at the Wankhede Stadium. PTI

### Scoreboard

**NEPAL:** K Bhurtel c J Mosca b A Hasan 5, A Sheikh st Meade b Ben Manenti 20, R Paudel c Stewart b Kalugamage 23, D Singh Airee b Kalugamage 17, A Sheikh c Campopiano b Smutts 27, L Bam c AJ Mosca b B Manenti 3, G Jha c H Manenti b Kalugamage 3, Karan KC (not out) 18, N Yadav (run out) 0, S Lamichhane c HJ Manenti b J Singh 5, L Rajbanshi (run out) 0. **Extras** (W-2) 2. **Total** (all out, 19.3 overs) 123

**Fall of wickets:** 1-8, 2-49, 3-49, 4-93, 5-96, 6-100, 7-102, 8-102, 9-123

**Bowling:** B Manenti 4-0-9-2, A Hasan 3-0-34-1, JJ Smutts 4-0-22-1, G Stewart 3-0-32-0, C Kalugamage 4-0-18-3, J Singh 1-3-0-8-1.

**Italy:** J Mosca (not out) 60, A Hasan (not out) 62. **Extras** (LB-2) 2. **Total** (For no loss, 12.4 overs) 124.

**Bowling:** Karan KC 2-0-21-0, D Singh Airee 3-4-0-24-0, L Rajbanshi 1-0-19-0, S Lamichhane 3-0-31-0, N Yadav 1-0-12-0, K Bhurtel 2-0-15-0.

Anthony, but he still fetched ten runs from two balls, including a six, to help Italy reach 68 for 0 after powerplay overs.

Italy marched to 97 for 0 in 10 overs. Justin reached fifty in 37 balls, and a ball later, Anthony lofted Lamichhane over deep square leg to com-

plete his fifty in 28 balls. He then hit his second consecutive six to bring 100 on the board inside 11 overs.

Much was expected from the Nepal batters after a stupendous show against England, but they came up with a disappointing show and had no answer.

## England were 'too careful' in the chase, says Brook

Skipper Brook reminds they handled spin well in Sri Lanka but could not execute on the day of the game

MUMBAI

England had played some good cricket coming into the ICC Men's World Cup, but they have fumbled in the first two games so far at the Wankhede stadium. They got closely over the line against minnows Nepal and lost by 30 runs to West Indies.

Harry Brook-led side had won T20I series 3-0 in West Indies, 1-1 in South Africa, 2-0 in Ireland, 1-0 in New Zealand and more recently 3-0 in Sri Lanka. England had handled spin smartly in Sri Lanka but fumbled against West Indies on Wednesday and to certain against Nepal also.

Brook reckoned it may be due to World Cup pressure that they were "more careful" in chase.

"We have handled spin quite well in Sri Lanka. We were too careful in chase, me included. I would have preferred to get out caught on the boundary than the way I got out today. That's part of T20 Cricket. He (Gudakesh Motie)



England's captain Harry Brook plays a shot during the match against West Indies. PTI

was probably the main threat at the time and I tried to rotate strike and nudge him on the legside and get Sam (Curran) back on strike," Brook said at the post match press conference on Wednesday.

Brook scored 17 off 14 balls and wasn't able to capitalise on the bisk starts from Phil Salt, Jos Buttler and Jacob Bethell. England lost way in the middle as West Indies spinners Motie and Roston Chase ran through the middle-order to restrict

England to 166 all out and secure win by 30 runs in Group C match. Brooke got a leading edge and Motie took a good catch on his own bowling.

"With the power that we have at the back end, myself included, I thought I could have taken a risk a little bit earlier knowing we still had Jacks (Will Jacks), and Jamie Overton to come in. With that power and that depth that we have, we do think we can chase almost anything."

## drama

## Aminul to be in Colombo for India-Pakistan game

DHAKA

Bangladesh Cricket Board chief Aminul Islam says he will be in Colombo to watch the India-Pakistan T20 World Cup clash on Sunday where he expects to break ice with the BCCI after tense exchanges over the past few weeks.

Speaking to Bangladesh newspaper 'Pratham Alo', Islam said the invitation for the high-profile game has

come from the ICC.

"The ICC has taken a decision. The major stakeholders of the ICC are these five Asian countries and for the India-Pakistan World Cup match on the 15th, they want representatives of all five Asian countries to be present at the ground together, watch the match together and talk to one another," Islam said.

India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan form the Asian block in the world body.

Asked if the meet could be an opportunity to end tensions with the BCCI, Islam said, "You can consider it as something like that."

The BCCI-BCB strife started after the Indian Board ordered the release of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the IPL contract with Kolkata Knight Riders for unspecified "developments all around."

It was widely speculated that the move was triggered by political violence in Bangladesh in which Hindus

have been targeted. Bangladesh responded by refusing to travel to India for their World Cup matches citing security worries.

However, the ICC, led by former BCCI secretary Jay Shah, rejected their concerns, describing the threat perception as low to moderate after its own assessment.

Bangladesh were eventually replaced by Scotland in the tournament after refusing to budge from their position despite lengthy discussions with the world

body. Their omission led to the Pakistan government announcing a boycott of the game against India as an expression of solidarity with Bangladesh. But the impasse was resolved after the BCB and the Sri Lankan government persuaded Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to withdraw the call.

Following another round of discussions, ICC decided not to penalise BCB for its previous stance and also allotted one ICC event to B'desh in 2028-2031 cycle.



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Email ID:  
akhandbharsatsandesh1@gmail.com  
Mob. 9415235084, 9565333000