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

Briefs

CHANDIGARH BJP attacks Mann govt on law and order

The Punjab BJP president Sunil Jakhar on Sunday accused the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government of functioning like an event management firm instead of focusing on development. He said the Bhagwant Mann-led government has no achievements and is using special Vidhan Sabha sessions as propaganda, including one on December 30 over the G Ram G law. Jakhar urged discussion on law and order, alleging failure to provide promised employment to the poor and misleading people on the scheme.

PATNA Threat to life: Tej Pratap seeks security

RJD chief Tej Pratap Yadav has written to Bihar Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Samrat Choudhary seeking security, claiming his life is in danger after alleged threats from former party national spokesperson Santosh Yadav. In an FIR, Tej accused him of issuing death threats, using offensive language on social media, working against party ideology, and extorting money from people. The spokesperson has been expelled. Tej also sought a probe into claims of a secret basement at Rabri Devi's residence.

AYODHYA Naidu offers prayers at Ram Temple

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu visited the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Saturday and offered prayers to Ram Lalla on the second anniversary of the consecration ceremony. He participated in rituals marking Pratistha Dwadashi, attended ceremonies at the yajna shala, and also offered prayers at the Sapt Rishi temple. Naidu also had a darshan of Ram Darbar and reviewed ongoing construction work. He said the development of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar was essential for achieving the goal of a developed India by 2047.

PATNA/KOLKATA 8 wagons of goods train derail in Bihar

Eight wagons of a goods train have derailed in Bihar's Jamui district, causing disruption of railway services on the Howrah-Patna-Delhi route, officials said. No casualties have been reported so far, they said. An Eastern Railway official said an inquiry has been ordered into the cause of the accident. The accident took place between Lahabon and Simultala railway stations under the Asansol division of Eastern Railways around 11.25 pm on Saturday. It resulted in the disruption of the movement of around two dozen trains overnight.

Why smuggling of Chinese e-cigarettes to India is booming

NEW DELHI

BJP MP Anurag Thakur accusing an opposition colleague of smoking an e-cigarette (vape) inside the Parliament two weeks ago created a minor uproar in the House.

But what escaped public debate was the larger public health concern of easy availability and popularity of Chinese-made vapes in Indian metros, which is fuelled by rampant smuggling in huge numbers through India's seaports and airports. This well-oiled trade also cocks a snook at the 2019 Prohibition of E-cigarettes Act, which outrightly bans production, manufacture, import, export, sale and distribution of vapes.

The latest annual report of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), India's top anti-smuggling agency, reveals that their seizures of e-cigarettes have gone up from a mere 11,000 pieces in 2021-22 to a whopping eight lakh units in 2024-25. DRI says that

smugglers exploit covert methods such as online marketplaces, courier networks, and hidden shipments to smuggle e-cigarettes and vaping devices into the country.

A few days before Thakur's diatribe in Parliament, DRI had found 45,984 vapes worth Rs 10.41 crore inside a container that arrived at Tamil Nadu's Tuticorin port from China, declaring its consignment as umbrellas. On November 22, 74,000 pieces were found concealed in containers declared as slippers at the Kolkata port. In September 2024, 82,010 vapes were seized from four containers docked at Kolkata port declaring the import of plastic goods from China. Similar foiling bids have been reported at Chennai, Vizag, and Mundra as well.

An accepted rule of thumb is that only 10% of smuggled contraband is seized by officials and hence the seizure figures are a marker of the massive volumes entering India. Recent market research



E-CIGARETTE SEIZURES

2021-22
11,000 pieces
2024-25
8 lakh pieces

E-Cigarette



MAJOR SEIZURES

45,984 e-cigarettes seized at Tuticorin port on November 30

74,000 e-cigarettes seized at Kolkata port on November 22

54,284 e-cigarettes seized from a Delhi warehouse on October 8

82,010 e-cigarettes seized at Kolkata port in September 2024

2 lakh e-cigarettes seized at Mundra port in September 2022

pegged the Indian e-cigarette market at USD 2.2 billion in 2024, forecasting a growth to USD 3.4 billion by 2033 at a CAGR of 4.5%. These are big numbers even in a country which has an estimated 10 crore cigarette smokers.

Smaller quantities are

brought in by carriers flying from the Gulf and south-east Asian countries, concealed in their baggage. Investigations by Chennai Customs have found that e-cigarette smuggling uses the same networks as those operating in the gold, narcotics, exotic wildlife and

hawala trade. In addition to ports of entry, there have been crackdowns by Chennai Customs of massive quantities of vapes stocked in godowns in the city as well, which indicate a well-oiled supply chain network.

A cursory online check

AVIATION TAKING OFF | US aerospace major pitches C-130Js as 'best' choice for IAF's tactical airlift requirement

Lockheed Martin plans production hub in India

MARIETTA (US)

As India prepares to procure up to 80 military transport planes, US aerospace major Lockheed Martin has pitched its C-130J Super Hercules as the best choice and said the aircraft will provide it a "stronger" heft for tactical airlift among the Quad nations.

If Lockheed Martin gets the opportunity, then it will set up a mega hub in India to produce the "iconic" aircraft, and it will be the first such global facility outside of the US, top officials of the company told PTI.

To date, Lockheed Martin has delivered more than 560 aircraft from the C-130J Super Hercules family, which have accumulated more than three million flight hours. The leading tactical airlift has been serving 28 operators in 23 nations.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) currently operates 12 C-130Js.

Alongside the standard transport variant, Lockheed Martin offers multiple specialised configurations of the C-130J, which enable the aircraft to perform intelligence, electronic warfare, and special forces support, search

and rescue and command roles.

Besides India, the three other Quad member nations - the US, Australia and Japan - have been operating C-130Js.

"The C-130J Super Hercules reflects proven performance and versatility across 20 unique mission sets. It holds 54 world records. Proven in every challenging operational environment, the C-130J's structural durability is the standard for reliability, safety, and excellence," said Patricia Trish Pagan, Vice President, Air Mobility and Maritime Missions at Lockheed Martin. Pagan said Lockheed Martin is the preferred partner globally because the C-130Js are "built to deliver and built to last", adding the aircraft will be the "best option for India".

In 2022, the IAF issued a Request for Information (RFI) to purchase medium transport aircraft (MTA) to replace its ageing fleet of Soviet-era AN-32 and IL-76 planes.

The IAF plans to procure around 80 military transport aircraft, and the multi-billion dollar procurement is likely to be cleared by the Defence Acquisition Council in the next few weeks.



Rolls Royce eyes third 'home mkt' outside UK

NEW DELHI

British aero-engine maker Rolls-Royce on Sunday said it is looking at making India its third "home market" outside of the UK in line with a plan to unlock the full potential of opportunities across an array of domains including jet engine, naval propulsion, land systems and advanced engineering.

In an interview to PTI, Sashi Mukundan, the executive vice president of Rolls-Royce India, elaborating on the move, said the company is planning for a "big investment" in the country and

listed developing a next-generation aero engine in India as a priority to power the combat jets that New Delhi will produce under the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programme.

Besides the UK, Rolls Royce considers the US and Germany as its "home markets" as the company has considerable presence including manufacturing facilities in these two countries.

Mukundan also highlighted how Rolls Royce can contribute significantly to address India's requirement for electric propulsion capability for boosting the Indian Navy's combat prowess.

Election Commission flags technical issue in 2002 rolls

Halts hearings for 'unmapped' electors in Bengal

KOLKATA

The EC has issued fresh instructions to district election officials in West Bengal, directing that voters marked as "unmapped" in the BLO app due to technical issues linked to the digitisation of the 2002 electoral rolls during the ongoing SIR exercise should not be called for hearings, even if such notices have been auto-generated by the system.

The directive, issued by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), West Bengal, on Saturday stated that the issue has arisen due to incomplete conversion of the PDF version of the 2002 electoral rolls, the last Special Intensive Revision (SIR) conducted in the state, into CSV format, leading to linkage failures in the booth-level officer (BLO) app for a number of electors.

It said that despite being marked as "unmapped" in the system, many such electors have valid self or progeny link-

BLO's body found in Bankura, work-related pressure alleged

Kolkata: A Booth Level Officer (BLO) was found dead in West Bengal's Bankura district on Sunday, triggering allegations that work-related pressure linked to the ongoing SIR of electoral rolls may have played a role, police said. The incident occurred in Ranibandh block, where the body of the deceased, Haradhan Mandal, was recovered from a school premises on Sunday morning. The police said they found a "suicide note". Accusing BJP of 'bulldozing' SIR process, TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee alleged over 50 lives were lost "to panic, anxiety, exhaustion and fear engineered by a voter-cleansing operation designed for BJP's electoral gain".

age with the hard copy of the 2002 electoral rolls, duly authenticated by district election officers (DEOs) and published on the CEO's website.

The CEO's office said that hearing notices generated automatically in such cases need not be served and should be retained at the level of the electoral registration officer (ERO) or assistant electoral registration officer (AERO).

As per the instructions, extracts of the 2002 electoral

rolls may be forwarded to the DEO concerned for verification in accordance with the guidelines of the Election Commission. Upon verification, EROs or AEROs may take an appropriate decision and upload the necessary documents for the disposal of the cases.

The directive also allows BLOs to be deputed for field verification, including taking photographs of the electors concerned for uploading in the system.



presidential descent

President Droupadi Murmu took a sortie onboard Navy's frontline submarine INS Vaghsheer at Karwar Naval Base, in Uttara Kannada on Sunday. Murmu said it was a "very special experience" for her to "sail, dive and spend time" with the sailors and officers onboard the submarine - ANI

97% drop in malaria cases: Amit Shah

AHMEDABAD

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said India has recorded a 97 per cent reduction in malaria cases and the country will be free of the disease in a "short time".

He was addressing the 'All India Medical Conference -

IMA NATCON 2025' of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) in Shela here.

"Thanks to various healthcare related schemes like Ayushman Bharat and Mission Indradhanush, we have recorded 97 per cent reduction in malaria cases and we will be almost free from malaria in a short time.

The government has been able to bring down mortality rate in dengue to just 1 per cent. There has been a 25 per cent reduction in maternal mortality," he said.

"From Rs 37,000 crore in 2014, the Centre's health budget now stands at Rs 1.28 lakh crore under PM Narendra Modi," Shah added.



expert's warning

'Car fumes at traffic signals up heart attack risk'

KANPUR

Prolonged exposure to vehicular pollution at busy traffic signals can significantly increase the risk of heart attacks, a leading cardiology expert has warned, highlighting air pollution as a growing, but often ignored, public health emergency.

Dr Madhur Yadav, a specialist from Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi, raised the concern while addressing the 42nd annual conference of the Association of Physicians of India, UP API-CON 2025, held recently at the GSVN Medical College, Kanpur. Speaking during a scientific session on heart diseases and air pollution, Dr

Yadav said that inhaling toxic fumes while waiting at red lights can have immediate and long-term effects on the heart.

"Nearly 50% of heart attack cases are now linked to air pollution. The most harmful are particles measuring 2.5 microns, which are so small that they bypass the body's natural defences," he said. Once inhaled, these particles enter

the lungs, mix with the bloodstream, and directly interfere with heart function.

Dr Yadav elaborated that air pollution primarily contains three categories of particulate matter, 10 microns (PM10), 2.5 microns (PM2.5), and ultra-fine particles measuring 0.1 microns. While all of them pose health risks, PM2.5 is particularly lethal due to its ability

to penetrate deep into the lung tissue. These particles reduce the heart's ability to pump efficiently. According to him, children, senior citizens, and people with existing health conditions face the highest risk. "Pollution worsens their condition by increasing inflammation and generating free radicals that damage vital organs, including the heart, lungs, and

blood vessels," he said.

Dr Yadav also cautioned against outdoor physical activities during periods of high pollution. He advised people to avoid jogging, cycling, or exercising near roads with heavy traffic, especially during peak hours. He urged people to limit exposure to vehicular smoke, wear masks when stepping outdoors.

Children Honored with Medals and Certificates at Ganga Rishikulam School's Sports Day

Children are excelling in both academics and sports - Director Matsyendra Dwivedi
Good education is the true ladder to success - Principal Pratibha Tripathi

Tharwai
Whether it's education or sports, children are now excelling in every field and achieving great success. Children are making significant progress in the world of sports, which contributes to their physical and mental development, and sports are considered to play a very important role. In this context, Ganga Rishikulam School, Sector-C, Shantipura, Phaphamau, a renowned school in the Prayagraj district, organized a grand sports competition.

The competition included various events such as running, Kho-Kho, and Kabaddi, in which children from Nursery to Class 5 participated. The children who secured first, second, and third positions were honored with medals and certificates by the school's Director, Matsyendra Dwivedi, and Principal, Pratibha Tripathi, on Sports Day,



December 24th, to

encourage them.

Director Matsyendra

Dwivedi, present at the event, stated that sports are very important for maintaining physical and mental health. He emphasized that the sports competition, which included running, Kho-Kho, and Kabaddi, was organized to encourage the children and foster their interest in sports alongside academics.

He expressed hope that the children would continue to excel in sports and achieve great success, bringing glory to their district, state, parents, and school.

Principal Pratibha Tripathi added that a good education is the true ladder to success, and if children receive a good education from the beginning, they will surely achieve success. Coordinator Arvind Mishra, along with teachers Soumya Pandey, Geeta Verma, and other teachers, were also present at the award ceremony.

Man approaches High Court after 12 years for compassionate appointment, petition dismissed, court imposes fine

Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court dismissed a review petition filed in an old service dispute. The court stated that there was no valid reason for the delay of 4,430 days (approximately 12 years) in filing the petition. This order was passed by a single-judge bench of Justice Saurabh Shyam Shamsery while hearing a review petition filed by a resident of Saharanpur. The case pertains to Mulki Raj, a resident of Saharanpur district. Mulki Raj had filed a writ petition in the High Court in 1996, challenging a dispute related to his service. He also received interim relief for some time in this matter. However, the Allahabad High Court dismissed this writ petition after a full hearing on September 10, 2013. Following this, Mulki Raj neither appealed against the order nor filed a review petition. Mulki Raj remained in service until 2018. He passed away in 2021. After his death, his son filed a review petition in the High Court, arguing that the 2013 court order was hindering his compassionate appointment (government job). The High Court rejected this argument, stating that compassionate appointment cannot be the basis for filing a review petition after such a long delay. The court also observed that since the original petitioner did not challenge the decision during his lifetime, his son has no legal right to file a review petition in this matter. The court dismissed the application for condonation of delay, stating that the reasons given in the petition for the 4,430-day delay were vague and weak. With the dismissal of the application for condonation of delay, the review petition was also automatically dismissed. The court also imposed a fine of Rs. 500 on the petitioner, which was ordered to be deposited with the District Legal Services Authority, Saharanpur.

SDM Court Cracks Down: 1.66 Crore Penalty Imposed on 28 Illegal Encroachers

Jalesar

In a significant action against illegal encroachments, the Court of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (Judicial), Jalesar has ordered the recovery of 1 crore 66 lakh 25 thousand as compensation from 28 individuals found guilty of unlawfully occupying land belonging to the Nagar Palika Parishad. The court has also directed that the encroached land be vacated and cleared of all illegal structures. In compliance with the court order, the Nagar Palika Parishad has issued a public proclamation (munadi), granting the encroachers a three-day



deadline to voluntarily vacate the land and remove the encroachments, failing which forcible eviction proceedings will be initiated. Providing details, Executive Officer of the Nagar Palika Parishad, Pradyumn Kumar, stated that the matter was adjudicated in Case No.

3027/2024 (State vs. Om Prakash and Others), pending before the SDM (Judicial) Court, Jalesar. The verdict was delivered on October 21, 2025 under Section 4 of the Uttar Pradesh Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1972. As

per the court findings, the encroachers had illegally occupied municipal land situated at Gate No. 3294, measuring 0.320 hectares, located in the Inner Chungi area on Tehsil Road, Jalesar. The court held all 28 encroachers guilty and ordered that the land be freed from encroachment. It further directed that the compensation amount be recovered from the offenders as arrears of land revenue. Following the court's directive, the administration has initiated proceedings to ensure timely compliance, warning that strict action will follow if the encroachments are not removed within the stipulated period.

Counters Set Up at Tehsil and Block Offices for Filing Claims and Objections in Panchayat Voter List

Etah: Ahead of the Three-Tier Panchayat General Elections-2026, the draft Panchayat voter list for Tehsil Jalesar was published on December 23, 2025. Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Bhavna Vimal informed that all necessary arrangements have been made to receive claims and objections following the publication of the list. The SDM stated that dedicated counters

have been established at the Tehsil Office as well as at the respective Block offices for Jalesar and Awagarh Development Blocks. For Jalesar and Awagarh Blocks, Collection Amins Amit Kumar and Kishori Lal and for Awagarh Block, Collection Amins Sanjay Sharma and Chandrajeet have been assigned duty immediately until further orders with working hours from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. At the

Tehsil Office, separate counters have been set up in the Vividha Room for voters of both Jalesar and Awagarh Blocks to ensure convenience. Additionally, one counter each has been established at the offices of both Development Blocks. Electoral Registration Officer Ms. Vimal stated that all counters are equipped with the prescribed forms. Voters can submit applications through Form-2.

Providing relief to poor families in winter is the biggest noble work: Shefali Thakral

Bhadohi

To protect themselves from the ongoing severe cold and cold wave, on one hand, the government administration is taking measures like distribution of bonfires, blankets and rain shelters at various places, while on the other hand, social organizations are helping the poor extensively. On Saturday, the work of distributing blankets to poor destitute families to protect them from cold was done by Hiralal Social Development and Research Institute in Gram Panchayat Gadkhar. The program was inaugurated by the chief guest, District Panchayat member Dev Prakash Patel, by giving blankets to the poor. Blankets were distributed among more than 100 poor, helpless and needy people of



Gram Panchayat. The main organizer of the program, Professor Shefali Thakral, Head of the Department of Psychology, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth, while highlighting the objectives of the organization, appreciated this noble work and said that whatever measures should be taken to provide relief to the poor in the severe cold, it is very little. He said that providing relief to poor and destitute people

from the cold is the most noble act. Expressing his expectation from this social institution, he said that it should continue organizing such events in future so that the poor can be helped more and more. The blanket distribution program was mainly attended by the organization advisor Dr. Ram Kirti Singh, President Dinesh Kumar Chauhan, Vice President Deepak Saini, Sachin.

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Traditional Sports competition held at Raj Bhavan on the inspiration of Governor Lucknow

On the third day of the traditional sports competition 2025-26 held at Raj Bhavan on the inspiration of Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, league matches of badminton, tug of war and gilli-danda sports competitions were held today.

During the competition, the Players participated with enthusiasm, discipline and sportsmanship. Through traditional games like badminton, tug-of-war and gilli-danda, physical efficiency, team spirit and mutual cooperation were witnessed, creating an enthusiastic atmosphere at the venue. Sports manager Jamal Siddiqui team won the league match of Gilli-Danda while Information Officer Krishna Kumar team won the league match of tug-of-war. The sports competition organized at the Raj Bhavan on the inspiration of the Governor is a remarkable initiative towards encouraging sports culture, preservation of traditional games and promotion of healthy lifestyle.

On this occasion, Raj Bhavan officials, employees, members residing in the Raj Bhavan premises, children, sportsmen and sports lovers were Present.

DM-11 wins friendly match against DRM-11 by 7 runs

Friendly match organized to establish better coordination and harmony between administrative and railway officials in view of Magh Mela-2026



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: A friendly cricket match was organized between DM-11 and DRM-11 at DSA Ground to establish better coordination and harmony between administrative and railway officials in view of Magh Mela-2026. The friendly cricket match was inau-

gured by Divisional Commissioner Soumya Agarwal. The Divisional Commissioner met all the players of both DM-11 and DRM-11 teams and wished them good luck. In the friendly cricket match, the DRM-11 team won the toss and decided to field first. In the 15-over match, batting first, the DM-11 team scored a

total of 116 runs for the loss of 7 wickets in the stipulated 15 overs. Mela Officer Rishiraj scored the highest 31 runs for the team in 29 balls and also took one wicket for 18 runs in 3 overs. District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma and Imran started the innings for the DM-11 team. City Commissioner Seelam



Sai Teja contributed 14 runs for his team. Chasing the target, the DRM-11 team could only score 109 runs for the loss of 3 wickets in the stipulated 15 overs. Thus, the DM-11 team won the match by 7 runs. In the match, Akash Shrinetra from the DRM-11 team scored 48 runs in 27 balls, including 8 fours

and 1 six. The District Magistrate contributed 5 runs and also played a crucial role in his team's victory with his economical bowling, giving away only 7 runs in 2 overs. At the end of the match, players were given awards in various categories. For his outstanding performance in the friendly match,

Magistrate Rishiraj was chosen as the Player of the Match. Considerable enthusiasm was observed among the administrative and railway officials during the match. DRM Rajneesh Agarwal, Professor Ankita Raj, and other relevant administrative and railway officials were present on this occasion.

Divisional Commissioner inspects various sectors of the fairground, reviews arrangements, and issues instructions



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: Divisional Commissioner Soumya Agarwal, on Sunday, visited various sectors of the Magh Mela 2026 fairground, in view of its approaching date. She was accompanied by Municipal Commissioner Seelam Sai Teja, the Deputy Fair Officer, Magh Mela, and Superintending and Executive Engineers of the concerned departments. During the visit, the Divisional Commissioner inspected the various ghats being prepared in the fairground and inquired about the necessary basic facilities and arrangements. She instructed that all ghats and essential facilities be completed on time before the commencement of the fair. All Sector Magistrates and departmental engineers were directed to continuously visit their respective areas and keep track of the progress of the work.

For the first time, land allotted to 4900 organizations at Magh Mela; officials working to provide facilities

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: The process of land allocation to organizations at the Magh Mela was completed on Saturday. ??The Prayagraj Mela Authority has allocated land to 4900 organizations in the 800-hectare fairground, as per the target. This is the first time that such a large number of organizations have been allotted land at the fair. In the 2024 Magh Mela, land was allocated to 4,599 organizations. This time, 301 new organizations have also been given the opportunity to set up camps in the area. After completing the land allocation process, Mela Authority officials are now engaged in setting



up the camps and providing facilities to the devotees. The work of laying water pipelines and electricity lines in the fairground has been completed as per the target. Therefore, electricity and water facilities will be immediately available to the organizations as they set up their

camps. Mela Officer Rishi Raj said that all sector in-charges have been instructed to complete the settlement work quickly. The fair has been divided into seven sectors. For resolving settlement-related problems and for information, devotees can contact their respective sector

offices and the in-charges there. The mobile numbers of all sector in-charges have been displayed on the notice board outside the Mela office. The Mela helpline number 1920 can also be contacted for resolving problems.

Officials have been instructed to

expedite the settlement work in the fairground, the construction of ghats over a distance of 2.8 km, other basic facilities, and crowd management work from December 28, and ensure that all tasks are completed within the stipulated time frame. Organizations will be blacklisted for not following rules and regulations. The Mela Officer said that all organizations will be investigated, and those that do not comply with the rules and regulations will be blacklisted. Suspicious organizations will also be identified, and it will be checked whether the organizations are fulfilling the purpose for which they were allotted land.

Schools for classes 1 to 12 to remain closed for two days due to severe cold wave



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: As per the instructions of the District Magistrate of Prayagraj, in view of the extreme cold wave, low temperatures, and dense fog, all schools in the district for classes 1 to 12 will remain closed on December 29 and 30. This order will be

applicable to all schools, including those affiliated with the Basic Education Council, government schools, government-aided schools, private recognized schools, as well as those affiliated with CBSE, ICSE, and all other boards. Students will not attend school during this period. According to District Basic

Education Officer Prayagraj, Anil Kumar, teachers, Shiksha Mitras (para-teachers), instructors, and other staff will be present at the schools to carry out administrative and other necessary tasks. The district administration has instructed all schools to ensure strict compliance with the order.

Chrysanthemum and Coleus Exhibition Organized at Chandrashekhar Azad Park

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: As in previous years, a two-day Chrysanthemum and Coleus Exhibition-2025 was organized at the Government Garden, Chandrashekhar Azad Park, Prayagraj on December 27th and 28th, 2025. On December 28th, 2025, at the closing ceremony, the chief guest, Mudit Chandra, Principal Chief Personnel Officer, NCR Prayagraj, and the special guest, Virendra Singh, Chief Horticulture Specialist, Horticultural Experiment and Training Center, Khusrobagh, Prayagraj, distributed prizes to the participants of the exhibition.

In the individual category, Mukund Lal, Hathigaha,

Prayagraj, received the first prize for overall Chrysanthemum and Coleus, Dr. Ajay Kesarwani, Katghar, Prayagraj, received the second prize, and Hari Netralaya, Panna Road, Prayagraj, received a consolation prize in the individual category. Similarly, in the government and semi-government category, for small and large chrysanthemum varieties, Suresh Kumar Yadav, In-charge, Moti Lal Garden Unit, received the first prize, Shiv Kumar Maurya, In-charge, Band Stand Garden Unit, received the second prize, and Pooja, In-charge, Grape Garden Unit, received a consolation prize. The Superintendent of the Government Garden, Chandrashekhar Azad Park, Prayagraj, stated that a total of 87 entries were submit-

ted in various categories of Chrysanthemum and Coleus in the exhibition. 59 prizes were awarded to 56 entries. In his address at the prize distribution ceremony, the chief guest, Mudit Chandra, said that the various varieties of chrysanthemum and coleus displayed in the exhibition are a symbol of our sensitivity towards nature, beauty, and environmental protection. He encouraged the participants in the individual category and urged them to participate in the exhibition with even greater enthusiasm next time. Dr. R.E. Wilson, Scientist, SHUATS, and Dr. Manoj Kumar Singh, Scientist, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Kaushambi, were also present at the prize distribution ceremony.

Grand Celebration Held at Hogan Hall of St. Joseph's School and College on the Occasion of Christmas



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: A grand ceremony was held on Sunday at Hogan Hall of St. Joseph's School and College on the occasion of Christmas. Harshvardhan Bajpai, MLA from Allahabad North, was also present. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Allahabad celebrated the spirit of festivity, fellowship, and community harmony by organizing its annual Christmas gathering at St. Joseph's College, Prayagraj. The event, led by the Bishop

of Allahabad, Most Reverend Louis Mascarenhas, brought together distinguished guests from the civil administration, judiciary, legislature, press and media, and various other officials of the city. This gathering was an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of cooperation between the Church and the wider community and to express gratitude. The program began with a prayer, followed by the performance of joyful Christmas carols. Following this, Most Rev. Louis Mascarenhas delivered a spe-



cial Christmas message, reflecting on the values of peace, service, and goodwill. In his address, Bishop Mascarenhas expressed heartfelt gratitude to the guests for their continued cooperation and support. He said, "We are deeply grateful for the unwavering partnership of our administrative leaders, police officers, members of the judiciary, civil servants, press and media, and all elected representatives. Your dedication ensures the well-being and peaceful progress of our entire community, and we

deeply value this collaborative relationship." Following this, a delightful high tea further enhanced the festive atmosphere, providing a relaxed opportunity for interaction and conversation, bringing the program to a meaningful conclusion. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Allahabad, under the guidance of Bishop Louis Mascarenhas, is actively involved in the fields of education, healthcare, and social service, promoting community harmony and holistic development.

Editorial

Russia has economically become more dependent than ever on China

Russia, meanwhile, has economically become more dependent than ever on China. It views China as indispensable in shaping a new global order. The recent visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to China underscored the strategic nature of the relationship. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was blunt in stating that their ties were "irreplaceable in maintaining global strategic stability and promoting cooperation among emerging powers". Both men condemned the US for creating "closed military-political alliances [like NATO] with a limited set of members", and expressed willingness to create alternative institutions where China and Russia can shape norms in a way that suits their interests. Iran, too, has played a quid pro quo role in supporting Russia in its war against Ukraine, both diplomatically and militarily. In fact, as per a recent US Congress report, Iran not only maintains a steady supply of drones, air-to-ground munitions, and artillery ammunition to Russia, but it is also building a drone production factory inside Russian territory. Moreover, Russia, China and Iran are increasingly deepening cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. In March, they held the fourth edition of their annual trilateral naval exercises in the northern Indian Ocean. The cascade of conflicts obviously has a negative impact on India's external environment. A more volatile world makes pursuing development security all the more challenging. Within this context, the emergence of a strong partnership between China, Russia and Iran, founded on an anti-Western sentiment, has serious implications for India. For starters, efforts by the three countries to shape norms across the Global South and the Indo-Pacific, or at institutions such as the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, could chip away at India's strategic space. This is particularly the case given India's democratic values, deepening ties with the US and Europe. and its strategic competition with China. Moreover, their closer military cooperation in the Indo-Pacific portends the emergence of a Cold War-style camp confrontation. This is detrimental to India's approach of multi-alignment and maintaining strategic autonomy. **The world today** appears to be on the verge of a cascade of conflicts. Over two years since it started, the Russia-Ukraine war does not seem to be heading towards an imminent settlement. Likewise, despite calls for a ceasefire, the Israel-Hamas conflict appears unlikely to abate anytime soon. And now, events over the past month involving Israel and Iran have demonstrated the potential for a wider regional conflict. While the wars in Eurasia and the Middle East may seem disjointed and seeped in their own historical and political contexts, they are also interconnected in a broader sense of the emerging great power competition for the future of the world order. What we are witnessing today is an era of great power competition in an increasingly multipolar world. The US and China are the chief protagonists in this new order, although each is constrained by its domestic politics and capacities. This creates a certain power vacuum, but also space for autonomy of action, balancing and bandwagoning, and even adventurism by middle powers. In this environment, while there are no distinct blocs that have emerged, there are certain alignments that are becoming more prominent. For instance, NATO seems to have found a fresh purpose following Russia's assault on Ukraine, but there are deep concerns related to American policy continuity. Likewise, there is the emergence of a Russia-Iran-China axis based on common interests and grievances with the West. But there are limits to the nature of support that each lends to the other. After years of mutual antagonism,

, Israel and Iran now appear to be on the brink of a new conflict.



If voters do not vote, then how will governments be elected?

Voters are the basis of elections and if voters do not vote, then how will governments be elected? The fewer voters will vote, the easier it will be for the political parties to manipulate them in their favor and it will also be easier to win, because the mood of the voters is such that the angry voters do not vote or Those who vote for a particular party get burnt on NOTA, whereas those who vote only for a particular party come to vote in any circumstances and in this way, even if the voting percentage is low, that party can also win, due to which a large number of voters are attracted. The section should be angry. But this is not even 100% true. Because many times people come out in large numbers for anti-voting and those voters get angry, who are stuck to one party and are angry with that party for some reason. But they do not get angry and vote for other parties, rather they prefer to sit at home and protest against voting. If we want to see such examples, we will see that in the 2018 assembly elections in Rajasthan, the Rajputs there had opened a front against the BJP and the result was that the BJP had lost in Rajasthan. Despite being less in number than other castes, the opposition of Rajputs proved too much for BJP and after two five-year plans, BJP could return to power in



Rajasthan in the year 2023. This time, the way the resentment of Rajputs has come to the fore in the northern region of India after the Jats from Western Uttar Pradesh, anything can happen. In fact, for the last one year, BJP has been continuously trying to target every caste in the country except Muslims, which have good numerical strength. , for the Lok Sabha elections. But as elections approached, resentment towards BJP emerged among some big castes. In the first phase of voting of this Lok Sabha election, a large number of Jat voters were seen missing in Western UP, called Jatland.

These communities have always resolved all small and big disputes in the villages through their Panchayats. Apart from this, the kindness among the farming communities, especially the big farmers, is so much that no one can go through their

doors without eating and drinking. About four years ago, when the Corona epidemic was spreading globally and there was chaos all around, people suffering from Corona were dying and villagers living in cities were returning to their homes on foot hungry and thirsty, then the farmers He had opened the stores of his house and helped such helpless travelers a lot. Not only this, almost all the works were closed at that time, but the farmers kept the country's GDP intact by working day and night in their fields. At that time, only one or two leaders would have come forward to help the people, the rest of the help was either done by the farmers, or by those who were sons of farmers and were in jobs. But the way farmers have been ignored in this country for the last few years and especially what has happened to them during the farmers' movement, it is

clear that the resentment of Jats, Rajputs and other big castes was bound to come to the fore. But it is not wise to stay away from voting and separate from each other. However, if we talk about reduction in voting, we will see that while 69.2 percent voting took place in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, this time only 55 to 66 percent voting took place at various booths. If the voting percentage remains the same in future, then it will be a big warning not only for the democracy of the country but also for the Election Commission about the dissatisfaction of the voters. Rajputs and Thakurs have also opened a front against the BJP governments in the entire northern region of India. Their Panchayats are being held and despite the persuasion of many big Rajput and Thakur leaders, their opposition is not calming down. In this way, the disappointment shown among the voters in Western Uttar Pradesh, known as Jat Land, on April 19 and the number of voters who came to vote at the booths till almost noon, has given rise to disappointment that whether this time Are voters so angry with the attitude of one party governments that they do not even want to exercise their voting rights? But what is this resentment that if people are angry with the governments

of one party, then they should not vote, this will only increase the problem. The way Jats are disappearing from the Panchayats, and the Rajput community and other castes also want to establish their dominance by doing Panchayats and want to show the ruling party that not only Jats, but also Rajputs and Thakurs live in the area. The government is feeling scared because of it, but the unity seen in the Panchayats of these three big castes will be affected in some way or the other. In such a situation, when these three castes have tried to create an opposing wave through Panchayats, then they need to remain united to get their demands met. In western Uttar Pradesh, there is evidence of unity of Ajgars i.e. Ahirs, Jats, Gurjars and Rajputs. In a way, Thakur is also a caste of Rajputs, so it is counted in it. These four farmer communities are not only hardworking but also honest. And these four communities can tolerate everything, but do not tolerate fraud. Although I believe that all the farmer communities or should we say all the farming communities are honest and hardworking, the Jat and Rajput communities have always been at the forefront in taking decisions in the Panchayats, taking everyone along and history is witness to this.

Above-Normal Rainfall Is Good News, But There's A Deeper Problem

Two large lakes in the metropolis, Varthur and Bellandur, have been lying empty for the last four years due to desilting work. The delay in their rejuvenation is one of the major reasons for the groundwater crisis in Bengaluru. "Above-normal monsoon is good news for cities as both the local lakes will fill up and recharge the groundwater resources. The Cauvery basin will fill up, benefiting the south Indian states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala," says S. Vishwanath, trustee of the Biome Environmental Trust, Vishwanath had been one of the first persons to launch a campaign for rainwater harvesting in the city, way back in the 1990s. "We have to take care of the catchment area of the

Cauvery basin, especially the forested areas of Wayanad, Coorg and Hassan, and make sure there is no felling of trees or conversion of land, no sand mining or discharge of industrial effluents into the river." The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), which has been facing severe criticism amid the water shortage in the city, has now come up with a strategy to conserve water through supply cuts to big customers. The authority hopes this will help it save around 60 million litres of water per day (MLD). "A 10-20% cut is manageable if large commercial establishments, apartment complexes and industries adopt simple water conservation methods, such as installing aera-

tors to limit tap water flow, which can save up to 30% of water usage," says BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar. "Many large establishments already have sewage treatment plants and we have advised them to utilise treated water for various purposes, including flushing and gardening. The BWSSB plans to make treated water available to households through pipes to save and reuse water in the long run," he adds. It's not just Bengaluru, most major metropolises in India have been grappling with water shortages too. Mumbai, India's financial capital, is on the verge of one. The water stocks in the seven lakes that supply water to Mumbai have dipped to 37.9%, the lowest in the last three years.

Following that, the ECI decided to introduce VVPATs in a phased manner, and in the 2019 General Elections, all EVMs were used with VVPAT machines. Let me point out two things. Firstly, it was precisely to remove doubts regarding the EVMs that VVPAT machines were introduced - to provide voters with a means to verify that their vote was cast correctly and for the audit of stored electronic results. Using these machines, voters can review a physical ballot to confirm their electronic vote. Secondly, it was the VVPAT machines that malfunctioned in the recent by-polls, and not the EVMs," writes former Chief Election Commissioner S.Y. Quraishi in the book India's Experiment.

With Democracy: The Life of a Nation Through Its Elections. The chronology of events - from the seed of an idea to its development to the widespread use of EVMs - shows that the process progressed through several Union governments. Yet, the same leaders who may have raised objections over polling through EVMs have been content while in office. Quraishi has observed in his book, "The issue of 'tamperability' of EVMs has been doing the rounds ever since they were first introduced. Every time a political party loses an election, it blames the machine. However, none of them has been able to prove their allegations against

the credibility of EVMs, and neither do they apologise when they win the elections where the same EVMs have been used." Strong words indeed. Doubts, then aspersions, were directed at EVMs - over their accuracy and security - since these were used experimentally. In fact, there was a time when Rangarajan took to writing in defence of his creation in terms of the machines being secure and tamper-proof. He had even been quoted saying that EVM was one invention that made him as proud as did his writings. Yet, just a year after his demise, EVMs were back in the news, again for the wrong reasons. Former CEC Navin Chawla, in his book Every Vote Counts: The Story of India's Elections, remembers from his own experience, "The EVM continues to be buffeted in stormy seas. A concerted attack emerged in 2009..." And the next year, Hari Prasad, an engineer, in collaboration with American computer scientist J. Alex Halderman and Dutch hacker Rop Gonggrijp, claimed to have shown ways of tampering with EVMs. However, Prasad was unable to justify how he was able to acquire a real EVM. He was subsequently arrested on charges of theft of the machine allegedly from a customs house in Mumbai, where it was stored. Incidentally, about two dozen countries have EVMs or a similar system of voting

today. The ECI has its views on "EVM detractors", posted on its website: "Self-appointed technical experts and certain social media personnel have repeatedly failed to realise that the EVMs cannot be compared to a computer, which runs on an operating system. The micro-controllers of EVMs and VVPATs run on a specific program designed to faithfully record the voters' choice. That the EVM is a truthful machine has been proved over decades of usage through changes in several governments at the state and central level, whenever the public wanted to. In fact, the EVM has made elections safe and virtually eradicated booth capturing by limiting the rate of vote casting to four votes a minute and thus significantly increasing the time required for stuffing false votes." Another election, another round of suspicion and allegations on the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). The voting machine has always been mired in controversies, with debates heating up around the time of elections. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has repeatedly defended EVMs as non-tamperable, citing technological measures and strict administrative and security measures taken by the poll body. Unfortunately, S. Rangarajan, the man who designed the EVM, is no longer here to defend the device.

What if I write only 'Hindu Indian'

My probing ended there, and I did not care to find out more. Being an Indian was all that mattered to me - and still does. But what if a government led by parties who promote a national caste survey actually conducts such a study? What if they knock at my door with a lengthy form asking my caste, insisting that I either declare my caste or face punishment? What if they do not accept 'Arora' as a caste or do not have it listed in their miles-long list of all castes, sub-castes and so on? What if I write only 'Hindu Indian' in response to my caste? I also wonder whether leaders from these parties, if voted to power, would make caste declaration mandatory for other public

services too: airport immigration counters, banking, etc. I wonder whether they ever discuss caste with their own children at the dining table. A caste survey at the national level might deliver some perceived dividends to some political parties, but at what cost? At the cost of dividing a population of over 750 million young Indians, especially those living in urban and semi-urban areas, into unfamiliar verticals, or even silos, and placing them in an atmosphere they would be extremely uncomfortable in. Why are some of our politicians so disconnected from the aspirations and dreams of young Indians? Yes, I know, caste is still a reality, unfortunately, in many parts of the

country. But why not go for scientific surveys, preferably digital, to render India free from ills like illiteracy, poverty, caste system, discrimination against women, etc, as envisaged in the Constitution? Such surveys can measure, for instance, why some parts of the country have been left behind economically and socially and what needs to be done as a nation to pull them into the national mainstream. We need studies to find out why not a majority of our colleges and universities are as good as, say, Delhi University or Jamia Millia Islamia. We need surveys to know why a large number of young people prefer government jobs over entrepreneurship in some states, why a

farmer's yield is still below international standards, and why there are still so few new-generation women entrepreneurs in the country. All that 1.4 billion Indians want today, after all, is a united and developed India. I was born in the Indian Railways township of Tundla, a major junction on the historic Delhi-Howrah trunk route, in the heartland of Uttar Pradesh. The town had a population of just 30,000 then, divided almost equally between the railwaymen and their dependents and 'the townwallahs', as the others - shopkeepers, traders, professionals and some farmers - living there were fondly called. Tundla was like a microcosm of India.

Briefs

KANPUR

Illegal Hookah Bar busted

Acting against illegal hookah bars, Kohna police raided 'Drama Restaurant' in Arya Nagar, which was allegedly operating as a front. Two hookahs, chillums, jars, and flavor pipes were seized from the spot. The restaurant operator, Ankit Omar, has been arrested. Police stated the campaign against illegal hookah bars and drug trade in the Central Zone will continue.

LALITPUR

Students present cultural extravaganza at annual festival

An annual festival at Pratiyabasthali Gyanodaya Vidya Peeth in Masora Khurd featured impressive cultural performances by students. Events included gymnastics, a play on Rani Chinnamma, patriotic dramas, and dances depicting India's glorious past. Guests praised the event, calling it a rare and prestigious showcase for the Bundelkhand region.

BALLIA

Om Prakash Rajbhar Extends Greetings to Congress

Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party chief and UP Minister Om Prakash Rajbhar extended greetings to Congress on its foundation day, calling it an old party that needs to work harder. In a sharp attack on the Samajwadi Party, he questioned its claim of respecting Brahmins, alleging that during Akhilesh Yadav's tenure, Yadavs were prioritized in police and SDM recruitments.

JAUNPUR

BJP Organizes Conference in Memory of Atal Bihari

The BJP organized an 'Atal Smriti Samman' conference at Sunbeam School, Kullhanamau, to mark the birth centenary of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Former Union Minister Mahendra Nath Pandey was the chief guest, lauding Vajpayee's multifaceted personality for giving Indian politics a new direction. Local BJP leaders and a large number of workers attended the event.

LALITPUR

881st Birth Anniversary of Maharaja Khet Singh Celebrated

The 881st birth anniversary of Maharaja Khet Singh Khangar Judev was celebrated with a three-day festival at the historical Garh Kundort fort in Niwari, MP. Guests, including MP Assembly Speaker Narendra Singh Tomar, honored him as a great warrior and skilled administrator who established Jijhotikhanda as an independent Hindu republic and fought battles against Muhammad Ghori.

LUCKNOW

State Employees to encircle assembly

The UP State Employees Joint Council has announced a plan to gherao the state assembly on January 20, accusing the government of ignoring their demands. Separately, the electricity employees' joint struggle committee decided to protest privatization by wearing black armbands from January 1.

MANTHAN | CM directs zero tolerance against social media misuse, cybercrime, religious provocation

Zero tolerance on cybercrime, social media abuse: CM Yogi

LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday directed the police to use artificial intelligence and advanced technical tools to dismantle "internationally funded religious conversion rackets" operating in the state. Addressing the closing session of Police Manthan: Senior Police Officers Conference-2025, the Chief Minister issued a series of instructions aimed at strengthening law and order, cyber surveillance and border security.

The Chief Minister asked senior police officials to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards misuse of social media, cybercrime, fake content, deepfakes and organised digital propaganda that threatens social harmony. He instructed that objectionable content affecting law and order or promoting caste and



religious hatred should be dealt with swiftly and strictly, with identification of fake accounts and coordinated misinformation campaigns.

Referring to religious conversion cases, including incidents reported from Balrampur, the Chief Minister said such activities indicate organised operations. He directed police and intelligence agencies to maintain continuous surveillance on conversion-related activities and act at an early stage. He stressed the need to strengthen intelligence gather-

Instructions issued to strengthen border security, curb terrorism, drug trafficking and organised crime

ing through local inputs, social media monitoring and financial trail analysis.

The Chief Minister also instructed authorities to enhance border surveillance and counter-terrorism mechanisms, particularly along borders connected with

Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. He emphasised the use of modern technology to prevent terrorist infiltration, drug trafficking and other cross-border crimes.

On organised crime and narcotics trafficking, the Chief Minister said enforcement action should be sustained and made more effective through inter-agency coordination and real-time information sharing. He directed police to break criminal networks and weaken their operational capabilities.

Addressing cattle smuggling

cases, the Chief Minister said action should go beyond immediate arrests. He instructed police to identify and take strict legal action against masterminds and entire networks involved in such crimes.

During the second day of the Police Manthan programme, presentations were made on disaster management, civil defence and home guards, large crowd management, intelligence and emerging challenges including social media and NGOs, Nepal border security, anti-terror operations, narcotics control, cattle smuggling and other organised crimes.

The Chief Minister concluded by directing police officers to ensure timely action, effective intelligence coordination and strict enforcement to maintain law and order and public safety across the state.

Explosions rock Kaisarbagh, 30 feet high flames cause panic



LUCKNOW

A massive fire broke out late Saturday night at a vehicle garage located near Kaisarbagh bus stand under the Wazirganj police station area, triggering panic among local residents. The blaze was accompanied by repeated loud explosions, with flames shooting nearly 30 feet into the air.

According to officials, the fire spread rapidly due to the presence of mobil oil, engine oil, and used lubricants stored inside the garage. Oil containers burst one after another, intensifying the fire and causing parts of the structure to collapse. The flames also reached nearby shops, forcing people to move away

Garage near Wazirganj police station gutted as oil containers explode; no casualties reported

from the area. Upon receiving information, police teams and the fire department rushed to the spot. Three fire tenders were deployed, and after nearly one and a half hours of continuous efforts, the fire was brought under control.

No injuries or loss of life have been reported in the incident. However, the garage and all equipment stored inside were completely destroyed. Police and fire department officials are investigating the exact cause of the fire.

Veer Bal Diwas Commemorated at Collectorate

HAMIRPUR



Hamirpur Collectorate hosted Veer Bal Diwas, chaired by District Probation Officer Rajiv Kumar Singh. Commemorating the sacrifice of Guru Gobind Singh's Sahibzadas on December 26, the event inspired local students to build a strong social identity. Chairperson Vibha Bharti joined officials in awarding prizes to participating youth.

Saints grovel, criminals thrive: Akhilesh Yadav

Samajwadi Party President and former Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav launched a sharp attack on the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party government on Saturday, accusing it of disrespecting religious traditions and failing to control crime. Yadav alleged that in the current dispensation, saints and seers are being forced to "grovel" before government officials for land allocations meant for religious and charitable works, which he termed a "grave insult" to centuries-old traditions.

Referring specifically to arrangements for events like the Kumbh and Magh Melas, Yadav stated that the healthy



SP chief targets administration over Kumbh, Magh Mela Traditions, Questions Who is Directing Officials

tradition of officials seeking blessings from saints for organizing such works has been overturned. He questioned which authority was

compelling officers to mistreat the saintly community and suggested it was driven by an arrogance of power and a desire for monopoly.

Shifting his criticism to governance, Yadav claimed that every form of crime and illegal business, particularly the narcotics trade, is increasing in Uttar Pradesh. He alleged that criminals and mafia are operating fearlessly under political protection, with the police and administration turning a blind eye. The SP chief asserted that neither women, youth, nor businessmen are safe under the current government and predicted that the public would remove the BJP from power in the 2027 assembly elections to free the state from crime and narcotics.

Babu Mulkiraj Saini remembered is symbol of clean politics: Maurya

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya on Sunday said that the life of freedom fighter and former MP Babu Mulkiraj Saini remains a guiding example of good governance, service and development. He was speaking after unveiling Saini's statue at the MRS Public School campus in Saharanpur.

The Deputy CM said Babu Mulkiraj Saini devoted his entire life to the service of society and the nation, earning respect for his honesty, simplicity and commitment to public welfare. He stated that contemporary politicians should learn from Saini's ideals and work with integrity for strengthening democracy.

On the occasion, Keshav Prasad Maurya was also hon-



Deputy CM unveils statue of freedom fighter and former MP Babu Mulkiraj Saini

oured with the Babu Mulkiraj Saini Award 2025. He said that strengthening democracy and protecting constitutional values is a collective responsi-

bility. Referring to development initiatives, he said the government is simultaneously preserving the country's heritage while accelerating infrastructure growth, including road and air connectivity.

The Deputy CM noted that Babu Mulkiraj Saini chose to promote education rather than political inheritance within his family.

Protests against persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh



RAMPUR/PRAYAGRAJ

Protests were held in Rampur and Prayagraj districts of Uttar Pradesh on Saturday against the alleged killing and persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh. In Prayagraj, a large number of saints and activists associated with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal took out a rally in the Phaphamau area. The protesters raised slogans against Bangladesh and burned an effigy symbolizing terrorism. Religious leaders

Rallies demand Indian Government intervention, call for treatment of minorities

present at the rally called upon the Indian government to take necessary action.

In Rampur, a demonstration was organized near the Gandhi Samadhi site under the leadership of Dr. Priyanka Shukla, the acting president of the Shri Tripureshwari Shaktipeeth.

Heart patients surge 30% amid winter

LUCKNOW

Heart-related hospital visits in Lucknow have surged by nearly 30% during the ongoing cold wave. Patients are arriving at KGMU and Lohia Institute with symptoms including chest heaviness, palpitations, and breathlessness. Doctors are reviewing medications and often advising increased doses of blood pressure drugs.

Dr. Bhuvan Chandra Tiwari, HOD Cardiology at Lohia Institute, explained that cold weather causes constriction in blood vessels, increasing heart workload and oxygen demand, heightening heart attack risk. Dr. Rishi Sethi, HOD Cardiology, KGMU, added that flu and respiratory infections further exacerbate heart strain, requiring dose adjustments for 20-30 patients



KGMU, Lohia see surge in OPD cases Cold weather linked to rise in BP and heart complications

daily. Common warning signs include chest pain, difficulty breathing, dizziness, nausea, and cold sweats. Doctors advise wearing layered clothing, avoiding outdoor walks in extreme cold, performing indoor exercises, consuming fruits, vegetables, and omega-3, and avoiding smoking, alcohol, and high-salt foods.

Hospital lapse shocks police, 'dead' patient found breathing

KANPUR

A critical lapse occurred at GSVM Medical College's Hallett Hospital when a patient in Ward 12 was erroneously declared dead. Police were informed for post-mortem, only to find the patient alive.

LLR Hospital in-charge Dr. R.K. Singh said the patient had been admitted by Govind Nagar police under unknown name and address. Junior doctors reportedly failed to verify pulse, breathing, and other vital signs before completing death declaration paperwork. On being informed, Principal Dr. Sanjay Kala constituted an inquiry committee. Based on the report, junior doctor Himanshu Moriya, staff nurse Sunny Sonkar, and the ward in-charge were suspended. Further action is underway.



GSVM Medical College Principal Dr. Sanjay Kala orders probe after junior doctors and nurse declare patient dead without verification

ADC Central Archana Singh confirmed the police are investigating the incident and may recommend additional action. The case has highlighted resource and staff constraints in government hospitals, which can endanger patient safety. Authorities have strengthened supervision in Ward 12.

MSG foundation hosts free medical camp in memory of deceased elders

LUCKNOW



On December 28, 2025, the MSG Foundation organized a free medical camp near Abuzari Mosque, Lucknow, honoring late Shaukat Hussain, Hussain Ali, and Murtaza Begum. Over 170 patients received health check-ups, sugar tests, and free medicines. Chief Guest Dr. Abu Turab Rizvi was honored alongside the medical team.

AISPLB national convention concludes with calls for unity



LUCKNOW

The historic Bada Imambara in Lucknow served as the backdrop for the All India Shia Personal Law Board's (AISPLB) annual national convention, an event marked by high turnout and a firm commitment to the community's constitutional rights. Presided over by Maulana Saem

Mehdi, the gathering opened with a powerful Quranic invocation of unity, urging the community to "hold fast to the rope of Allah." Addressing the assembly of scholars and youth who braved a severe Lucknow cold wave, General Secretary Maulana Yasooob invoked the teachings of Imam Ali to emphasize that the fight for rights is the only shield against institutional injustice.

UP's organic women run startup set for global exports

LUCKNOW

Two women entrepreneurs from Uttar Pradesh, leveraging state government support, are scaling their millet-based organic food startup with an eye on exporting to Gulf countries. Shikha Singh Chauhan and Somya Singh, graduates from Delhi University who chose to return to their villages, founded the venture focusing on organic pulses, spices, ghee, millet pasta, and multigrain products. Their model operates on a farm-to-fork principle, procuring raw



materials directly from small farmers at fair prices and eliminating intermediaries.

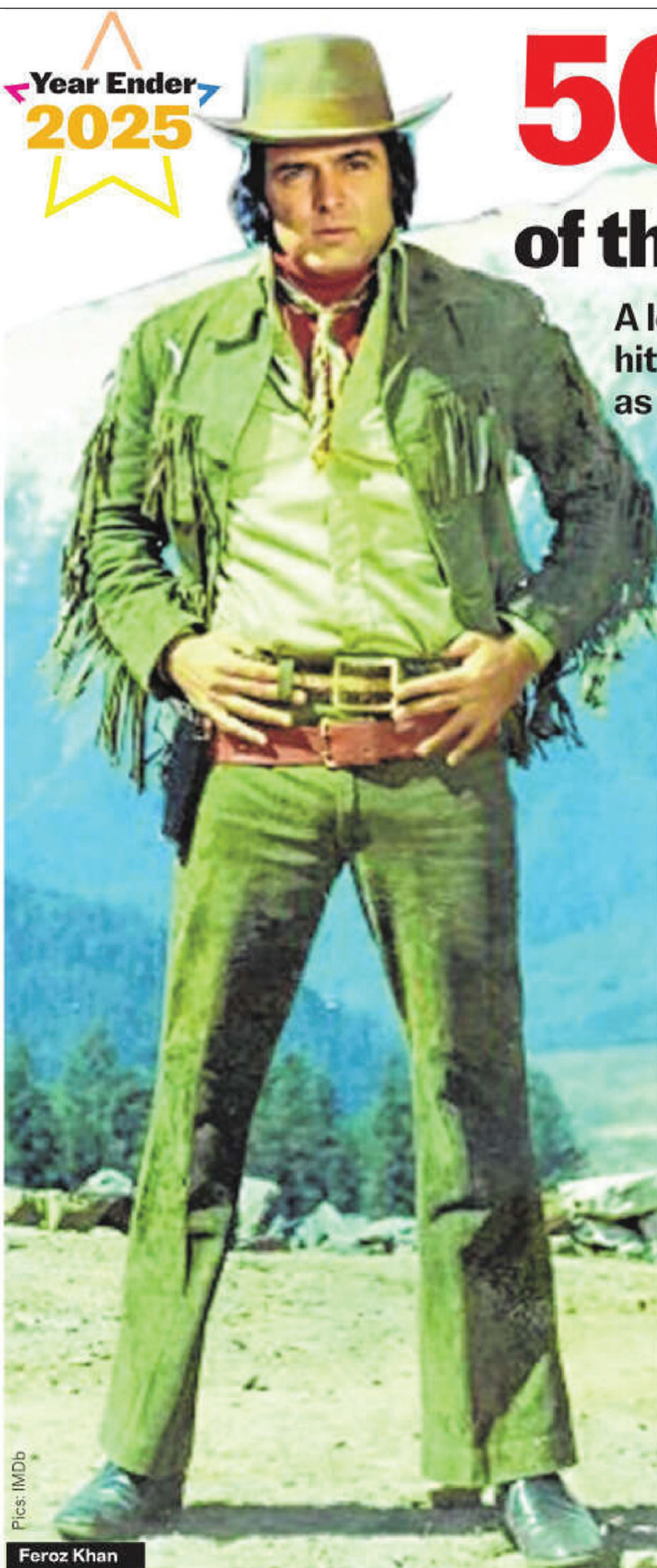
The startup, which employs over 15 women in production, processing, and packaging in

Gautam Buddha Nagar and Bagpat, has received a boost from the state's Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF). This has helped expand their processing and packaging unit.

Supported by state's agriculture fund, duo supplies rural women in farm-to-fork venture

Currently, they supply products within the Delhi-NCR region and are also vendors for the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED). They are also developing specialized products for gov-

ernment nutrition programs. The entrepreneurs have been training farmers in natural, chemical-free cultivation practices to ensure a steady supply of organic raw materials. With the growing global demand for organic and millet-based products, they are now focusing on meeting international quality control and packaging standards to prepare for entry into Gulf markets. Their venture highlights a trend of educated youth returning to rural areas to build agri-businesses that integrate farmer welfare, women's employment, and consumer health.



50 years of this forgotten hit

A look back at *Kala Sona*, the 1975 hit film overshadowed by *Sholay*, as it quietly completes 50 years

With the kind of relentless attention that it got this last year, it would seem as if *Sholay* was the only hit film that released in 1975. In its blitzkrieg celebrating 50 years, we forgot about a lot of the other hits that released that year—not that many of them have stood the test of time, cinematically. One of these was *Kala Sona*, which was a hit and starred Feroz Khan, Parveen Babi, Danny Denzongpa, Farida Jalal, Helen, Prem Chopra, Durga Khote, and Keshito Mukherjee.

The story revolves around a man who, years later, comes to know that the dacoit who murdered his father is still alive. He then travels to a distant village in search of the killer. The curvy western film gave Feroz yet another opportunity to emulate Clint Eastwood, while facing off against villain Prem Chopra, who played the not-so-dangerous-sounding Poppy Singh. The core music team comprised R.D. Burman, Asha Bhosle, and Kishore Kumar, and Denzongpa also sang the song *Sun Sun Kasam Se* along with Bhosle, which became a hit.

Special mention must be made of Farida, who was very good and played a highly endearing role. Feroz Khan certainly played along with his Casanova image in the beginning of the movie, with several women calling him, but he doesn't want to be with any of them. While Danny is in a positive role here, as many of you must have heard, he was the first choice to play Gabbar in *Sholay*. The film also starred Imtiaz Khan, Amjad Khan's (Gabbar) real brother, who could never reach the level of success that his famous sibling had.

The fight sequences in the film, like many of that

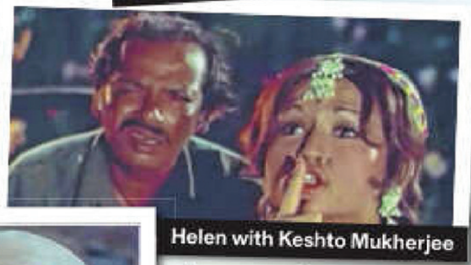
Heard of the villain Poppy Singh? No, he isn't related to Gabbar



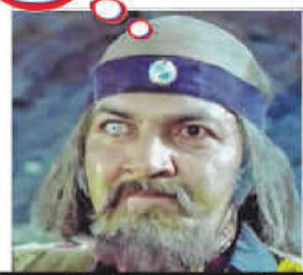
Danny Denzongpa



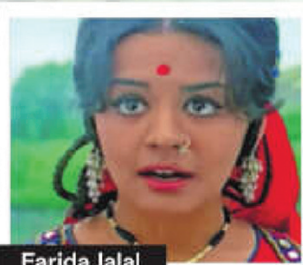
Parveen Babi with Feroz Khan



Helen with Keshito Mukherjee



Prem Chopra as Poppy Singh



Farida Jalal

time, are quite illogical and can certainly never be used as part of any modern self-defence tutorial. There is a surprisingly refreshing scene where Feroz and Danny are in their underpants; however, unlike today's costumes, which have diamond-studded underwear with branding all over, the underpants in this case were worse than the ones you would find at the Andheri railway station, which speaks a lot about the irreverence for costume quality at that time.

The interval was used that time the way it was supposed to be—at a critical point, in this case when Feroz is shot dead (he's back in the second half, don't worry)—and there are twists and turns galore even in the end. The film is available on the Ultra app and YouTube for those who might want to check it out.

(Have you seen *Kala Sona*? If you have any interesting points to add, type away to kabir@fpj.co.in)

Filmy Shots

Toxic makers unveil Huma Qureshi's first look

Bollywood actor Huma Qureshi on Sunday shared the first look poster from her upcoming film *Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups*. Headlined by Yash, the film is set to release in theatres on March 19, 2026. Directed by Geetu Mohandas, known for *Moon* and *Liar's Dice*, it is produced by VN Productions and Monster Mind Creations. The film also features Kiara Advani. Qureshi, who will essay the role of Elizabeth in the film, uploaded the poster on her Instagram handle. It featured the actor in the black dress on the backdrop of a car and an angel statue.



Thalapathy Vijay bids farewell to acting after 33 years

Actor-politician Thalapathy Vijay has officially announced his retirement from acting after a 33-year career in the film industry. He made his debut as a child actor at the age of 10 in the Tamil film *Vetri* and played his first lead role at 18 in *Naalaiya Theerpu* (1992). The announcement came at the grand audio launch of H. Vinoth's *Jana Nayagan* in Malaysia on Saturday, marking the film as his final appearance as an actor.



Sushant Singh flags late-night loud music at restaurant

Actor Sushant Singh, who made his acting debut with Ram Gopal Varma's *Satya* in 1998, expressed frustration and filed a complaint over late-night noise at the rooftop restaurant Trove9 in Andheri, Mumbai, stating that it was "blaring loud" music past 10 PM. On Saturday, the actor took to his X handle (formerly Twitter) to share a video of the rooftop restaurant, capturing the loud music being played. He appealed to the Mumbai Police for intervention, writing, "Dear @MumbaiPolice this rooftop restaurant Trove9 next to my residential building has been blaring loud music for the last few nights past 10 PM. Is this legal?"



Walk out gracefully at least: Kumar Pathak

Drishyam 3 producer Kumar Mangat Pathak slams actor Akshaye Khanna for ignoring calls

Akshaye Khanna, who was last seen in *Dhurandhar*, has been receiving praise for his powerful portrayal of Pakistani gangster Rehman Dakeit. Reports had earlier claimed that the actor walked out of *Drishyam 3* over a remuneration demand of Rs 21 crore following the success of *Dhurandhar*, along with a request for a hair wig. However, producer Kumar Mangat Pathak confirmed Akshaye's exit while clarifying that the actor did not quit *Drishyam 2* after the success of *Dhurandhar*.

Speaking to ETimes, the producer said he has no idea why Akshaye exited *Drishyam 3*, adding that even during the trial shows, he had a fair idea that *Dhurandhar* would perform well. He claimed Akshaye had already anticipated the film's success and factored it into his fee for *Drishyam 3*, which was agreed upon.

Kumar added, "After he signed the agreement, his costumes were finalised and paid for. Just 12 days before the shoot was to commence on December 16, I got a text from him saying he wouldn't be doing the film, and we would definitely work together in the future."

'Akshaye Khanna not responding to calls and messages'

The producer said that he tried calling Akshaye, but he didn't answer, adding, "He has a tendency to go MIA whenever he wants to and I am aware of that side of him, but this is highly unprofessional. How can you not respond to



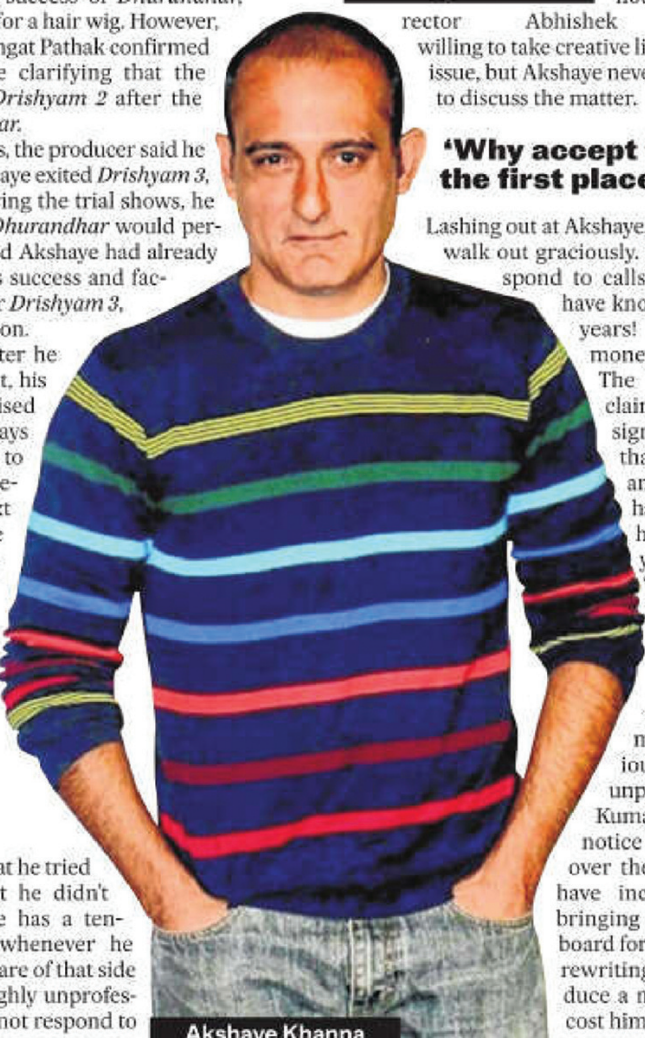
Producer Kumar Mangat Pathak

director Abhishek Pathak was willing to take creative liberties to address the issue, but Akshaye never even came forward to discuss the matter.

'Why accept the money in the first place?'

Lashing out at Akshaye, Kumar said, "At least walk out gracefully. How can you not respond to calls and messages? We have known each other for 15 years! Why accept the money in the first place? The producer further claimed that he had signed the deal, adding that before Section 375 and *Drishyam*, Akshaye had been sitting at home for nearly four years. Kumar stated, "Is this how you behave once your film works? I have been in this industry for 40 years. Success and failure are common, but this behaviour is unethical and unpardonable."

Kumar has also sent a legal notice to Akshaye Khanna over the losses he claims to have incurred, stating that bringing Jaideep Ahlawat on board for *Drishyam 3* required rewriting the script to introduce a new character, which cost him over Rs 1 crore.



Akshaye Khanna

When reality stars ruled 2025

We look at popular Indian reality shows, their winners, and the impressive net worths that grabbed attention

With reality shows continuing to dominate prime-time viewership and social media buzz, this year has been exceptional for Indian television. Audiences were treated to fierce competition, talent, and entertainment in everything from the musical extravaganza of *Indian Idol 15* to the high-voltage drama of *Bigg Boss 19*. Let us take a look at the winner list of the reality TV shows and their net worth:

Year Ender 2025



Gaurav Khanna (*Bigg Boss 19*)

Winner of *Bigg Boss 19*. Gaurav Khanna won the grand trophy and prize money after emerging victorious from the fierce season, impressing spectators with his calm gameplay. According to Live Mint's reports, his television career, success on reality shows, and brand endorsements have contributed to his current estimated net worth of between Rs 8 crore and Rs 15 crore.



Gaurav Khanna (*Celebrity MasterChef*)

The winner of *Celebrity MasterChef* was the same as *Bigg Boss 19*. It was Gaurav Khanna, and we have previously already discussed his net worth.



Rubina Dilaik and Abhinav Shukla (*Pati Patni Aur Panga*)

Pati Patni Aur Panga winners Rubina Dilaik and Abhinav Shukla emerged as the *Sarvagun Sampann Jodi* of the season, winning the season's title. As per NDTV, Rubina's net worth is calculated to be around Rs 31 crore, while her husband Abhinav's net worth is somewhere around Rs 15 to 20 crore.



Arjun Bijlani (*Rise & Fall*)

Winner of *Rise & Fall*. One of the most well-known faces on Indian television, Arjun Bijlani is renowned for his versatility in reality series, fiction shows, and hosting. According to One India, he has made between Rs 30 crore and Rs 50 crore from acting, hosting, web series, and brand endorsements.



Manasi Ghosh (*Indian Idol 15*)

Manasi Ghosh, the winner of *Indian Idol 15*, became well-known after winning the popular singing reality show. Throughout the season, she vowed judges and viewers with her strong performances. She reportedly received a brand-new car and Rs 25 lakh in prize money; her estimated net worth is approximately Rs 1 crore.

Briefs

China expels three corrupt military men

Chinese parliament has expelled three high-ranking military officials in the latest crackdown against corruption. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress expelled Wang Renhua, head of the Central Military Commission's Political and Legal Affairs Committee; Zhang Hongbing, political commissar of the People's Armed Police, and Wang Peng, director of the CMC's training department. All 3 remain full members of Central Committee, ruling Communist Party of China's decision-making body.

Thailand parties name PM nominees

Political parties in Thailand on Sunday registered their candidates for the next PM, marking the unofficial start of campaigning for the Feb 8 general election. PM Anutin Charnvirakul dissolved Parliament earlier this month to call early poll, after the main opposition prepared to seek a no-trust vote over constitutional change. Calling a new election allows Anutin and his Bhumjaithai Party to build up their numbers in House of Representatives to gain a more secure grip on govt. Voters will also cast votes in a referendum asking if they want a new constitution.

S Africa bldg collapse kills baby, 2 others

Three people, including a 1-year-old child, died when a 2-storey building collapsed in South Africa's Soweto township, west of Johannesburg, early on Sunday. Three others sustained injuries. A total of six people were inside the building when it collapsed, and emergency officials rescued the three people injured who were trapped under the rubble.

Three dead, scores hurt in Syria clashes

Clashes broke out in Syria between protesters from Alawite religious minority and counterdemonstrators on Sunday, killing over three and injuring dozens, officials said. The clashes came two days after a bombing at an Alawite mosque in Homs killed eight people and hurt 18 during prayers. Thousands gathered in Latakia and Tartous and elsewhere. Sunday's protests were called for by Ghazal Ghazal, an Alawite sheikh living outside of Syria who heads a group called the Supreme Alawite Islamic Council in Syria and the Diaspora.

Khaleda Zia is 'extremely critical'

Bangladesh's former PM Khaleda Zia is "extremely critical", her personal physician has said. Zia, 80, the BNP boss, has been undergoing treatment since Nov 23. "It cannot be said her condition has improved. She is passing through an extremely critical phase," Dr AZM Zahid said.

NY subway switches to tap-go fares

When the MetroCard replaced the New York City subway token in 1994, the swipeable plastic card infused modernity into one of the world's oldest and largest transit systems. Now, over 3 decades later, the gold-hued fare card and its finicky magnetic strip are following the token into retirement. The last day to buy or refill a MetroCard is Dec. 31, 2025.

'SHAM POLL' | First voting since military seized power in 2021

First round: Myanmar poll 'widely criticised'

YANGON

The first of three phases of voting has finished in Myanmar in an election widely dismissed as a "sham", with major political parties dissolved, leaders jailed and as much as half the country not expected to vote due to an ongoing civil war.

The military government is holding a phased ballot nearly five years after it seized power in a coup, prompting widespread opposition and spiralling into civil war.

Observers say the junta, with China's support, is seeking to legitimise its power as it seeks a way out of the devastating stalemate.

More than 200 people have been charged for disrupting or opposing the polls under a new law which carries severe punishments, including the death penalty. There were reports of explosions and air-strikes across multiple regions as the first round of voting took place on Sunday. A rocket attack on an uninhabited house in the Mandalay region in the early hours of the morning injured three people, the region's chief minister told the BBC.

Separately, a series of blasts damaged over 10 houses in the Myawaddy township, near the border with Thailand, late on Saturday. A resident told the BBC a child was killed and three others were taken to hospital. Voters said the election feels more "disciplined and systematic" than previous polls. "The experience of voting has changed a lot," said Ma Su ZarChi, who lives in the Mandalay region.

First-time voter Ei Pyay Phyo Maung, 22, said she was voting as she believed it is "the

KOSOVO TRIES TO END CRISIS

Pristina: Voters in Kosovo cast ballots on Sunday in an early parliamentary election in hopes of breaking a political deadlock that has gripped the small Balkan nation for much of this year. The snap vote was scheduled after PM Albin Kurti's governing Vetevendosje, or Self-Determination, party failed to form a government despite winning the most votes in a February 9 election.



responsibility of every citizen".

"My hope is for the lower classes. The prices are skyrocketing. I want to support someone who can bring them down for those struggling the most," she said.

While over 4,800 candidates from 57 parties are competing for seats in national and regional legislatures, only six are competing nationwide with the possibility to gain political clout in Parliament. The well-organised and funded Union Solidarity and Development Party, with its support from the military, is by far the strongest contender, reported AP.

"An election organised by a junta that continues to bomb civilians, jail political leaders, and criminalise all forms of dissent is not an election — it

GUINEA VOTES IN FIRST POLL SINCE 2021 COUP

CONAKRY: Guineans are voting on Sunday to elect a new president in the country's first election since a 2021 coup, as analysts say a weakened opposition will result in a likely win for junta leader Gen Mamadi Doumbouya. Sunday's election is the culmination of a transition process that began 4 years ago after Doumbouya ousted President Alpha Conde.

KATHMANDU MAYOR PM FACE

KATHMANDU: Kathmandu Metropolitan City Mayor Balendra Shah, aka Balen, 35, was named PM candidate as he and Rastriya Swatantra Party inked a pact to jointly contest March 5 Nepal poll. The 7-point agreement designates Balen as parliamentary party leader and PM face, while Rabi Lamichhane will continue as chairperson of RSP, 4th-largest party in dissolved house of representatives.

Agitating Serbia students urge support for early poll to oust Vucic

Belgrade: Serbia's protesting university students on Sunday collected signatures across the country for their request for an early parliamentary election they hope would oust the autocratic government of President Aleksandar Vucic from office.

Braving freezing weather, the students set up nearly 500 stands in dozens of cities, towns and villages in the Balkan country for residents to sign the election demand, which isn't a formal petition. Students have said Sunday's action was meant to pressure Vucic and as a test of support.

Young protesters have been at the forefront of a nationwide movement against Vucic's populist rule in Serbia. More than a year of street protests first started in November 2024 after a train station disaster that killed 16 people.

Russia's response to European attack will be devastating: FM

MOSCOW

Russia does not intend to attack anyone in Europe, but its response to any strike will be devastating, its Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Sunday, noting the EU's "war party" has become a stumbling block in Ukraine peace efforts.

"My message for European politicians who seem to have problems getting to grips with this fact is to repeat one more time that there is no need to be afraid of Russia attacking anyone," Lavrov said in an interview with state-run news agency TASS.

"However, should anyone consider attacking Russia,

they would face a devastating blow," Lavrov added.

"Whether leaders like (EU chief) Ursula von der Leyen, (German Chancellor) Friedrich Merz, (UK PM) Keir Starmer and (French President) Emmanuel Macron and the like have reached a point of no return is hard to say. "We do see so far, the European war party has been investing its political capital in inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia, and is ready to go the whole nine yards," the minister said.

"I would emphasise on the fact these actions on their behalf were totally illegitimate. After all, Russia has never taken the initiative to target its European neighbours with unfriendly

actions," Lavrov stated.

KYIV MUST END THINGS PEACEFULLY: PUTIN

Ealier on Saturday, President Vladimir Putin visited a command post of the Russian Armed Forces and said, "Ukraine must end things peacefully," reported TASS.

Putin said, "If Kiev does not want peace, Russia will achieve all special military operation goals

by military means."

He said the establishment of a buffer zone on the Russian-Ukrainian border is proceeding well, and Russian Armed Forces are advancing in Donbass and the Zaporozhye Region along the entire line of engagement.

ZARDARI WAS ADVISED TO 'HIDE IN A BUNKER'

OP SINDOOR

Lahore: Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has revealed he was advised to "hide in a bunker" when India launched Operation Sindoor in May this year.

Zardari made the revelation at an event in Larkana, Sindh, to mark the 18th death anniversary of his wife and former PM Benazir Bhutto, assassinated in a gun and bomb attack in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007.

"My MS (Military Secretary) came to me and said, 'Sir, the war has started.' I had actually told him four days earlier that a war was going to happen. He said, 'Sir, let's go to a bunker (being a safe place)'... I said, 'If martyrdom is to come, it will come here. Leaders don't die in bunkers. They die on the battlefield. They don't die sitting in bunkers,' he said on

India hit air base, damaged installations, injured men: Dar

Islamabad: The Pakistani government has again found itself embarrassed on the world stage, now acknowledging the impact of India's strategic and precision strikes on their military installation during the escalation in May, following Operation Sindoor. This time around, the embarrassment came from Pakistan's Foreign Minister and Dy PM Ishaq Dar, who, during the year-end press briefing on Saturday, confirmed India had targeted its Nur Khan Air Base in Rawalpindi's Chakala, damaging their military installation and injuring personnel there.

Dar told the briefing India had sent multiple drones within 36 hours, and one drone damaged the military installation, highlighting the operation's scale and precision. "They (India) send drones towards Pakistan. In 36 hours, at least 80 drones were sent... We were able to intercept 79 out of the 80 drones. Only one drone damaged a military installation and personnel were also injured," Dar claimed.

Saturday.

"Pakistan desires peace but remains fully prepared to defend itself," Zardari said.

He praised Army chief Asim Munir for what he called a "befitting reply to India".

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) top leader claimed that the international community is now acknowledging Pakistan's stance and even US President Donald Trump had praised Munir.

Dhaka rejects India's claim of hostilities against minorities

Dhaka: Dhaka rejected India's concerns over treatment of minorities in Bangladesh, calling it an "inaccurate, exaggerated, or motivated narrative" that does not reflect the facts. Bangladesh foreign ministry spokesperson SM Mahbulul Alam said,

"The Govt of Bangladesh categorically rejects any inaccurate, exaggerated, or motivated narratives that misrepresent Bangladesh's long-standing tradition of communal harmony." Alam claimed there were "systematic attempts to portray the iso-

lated incidents of criminal acts as systemic persecution of the Hindus and maliciously used to propagate anti-Bangladesh sentiments" in different parts of India.

"We observe a selective and unfair bias in certain quarters, where isolated incidents are

amplified, misrepresented and propagated to incite common Indians against Bangladesh, its diplomatic missions and other establishments in India," Alam said, adding, the Indian spokesman's comments "do not reflect the facts".

2 HADI CASE SUSPECTS FLED TO INDIA: POLICE

Two primary suspects, Faisal Karim Masud and Alamgir Sheikh, in the murder of Inquilab Moncho leader Sharif Osman Hadi have fled Bangladesh and are believed to be currently in India, a

Dhaka Metropolitan Police officer said on Sunday.

However, Meghalaya police and BSF rejected the claim.

Meanwhile, a rift overnight gripped the student-led National Citizen Party over its proposed alliance with the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Thai and Cambodian envoys meet in China to solidify ceasefire

BEIJING

Top diplomats from Thailand and Cambodia kicked off two days of talks in China on Sunday as Beijing seeks to strengthen its role in mediating the two countries' border dispute, a day after they signed a new ceasefire.

Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow and Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn were set to meet in China's southwestern Yunnan province for talks mediated by their Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi.

The talks aim to ensure a sustained ceasefire and promote lasting peace between the countries, according to a statement by Sihasak's office.

Wang was scheduled to join both bilateral meetings with each of the diplomats and a trilateral talk on Monday. China has welcomed the ceasefire announcement, which freezes the front lines and allows for displaced civilians to return to



Cambodia's Prak Sokhonn China's Wang Yi.

US has become real UN: Trump

US has become the "real" UN, which has been of very little help in resolving conflicts around the world, President Donald Trump said as he announced the Thailand-Cambodia fight will stop momentarily.

their homes near the border.

"China stands ready to continue to provide the platform and create conditions for Cambodia and Thailand to have fuller and more detailed communication," Chinese foreign ministry said.

China has sought to position itself as a mediator in the crisis, along with the United States and Malaysia.

US, Israel, Europe waging full-scale war on Iran, prez Pezeshkian says

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian says that the US, Israel and Europe are waging a "full-fledged war" against his country.

The president's remarks on Saturday came ahead of Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's meeting on Monday with US President Trump. They also came six months after Israel and the US launched strikes on Iran, and after France, Germany and the UK reimposed UN sanctions on Iran in Sept over its nuclear programme.

"In my opinion, we are in a full-fledged war with America, Israel and Europe. They do not want our country to stand on its feet," Pezeshkian told the official site of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in an interview.

"Our dear military forces are doing their job with strength, and now, in terms of equipment and manpower, despite all the problems we have, they are stronger than when they [Israel and the US] attacked."

3 KILLED IN SWEDEN AS MAJOR STORM SWEEPS ACROSS NORDIC COUNTRIES



A third person has died in Sweden after a powerful winter storm swept across Nordic countries, causing travel disruption and power outages.

The Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute issued alerts for strong winds for large parts of the northern half of the country as Storm Johannes hit. One man in his 50s died after being struck by a tree in the Kungsberget ski resort in the country's south, local media and police reported; while further north, regional utility company Hemab said that one of its employees died in an accident while out working.

Police said a man in 60s was hospitalised after being hit by

a tree while working in a forest in Hofors, Sweden, and later died. Thousands of homes in Sweden, Norway and Finland have been left without power. In Sweden, over 40,000 homes were affected by power outages and numerous rail services were cancelled, Swedish news agency TT reported.

Several flights, rail and ferry services in the Nordic nations have been cancelled. Roads and rail services have also been hit due to the storm conditions. In Norway's Nordland region, one of the most northerly counties in the country, the fire department responded to over 200 weather-related incidents, broadcaster NRK reported.



SNOW-COVERED MOUNT ETNA ERUPTS, SPEWS LAVA AND ASH: Italy's most active volcano erupted on Saturday, prompting scientists to issue a red Volcano Observatory notice for aviation, signalling a potential risk for aircraft. Despite the alert, authorities said flights continued operating normally at Catania-Fontanarossa airport, adding no disruption was expected unless ashfall increased.

Storm Johannes cut power to around 23,000 homes in Nordland and a further 9,000 were without electricity in the Inland region, NRK said.

In Finland, the storm, known there as Hannes, subsided on Sunday morning but had left over 60,000 homes without power, according to public broadcaster Yle.

Flights at Kittila airport in northern Finland were grounded after heavy winds

pushed a passenger jet and a smaller plane off the runway and into a bank of snow, the Helsinki Times reported.

The Swiss Air jet, carrying about 150 passengers, had just landed from Geneva and was taxiing when it veered off. The smaller jet, a 400XT model, was on the ground at the same time and was also pushed off course by the wind, it said.

There have been no reported injuries.

offgrid

PIO wins £67k claim over 'slave' remark against UK KFC franchise

LONDON

An Indian man who accused his manager at a KFC franchise outlet in south-east London of wrongful dismissal and race discrimination has won nearly £67,000 in compensation after a tribunal ruled in his favour.

Madhesh Ravichandran, from Tamil Nadu, told an employment tribunal hearing

that his Sri Lankan Tamil boss discriminated against him and used references such as "slave" and "Indians are fraudsters" directed at him. In details from the hearing published this week, tribunal judge Paul Abbott upheld Ravichandran's claim of wrongful dismissal and race discrimination against Nexus Foods Limited.

"The complaints of direct race discrimination are well-



founded and succeed," reads the judgment.

"We have found on the facts the claimant was subject to the less favourable treatments. His holiday request was refused as he was Indian and [restaurant manager] Kajan wished to prioritise requests from Lankan Tamil colleagues, and he was referred to as a 'shit' and a 'slave' which is self-evidently less favourable treatment," it notes.

Ravichandran began work at the West Wickham outlet of KFC in January 2023 following his interview with Kajan, whom he reported to directly.

After facing months of problems, matters came to a head in July of that year when his boss attempted to make Ravichandran work excessive hours on a shift and handed in his notice.

Judge Abbott said he

accepted the evidence that his decision followed "Kajan's persistent efforts" to make him work "excessive hours".

During follow-up calls, Kajan was said to have become "racially abusive and threatening" towards Ravichandran.

"The race abuse from a manager had, we find, the purpose and the effect of violating the claimant's dignity," reads the judgment.

The tribunal concluded that

Ravichandran was "summarily dismissed" whilst serving out his notice and was denied his statutory right to one week's notice.

"It was not asserted by the respondent that the claimant had done anything to entitle it to dismiss the claimant without notice.

The claimant was, therefore, wrongfully dismissed and is entitled to be paid one week's pay in lieu of notice," it states.

Briefs

KARACHI

Pak kabballi star banned indefinitely



Pakistan international kabballi player, **Ubaiddullah Rajput**, has been banned indefinitely by the national federation after he appeared for an Indian team in a private tournament in Bahrain earlier this month. The Pakistan Kabballi Federation imposed the ban following an emergency meeting on Saturday, finding Rajput guilty of travelling abroad to play in the tournament without obtaining a mandatory no-objection certificate. PKF secretary Rana Sarwar said Rajput has the right to appeal before a disciplinary committee. Sarwar said the federation took serious note of the fact that Rajput not only travelled overseas without an NOC but also represented a team from India, wore its jersey and, at one point, wrapped the Indian flag.

LAHORE

Shadab back in Pakistan T20I squad



Pakistan have recalled all-rounder **Shadab Khan** for next month's T20I series in Sri Lanka but have not called back top batter Babar Azam or fast bowler Shaheen Afridi from the Big Bash League in Australia for the series. Shadab makes a comeback for the three-match series beginning January 7, 2026 after being sidelined since June this year due to a shoulder surgery. He returned to competitive cricket with a stint in the Big Bash league this month where he has performed better than his other country-mates. Babar, Shaheen, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali and Muhammad Rizwan, the other Pakistan players in the BBL, didn't get a call-up and will continue to play in the league.

PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA)

Nortje stars as Sunrisers win big in SA20



Sunrisers Eastern Cape bowled Paarl Royals for the lowest-ever score in the history of the SA20 to claim a 137-run bonus-point victory here. The Sunrisers bowled Royals out for just

WOMEN'S T20I SERIES | Mandhana, Shafali's record stand fires India to highest total of 221/2, Sri Lanka lose by 30 runs

India notch fourth win

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

An all-round India rode on Smriti Mandhana (80) and Shafali Verma's (79) record partnership followed by spinner Vaishnavi Sharma's impressive 2/24 to beat Sri Lanka by 30 runs in the fourth women's T20I and take a 4-0 lead in the five-match series here on Sunday.

After Mandhana and Shafali set the platform for India's highest women's T20I total of 221/2 with the highest partnership of 162 for any wicket, Vaishnavi bowled an impressive 4-0-24-2 to help the home side record a commanding win.

Chasing a mammoth 222, Sri Lanka came out firing with Hasini Perera (33 off 20 balls, 7 fours) and skipper Chamari Athapaththu (52 off 37 balls, 3 fours and 3 sixes) providing the early fireworks.

But the target proved too much for the island team to manage, as they lost wickets in a flurry towards the end to finish at 191 for six in their 20 overs. The left-handed Perera set the tone with a flurry of fours at the start while Athapaththu once again displayed her rich array of strokes, but the asking run-rate on a flat pitch kept rising steeply for the Sri Lankan side.

In a high-scoring game where any error in line or length was punished severely by the batters from both the teams, the young Vaishnavi bowled a total of nine dot balls to exert pressure from one end while accounting for the dangerous Athapaththu and Harshitha Samarawickrama (20).

Arundhati Reddy (2/42) chipped in with a couple of vital strikes, dismissing Perera in the sixth over after a 59-run opening stand and later, got



India's Smriti Mandhana (L) and Shafali Verma run between the wickets during the fourth T20I match against Sri Lanka Women in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday. PTI

Scoreboard

India: S Mandhana c Dulani b Shehani 80, S Verma c&b Madushani 79, R Ghosh (not out) 40, H Kaur (not out) 16
Extras: (LB-4, W-2) 6
Total: 221-2 (in 20 overs)
FoW: 1-162, 2-168
Bowling: Malsha Shehani 4-0-32-1, Kawya Kavindi 4-0-43-0, Kavisha Dilhari 4-0-47-0, Rashmika Sewwandi 2-0-25-0,

Chamari Athapaththu 2-0-30-0, Nimasha Madhushani 4-0-40-1.
Sri Lanka: H Perera c H Kaur b Reddy 33, C Athapaththu c Mandhana b Vaishnavi 52, I Dulani run out (AB Kaur/Sharma) 29, H Samarawickrama st Ghosh b Vaishnavi 20, K Dilhari c sub (G Kamalini) b Reddy 13, N Silva (not out) 23, R

Sewwandi b Charani 5, K Nuthyangana (not out) 5
Extras: (B 5, LB 1, NB 3, W 2) 11
Total: 191-6 (in 20 overs)
FoW: 1-59, 2-116, 3-140, 4-147, 5-170, 6-185
Bowling: Renuka Singh 3-0-32-0, Arundhati Reddy 4-0-42-2, Deepti Sharma 4-0-31-0, Vaishnavi Sharma 4-0-24-2, Amanjot Kaur 1-0-10-0, Shree Charani 4-0-46-1

the rid of Kavisha Dilhari (13). The fifth and final T20I will be played here on December 30.

Earlier, Mandhana and Shafali went on a record-making spree, powering India to their highest Women's T20I total of 221 for two.

Having batted second in each of the three games so far in this five-match rubber, Mandhana and Shafali put on

162

Record partnership between Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma for any wicket.

a batting masterclass to hammer Sri Lanka bowlers all around the Greenfield International Stadium after

being asked to bat first.

Towards the end, Richa Ghosh smacked a 16-ball 40 not out and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur made 9-ball 16 not out, as India rattled up a massive total.

Indian openers Mandhana and Shafali shared a massive 162-run stand in 15.2 overs, which is now the best partnership for any wicket for the country in women's T20Is.

'Touching 160kmph means more to me'

New Australian Hall of Famer Lee had made it his goal to bowl fast

MELBOURNE

Former Australian bowler Brett Lee was so obsessed with bowling fast that he had made it his goal as a nine-year-old to clock 160kmph, and nothing else -- not even personal milestones or smashing the stumps of the best batters -- mattered to him so long as he was touching that magical speed.

Lee, 49, who has been inducted into Australian Cricket's Hall of Fame, said he dedicated his life to achieving that dream, while crediting his mother, Helen, who was a sprinter, for the necessary genetics.

"That (160kmph) means more to me than any wicket I've taken. Of course, the team comes first - to win the (2003) World Cup, that's the pinnacle; that's why you play the game," Lee was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au.

"But in terms of personal milestones, it wasn't wickets for me. Because I'd set my goal at such a young age to hit that



That (160kmph) means more to me than any wicket I've taken. Of course, the team comes first

Brett Lee
former Australian pacer

160(kph) barrier and to go past it . when you dream about something, you dedicate your life to achieving that dream, and it comes off, it's very special."

Lee ended his two-decade-long career with 718 international wickets across formats.

MCG pitch curator in 'state of shock' at two-day Test finish

Matthew Page admits the wicket for the Boxing Day Test was heavily in favour of the bowlers

MELBOURNE

Melbourne Cricket Ground head curator Matthew Page confessed he was "in a state of shock" after 20 wickets fell on the opening day of the Boxing Day Test, admitting that the pitch was heavily in favour of the bowlers.

Page opted to leave 10mm of grass -- up from 7mm last year when Australia famously beat India late on day five. But the decision backfired as 36 wickets fell in just 142 overs across six sessions and England went on to defeat Australia by four wickets late on day two on Saturday.

"I was in a state of shock after the first day," Page told the press at the MCG on Sunday.

"We're obviously disappointed it's gone two days. We produced a Test that was captivating, but it hasn't gone long enough. We'll learn from that and make sure we get it right next year."

"I've never been involved in a Test match like it and hope-



Australia's Marnus Labuschagne (L) drops his bat after he is struck by a delivery from England's Ben Stokes on Day 2 of their Ashes Test in Melbourne on Saturday. AP

fully I'm not involved in a Test match like it again."

Despite winning the match, England's first Test win in Australia since 2011, captain Ben Stokes strongly criticised the overwhelmingly bowler-friendly pitch, saying such conditions elsewhere in the world would unleash "hell".

"We know this hasn't gone as we planned. We're trying to balance that contest between bat and ball throughout, over the four or five days, to pro-

Abhishek mesmerises during tough net session for Punjab

World No. 1 T20I batter plays aggressive shots against spinners with imaginary field placement in Jaipur

JAIPUR

Around 10 minutes into his net session on a quiet Sunday morning here, Punjab skipper Abhishek Sharma paused and turned to teammate Gaurav Chaudhary with a question that revealed his intent and imagination.

"Field kya hai?" he asked, enquiring about an imaginary field placement.

The lanky off-spinner replied instantly: "Mid-off single saving ke liye rakkha hai (mid-off fielder is to save singles)."

What followed was predictable yet breathtaking. A familiar bat swing, a perfectly completed arc and the ball was dispatched out of sight cleanly.

For world's No. 1 T20 batter, defence was almost an afterthought for close to an hour as he launched at least 45 sixes at the picturesque Anantam Cricket Ground, slightly off Jaipur city limits, built on farmland.

It resembled a specialised batting session where Abhishek wanted to face only spinners - off-breaks, leg-breaks and slow left-arm orthodox - on a surface where the ball gripped repeatedly and offered substantial turn if bowlers hit the right areas.

The left-hander did ask the groundsman to run the light roller, but the degree of difficulty did not lessen, as deliveries from the net bowlers continued to misbehave - some rearing up unexpectedly while others kept alarmingly low.

Abhishek encountered problems whenever the length was marginally shortened, but the way he used his feet was pure joy to watch.

After getting beaten or seeing the ball jump off the



Punjab skipper Abhishek Sharma in a file pic. x

spot, he would walk down the track, tap his bat at the indentation and then demonstrate his mastery. Whenever the length was pulled back, he would dance down the track and loft both off-breaks and googlies (turning away) inside out over extra cover.

On at least five occasions, the ball landed in the portico of an adjacent high-rise residential building.

The inside-out shot was repeated so often that the team's head coach Sandeep Sharma jokingly quipped in Punjabi: "Tu apni century poori karan layi extra cover de upar hi chakke maarna chaunda ae (You want to complete your century with only sixes over extra cover)."

A red fielding net was placed at short extra cover for the false shot, where the bat face normally closes against deliveries that stop and arrive late. He fell into that trap once but quickly adjusted, choosing to hit a few straight sixes

instead. When the 25-year-old arrived for training, around 45 minutes after the rest of the squad, he wanted to practise on one of the five centre strips - all red-soil tracks.

However, since the match strip was not marked, BCCI protocols did not allow him to bat there. He then bowled left-arm spin for close to 40 minutes, exchanging batting notes with the head coach and assistant coach Uday Kaul.

Once the entire team had completed their session, it was time for the skipper to put his pads on.

He initially opted to face the pacers, but one of the young net bowlers consistently bowled on a fifth-stump line, prompting Abhishek to advise, "Bhai, you please come closer to the stumps."

Watching the world's premier T20 batter also offered insight into his mindset - how he has trained himself to attack at all costs, a reflection of the team's philosophy.

World Rapid Chess: Humpy in joint lead

Gukesh, Erigaisi well-placed as Carlsen suffers rare loss

DOHA

Reigning champion Koneru Humpy displayed her trademark composure and tenacity to remain in joint lead in the women's section while Indian star players D. Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi also remained in the hunt in the 'Open' category on Day 2 of the FIDE World Rapid Championships here.

With three more rounds to go in the women's section on Sunday, Humpy shared the lead with China's Zhu Jiner on 6.5 points out of a maximum eight. The duo was trailed by as many as 10 players on six points, including India's Dronavalli Harika.

However, it was classical world champion Gukesh's fighting spirit that stood out on Saturday despite the Indian ace claiming before the start that he didn't have a lot of expectations from the season-ending competition.

Gukesh and Erigaisi were placed comfortably on 6.5 points in a cluster of 13 players after nine rounds with just a point separating the India duo



Arjun Erigaisi (in pic) and D Gukesh remain in hunt in the Open category of the event.

from joint leaders Vladislav Artemiev and Hans Niemann (7.5 point each).

Starting with two draws, against Dutch GM Anish Giri and Alexey Sarana, Gukesh prevailed over Spain's David Anton in a topsy-turvy Round 8 game. In the following round he was decimated by Nodirbek Abdusattorov in the King's Indian attack, the Indian's only defeat so far in the competition.

Russian GM Artemiev inflicted a rare defeat on Carlsen, and Erigaisi.

Battle of Sexes

Kyrgios beats Sabalenka in 'sequel' to 1973 tennis event

DUBAI

In an event billed as tennis's latest "Battle of the Sexes," Aryna Sabalenka, the No 1-ranked women's tennis player in the world, lost to Nick Kyrgios, who's currently ranked No 673 on the men's tour, on December 28, 2025, in Dubai.

Kyrgios won 6-3, 6-3 at the Coca Cola Center in Dubai on Sunday. The Australian claimed the first set 6-3.

Sabalenka saved one of the

set points with a powerful forehand winner down the left side. But Sabalenka faltered at the net with her backhand volley to hand the Australian the first set.

Sabalenka broke in the second set and raced to 3-1 lead but Kyrgios roared back to take the remaining five games to take the second set 6-3 and seal the three setter exhibition match.

Before the match generated hype and organisers promoted it that way.

"This is about respect,

rivalry and reimagining what equality in sport can look like," explained Stuart Duguid, who, along with tennis great Naomi Osaka, co-founded Evolve, the sports agency putting on the event.

Evolve has promoted the Dubai event as a sequel to the iconic 1973 "Battle of the Sexes," in which Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs.

The match has been controversial and has brought criticism from within tennis, with some seeing it as a gimmick. Certain scholars of

sport, saw important differences between the two contests. For one, there are the rules: different court dimensions, service restrictions and scoring systems.

While King's victory is viewed as a feminist triumph over entrenched sexism, neither Sabalenka nor Kyrgios seem to be playing for anything beyond the court.

According to experts, the feminist movement of the early 1970s saw American women fight for better

rights, opportunities, rewards, reproductive freedoms and bodily autonomy. They also sought access to and equality in sports.

Women's tennis led the way, as King and others bravely formed their own tour, unionised and negotiated for equal pay at the US Open. Riggs - a 55-year-old ex-champion and self-proclaimed "male chauvinist pig" - was a noisy antagonist. He maintained that better pay should go to men like him on the senior tour.



Aryna Sabalenka (L) and Nick Kyrgios at the Battle of Sexes tennis exhibition match in Dubai. AP