

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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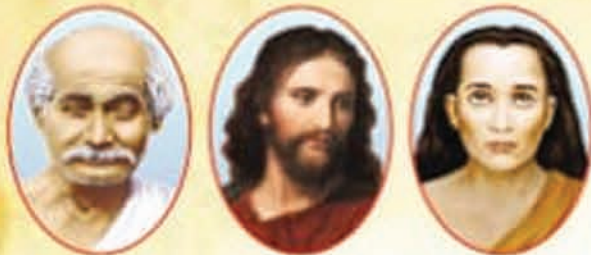
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UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

## प्रतिपल नव वर्ष की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं



### नव वर्ष का अखंड संदेश



#### नव वर्ष

2026 को हम किस तरह से मनाएं? इस पर चिंतन करना और उसका अनुसरण करना बहुत ही आवश्यक है। आइए हम सब सबसे बड़े सद्गुरु, सबसे बड़े अवतार, की ओर अपने मन और बुद्धि को ले चलें सबसे बड़े अवतार हैं- मृत्युंजय महावतार बाबाजी। महावतार बाबा जी का प्रमुख कार्य है सभी अवतारों की मदद करना जितने भी अवतार हुए हैं या हैं या आएंगे, उन सबकी पूरी व्यवस्था महावतार बाबाजी करते हैं। कैसे सभी अवतार अपने कर्म को पूरा कर सकें जिसके लिए महावतार बाबाजी सभी अनुकूल व्यवस्था करते हैं महातार बाबाजी ने वर्तमान युग को द्वार पर युग कहा है वर्तमान युग द्वार का 326वां वर्ष चल रहा है। महावतार बाबा ने कहा है इस युग के अनुकूल शिक्षा को उन्होंने पूरे मानव को श्यामाचरण लाहिड़ी से दिया है। लाहिड़ी महाशयजी बनारस के एक गृहस्थ संत थे, जो ध्यान की उच्चतम अवस्था में पहुंच चुके थे। ये वर्तमान द्वार पर युग के योनावतार हैं, योनेश्वर हैं मृत्युंजय महावतार बाबा ने लाहिड़ी महाशयजी से कहा कि 19वीं शताब्दी में जो ज्ञान मैं सभी मानव को तुम्हारे माध्यम से दे रहा हूं, इसी ज्ञान को योनेश्वर कृष्ण ने अर्जुन को हजारों वर्ष पहले दिया था। अब आवश्यक है इसी ज्ञान का प्रचार-प्रसार भारत के प्रत्येक घर - घर में हो। इसी ज्ञान के प्रचार-प्रसार के लिए परमहंस योशानंद जी को महातार बाबा ने चुना। और महातार बाबा ने परमहंस योशानंद को ज्ञानावतार स्वामी युक्तेश्वर जी के यहां पर भेजा कि उनके यहां जाकर के विनम्रता का उच्चतम पाठ पढ़ें परमहंस योशानंद जी 10 साल स्वामी युक्तेश्वर जी के साथ रह कर के विनम्रता का उच्चतम पाठ पढ़ कर के फिर अमेरिका गए अमेरिका जाकर के इसी क्रियायोग सनातन धर्म का विधिवत प्रचार किया। भारतीय संस्कृति जो पूरे मानव की संस्कृति है इसी भारतीय संस्कृति का प्रकाश, इसी भारतीय संस्कृति का ज्ञान जीसस क्राइस्ट ने पश्चिम में दिया। इसी का प्रचार-प्रसार भगवान बुद्ध, भगवान महावीर स्वामी, कबीर साहब, गुरु नानक देव जी ने दिया है। इसी ज्ञान का प्रचार-प्रसार सभी जितने अवतार हुए, सभी ने किया मोहम्मद साहब ने भी इस ज्ञान का प्रचार-प्रसार किया इसीलिए मोहम्मद साहब शुद्ध शाकाहारी बने और उन्होंने यहां तक कहा था कि किसी का भी अगर हम खून करेंगे तो खुदा माफ नहीं करेंगे। जिसका खून किए हैं वही माफ कर सकता है इसी क्रियायोग सनातन धर्म का प्रचार-प्रसार इस नव वर्ष में होना है। यह कैसे होगा? परमहंस योशानंद ने अपनी महासमाधि के ठीक पहले जो निर्देश दिया है, उसी का पालन करना परम आवश्यक है। मृत्युंजय महातार बाबा जी ने परमहंस योशानंद के माध्यम से यह कहलवाया है, विश्व के जितने भी लोग हैं, पूरे विश्व के सभी राष्ट्रों में जितने भी लोग हैं सब महात्मा गांधी के मार्ग पर चलें। जब महात्मा गांधी के मार्ग पर चलेंगे तो देखेंगे उनको किसी प्रकार का कष्ट नहीं होगा, न बीमारी होगी, न चिंता होगी, न गरीबी आएगी। अंदर की गरीबी, बाहर की गरीबी, कुछ भी नहीं आएगी। अंदर की गरीबी के बढ़ने से वाइलडिटी कम होती है बाहर की गरीबी बढ़ने से घर, मकान, कपड़ा, सुविधाओं का अभाव होता है। अब समय आ गया है कि पूरा विश्व महात्मा गांधी के मार्ग पर चले। क्रियायोग आश्रम एवं अनुसंधान संस्थान दिन-रात इसी का प्रशिक्षण दे रहा है कैसे महात्मा गांधी के मार्ग पर चल करके हम दिखाएं कि हम बीमारी से, चिंता से, हर प्रकार के रोग से मुक्त हो गए हैं और हर प्रकार के अभाव से मुक्त हो गए हैं, यही है नव वर्ष का अखंड संदेश।



स्वामी श्री योगी सत्यम्



[www.Youtube.com/YogiSatyam](http://www.Youtube.com/YogiSatyam) | [www.Kriyayoga-YogiSatyam.org](http://www.Kriyayoga-YogiSatyam.org) | [Contact@Kriyayoga-YogiSatyam.org](mailto:Contact@Kriyayoga-YogiSatyam.org)

वर्तमान समय आर्योह द्वार का 326 वां वर्ष है। कलियुग 1600 ई० में बीत गया है।



## Briefs

CHANDIGARH

**BJP attacks AAP on rural jobs graft**

The Punjab BJP leaders on Wednesday alleged that the AAP government, for over the past about four years, failed to provide the statutory 100 days of employment under MGNREGA to lakhs of people. Party state working president Ashwani Sharma, accompanied by vice president Subhash Sharma and state media head Vineet Joshi, asked CM Bhagwant Mann that when the Centre sent funds for 100 days of employment for every worker in Punjab, why did the state government not provide full 100 days of employment to workers?

BENGALURU

**ISRO conducts ground test of SSLV 3rd stage**

ISRO has carried out a successful static test of an improved version of the third stage of SSLV at the Solid Motor Static Test Facility of Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. According to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the test was conducted on Tuesday. The Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) is a three-stage all-solid launch vehicle developed by ISRO, which is amenable to industrial production and can meet launch-on-demand with a quick turnaround time between launches.

JAIPUR

**CBSE cracks whip over school suicide**

Following an alleged suicide of a Class IV student, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Tuesday cancelled the affiliation of Neerja Modi School of Jaipur for senior secondary level (classes 9-12) with immediate effect. The CBSE said the incident exposed "grave, flagrant, and wilful non-compliance" with mandatory child safety norms, concluding that the Neerja Modi School was "not fit for continuation of affiliation". A 9-year-old girl, Amyra, died by jumping from the fourth floor of the school building on Nov 1. According to the order, Amyra was a victim of continuous bullying at the school.

—Manish Godha

KOLKATA

**Bengal gets first woman chief secy**

After the tenure of Chief Secretary Manoj Pant's tenure ended on December 31, according to the state secretariat Nabanna sources, the new Chief Secretary of the state is Nandini Chakraborty, making her the first woman Chief Secretary of the state. Manoj Pant becomes CM Mamata Banerjee's principal secretary and Home Secretary post is given to Jagdish Prasad Mina.

—Aritra Singha

**POLL PUSH | Union home minister meets party leaders, including disgruntled Dilip Ghosh, 'rejuvenates' workers****After setting target, Shah pep talk for Bengal BJP**

KOLKATA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah's three-day visit to Kolkata concluded on Wednesday leaving every Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker excited.

On Wednesday, Shah met with party's machineries, from former MPs to MLAs and also disgruntled party leaders, and gave them a road-map for the upcoming 2026 Assembly elections.

According to party sources, the former MPs were asked to visit their constituencies at least four times a week.

"The party leaders will have to prove their credibility in order to get tickets to contest the upcoming polls. The Union Home Minister also asked the MP and former MPs the difficulties they have faced during the Lok Sabha elections and also discussed ways to overcome the hurdles. Shah had also instructed the partymen to make corruption and infiltration during Trinamool Congress (TMC) regime the main poll plank for the saffron camp," said party sources.

Shah also held a separate meeting with disgruntled party leader Dilip Ghosh along with Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, former state president and MoS Sukanta Majumdar and present state president Samik Bhattacharya.

Speculations have started whether Ghosh will be active during the 2026 polls as Ghosh was sidelined after he met Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on the day of Jagannath temple inauguration at Digha on April 30.



Amit Shah with Bengal LoP Suvendu Adhikari and other BJP leaders in Kolkata. The party attacked CM Mamata Banerjee for her comments against Shah

**Matua politics: BJP warns Abhishek**

**Kolkata:** Once again ahead of Trinamool Congress (TMC) National secretary Abhishek Banerjee's visit to Matua's Thakurbari in Bongaon in north 24 parganas on January 9, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP and MoS Shantanu Thakur warned that Banerjee will not be allowed to offer prayers if he comes with force. "If Abhishek Banerjee comes to Thakurbari to show his power with police force, I will not allow him to offer puja. If he does so, then thousands of Matuas will congregate and will hold 'Dhikkar Michhil' (protest rally). Matuas don't need the support of TMC. His aunt (Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee) should first apologise for pronouncing our ancestor's name wrongly," said Thakur.

—Aritra Singha

While leaving the venue, Ghosh said that he was called and he gave a patient hearing.

"I can't say anything much but can say you can see Dilip Ghosh active in 2026 polls," he mentioned.

BJP leader Shishir Bajoria stated, "Shah had asked us to leave everything and to concentrate on 2026 elections so that lotus blooms in Bengal."

Notably, apart from the state leaders, the meetings were also attended by the party's central observers for Bengal like Sunil Bansal,

Bhupendra Yadav, Biplab Deb and Amit Malviya.

On the other side, while Shah's convoy was on its way to Thanthania Kali temple where Shah offered prayers in North Kolkata, Congress staged a protest at College street and called Shah to be 'anti-Bengali'.

Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari mentioned that everyone is 'rejuvenated' after meeting Shah.

"This time it is evident that 'Ashol Parivartan' (real change) will come to Bengal

and BJP will form the government ousting TMC," added Adhikari.

Meanwhile, taking potshots at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's comment against the Union Home Minister, BJP spokesperson and Puri MP Sambit Patra added, "When party's national president JP Nadda had visited Bengal, his convoy was attacked and now Mamataji is saying that if she wanted, she would have locked Home Minister of the country at the hotel he was putting up. This is shameful."

**60 injured as two loco trains collide inside Chamoli tunnel**

CHAMOLI

Around 60 people were injured late on Tuesday night after two loco trains collided inside the under-construction Vishnugad-Pipalkoti hydropower project of THDC in Chamoli district, officials said.

The accident occurred at 9.30pm inside the 13 km-long tunnel of the 444 MW hydropower project being built on the Alaknanda river. At the time of the mishap, more than 100 officers, employees and workers were present inside the tunnel, where construction work was underway.

Officials said tunnel excavation was being carried out using a tunnel boring machine, with several heavy machines deployed inside the tunnel to expedite the work. Two of these machines, used to



An injured worker being carried on a stretcher after a collision between two internal transport trains at THDC hydropower project site in Chamoli on Wednesday

transport workers and construction material within the tunnel, collided with each other, leading to the accident. Following the collision, construction work inside the tunnel was immediately halted.

District Magistrate Gaurav Kumar and Superintendent of Police Surjeet Singh Panwar rushed to the district hospital in Gopeshwar and reviewed

the condition of the injured. Kumar said around 60 people were injured in the accident. Of these, 42 injured workers are being treated at the district hospital in Gopeshwar, while 17 injured workers are undergoing treatment at Vivekanand Hospital in Pipalkoti. The condition of all the injured has been reported to be stable.

**Nimesulide oral dose above 100 mg banned**

NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has banned the manufacture, sale and distribution of all oral formulations containing the popular painkiller nimesulide above 100 mg, citing serious risks to health, an official notification said.

The decision was taken following a recommendation by ICMR, the apex health research body of India, it said.

"The Central government is satisfied that the use of all oral formulations containing Nimesulide above 100 mg in immediate release dosage form is likely to involve risk to human beings," the notification issued on Monday said.

It stated it is necessary and expedient in public interest to prohibit the manufacture, sale and distribution of the drug in the country.

**Cabinet nod to ₹19,142 crore Nashik-Akkalkot highway**

NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday approved a road project each for Maharashtra and Odisha cumulatively costing Rs 20,668 crore.

For Maharashtra, the CCEA, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the construction of the 6-lane access-controlled Nashik-Solapur-Akkalkot corridor on build-operate-transfer (BOT) toll mode. This road project, costing Rs 19,142 crore, would be 374 km long and would reduce the overall travel time between Nashik and Akkalkot by around 45% to approx 17 hours as it would support average vehicular speeds of 60 km/h with design speed of 100 km/h.

The Cabinet said this pro-



The six-lane corridor supports average vehicular speeds of 60 km/hour with design speed of 100 km/hour.

ject will provide connectivity to important regional cities such as Nashik, Ahilyanagar, Solapur and Kurnool. The corridor would also be connected to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway near Vadawan port interchange, Agra-Mumbai corridor at Nashik, with NH-60 at Adegao and Samruddhi Mahamarg at Pangri (near Nashik).

It added that the primary purpose of this access-controlled corridor is to "improve

travel efficiency" and to "reduce the travel distance by 201 km". The Nashik - Akkalkot (Solapur) connectivity is also aimed at improving logistics efficiency for freight originating and terminating at major National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC) nodes of Koppardhy and Orvakal.

As for the Odisha project, the Cabinet approved the widening and strengthening of the existing two lane National Highway 326 over a distance of 243 km at a cost of Rs 1,526.21 crore, which includes a civil construction cost of Rs. 966.79 crore.

This upgradation, it said, would make travel faster, safer and more reliable and would benefit the districts of Gajapati, Rayagada and Koraput through which the highway passes.

**Congress to Centre: Did China mediate during Op Sindoor?**

NEW DELHI

Citing Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's statement at a symposium in Beijing on December 30 that it had "mediated" on the "tensions between India and Pakistan" during Operation Sindoor, the Congress on Wednesday asked the Centre to reveal if India's northern neighbour had indeed played a role in the "abrupt halt to Operation Sindoor".

In a statement, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "President Trump has long claimed that he personally intervened to halt Operation Sindoor on May 10, 2025. He has done so on 65 different occasions in



various forums in at least seven different countries. The Prime Minister has never broken his silence on these claims made by his so-called good friend."

But now, Ramesh added, the Chinese Foreign Minister has made a similar claim and stated that China also mediated. The Congress leader termed this "concerning" considering that "on July 4, 2025, the Deputy Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen Rahul Singh had publicly stated

that during Operation Sindoor, India was actually confronting and combating China."

Thus, Ramesh argued that "given that China was decisively aligned with Pakistan, Chinese claims of having mediated between India and Pakistan are concerning - not just because they directly contradict what the people of our country have been led to believe, but because they seem to make a joke of our national security itself."

The Congress leader added that "this claim must also be understood in the context of our relationship with China" as India has "begun re-engagement with them - but unfortunately it has been on Chinese terms."

**Woman gang-raped in car, Cong slams Haryana govt**

CHANDIGARH:

A woman was allegedly gang-raped in a moving van through the night and thrown out of the speeding vehicle, suffering serious head and facial injuries, on a desolate road by two men who have since been arrested, police said on Wednesday.

The assault of the mother of three, which brings back the horror of the Nirbhaya rape on another cold December night 13 years ago, took place in the early hours of Tuesday on the winding, little populated Gurgaon-Faridabad, officials said.

Faridabad police produced the two accused, one from Uttar Pradesh and the other from Madhya Pradesh, in a city court on Wednesday and

sent them into judicial custody, they said.

The 25-year-old, who had been living at her parents' home after troubles with her husband, suffered severe injuries to head and her face,

**TWO ARRESTED**

which required more than 12 stitches. She has been admitted to a private hospital in Faridabad, adjoining the national capital.

Her condition is critical, and she is not yet fit to record a statement, a police official said.

Meanwhile, Haryana Congress president Rao Narendra Singh on Wednesday tore into the state BJP government over the gang rape in Faridabad and said that the incident is a liv-

ing example of the complete collapse of law and order in the state.

"Giving a lift, forcing a woman into a car, raping her, roaming around with her for hours and then throwing her

on the road - this incident exposes the utter failure of the BJP government.

Under BJP rule, criminals are emboldened and women are feeling unsafe," he said.

Rao Narendra Singh said that this incident raises serious questions about women's safety in the state.

Rao Narendra Singh asked, "When women are not safe, what claims is the government making? The failure of the police administration and the government's insensitivity have given criminals a free hand."

**UP BJP in damage control after Brahmin MLA meet triggers ripples**

LUCKNOW

A closed-door meeting of Brahmin legislators has caused ripples within the Uttar Pradesh unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), prompting the leadership to move swiftly to contain discontent and prevent the issue from escalating.

The party has deputed former state BJP president Ramapati Ram Tripathi to reach out to legislators who attended the December 23 gathering in Lucknow, held during the winter session of the state legislature. The meeting, later viewed by the leadership as a sign of brewing unease, involved around 45 to 50 Brahmin MLAs from

Purvanchal and Bundelkhand, along with a few legislators from other parties. It was hosted at the residence of Kushinagar BJP MLA P N Pathak, also known as Panchanan Pathak, on the occasion of his wife's birthday.

Tripathi met Deoria MLA Shalabh Mani Tripathi and has since contacted several legislators, urging restraint and



asking them to raise grievances only through the party's formal platforms. He reportedly conveyed reservations about the manner in

which the meeting was held and advised MLAs to approach state BJP president Pankaj Chaudhary directly, assuring them that their concerns would be heard.

The same day, Chaudhary met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and reiterated a tough stand, warning Brahmin MLAs against holding such meetings and cau-

tioning that disciplinary action would follow any repeat.

While Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and ministers Dharamveer Prajapati and Sunil Sharma said the meeting's intent should not be viewed negatively or through a caste lens, Chaudhary maintained that party discipline

would not be compromised.

The episode has given the opposition an opening, with the Congress and Samajwadi Party stepping up efforts to woo Brahmin voters. Meanwhile, sources said the Chief Minister's Office and senior BJP and RSS functionaries intervened to prevent the controversy from spiralling further.

**seeking blessings****On last day of '25, Yogi, Rajnath pray at Ram temple**

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath at Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple

AYODHYA

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday offered prayers at Hanuman Garhi and the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex, seeking peace, prosperity and welfare for the nation and Uttar Pradesh.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh arrived in Ayodhya on

Wednesday morning to attend the Pratishtha Dwadashi programme and was received by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at the Maharishi Valmiki International Airport. Soon after, both leaders proceeded to Hanuman Garhi, where they paid obeisance to Sankat Mochan Hanuman.

The two leaders then visited the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex and

offered prayers at the Shri Ram Lalla Temple and the Ram Darbar. Yogi Adityanath and Rajnath Singh performed the aarti, circumambulated the temple premises and prayed for the progress and well-being of the country and the state.

Amid chants of "Jai Shri Ram" and the recitation of Vedic mantras, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh cer-

emonially hoisted the religious flag atop the spire of the Maa Annappurna Temple.

As they emerged from the temple complex, devotees welcomed them with loud chants of "Jai Shri Ram." Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath acknowledged the gathering by waving to the crowd and blessing children, as an atmosphere of devotion and religious fervour prevailed across Ayodhya.





# Kriya Yoga Meditation is the Highest Method for Inner Transformation: Swami Shri Yogi Satyam

**During a special class for practitioners from India and abroad, explained that they are inviting people from all over the world to a Zoom session with love and devotion**

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Prayagraj.** On New Year's Eve at the Kriya Yoga Ashram in Jhansi, Kriya Yoga Guru Swami Shri Yogi Satyam Maharaj, during a special class for practitioners from India and abroad, explained that they are inviting people from all over the world to a Zoom session with love and devotion, so that they can listen to, understand, and practice the scientific form of true knowledge for the arrival of the light of the New Year, enabling them to



experience ever-new bliss every moment. This sacred practice removes all the prob-

lems of life. He also explained that Mahavatar Babaji, through Mahatma

Gandhi, clarified that a spinning wheel is constantly moving within our inner self,

and we should consciously set it in motion. The power that rotates in a circular motion inside the head, moving from the head to the spinal cord and back, is this spinning wheel. This is the spinning wheel of the inner self. The Mahatma elaborated on this in detail as the practice of Kriya Yoga. Gandhi Ji was unable to properly explain to people about the spinning wheel constantly moving within the inner self.

Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi invented the spinning wheel and encouraged

everyone to use it, which provided both cloth and allowed for the practice of mantra recitation while spinning.

Remember, Mahavatar Babaji clearly stated that Kriya Yoga is the highest method of meditation. That is the spinning wheel of the inner self. That is why Mahatma Gandhi started a movement centered around the spinning wheel. So, if we truly learn to operate the spinning wheel within our inner self, we become free from all kinds of fear and anxiety. We fully realize our immortality.

## Police teams were present to control the increasing traffic congestion

**Phaphamau**

On Wednesday, a traffic survey was conducted in areas under the Phaphamau police station, including Phaphamau market, bypass intersection, and Phaphamau bridge. Considering the increasing crowds, DCP Ganganagar Kuldeep Singh Gunawat and ACP Tharwai Arun Parashar reviewed the security arrangements. Special attention was given to traffic management at the site. Phaphamau Station House Officer Ashwani Singh and his police team were present to ensure that there was no unnecessary crowding on the road and that traffic flowed smoothly. ACP Tharwai Arun Parashar stated that the upcoming fair is also being taken into consideration, and police teams have been deployed at various locations to manage traffic congestion and ensure smooth movement of vehicles.



# Son-in-law who murdered mother-in-law arrested: Dragged mother-in-law onto the street and shot her, pistol used in the murder recovered

**Prayagraj.** Police have arrested Mohammad Irfan, the son-in-law who publicly shot and killed his mother-in-law. Police from Kareli police station, along with other teams, were conducting raids in search of Irfan. On Wednesday, the police apprehended Irfan. The pistol used in the murder was also recovered from him. Irfan had been having a dispute with his in-laws after an argument with his wife, Chand Bibi. Irfan's wife had been living with her parents for several years. Irfan wanted to forcibly take her back. Chand Bibi's mother, Irfan's mother-in-law, Ashia Khatoon (55), was opposing this. On December 26, Irfan dragged his mother-in-law onto the street, shot her in the head, and fled. Irfan's wife alleges that Irfan wanted her to run a sex racket. When she opposed this, he killed her mother. Ashia Khatoon (55) lived near the Akbarpur Old Mosque with her three daughters and four sons. Ashia Khatoon's husband, Mushtaq Ahmed Mali, died several years ago. Her daughters are Rizwana, Farzana, and Chand



ters and four sons. Ashia Khatoon's husband, Mushtaq Ahmed Mali, died several years ago. Her daughters are Rizwana, Farzana, and Chand

Bibi. Chand Bibi is the youngest. Her four sons are Naushad, Munna, Irshad, and Dilshad. Her daughter, Chand Bibi, had a love marriage

with Mohammad Irfan 15 years ago.

They have one daughter and one son. Irfan, a resident of Akbarpur,

returned from Saudi Arabia in 2019. He worked as a welder there. After returning from Saudi Arabia, he married Chand Bibi in 2020. He did not return to Saudi Arabia. He started working as a welder in Prayagraj. When Irfan and Chand Bibi had a dispute, she went to live with her mother.

Irfan was having a dispute with his wife. It was because of this dispute that Irfan came to his in-laws' house again today. A fight broke out there. After the argument, Irfan dragged his mother-in-law out of the house onto the street and shot her in the head. Panic spread in the area after the incident. The police arrived at the scene after being informed, but the accused had already fled.

The police are questioning the family members. He wanted me to run a sex racket. The daughter, Chand Bibi, said, "Irfan first wanted to bring friends and

acquaintances to the house and force me into immoral activities. When I refused, he started beating me. After that, he directly wanted me to run a sex racket. That's why I had a fight with him and came back to my parents' house." Even then, he didn't leave me alone. He would come to my parents' house at night, intoxicated, and beat me. On December 23, he came home drunk and tried to drag me away after beating me. When the neighbors intervened, he threatened them and left. I had also filed a complaint against my husband at the Kareli police station. DCP City Manish Shandilya said, "We received information that a woman had been shot dead. The son-in-law committed the murder due to a family dispute. The woman's body has been sent for post-mortem. The accused will be arrested soon, and the case will be solved." One attachment

## Education Service Selection Commission to open today with new hopes, commission meeting to be held on January 6

**Prayagraj.** With numerous hopes in the new year, the Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission will open on Thursday. With former DGP Prashant Kumar appointed as the chairman, candidates have high hopes that the process for old recruitments will be completed and advertisements for new recruitments will also be released. The first meeting after Prashant Kumar's appointment as chairman was held on December 23. In the meeting, instructions were given to prepare a schedule for the recruitment examinations. Several other important decisions were also taken. After this, the winter vacation began on December 25. Now, after the winter vacation, the commission will open on Thursday



in the new year. Following this, the commission meeting will be held on the first Tuesday of the new year, January 6. With this meeting, the process for recruitments that have been pending for years is expected to begin. Recruitment expected for approximately 30,000 TGT-PGT teacher positions. The recruitment process for 624 PGT and 4163 TGT positions is already underway by the Education Service Selection Commission. The recruitment

process for these positions is expected to be completed in the new year. In addition, the Directorate of Secondary Education has prepared details for more than 25,000 TGT-PGT positions. Therefore, the recruitment process for these positions is also expected to begin in the new year. More than 2500 Assistant Professor positions to be filled. The commission has already started the recruitment process for 1302 Assistant Professor positions. The written examination has been conducted and the results have also been declared, although several objections have been raised by the candidates. In the last meeting of the commission, it was decided that the recruitment process would be completed after addressing the

## Strict Security Measures on New Year's Eve: Police Take Swift Action at Taktai Border

**Shankargarh.** In view of the upcoming Magh Mela and New Year celebrations, the Shankargarh police were seen on high alert. In this connection, under the leadership of Inspector-in-Charge Yashpal Singh, the Shankargarh police force conducted an intensive checking drive at the Taktai border of Shankargarh, causing a stir in the area.

During the operation, strict action was taken against vehicles illegally parked along the road from the Taktai border to Shivrajpur Chowk, and challans were issued as per rules. Meanwhile, encroachments that had been present for a long time at Shivrajpur Chowk were removed in the



presence of the police force, which helped in streamlining the traffic flow.

Inspector-in-Charge Yashpal Singh clarified that no negligence in law and order, security, and

traffic management will be tolerated during the Magh Mela and New Year celebrations. He said that the safety of the general public is the top priority and such campaigns will

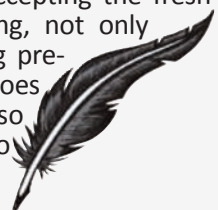
continue regularly. While this swift action by the police brought relief to commuters and shopkeepers, it created a chaotic situation among those who were disregarding the rules.



## Editorial

### It's curious even scientists discard spirit of science in daily life, become unscientific: Nehru

In the course of less than four months, we have put up, declared open, or are going to declare open, three national laboratories. I suppose before this year is out, some more national laboratories will also be started. This is a great venture testifying to the faith which our scientists and, I hope, our Government have in science. I suppose the putting up of fine and attractive buildings does some service to science; nevertheless, buildings do not make science as Dr. Raman has often reminded us. It is human beings who make science, not bricks and mortar. Properly equipped buildings, however, help the human being to work efficiently. It is, therefore, desirable to have these fine laboratories for trained persons to work in and for persons to be trained for future work. You, Sir, referred to the spirit of science. I wonder what exactly that spirit is and to what extent we agree or differ in our ideas of it. Is science, as is often supposed, a handmaiden to industry? It certainly wants to help industry, though not merely for the sake of helping industry but also because it wants to create work for the nation, so that people may have better living conditions and greater opportunities for growth. That I suppose will be agreed to but there is something more to it. What ultimately does science represent? You, Sir, just referred to scientists declaring war on nature. May I put it in a different way? We seek the co-operation of nature, we seek to uncover the secrets of nature, to understand them and to utilise them for the benefit of humanity. The active principle of science is discovery. Now, what is, if I may ask, the active principle of a social framework or society? Usually, it stands for conservatism, remaining where we are, not changing and carrying on, though, of course, with some improvement and further additions. Nevertheless, it is a principle of continuity rather than of change. So, we come up against a certain inherent conflict in society between the co-existing principles of continuity and of conservatism and the scientific principle of discovery which brings about change and challenges that continuity. So the scientific worker, although he is praised and patted on the back, is nevertheless, not wholly approved of, because he comes and upsets the status quo of things. Normally speaking, science seldom really has the facilities that it deserves except when some misfortune comes to a country in the shape of war. Then everything has to be set aside and science has its way, even though it is for an evil purpose. It is interesting to see this conflict between the normal conservatism of a static society and the normal revolutionary tendency of the scientist's discovery which often changes the basis of that society. It changes living conditions and the conditions that govern human life and human survival. I take it that most people who talk glibly of science, including our great industrialists, think of science merely as a kind of handmaiden to make their work easier. And so it is. Of course, it does make their work easier. It adds to the wealth of the nation and better conditions. All this science does. But surely science is something more than that. The history of science shows that it does not simply better the old. It sometimes upsets the old. It does not merely add new truths to the old ones but sometimes the new truth it discovers disintegrates some part of the old truths and thereby upsets the way of men's thinking and the way of their lives. Science, therefore, does not merely repeat the old in better ways or add to the old but creates something that is new to the world and to human consciousness. If we pursue this line of thought, what exactly does the spirit of science mean? It means many things. It means not only accepting the fresh truth that science may bring, not only improving the old but being prepared to upset the old if it goes against that spirit. It also means not being tied down to something that is old.



## Indians ruled the Gulf through Hormuz

Though an uneasy ceasefire between Israel and Iran continues, just two days ago, on 24 June, the Iranian parliament threatened the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. But this was not the first time that Hormuz, situated at the narrowest point of the Persian Gulf, has turned into a flashpoint between Iran and the West. Since at least 1300 CE, Hormuz has been the hinge of Eurasian trade, where thousands of Indians, Arabs, Iranians, Mongols, and Turks made their fortunes. Goods poured through Hormuz, to and fro the Mediterranean, West and Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia, and China. But in the 16th century, the Portuguese adventurer Alfonso da Albuquerque took control of the port. The shockwave rippled through the Western Indian Ocean; the decades after saw the end of Hormuz's prominence, the development of Iran's first maritime policy, and the immigration of tens of thousands of Indian traders and investors into the Gulf and Iran. This is the story of how Hormuz shaped the history of India and the world. Just as the Gulf's geography offered opportunities throughout time, it also created challenges. Its character was utterly unique, nothing like our world of monolithic nation-states. Sam Dalrymple, historian and author of *Shattered Lands: The Five Partitions of India*, described Gulf towns to me as "trading islands/oasis towns wedged between the sand sea and the salt sea. They make less sense as states and more as oases filled with traders." Their population was never



consistent: it waxed and waned with the trading seasons, which in turn depended on the monsoon. Outside these ports, weather conditions were extreme: storms, unseasonal winds, scorching heat and humidity. The Gulf's northern edge, shielded from the Iranian Plateau by a mountain range, allowed little room for coastal states to grow. In the south, the vast Arabian desert was home to small tribes that occasionally preyed on sea traffic. Hormuz rose to prominence because it was able to offer safe ground for international trade, without the risk of piracy. This wasn't what one would expect from looking at it. Barely a few kilometres across, sweltering Hormuz was encrusted in salt, with only one freshwater source. Its rulers solved this problem by importing water on barges from the shore. Markets were kept open all night to avoid the daytime

heat. In *The Persian Gulf: A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities*, historian Willem Floor further explains that the rulers of Hormuz imposed an embargo on timber, oars, coir, iron and steel, which prevented their rivals from building ships. They then took control of nearby ports, establishing a chokehold on the Gulf. Though Hormuz's rulers were Muslim, the island made no segregations on ethnic or religious lines. The second-largest ethnic group on the island were Indians, who conducted a roaring trade in horses in the 13th century CE. In 'India's Sea Trade with Iran in Medieval Times', historian Shireen Moosvi discusses the Somanatha-Veraval inscription, recording the construction of a mosque in Somnath in 1264 by the Hormuz merchant Nuruddin Firoz. The Sanskrit portion of the inscription describes the

mosque as a dharma-sthanam, and mentions the direct involvement of Gujarat's ruling Chalukya king and his officials in the grant. If this Hormuz merchant had such influence, writes Moosvi, "Hormuz merchants must surely have formed an elite group of some importance... in the Chalukya kingdom of Gujarat." For the next century, Hormuz continued to flourish. According to Moosvi, Hormuz's networks extended as far as Uzbekistan and Turkey. Goods shipped from Hormuz reached, in relays, all the way to China. The Chinese admiral Zheng He brought his vast armada there multiple times in the 15th century, where he exchanged ceramics and silks for the luxuries of Western Eurasia. Strategic resources such as horses were shipped to India from Hormuz; in return, India provided necessities such as rice

to the Gulf ports, as well as cloth, metals, woods, and spices. In his edited volume *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800*, MN Pearson notes that exchanges overwhelmingly favoured India. Vast quantities of silver and salt were required to balance the trade. In the early 1500s, the Portuguese erupted into the Indian Ocean. From their galleons—artillery platforms designed for deep-sea and coastal voyaging—they attempted to take control of trade gateways in the Indian Ocean, including Hormuz. They stationed a permanent garrison on the island in 1515, but immediately ran into problems. At the same time, the Mughal Empire of the Indian subcontinent consolidated its reach into Afghanistan. Conquering Kandahar, the Mughals stabilised overland routes from India to Central Asia, further weakening the appeal of Hormuz. According to Floor, the Ottoman Empire, which controlled Iraq, attempted to get rid of the Portuguese in 1552 but failed. It would be an Iranian power which finally expelled them and restored some normalcy to the Gulf trade.

But Hormuz would never again be independent. Up to this point, riven by internal strife, the Safavid dynasty of Iran had paid little attention to events in Hormuz—though they were technically its overlords. However, Shah Abbas I (r. 1587–1629), a contemporary of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, eventually consolidated power. He was alarmed by the loss of both Kandahar and Hormuz, crucial to Iran's trade with the steppe and the ocean.

### Delhi's new fuel policy is forcing people to buy new cars. It won't reduce pollution

There is an old saying in English—'missing the woods for the trees'. It means getting so focused on the minor details that you overlook the bigger picture. And honestly, this is what I feel about the new 'fuel policy.' Starting 1 July, all end-of-life vehicles (EOL) in the national capital will be denied fuel and can also face deregistration, impounding or scrapping. Reportedly, many Delhi residents have been lining up at car showrooms, panic-buying new vehicles. A very close friend's mother called me up and asked, "Beta, should we buy a new car?" Let me tell you a bit about aunty—she's a retired government service officer and lives comfortably with her husband on a decent pension in one of those societies in Greater Noida. Other than the twice-a-week run to the shops and the occasional drive to meet friends in Delhi, their 11-year-old Hyundai i10 barely gets used. Yet because of the new fuel policy announced by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta—where

older vehicles will not be allowed to refuel, first in Delhi and later across the entire National Capital Region (NCR)—she is genuinely wondering what to do. Now, let me make it clear that money is not a problem in this case. This retired couple can easily afford a new car. It is just that they don't see the need for one. And they shouldn't have to. You can think of thousands of cases like this of retired folks with perfectly functional and perfectly maintained vehicles that will now have to be junked because of this new policy. This is a waste of resources. If it is pollution reduction that we are chasing, the policy doesn't consider the massive carbon cost of building a new car from the ground up. I've read a few arguments in favour of shared mobility, the governments like Karnataka are trying to ban it altogether. And honestly, with how expensive and unreliable cabs have become, I've decided I'd rather just drive to the airport and pay the usurious parking fee myself.

### UDF must look beyond Muslim votes to win 2026 polls

There is a new 'captain' in Kerala. After the Congress-led United Democratic Front wrested the Nilambur seat from the Left Democratic Front, the state media lavished praise on Leader of the Opposition VD Satheesan for helming a crucial electoral win. On 23 June, the day of the Nilambur bypoll verdict, Satheesan watched the proceedings from the District Congress Committee (DCC) office in Ernakulam. As soon as the UDF ensured its victory, Congress leaders vied among themselves to shower praises on the LoP, led by MP Hibi Eden. It was a mark of appreciation for Satheesan, who didn't bow down to former Nilambur MLA PV Anvar's diktats and ensured a win despite the latter re-entering the fray. It was PV Anvar's resignation that facilitated the by-election in the first place, even if he sought to extract his pound of flesh for extending his support to the UDF. Leaders within the Congress—such as Ramesh Chennithala and ally Indian Union Muslim League (IUM)—advocated Anvar's accommodation, with the by-poll becoming a bellwether ahead of the 2026 assembly election. Nevertheless,

Satheesan stood his ground and took ownership of the decision to keep Anvar out. It was a marked departure from the consensual ways that have defined the Congress in recent times. The consensual approach was necessitated on account of the party's weakening organisational apparatus, leaving it at the mercy of various stakeholders and its supporters frustrated. The UDF's morale-boosting win and the credit to Satheesan prompted former LoP Ramesh Chennithala to come out publicly, stating how nobody hailed him as 'captain' when he led the UDF to bypoll victories in the past. Power struggles in the Congress aside, the UDF seems to be taking the wrong lessons from the bypoll by extrapolating it to 2026. On the contrary, the ruling Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) is leveraging even the loss to build its narrative for the upcoming assembly election. The Left's route to a solitary seat in successive Lok Sabha elections in 2019 and 2024 was marked by a shift in its Hindu vote base to the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). The Left has traditionally been the 'Hindu party'

in Kerala, whereas the UDF has been anchored by minority communities. Unlike the 2019 elections—held in the wake of the BJP-fuelled Sabarimala agitation—the 2024 loss made the switching of Hindu voters a perpetual phenomenon. If the CPI-M initially concentrated on carving out sections of UDF's minority votes to counter the loss of its Hindu base, the 2024 loss demonstrated the urgency to hold on to its Ezhava vote bank. This prompted the Left to double down on its strategy of portraying the UDF as a front backed by communal elements.

such as Jamaat-e-Islami. CPI-M deployed the same tactic in last year's Palakkad and Wayanad bypolls—alleging that the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) and Jamaat were responsible for UDF's victory. After the setback in Nilambur, CPI-M state secretary MV Govindan resorted to the same game plan, almost like a reflex action. The potency of this strategy has swelled on account of the polarisation between the Muslim and Christian communities in Kerala lately. The CPI-M, perhaps, believes that it can attract additional Christian votes.

## Europe's factories to African startups—how India can act as a bridge between economies

Not long ago I heard a global CEO joke that India's payment apps impress the world, yet our biggest export deals still settle in dollars. The comment stayed with me because it captured the paradox of modern India: a country with the tools and talent to bridge East and West, but not choosing to think bigger. Today's global landscape is splintering. Rising tensions between the United States and China have prompted supply-chain realignments from Vietnam to Mexico. Political blocs, tariff walls, and digital standards

are being remade in real time. In this environment, many countries must choose sides. India, by contrast, can carve a third path: a true bridge economy that unites disparate markets through aligned infrastructure, finance, and digital networks. The first piece of this bridge is production. India's Production Linked Incentive-driven factories are churning out smartphones, solar panels, and auto components on a scale unseen a decade ago. Exporters in Pune now ship precision parts as easily to Stuttgart in Germany

as they do to Lagos in Nigeria. Our manufacturing base overlaps the needs of advanced economies (where quality matters) and the rising purchasing power of the emerging economies. That dual fit is rare, and it underpins India's unique value proposition. Digital rails reinforce this bridge. UPI's transaction volumes surpassed global giants like Visa, turning wallets into gateways. Early UPI trials in the UAE and Singapore show how a rupee-linked digital corridor can settle micropayments instantly, without inter-

mediary banks. If India extends these rails to East Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Gulf, small businesses from Nairobi to Jakarta could transact with Indian partners as effortlessly as they do with local vendors. Digital payment networks are the plumbing of the 21st-century bridge. With our digital rails in place, the next step is ensuring those goods move as smoothly across ports and borders. Yet infrastructure alone is not enough. Logistics bottlenecks still cast a shadow on our ambition.



## Sir Ganga Ram statue was vandalized in the name of idol worship—Swami Jitendra Anand

Ghazipur



A Hindu conference emphasizing brotherhood, mutual love, cooperation and self-respect within the Hindu community was held late Monday night at the Royal Palace in Banshibazar, under the auspices of Madhav Basti. The chief guest, Swami Jitendra Anand Saraswati the special guest, Nirmala Didi and the program president, Dr. R.P. Sharma, jointly garlanded a picture of Bharat Mata and lit a lamp. In his address, the chief guest emphasized five key transformations for the centenary year. He elaborated on family enlightenment, social harmony, environmental protection, Swadeshi (self-reliance) and civic duties. He also spoke about the establishment of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple at Banaras Hindu University, explaining that Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya, for the sake of Hindu philosophy, intended for BHU students to bathe at the Ganga Ghat, visit the Baba Vishwanath Temple, and then proceed to their classes, thus ensuring the continuity of Hindu traditions among the students. In Pakistan, Sir Ganga Ram was the first to open a hospital for

the treatment of women and his statue was erected there. When Pakistan separated from India on August 14, 1947 the very next day, on August 15, Sir Ganga Ram statue was broken in the name of idol worship. In Afghanistan, as soon as the Taliban regime came to power, the colossal statues of Lord Buddha built on the mountains were destroyed in the name of idol worship. In its century-long journey, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has preserved the Hindu nation from generation to generation and on August 18, 1893 Swami Vivekananda had to deliver 15 to 20 speeches on Hinduism. We are a part of the Hindu nation, the Sangh's prayer, "Dhwaja Hindu Rashtrang Bhuta," has been sung for a long time, signifying that we are a part of the Hindu nation. Dr. Keshav Baliram Hegdegar stated that this is a Hindu nation, it does need to be

made into a Hindu nation we are already a part of the Hindu nation. The original copy of the Constitution has a picture of Ram Rajya (the ideal rule of Rama) on it. In the Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj, millions of Hindus, without any caste discrimination, bathed together in the Triveni Sangam. No one asks whose pyre is burning on the Ganges ghats. Donald Trump, who talks about women respect, became president only after defeating a woman. According to the Indian political system, no woman has ever become the President of the United States and those who legalize prostitution in their country talk about women respect. In our culture, the bird Jatayu sacrificed his life to protect Mother Sita. The worship of the nine forms of Durga and the Shakti Peethas is a symbol of our respect for women. The gold in our temples is enough to run the entire country. In this context, Dr. R.P. Sharma and Prajapita Brahmakumari Nirmala Didi expressed their views. At the end of the program, a collective aarti was performed before a picture of Mother India. Finally, the women were honored by being presented with shawls.

## Lohia College celebrates founder Lokbandhu 39th death anniversary

Varanasi

Today, on Wednesday, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia PG College, Bhairav Talab, Raja Talab, Varanasi, celebrated the death anniversary of the college's founder, Lokbandhu Raj Narayan. College Manager, Toyaj Kumar Singh, alias Sushil Kumar and Principal, Professor Ashutosh Kumar paid tribute by garlanding Lokbandhu statue. All the college professors and staff also paid tribute. On this occasion, Manager, Toyaj Kumar Singh, alias Sushil Kumar said of Neta that Lokbandhu political journey was steeped in sacrifice and austerity. His slogan was, "If the poor get food, my life is cheap." Principal, Professor Ashutosh Kumar remarked that Lokbandhu was a politically conscious leader. It was because of him that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was forced to resign for violating constitutional rules. On this occasion, Advocate Pradeep Kumar Singh former General Secretary of Rajatalab Bar Association said that Lok Bandhu had



abolished caste discrimination in Kashi Vishwanath Temple in the year 1954. The famous poet and poet Pravin Singh said that Lok Bandhu had symbolically allowed Dalits to enter the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in 1954 to end caste discrimination. On this occasion, Dr Sushil Kumar Dubey said that Lok Bandhu was a political warrior. He believed that instead of caste politics, there should be politics of ideas. On this occasion, Advocate Akhilesh Gupta threw light on the thoughts of Raj Narayan. On this occasion, Professor Suman Lata, Professor Narendra Narayan Rai, Professor Randhir Singh, Doctor Manoj Yadav, Doctor Supriya Rai, Doctor Kripashankar Pathak, Doctor Akhilesh Mishra,

Doctor Akhilesh Tiwari, Doctor Deepak Mishra, Doctor Ravi Kumar, Doctor Hemant Singh, Doctor Jitendra Patel, Doctor Ambrish Singh, Doctor Manoj Srivastava, Doctor Sarju Prasad Yadav, Doctor Pramod Verma, Doctor Priyaranjan, Dr Vinay Singh, Doctor Manoj Rai, Doctor Maya Singh, Doctor Sarita Rai, Doctor Ajay Kumar Maurya, Doctor Ramesh Kumar Singh, Jaideep Rai and all others also paid tribute by offering floral tributes. On this occasion, a cultural program based on the stories of Raj Narayan was presented. This program was conducted by Doctor Kripashankar Pathak and the vote of thanks was given by Doctor Narendra Narayan.

## Neeraj Choubey appointed Metropolitan President of Purvanchal Consumer Welfare Committee



Varanasi

In the function organized in the Garde auditorium of Paradkar Smriti Bhawan, President of Purvanchal Consumer Welfare Committee and National Food Security Act Vigilance Member Uday Kumar Srivastava nominated Neeraj Choubey (Sonu) as City President Varanasi. Choubey will work to provide relief to the oppressed and exploited consumers and to solve the problems of the common consumers by running a public awareness campaign. Mainly Ganga Sahay Pandey, CV Srivastava, Uday Yadav, Anjani Mishra, Kishan Agrahari, Nehru Pandey, Anil Mishra, Deep Narayan Singh, Vivek Pandey and Vikas Srivastava all gave their heartfelt best wishes and congratulations in the program.

# MNREGA Scam in Mustafabad: Village Head, Secretary and Technical Assistant Accused of Embezzling Rs. 29 Lakhs

Bahraich

If you want to see a clear picture of corruption in the MNREGA scheme, Mustafabad Gram Panchayat serves as a prime example. Here the village head, secretary and technical assistant colluded to get payments five times for the same road construction work by giving it different names. An investigation by the MNREGA ombudsman, based on complaints from villagers, revealed a scam of Rs. 29,75,153. Bilal Ansari, a resident of the village, along with other villagers, had complained to MNREGA

Ombudsman Umesh Tiwari about the irregularities in the panchayat. Based on the complaint, the ombudsman conducted an on-site inspection of the development works carried out in the Gram Panchayat with the village head Abu Sahma, technical assistant Amol Srivastava and the secretary. During the investigation, major irregularities were found in various works, including interlock paving from the main road to Imran house from Dastgir house to the canal from Akhtar Master house to the canal bridge from Ghanshyam field to Mukhtar field from the asphalt road to



Raghuraj field from Santosh field to Murtaza field, from Lucknow road to Karbala from Lucknow road to Bechan field, from the

asphalt road to Laharpur from the asphalt road to Sapsa border, from Radheshyam field to Inder field, from Chaudagra to Raju house

from Harsakari to Satyanarayan Yadav from Harsakari to the Zila Parishad gate, from the asphalt road to the brick pavement from the road to Suhail plant and from Lucknow road to Sattar Khan field, including earthwork, pond renovation and cremation ground pond excavation.

Ombudsman Umesh Tiwari stated that during the site inspection, no official of the Gram Panchayat presented any documents, nor was any information board displayed at any of the work sites. The panchayat neither provided any documents nor presented its side

of the story. The investigation revealed that payments were repeatedly claimed for the same work by changing the name of the task and manipulating the records. Payments were even obtained by creating fake muster rolls for a road built with contributions from the villagers, which constitutes serious unethical conduct and a criminal act. The Lokpal (ombudsman) has termed this entire episode a blatant misuse of public funds and has recommended the recovery of Rs. 29,75,153 in proportion to the amount involved, to be deposited into the state treasury.

## 8th Annual Function of International Kashi Ghatwalk University on Sunday, 18 January 2025

Varanasi



ing, neurologist Prof. Vijaynath Mishra, founder of Ghatwalk, said that many people are coming from outside to attend this year Ghatwalk. Our aim is to introduce them to the cultural richness of Kashi. While presiding, Prof. Shriprakash Shukla said that Our aim is to introduce them to the cultural richness of Kashi. While presiding, Prof. ShriPrakash Shukla said that The ghats of Kashi are a major source of knowledge and contemplation. Their architecture

reflects Kashi multicultural identity, and this festival primary objective is to introduce them to the world. Ramesh Pandey, Sharda Singh, Dr. Vindhyachal Yadav, Anoop Pandey, Manish Khatri, Avnindra Singh, Satyam Pandey, Shailesh Tiwari, Gaurav Dwivedi, Vishal Pandey, Ishadev, Vachaspati Upadhyay, Abhay Tiwari, Abhishek Gupta, Dr. Aryaputra Deepak, Dr. Uday Pal Manish Rai, along with many prominent Ghatwakars were present in the meeting.

## Paradkar XI Champions in a nail-biting match Kanishk Dev Gorawala Media Cricket Contest

Varanasi

Santosh Yadav brilliant half-century (94 runs off 50 balls with the help of 13 fours and a six) helped Paradkar XI win the title by defeating Hriday Prakash XI by three wickets in the final of the 38th Kanishka Dev Gorawala Media Cricket Tournament. Playing first after winning the toss at Dr Sampurnanand Sports Complex, Sigra on the last day of the cricket competition in the first phase of Anand Chandola Sports Festival under the banner of Varanasi Press Club, run by Kashi Journalist Association, on Wednesday, Hriday Prakash XI scored 192 runs in 20 overs by losing four wickets. Amit Mishra scored 47 runs in 32 balls with the help of 5 fours and one six, Irfan scored 42 runs in 25 balls (four



fours and one six), Sonu scored 41 runs in 23 balls (6 fours and one six) and Vijay scored 40 runs in 32 balls (6 fours). From the side of Paradkar XI, Sagar Yadav took two wickets and Deenbandhu Rai and Prakash took one wicket each. In reply, the Paradkar XI won by seven wickets on the last ball of the 20th

over. Santosh Yadav scored 94 runs. Santosh hit a six between cover and point, off the deep and wide leg. They won the match with seven wickets down on the last ball of the over. Santosh Yadav scored 94 runs. Santosh hit excellent boundaries on the off side between cover and point and fine leg and mid-wicket. The six he hit at

mid-wicket will be remembered by the audience for a long time. Santosh gave victory to his team by hitting a four in the cover area on the last ball. Prashant Mohan scored an important 31 runs. For Hriday Prakash XI, Purushottam took three wickets, while Irfan and Sonu each took one wicket.

Purushottam Chaturvedi was named best bowler, Prashant Mohan best batsman and Sonu best player. RP Gupta and Manohar officiated and Nandkishore Yadav did the scoring. After the match, Chief Guest Municipal Commissioner Himanshu Nagpal and Special Guest prominent industrialist Mayank Agarwal distributed trophies and individual prizes to the winning and runner-up teams. On this occasion, guests were welcomed by Varanasi Press Club President Chandan Rupani, Minister Vinay Shankar Singh, Treasurer Sandeep Gupta, Kashi Journalist Association President Arun Mishra, General Secretary Jitendra Srivastava and Sports Organizing Committee Secretary KB Rawat. Co-ordinators Rohit Chaturvedi and Pankaj.



From Shah Rukh Khan's *King* to *Ramayana* and blockbuster sequels, these nine most awaited Bollywood films promise quite the buzz in 2026

# Welcome 2026 Are you ready?

Ranveer Singh

**A**s Bollywood gears up for an ambitious 2026, the year promises a mix of star-driven spectacles, high-concept sequels, and long-gestating passion projects that have kept fans buzzing for months. From Shah Rukh Khan's much-talked-about *King* to the epic scale of *Ramayana* and the return of blockbuster franchises, here's a look at the 10 most awaited Bollywood films set to dominate conversations in 2026.

## Dhurandhar 2

After the massive success of *Dhurandhar*, expectations from its sequel are sky-high. *Dhurandhar 2* is expected to take the franchise forward with a bigger scale, higher stakes, and an even more gripping narrative. Featuring Ranveer Singh, the sequel is already being touted as one of the biggest box office bets of 2026. The film is all set to hit the big screens in March 2026.

## Ramayana

One of the most ambitious projects in recent times, *Ramayana* has been in the making for years and is finally expected to arrive in 2026. Mounted on a grand scale, the mythological epic promises cutting-edge VFX, a stellar ensemble cast, and a visually immersive retelling of the timeless tale. Directed by Nitesh Tiwari, the film's scale alone makes it one of the most awaited releases of the year. It will feature Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Ram, Sai Pallavi as Sita and Ravie Dubey as Lakshman among others. *Ramayana* will release in November 2026.

## King

Shah Rukh Khan's *King* is easily one of the most anticipated films of the year. Directed by Siddharth Anand, the film marks SRK's return in a darker, intense avatar following his blockbuster comeback phase. What has further amplified excitement is the

film's emotional core and the buzz around its storyline, which is expected to present the superstar in a never-seen-before role. The film will also star his daughter Suhana Khan, Deepika Padukone, Rani Mukerji, Abhishek Bachchan, Raghav Juyal, Jaideep Ahlawat and others.

## Border 2

Directed by Anurag Singh, *Border 2* brings together a formidable ensemble cast featuring Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, Ahan Shetty, Mona Singh, Medha Rana, Sonam Bajwa and Anya Singh. The war drama is scheduled for a theatrical release on January 23, 2026. The much-awaited teaser was unveiled earlier this month on the occasion of *Vijay Diwas*, giving audiences their first look at the film's scale and intensity. Set against the backdrop of the 1971 Indo-Pak war, the teaser highlights battlefield action and the indomitable spirit of Indian soldiers as they defend the nation.

## Mardaani 3

Rani Mukerji is set to reprise her iconic role as the fearless cop Shivani Shivaji Roy in the highly anticipated *Mardaani 3*. The third installment of the hit franchise will see Rani return in uniform as she takes on a "brutal case," promising a gripping and intense narrative. Directed by Abhiraj Minawala and produced by Aditya Chopra, *Mardaani 3* continues Yash Raj Films' successful crime-thriller series and is slated for a theatrical release on February 27, 2026.

## Battle of Galwan

Another much-discussed film lined up for 2026 is Salman Khan's *Battle of Galwan*. The teaser of the project was unveiled recently on the actor's birthday and it gave the audience a glimpse into a hard-hitting depiction of the 2020 Galwan Valley clash between Indian and Chinese troops. Inspired by real events, the film traces the circumstances that led to the loss of 20 Indian soldiers and the subsequent rise in tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh. Chi-

tranga Singh stars opposite Salman, and the film is scheduled to hit theatres on April 17, 2026.

## Alpha

*Alpha* remains one of the most eagerly anticipated films of 2026, but its release has been pushed once again. The makers have decided to defer the film to avoid a box office clash with Salman's *Battle of Galwan*, which is slated for April 17, 2026. Incidentally, *Alpha* was earlier scheduled to release on the same date, after already being postponed from its initial Christmas 2025 slot. The film is now expected to hit theatres later in 2026, with the makers yet to announce a fresh release date. Directed by Shiv Rawail, *Alpha* marks the sixth instalment in Yash Raj Films' successful *Spy Universe* and stars Alia Bhatt, Sharvari and Bobby Deol in pivotal roles.

## Love and War

This is yet another big-ticket film slated for 2026 that has generated immense anticipation. The project brings together Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt and Vicky Kaushal in lead roles and is being directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

## Drishyam 3

Ajay Devgn is all set to reprise his iconic role as Vijay Salgaonkar in *Drishyam 3*, which is slated for a release on October 2, 2026. Work on the much-awaited third chapter of the franchise is currently in progress, with the film being shot across multiple cities and locations.

## Shakti Shalini

After *Thamma*, the next film from the MHCUC slate set to release in theatres is *Shakti Shalini*. While Kiara Advani was initially signed on as the female lead, the role has now been taken over by *Saiyaara* actress Aneet Padda.

Shah Rukh Khan

Ranbir Kapoor

Rani Mukerji

Alia Bhatt

Sharvari

Aneet Padda

Salman Khan

## War history, masterfully told onscreen



TITLE: *Ikki*

CAST: Agastya Nanda, Dharmendra, Jaideep Ahlawat, Asrani, Simar Bhatia

DIRECTOR: Sriram Raghavan

WHERE: In theaters near you

RATING: ★★★★★



*Ikki* is a war drama based on the true story of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, India's youngest *Param Vir Chakra* awardee, who laid down his life at the age of 21 in the 1971 India-Pakistan War during the Battle of Basantar.

### Actors' Performances

*Ikki* switches between the present (just after the Kargil War, post-1999), when Brigadier ML Khetarpal, Arun's father, played by Dharmendra, visits Pakistan to meet Brigadier Khwaja Mohammed Naseer of the Pakistan Army, played by Jaideep Ahlawat, and the past (1971, during the war).

The movie makes you emotional on various occasions, a majority of them when Dharmendra is on screen. I don't

know whether to call this his best performance or to give credit to Sriram Raghavan for using him in a manner in which, at least in my experience, I haven't seen him utilized this well in an emotionally charged role. Or is it a combination of both?

Rahul Dev plays the role of the stoic Lt Col Hanut Singh, in a way that makes you feel he might as well be an army man in real life.

Sikander Kher has a roughly 60-second intro scene, which is excellent because of its mix of surprise and humour.

Surprising Asrani in one of his last cinematic roles was a pleasant surprise, and once again, the way Raghavan has used him in a cameo is just so apt.

It must be mentioned, regarding director Raghavan,

that we have a lot of patriotic, army-based films which regularly go a bit over the top. In this case, however, he does not let that happen. This is where I would like to talk about Agastya. I went into the hall with absolutely zero expectations regarding his performance. However,

whether it was emotion, anger, or romance, he delivers on all fronts.

A section of the audience was applauding when Dharmendra first comes on screen, even before he had said his dialogue. I would like to mention here that even if you were someone seeing Dharmendra

for literally the first time in this movie, you would have given that same kind of applause after witnessing his entire performance. The scene where my sprinklers totally lost control is when he is in Pakistan, visiting the old haveli where he used to stay with his family pre-Partition. In the middle of having dinner with the current occupants, an ex-Pakistan Army man (Deepak Dobriyal) confronts him and says that he had lost a leg during the war. And before Dharmendra even delivers his dialogue—saying that while the man has lost a part of his body, he lost his son—and hugs him, the tear ducts do their job.

Simar Bhatia, who plays Agastya's love interest, is such a refreshing change from some of the actresses in the last year

manufactured photo opportunities we have been bombarded with. Without an iota of doubt, one can say that she is a great actress and someone to watch out for in the future. Jaideep Ahlawat—and I've said this before, and I think I'll probably be saying this again in the future—literally has the quality of getting into whatever role he is given beautifully.

Coming back to Raghavan, he manages to show the crucial parts of army training, and the bonds and frictions that can take place between individuals, especially when someone has been chosen to be a leader for a competition, and how one man's ambition and misplacement of priorities can lead to wrong decisions.

### Music

Never did I feel that the music during the war scenes was overdone. The tempo for each moment—whether it is the tank fights, the emotionally charged instances, or any other—adds to the storytelling, never venturing into the melodramatic zone.

### Final Verdict

The movie is a must-watch because it's about the true story of the bravery of a 21-year-old who sacrificed his life for the nation, and cinematically, it has been done justice.



## ...my New Year resolution is

From being brutally honest to unlearning the past, here are some New Year resolutions for 2026 which were shared with us

**A**s the new year begins, several personalities have shared their thoughts and resolutions for 2026, offering a mix of reflection and honesty. Filmmaker Subhash Ghai, believes the year marks a significant shift and encourages people to adapt to changing times.

"2026 is not only the new year but brings a new era to this world with big changes in our social, economic and personal life. Let's be ready to unlearn the past. And learn the present to relearn our future. Wishing all the best to my nation

India 2026 onwards. Love," said director Subhash Ghai.

Actress Dr. Aditi Govitrikar, focuses on emotional clarity and self-respect as her guiding principle for the year. "My resolution is to say 'no' without guilt, 'yes' without fear, and 'I told you so' only in my head."

Adding a candid touch, comedian Radhika Vaz admits she does not believe in making resolutions. "I have none. I usually don't make any because they feel a little false." Actor Sumeet Vyas keeps it light-hearted with a fitness-driven goal. "Eat less, play tennis 6 times a week, serve fast and beat Manav Kaul 6-0, 6-0."

Subhash Ghai





**Welcoming NY**  
Auckland was the 1st major city to ring in 2026 with a downtown fireworks display launched from NZ's tallest structure, Sky Tower, followed by a defiant celebration in Australia in the aftermath of its worst mass shooting.

## Mamdani's wearing

Zohran Mamdani will become mayor of New York City as the clock ticks over into 2026 — but the celebrations are set to last through New Year's Day. The Democrat's team is planning separate swearing-ins on Thursday — a small, private one with his family in an old subway station around midnight, followed by a large event in the afternoon that will include a public block party outside City Hall. As a new mayor's term begins with the new year, it has been customary for the incoming leaders to hold two events.

## Thailand frees 18 PoWs

Thailand on Wednesday released 18 Cambodian prisoners of war held for 5 months, fulfilling the terms of a ceasefire agreement the two countries signed to end bitter fighting along their border. The release was stipulated in the ceasefire pact signed on Saturday by the defence ministers of the countries.

## Peru train crash kills 1

A train driver has died and at least 40 people have been injured in a head-on rail collision near Peru's most popular tourist attraction Machu Picchu. Two trains collided on the single track leading to the ancient Inca town on Tuesday. The US embassy in Peru said its citizens were injured, while the UK Foreign Office said it was "supporting a number of British nationals involved".

## Travel ban on US nationals

Mali and Burkina Faso said late on Tuesday they would ban US citizens from entering their countries in retaliation for President Trump's decision to ban Malian and Burkinabe citizens from entering the US. The announcements were made in statements by the foreign ministers of the West African countries.

## US freezes care funds

President Donald Trump's administration announced it was freezing child care funds to Minnesota after a series of fraud schemes in recent years. Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services Jim O'Neill said on X the step is in response to "blatant fraud that appears to be rampant in Minnesota and in the US."

## Eurostar snag fixed

Channel Tunnel's operator said trains through the undersea link between continental Europe and the UK were running again on Wednesday after a day of travel chaos caused by a power malfunction. Eurostar, which runs passenger trains through the tunnel, said its services were operating again but warned "knock on impacts" following the disruptions on Tuesday could still cause delays and cancellations.

## Iran appoints cent bank gov

Iran named Abdolnasser Hemmati, a former economics minister, as new governor to central bank after the former one quit following a record currency fall against the US dollar.

**CATASTROPHIC SITUATION** | Tel Aviv says organisations fail to meet 'stringent requirements'; 10 nations warn of suffering

# Israel to ban dozens of aid agencies from Gaza

TEL AVIV

Israel has announced it will stop dozens of aid organisations working in Gaza within 36 hours for failing to meet stringent new requirements to hand over personal details of Palestinian and international staff deployed in the devastated territory, 'The Guardian' reported.

The list of groups hit by the ban include some of the world's best known humanitarian organisations such as ActionAid, International Rescue Committee and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

Tuesday's announcement by the ministry of diaspora affairs comes amid recent fierce storms, which destroyed thousands of tents in Gaza, exacerbating an already acute humanitarian crisis.

Foreign ministers of 10 nations expressed "serious concerns" about a "renewed deterioration of the humanitarian situation" in the devastated territory, saying the situation was "catastrophic".



A Palestinian boy collects water from a tank amid the rubble of destroyed buildings in Gaza City.

"As winter draws in, civilians in Gaza are facing appalling conditions with heavy rainfall and temperatures dropping," the ministers of Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland said in a joint statement released by the UK's Foreign Office.

The statement added, "1.3 million people still require urgent shelter support. More than half of health facilities are

only partially functional and face shortages of essential medical equipment and supplies. The total collapse of sanitation infrastructure has left 7,400,000 people vulnerable to toxic flooding."

The ministers called for the UN and its partners to continue their work in Gaza, and for the lifting of "unreasonable [Israeli] restrictions on imports considered to have a dual use". Hundreds of items have been blocked by Israel from



The target of 4,200 trucks per week, including an allocation of 250 UN trucks per day, should be a floor not a ceiling. The targets should be lifted so we can be sure the vital supplies are getting in at the vast scale needed.

### A statement

entering Gaza on the basis they may be used by Hamas to rebuild tunnels or for military purposes. The items include vitally needed medical and shelter equipment.

The ministers called for the opening of crossings to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, saying corridors for moving goods remained closed or severely restricted for humanitarian aid, including Rafah, the biggest entry point that leads directly to Egypt. "Bureaucratic customs processes and extensive screenings are causing delays, while commercial cargo is being allowed in freely," the statement said.



## Granddaughter of JFK no more

**Tatiana Schlossberg**, the granddaughter of former US President John F. Kennedy, has died at 35. Her family announced her death in a social media post shared by the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation, writing: "Our beautiful Tatiana passed away this morning. She will always be in our hearts."

In November, Schlossberg, a climate journalist, announced her diagnosis of an aggressive form of cancer. She said in an essay she had been given less than a year to live.

Schlossberg was the daughter of designer Edwin Schlossberg and diplomat Caroline Kennedy, and is survived by her husband George Moran and their children, Edwin, 3, and Josephine, 1.

In a 'New Yorker' article 'A Battle With My Blood' last month, Schlossberg revealed she had been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia in May 2024, after giving birth to her second child.

## 2026: FAST FORWARD

The year is packed with major global events

### POLITICS

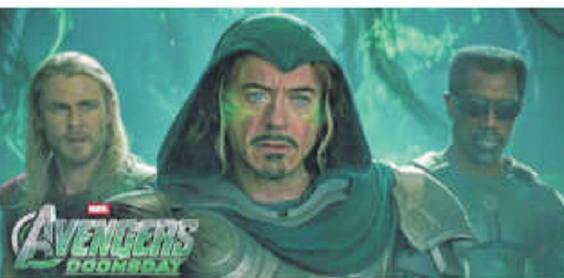
- Thailand general election (**Feb 8**)
- Bangladesh general election (**Feb 12**)
- Nepal general election (**March 5**)
- Hungary parliamentary election (**April 12**)
- Colombia presidential election (**May 31**)
- Ethiopia general election (**June 1**)
- Armenia parliamentary elections (**June 7**)
- Sweden general election (**Sept 13**)
- Brazil presidential election (**Oct 4**)
- Israel Knesset election (**Oct 27**)
- US midterm elections (**Nov 3**)

### MUSIC

Madonna to release sequel to Confessions On A Dancefloor.  
BTS to launch new album & tour after military service.  
Lana Del Rey to launch Stove, a country/Southern Gothic project.  
Robbie Williams to release Britpop album on Feb 6.

### SPACE

Nasa's Artemis II mission, likely in February, will take four astronauts on a 10-day voyage around the moon.  
Chinese astronauts on board Chang'e 7 will study the moon's south pole.  
SpaceX set to debut a new version of its Starship megarocket.  
Boeing's Starliner spacecraft is scheduled for an uncrewed test flight to ISS.



**FILMS** Release of Avengers: Domsday, Spider-Man: Brand New Day, Toy Story 5, and The Hunger Games: Sunrise on the Reaping

**Marilyn Monroe's 100th:** Centennial celebrations.

## Hadi murder suspect in Dubai

**Dhaka:** In the Bangladeshi student leader Osman Hadi's murder case, prime accused Faisal Karim Masud has denied any role, claiming he was in Dubai, contradicting Bangladesh police's allegations about his presence in India, reports said. In a viral video (veracity was not verified), Masud said he did not kill Hadi, claiming a radical political group was involved.

Masud accepted he went to Hadi's office before the shooting but insisted his relations with Inqilab Moncho spokesperson was business related. The video has sparked fresh debate and uncertainty over what really happened.

"I am Faisal Karim Masud. I want to state I am not involved in the murder of Hadi in any

way. This case is completely false and based on a fabricated conspiracy," Masud said.

"Because of this false implication, I was forced to flee the country and come to Dubai. I came here with great difficulty, though I held a valid 5-year Dubai visa," he added.

He claimed his family was being falsely implicated and is being severely harassed and tortured, despite being completely innocent. "They have no involvement whatsoever. This kind of inhumane treatment of my family is unjust and unacceptable. I strongly protest against it," he said.

About ties with Hadi, Masud said, "Yes, I did go to Hadi's office. I am a businessman; I own an IT firm. I was previously employed at ministry

of finance. I went to meet Hadi about a job. He promised to arrange it and asked for an advance payment."

"Accordingly, I gave him 500,000 taka. He asked me to donate to his programmes, and I provided funds whenever he requested. Last Friday, I gave him money for one of his programmes," he added.

Masud accused Jamaat of Hadi's murder, saying, the student leader was "a product of Jamaat" and he was killed by "Jamaati elements". "This incident is the work of Jamaat. Neither I nor my younger brother was on that motor-cycle, and we have been deliberately framed. My family is suffering unjustly. This level of harassment is disturbing and unacceptable."

—Agencies

## France to ban social media for U-15s

PARIS

The French government on Wednesday said it would ban social media for children Under-15. If the bill is passed, France would be one of the first democracies to do so.

The bill, scheduled to be presented in Parliament in January, and, if passed, to be enforced in September 2026, is a two-fold initiative. The law will ban social media sites from serving anyone under 15, in addition to enforcing the long-standing prohibition on mobile phone usage in high schools. The proposal follows Australia's decision to prevent its young citizens from accessing social networking sites, which has stirred a controversy over the use of social media and its impact on mental health.

According to **President Emmanuel Macron** and his cabinet, the law is intended to ensure "appropriate



measures are put in place to protect youngsters from inappropriate content, bullying, and sleep disturbances that have become distressingly frequent in adolescents."

There is increasing evidence, over the past decade, of the consequences of excessive social media exposure on the health and well-being of adolescents and also adults. There is mounting research evidence in Europe, the US, Australia, and Asia of increasing levels of teenagers suf-

fering from anxiety, body image disturbances and self-harm.

The implementation of the ban is not going to be easy. According to teachers' unions, the use of phones, although banned in middle schools, is not implemented consistently. High schools are expected to be more problematic, since students are older and independent.

"We do not have the human and technical capacity to implement it," said Jean-Rémi Girard, head of National Union of High School, Middle School, Primary Schools, and Higher Education (SNALC). Whether the policy is right is no longer the question, the challenge is to make it practical.

Notably, under-16s in Australia were banned from using major social media sites, including Tiktok, X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and Threads on December 10. The ban is the first of its kind and was being watched closely by other countries.

## UKRAINIAN UAV ATTACK ON PUTIN'S RESIDENCE

## Russia releases video proof

MOSCOW

Russia on Wednesday published video proof of its claims, showing a downed drone it said was launched by Ukraine at President Vladimir Putin's residence in the northwest.

The video, released by Russia's defence ministry, shows the damaged drone lying in snow. It described the incident as a "targeted, carefully planned" attack that had been "carried out in stages".

Officials said the UAV was part of a mass drone launch aimed at Putin's residence. They claimed the home was not damaged, and Putin's whereabouts at the time were not revealed.

Moscow called the alleged drone attack a "terrorist act" and a "personal attack" on Putin. In response, Russia said



it would harden its stance in peace talks concerning the Ukraine war. The US-based Institute for the Study of War expressed scepticism over Russia's claims, saying there was no supporting footage or evidence associated with deep strikes from Ukrainian forces to back up the assertion Putin's house had been targeted.

**RUSSIAN DRONES BLAST ODESA, INJURE 6, INCLUDING CHILDREN**  
Russian drones blasted apart-

ment buildings and the power grid in Ukraine's Odesa in an overnight attack that injured six people, including a toddler and two kids, officials said.

Four apartment buildings were damaged, according to regional military administration head Oleh Kiper.

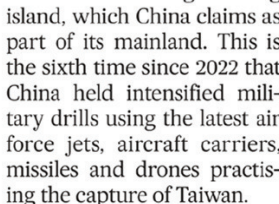
Power company DTEK said two of its energy facilities suffered significant damage. The company said 10 substations that distribute electricity in Odesa were damaged in December alone.

## NY speech: Xi vows to reunify China & Taiwan

**Beijing:** Chinese President **Xi Jinping** in his New Year address on Wednesday said Taiwan's reunification with China is "unstoppable" while projecting the country's growing defence advances, and highlighted the construction of the world's largest dam over Brahmaputra river.

Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait share a bond of blood and kinship, Xi said in his 2026 New Year message.

"The reunification of our motherland, a trend of the times, is unstoppable," Xi said amid stepped up high-powered drills by the Chinese military in the last three days around the self-governing island, which China claims as part of its mainland. This is the sixth time since 2022 that China held intensified military drills using the latest air force jets, aircraft carriers, missiles and drones practising the capture of Taiwan.



Xi, 72, the longest-serving leader of the People's Republic of China sought to project Beijing's economic, defence and tech advancements. "Construction of hydropower project at the lower reaches of Yarlung Zangbo (Brahmaputra river) began," he said.

China began the construction of \$170 billion dam over Brahmaputra in ecologically fragile Tibet, near the Indian border in Arunachal, which evoked concerns of flooding in India and Bangladesh. Xi spoke of the commissioning of China's first aircraft carrier equipped with an electromagnetic catapult system.

## Jailed Lai's teeth rotting, fingernails falling off: Daughter

The daughter of **Jimmy Lai**, the pro-democracy tycoon jailed in Hong Kong, has expressed concerns about her father's deteriorating health in prison, saying his fingernails "sometimes fall off" and his teeth are rotting.

Lai, 78, has been detained since December 2020 and faces life in prison. Earlier this month he was convicted of colluding with foreign forces under the city's controversial national security law.

Hong Kong and Chinese authorities have denied that Lai has been mistreated in prison, saying he is in "good health". The BBC has seen a letter written by Lai's family urging UK PM Keir Starmer call for Lai's release when he meets Chinese President Xi Jinping next month.

His daughter Claire Lai, who's in exile in London, said she fears she "may never see



him again". "Of course I worry that my father is going to be a martyr, and I don't want him to be a martyr. But I would not be here today, I would not be speaking out if I didn't think this was his best chance of reuniting with our family."

"He is diabetic, he has heart issues which he never had in the past. He has fingernails that turn purplish grey and sometimes fall off. He has teeth that are rotting. He has back and waist pains. Some days it's painful for him to stand. Sometimes he can't stand. And some days he can't even get out of bed," she said.

## Isiah Whitlock Jr, 'The Wire' and 'Veep' actor, dies at 71

**Isiah Whitlock Jr.**, known for his memorable acting roles on 'The Wire' and 'Veep', has died at the age of 71, according to his manager. "It is with tremendous sadness I share the passing of my dear friend and client Isiah Whitlock Jr," manager Brian Liebman wrote on Instagram.

Whitlock, who also featured in 'Goodfellas' and 'The Chappelle Show', was a long-time collaborator with director Spike Lee, who also shared a heartfelt tribute to him.

"Today I learned of the passing of my dear beloved brother Isiah Whitlock. God bless," Lee wrote, alongside a photo of the two men shaking hands. "If you knew him — you loved him. A brilliant actor and even better person," Liebman wrote.

In statements to Hollywood news outlets, he added Whitlock passed away in New York after a short illness.





## Briefs

MUMBAI

## De Grasse to be TMIM 2026 ambassador



Two-time Olympic gold medalist sprinter **Andre De Grasse** was on Wednesday named the international event ambassador for the 21st edition of the Tata Mumbai Marathon, set to take place here on January 18. One of the most accomplished sprinters of his generation, De Grasse brings his presence and inspiration to the World Athletics Gold Label Race. Renowned for his electrifying finishes, composure under pressure, and ability to deliver on the sport's biggest stages, De Grasse is a global athletics icon whose journey continues to inspire millions worldwide. Rising from a humble beginning, he discovered sprinting at a local meet wearing basketball shoes and spikes, a moment that marked the beginning.

KARACHI

## Afridi to return home from BBL



Experienced Pakistan left-arm pace bowler, **Shaheen Shah Afridi** will return home from Australia later on Wednesday with doubts over his availability for the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka early next year. Shaheen has been called by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for treatment and rehabilitation at the High Performance Centre in Lahore after he sustained a knee injury while fielding for Brisbane Heat in the Big Bash League (BBL). Shaheen, who has struggled in his maiden appearance in the BBL, had spent a long time out from cricket in 2021-22 after undergoing a knee surgery following an injury while fielding in a Test.

MADRID

## Carlos undergoes heart surgery



Former Brazil and Real Madrid defender **Roberto Carlos** has undergone surgery for a heart problem.

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Allahabad Jurisdiction.  
Email ID:  
akhandbharatsandesh@gmail.com  
Mob. 941525084, 9565333000

**VIJAY HAZARE** | This is Mumbai's fourth successive victory in the league stage

## Sarfaraz stars in Mumbai win

JAIPUR

**Sarfaraz Khan** ended 2025 with a magnificent 75-ball 157 studded with 14 sixes as Mumbai inched closer towards knock-out with a 87-run victory over Goa in a group C game of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Wednesday.

Sarfaraz, who was also in prime form during the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, hit a 56-ball century, his third in List A as Mumbai posted an insurmountable 444 for 8 and then restricted Goa to 357 for 9.

This is Mumbai's fourth successive win in the group league stage and one more win out of the remaining three games will almost ensure a smooth passage into the quarterfinals.

On a day when Yashasvi Jaiswal (46) made his come-back after being laid low by gastritis during the opening week of the National One Day Championship, Sarfaraz owned the stage at the Jaipuria Vidyalaya ground where he made a mincemeat of the Goa attack with nine fours and 14 sixes.

A many as 10 out of his 14 sixes were hit off-spinner Lalit Yadav (2/93 in 9 overs)



and left-arm spinner Darshan Misal (3/98 in 9 overs). He hit Lalit for four sixes, while Misal was dispatched for half-a-dozen maximums. Legendary Sachin Tendulkar's son Arjun was hammered for 78 runs in eight overs.

While Sarfaraz was dismissed in the 42nd over when he was looking good for his maiden double hundred in List A cricket, Mumbai didn't lose the tempo with more

than 100 runs coming off the last 8 overs.

Musheer Khan (60 off 66 balls), wicketkeeper Hardik Tamore (53 off 28 balls), Shams Mulani (22 off 15 balls), Tanush Kotian (23 not out off 12 balls) and skipper Shardul Thakur (27 off eight balls) wielded the long handle to good effect as the winners hammered 35 fours and 25 sixes.

In reply, Goa were never in

the chase but Lalit Yadav (64), Abhinav Tejrana (100) and Deepraj Gaonkar (70) did bat well during the middle overs but it was never going to be enough.

Skipper Shardul Thakur (3/20 in 6 overs) once again showed his wares on a flat deck, while Yashasvi Jaiswal, bowling his leg-breaks, got smashed for 52 in just 3 overs but got a couple of wickets in the bargain.

## Brief Scores:

**Mumbai 444/8** in 50 overs (Sarfaraz Jhan 157, Musheer Khan 60, Yashasvi Jaiswal 46, Darshan Misal 3/98). Goa 357/9 in 50 overs (Abhinav Tejrana 100, Lalit Yadav 64, Shardul Thakur 3/20). **Mumbai won by 87 runs.**

**Chattisgarh 355/3** (Vikalp Tiwari 112, Ayush Pandey 86, Amandeep Khare 83).

Sikkim 126 in 34 overs (Gurinder Singh 47, Ajay Mandal 4/40, Dev Aditya Singh 4/25). **Chattisgarh won by 229 runs.**

**Maharashtra 331/7** in 50 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 124, Satyajit Bachhav 56, Ramakrishna Ghosh 47, DS Bora 3/81). Uttarkhand 202 in 43.4 overs (Sanskhar Rawat 56, Satyajit Bachhav 3/22).

**Maharashtra won by 129 runs.**

**Himachal Pradesh 221** in 47.2 overs (Pukhraj Mann 76, SS Bajwa 4/17, Naman Dhir 2/28).

**Punjab 223 for 4 in 36.1 overs** (Prabhsimran Singh 84, Anmolpreet Singh 72, Naman Dhiri 50 not out). **Punjab won by 7 wickets.**

## Karnataka, MP continue unbeaten run in Group A

**Ahmedabad:** Defending champions Karnataka continued their unbeaten run in the tournament defeating Puducherry by 67 runs in a fourth round Group A match at the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Wednesday.

Skipper Mayank Agarwal (132 off 124; 15x4s, 2x6s) and Devdutt Padikkal (113 off 116; 10x4s, 4x6s) struck fluent centuries and added 228 runs in 37.5 overs for the opening stand to set the base for a total of 363 for 4 after electing to bat. Besides the duo, Karun Nair remained unbeaten on 62 off 34 balls, a knock which was studded with four boundaries and as many hits over the fence.

None of the Puducherry bowlers could inflict any damage on Karnataka with Jayant Yadav returning with best figures of 1/41 from his nine overs. Chasing, Puducherry made a decent start with Nayan Shyam Kangayan (68 off 66) and wicketkeeper Ajay Rohera (32) stitching 78 runs.

## Pant fails to fire as Delhi suffer big defeat

**Alur (Karnataka):** India keeper Rishabh Pant's indifferent form coupled with Delhi's leading batters failing to fire saw their unbeaten run being interrupted by Odisha, who carved out a huge 79-run victory in a fourth-round Group D match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Wednesday. With the national selectors set to announce the squad for the three-match ODI series against New Zealand in first week of January, it was the charismatic India keeper-batter and Delhi skipper Pant, who was the focus of attention. But the feisty cricketer could score only 24 as the much-vaunted Delhi batting imploded, managing just 193 in 43.3 overs in the chase of an immensely gettable 272/8 scored by Odisha after being sent in to bat first. Delhi's innings have largely been built around one solid batting performance so far this season of the competition.

## Afghanistan recall Naveen, Naib for T20 World Cup

Naveen returns after recovering from shoulder injury

KABUL

Afghanistan on Wednesday recalled pacer Naveen-ul-Haq and all-rounder Gulbadin Naib in a 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup to be held across India and Sri Lanka from February 7.

Star spinner Rashid Khan will continue to lead the side, with Ibrahim Zadran named as his deputy.

Naveen returns after recovering from a shoulder injury. He last featured in an international match in December 2024.

Naib, meanwhile, was left out of Afghanistan's white-ball tour of Bangladesh in October as was the experienced left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi, who has also been included in the squad. "We had good discussions over the past few days and finalized the squad. Gulbadin Naib is a big-match player, and his return boosts our team. We are also pleased to have Naveen Ul Haq back, which enhances the quality of our fast bowling," chief selec-



tor Ahmad Shah Sulimankhil said. The squad also features off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman. His inclusion has pushed mystery spinner AM Ghazanfar to the reserves.

Afghanistan enjoyed their best-ever run in an ICC event at the previous edition of the T20 World Cup in 2024, where they reached the semifinals.

This time, they have been drawn in a group alongside New Zealand, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and Canada. Afghanistan will open their campaign against New Zealand on February 8 in Chennai. The same squad will also play a three-match T20I series against the West Indies

## Afghanistan Squad

Rashid Khan (Captain), Ibrahim Zadran (VC), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (WK), Mohammad Ishaq (WK), Sediqullah Atal, Darwish Rasooli, Shahidullah Kamal, Azmatullah Omarzai, Gulbadin Naib, Mohammad Nabi, Noor Ahmad, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Naveen Ul Haq, Fazal Haq Farooqi and Abdullah Ahmadzai. Reserves: AM Ghazanfar, Ijaz Ahmadzai and Zia Ur Rahman Sharifi.

in the UAE ahead of the World Cup, starting January 19.

"Afghanistan had a terrific run in the previous edition of the T20 World Cup. We cherish excellent memories from the past, and hope for even better results this year, which will be played in Asian conditions," Afghanistan Cricket Board CEO Naseeb Khan said.

## Mercurial Carlsen wins record-extending 9th title

Erigaisi becomes second from India to win a World Blitz medal

DOHA

Relieved after defending his world blitz crown, chess megastar **Magnus Carlsen** acknowledged it was an extremely tough field and admitted he was fortunate to win a record-extending ninth title following the reverses in the early rounds of the tournament.

World No.1 Magnus Carlsen showed his endgame genius yet again to add the Blitz crown to the Rapid gold medal he won last week by defeating Uzbek Grandmaster Nodirbek Abdusattorov 2.5-1.5 in the title showdown on Tuesday.

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi, impeccable in the 19-round qualification (Swiss), suffered a massive meltdown in the semifinal to settle for a bronze medal in the World Blitz Championship.

The third-place finish for 22-year-old Erigaisi on Sunday, not only helped him win the Blitz and Rapid bronze, it also made him only the second male chess player



from India after the legendary Viswanathan Anand to win a World Blitz medal.

"This was a very tough event for me. It could have gone either way. But when we got to the knockouts, I thought I should really enjoy it, and it worked out," Carlsen, who ended up winning both the Rapid and Blitz gold, told FIDE.

Carlsen refused to accept a draw in the final against young Uzbek GM Abdusattorov and came up with a unique pawn move out

## Ex-Aus cricketer Martyn in a serious condition

The 54-year-old former right-hand batter had fallen ill in recent days

BRISBANE

Former Australian cricketer **Damien Martyn** is in serious condition in a Gold Coast hospital Brisbane, Dec 31 (AP) Former cricketer Damien Martyn, who played 67 test matches for Australia, is in a serious condition in a Gold Coast hospital south of Brisbane, Australian media reported Wednesday.



The 54-year-old former right-hand batter had fallen ill in recent days, with Nine Newspapers reporting he is in an induced coma and fighting a bout of meningitis.

"Lots of love and prayers sending (at) damienmartyn way. Keep strong and fighting legend. Love to the family," former test teammate Darren Lehmann wrote on social media.

A spokesperson for Gold Coast Health said that Martyn "remains in a serious condition at the Gold Coast University Hospital." Speaking to News Corp., close friend and former Australian test wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist said: "He is getting the best of treatment and (Martyn's partner) Amanda and his family know that a lot of people are sending their

prayers and best wishes." Cricket Australia chief executive Todd Greenberg wished Martyn a quick recovery.

"I'm saddened to hear of Damien's illness. The best wishes of everyone at CA and in the wider cricket community are with him at this time," said Greenberg.

Martyn's seemingly effortless stroke play was his strength, averaging 46.37 with the bat in test matches.

Lots of love and prayers sending (at) damienmartyn way. Keep strong and fighting legend. Love to the family,

**Darren Lehmann,**  
former Australia cricketer

Born in Darwin, Martyn earned a test debut at 21 replacing Dean Jones in the 1992-93 home series against West Indies and was Western Australia's captain at 23.

His high score of 165 came against New Zealand in 2005, one of his 13 test centuries.

This was a very tough event for me. It could have gone either way. But when we got to the knockouts, I thought I should really enjoy it, and it worked out

**Magnus Carlsen,**  
World Blitz Chess champion

leader Erigaisi (15 points) and second-placed American GM Fabiano Caruana (14 points).

Carlsen then went on to beat Caruana 3-1 to secure a place in the final, while an clinical Abdusattorov inflicted a shattering 2.5-0.5 semifinal defeat on Erigaisi.

Earlier, Erigaisi, after stunning the likes of Carlsen and Abdusattorov to emerge sole leader with 10 points from 13 games on Monday, went through the remaining six rounds on Tuesday with steely resolve.



Kalyan Chaubey, AIFF President

## AIFF asks clubs to confirm participation in delayed ISL

NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Wednesday asked the clubs to confirm their participation in the delayed season of the Indian Super League (ISL) and the proposed format within a day so that it can inform the continental body the exact number of matches to be played in the competition.

With the ISL 2025-26 yet to start, it is certain that the

clubs will not be able to play the mandatory 24 matches in the season -- including top division league and domestic cup -- to be eligible to feature in the AFC Champions League 2.

In that regard, the ISL clubs had urged the AIFF to request the Asian Football Confederation for a one-time relaxation in the minimum requirement of 24 matches so that they can play in the ACL 2.

The representatives of the clubs and a committee

formed by the AIFF have had five meetings since December 24 on how to hold the 2025-26 ISL season.

"... the meetings held on 28th December 2025, wherein the ISL Clubs requested the All India Football Federation to take up the matter with the Asian Football Confederation regarding a one-time relaxation in the minimum requirement of 24 matches," the AIFF said in a letter to the ISL clubs.

"AIFF asks ISL clubs to

confirm participation and the proposed competition format in ISL 2024-25 by January 1, 2026. The AFC, the Sports Ministry and the Supreme Court will be informed accordingly.

"Considering the urgency of the matter, it would be highly appreciated if the above confirmation is received by tomorrow, i.e., 1st January 2026. We trust you will appreciate the seriousness and time-sensitive nature of the situation."

The AIFF also said it is

required to submit the outcome of the meetings it had with the ISL clubs to the Sports Ministry before January 2, 2026.

"Further, the Hon'ble Supreme Court is scheduled to resume after vacation on 5th January 2026, and all stakeholders may be required to file relevant documents in accordance with legal advice."

The AIFF had proposed two competition formats for the ISL 2025-26 season, which it wants to start in the

first week of February.

The first option is a conference-based league structure where the 14 participating teams would be divided equally into East and West groups. Teams would play against each other only within their respective conferences.

The top four sides from each group will advance to a single-leg championship round to decide the ISL winner. All the matches would be played at two centralised venues.