

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Saturday, 13 December, 2025

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

## The govt. should formulate a plan to control pollution: Rahul

New Delhi

Congress MP and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi raised the issue of air pollution in the Lok Sabha on Friday. He said, "Most of our country's major cities are reeling under toxic air. Millions of children are suffering from lung diseases. People are



suffering from cancer."

confident that there will be a consensus between the government and us

on this matter. Every member in this House will agree that we all want to work together to address the harm being caused to the people of the country due to pollution." In response, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said, "The government has made its stand clear from day one that we are ready to

discuss all important issues. The government is also ready to take suggestions from Congress and other opposition party leaders." BJP MP Anurag Thakur raised the issue of lathicharge on Hindus in Tamil Nadu for demanding the lighting of lamps. He targeted the Tamil Nadu government, saying,

"Tamil Nadu has become a symbol of opposition to Sanatan Dharma." His ministers make statements against Sanatan Dharma. Before the House proceedings began, Rahul held a meeting with Congress MPs in the Annex Extension Building of Parliament House on Friday.

## A budget of 11,718 crore has been approved for the census

New Delhi

The Cabinet on Friday approved three important decisions. The Cabinet approved a budget of ₹11,718 crore for the Census. The Union Cabinet also approved the Coal Linkage Policy to reform the coal allocation policy. The government also gave policy approval to the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for the copra 2025 season. After the Cabinet meeting, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw provided information about the 2027 Census. The Union Minister stated that it will be the world's largest administrative and statistical exercise. The 2027 Census will be the 16th census to be conducted and the 8th since independence. The census is a subject of the central government. The Union Minister



The bill to increase FDI in the insurance sector to 100 percent has been approved

New Delhi

According to the Lok Sabha bulletin, the Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2025 aims to deepen insurance penetration, accelerate growth and development, and enhance ease of doing business. It is one of the 13 bills listed for the upcoming session of Parliament. In her budget speech this year, Finance Minister Sitharaman proposed increasing the foreign investment limit in the insurance sector from the existing 74 percent to 100 percent.

informed that it is conducted in the country under the Census Act, 1948 and the Census Rules, 1990. The last census was conducted in 2011. The 2021 Census could not be conducted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier, the gazette

notification for the 2027 Census was issued on June 16, 2025. The estimated cost of the 2027 Census will be ₹11,718 crore. Census to be conducted in two phases. The Union Minister informed that the reference date for

The amendments are primarily aimed at promoting the interests of policyholders

The primary act providing the legislative framework for insurance in India is the Insurance Act of 1938. It provides the framework for the operation of insurance businesses and governs the relationships between insurers, their policyholders, shareholders, and the regulator, IRDAI. The amendments are primarily aimed at promoting the interests of policyholders. As part of the next generation of financial sector reforms. So far, the insurance sector has attracted Rs 82,000 crore through Foreign Direct Investment.

the census will be March 1, 2027, at 00:00 hours. For snow-bound areas, this date will be October 1, 2026, at 00:00 hours. Vaishnaw said, "The 2027 Census will be conducted in two phases.



On Friday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched the Rabi season's Kisan Pathshala 8.0 at the Progressive Farmers' Conference and "Farming Talk on the Field" program held in Daulatpur village, Barabanki. During this program, where he interacted directly with farmers on their fields, Chief Minister Yogi discussed in detail Uttar Pradesh's agricultural progress.

## Pollution: BJD MP appeals for shifting of session

New Delhi

winter and budget sessions of Parliament should be held in a city outside Delhi. He described Delhi's annual pollution problem as a man-made disaster. Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Mangaraj, a resident of Odisha, said that just as his state responds swiftly and

disciplinedly to natural disasters, Delhi's pollution should also be addressed promptly and seriously. "I come from Odisha, which fights disasters like cyclones and floods very effectively," Mangaraj said. "But what troubles me is Delhi." The MP said that MPs, officials, driv-

ers, sanitation workers, and security personnel have to work in toxic air every day. He said, "We cannot ignore their problems. We cannot call it normal." He argued that holding Parliament sessions every year during peak pollution hours puts people's lives.

## Tharoor did not attend the meeting chaired by Rahul

New Delhi

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor is once again in the news. The MP from Thiruvananthapuram did not attend the meeting of Congress Lok Sabha MPs chaired by Rahul Gandhi. However, according to party sources, Tharoor had informed the party in advance about his absence. Besides Tharoor, another senior Congress leader, Chandigarh MP Manish Tewari, also did not attend the meeting.

## The world will survive only if the health of the earth remains good: CM Yogi Adityanath

Barabanki

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that Mother Earth produces food to feed us, but her health must also be maintained, and if her health is good, not only humanity but the entire creation will survive. He said that many programs are currently underway for this purpose. The campaign for the National Vision of Natural Farming, which the Prime Minister has



promoted, is part of this effort. He always says that the first mantra for increasing farmers' income is to reduce

costs and increase production. This is possible if the farmers receive timely access to seeds, fertilizers, irrigation facilities, and support for scientific methods. On Friday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched the Rabi season's Kisan Pathshala 8.0 (Farmers' School 8.0) at the Progressive Farmers' Conference and "Farming Talk on the Field" program held in Daulatpur village, Barabanki.

In this program, where he interacted directly with farmers on the field.

An impartial inquiry into the Karur stampede is necessary: Supreme Court

New Delhi

During the hearing of the Karur stampede case, the Supreme Court has raised serious questions about the functioning of the Madras High Court. The Supreme Court said that something is wrong with the way cases are listed and heard in the High Court, and an explanation is necessary. made this observation receiving a report from the Registrar General of the Madras High Court.

every affected family. The Government of India is fully committed to strengthening harmony, ensuring security, and helping Manipur move forward on the path of stability and prosperity." Murmu said she has inaugurated several projects that will transform the lives of the people of Manipur.

Earlier, the President laid the foundation stone for 14 projects worth ₹1,180 crore and inaugurated 12 projects worth ₹207 crore. She said that these projects in various sectors such as tribal development, agriculture,

Even if I give them 1 lakh rupees, Muslims will not vote for me: CM Himanta Biswa

New Delhi



work. The kind of Muslims we call 'Mya Muslims'. He said he would even donate a kidney if needed, but he wouldn't vote for me. "He added that the illegal population is increasing in Assam, and the Muslim population is growing, which is a problem for the state. In 2021, the Muslim population was 38%, and it could reach 40% by 2027. Since 1961, the Muslim population has been increasing by 4-5% every ten years.

## Indigo passengers get compensation



New Delhi

ensure justice for the accused and also expedite the hearing of their case in court. This will reduce the number of pending cases in the courts. The apex court said that the pace of hearing in cases under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and other similar laws, where the responsibility of providing evidence to prove innocence rests with the accused, should be increased. The bench gave this direction while hearing the bail plea of the accused arrested in the case of the derailment of the Gyaneshwari Express due to an explosion in the West Midnapore district of Bengal in 2010.

## Vegetable and spice prices rose in November, pushing retail inflation up to 0.71%

New Delhi

Retail inflation in November rose to 0.71% compared to the previous month. In October, it was at 0.25%, the lowest level in 14 years. The increase in inflation in November was due to rising prices of vegetables, eggs, meat and fish, spices, fuel, and electricity. The government released the inflation figures on Friday, December 12. Food

prices increased in November. Food items contribute approximately 50% to the inflation basket. Month-on-month food inflation increased from minus 5.02% to minus 3.91%. In November, rural inflation increased from -0.25% to minus 0.10%, while urban inflation rose from 0.88% to 1.40%. Retail inflation at a 14-year low in October, retail inflation reached a record low of 0.25%.

## The superstar of the century, Amitabh Bachchan, is truly an emperor; his success is unparalleled - Jay Shukla

Jay Bhaiya, a resident of Dighiya village in Meja and Director of Awada Group, had a glorious meeting with film industry superstar and megastar of the century, Amitabh Bachchan, and shared information on several issues related to Prayagraj

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**



**Meja.** It was a very glorious and pleasant meeting, and a beautiful moment, when Jay Bhaiya from Meja met the megastar of the century and the film industry, Mr. Amitabh Bachchan. There had been two close opportunities before, but Jay Bhaiya, who constantly strives to uphold the honor and pride of Meja, had not been able to meet Mr. Bachchan. After that, he placed an advertisement for Awada on KBC and requested a meeting with the megastar Amitabh Bachchan, to which he readily agreed. They spoke for about 10 minutes. Mr. Bachchan is an incredibly humble person, and no amount of praise is enough for him. It is noteworthy that in 1984, during the Lok Sabha elections in Allahabad, Jay Shukla, a native of Meja, was studying at a nursery school in

Bharatganj. The school children were lined up along the roadside at four o'clock because Amitabh Bachchan, who was a Lok Sabha candidate, was expected to arrive. However, he did not come until five o'clock in the evening, and Jay Bhaiya had to walk three kilometers from there to Machha. Even then, Jay Bhaiya had to go home without seeing Amitabh Bachchan! According to Mr. Shukla, a few years ago, Jay Bhaiya had created a solar project for Amit Ji and wanted to present it to him, but even then, a meeting could not be arranged. It is worth mentioning that

## Couple Tragically Killed in Road Accident

Couple returning from a feast die after their motorcycle hits a tree on the roadside

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**Kaushambi**  
Couple returning from a feast die after their motorcycle hits a tree on the roadside. A tragic road accident occurred around 9 PM near Samaspur village in the Charwa police station area of Kaushambi district, resulting in the death of a couple. Due to the cold weather, the motorcycle went out of control and collided with a mango tree on the roadside. The husband and wife riding the motorcycle died on the spot. Witnesses rushed to the scene after hearing the crash and informed the police. Upon receiving the information, the police arrived at the scene, took custody of the bodies, and sent them for post-mortem examination. The scene was filled with grief and chaos. According to reports, Ajay Kumar and his wife Radha Devi, residents of Pantalwa



Bamrauli in the Puramuti police station area of ??Prayagraj district, had gone to a feast in Sirsi village of the Charwa area. After the feast, Ajay Kumar was taking his wife to her parents' home in Mituwapur. As they reached near Samaspur village in the Charwa police station area, the motorcycle became uncontrollable due to the cold and fog, and crashed violently into a mango tree. The accident was so severe that Ajay Kumar and Radha Devi's heads struck the tree, and they both died a painful death on the spot. At the time of the accident, Radha's mother was riding ahead on another motorcycle. Hearing the sound of the crash, she rushed to the scene and was devastated to find her daughter and son-in-law dead. Hearing her cries, villagers gathered at the spot. The villagers immediately informed the police. The Charwa police and the Dial 112 team arrived at the scene, conducted an investigation, and took custody of the bodies, sending them for post-mortem. The police are investigating the cause of the accident. Family members and relatives also arrived at the scene upon receiving the news. The scene was filled with sorrow and grief.

**Competitive Exam Aspirant Dies in Road Accident, Accident Occurred While Returning on a Rapido Bike**

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Prayagraj.** Arzoo

Yadav (24), a competitive exam aspirant, died in a tragic road accident late at night at the Ekavaya intersection on the Prayagraj-Kanpur highway near the High Court. Arzoo, originally from Gopri Chandpur, Jaidpur police station, Ambedkar Nagar, had been living in Sali for the past 6 years, preparing for competitive exams. He left his room around 6 PM. When he didn't return late at night, his friends became worried. Upon calling his phone, they received news of the accident. It was reported that he was returning on a Rapido bike around 10:30 PM when a truck and the bike collided, resulting in his death on the spot. Upon receiving news of the accident, the police arrived at the scene and sent the body for post-mortem. The body was handed over to the family on Friday. Arzoo's friend said that he had told them in the evening that he would be back by ten o'clock. When they spoke again, he said he had taken a Rapido. When he was very late, they called him and found out that he had been in an accident. He had a railway exam today. His landlady, Preeti, said that Arzoo had been living with them for two years. He had called and said not to lock the gate, as he would be late. Hearing the news of the accident, she was devastated. Truck driver and bike rider both in custody: According to the police, the Rapido bike went out of control, causing it to collide with the truck. Both the truck driver and the bike rider have been taken into custody. The vehicles involved have been seized. Further legal action is being taken based on the complaint filed by the family.



## A camp was organized in the district under the "Your Capital, Your Right" campaign

**Banks in the district returned a total of Rs. 61,08,430 in unclaimed funds to the rightful owners across 154 accounts**

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**Kaushambi:** A camp was organized at Saras Hall in Kaushambi district under the "Your Capital, Your Right" campaign by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India. The camp was attended by Chief Development Officer Vinod Ram Tripathi as the chief guest, along with Reserve Bank of India officer Shrawan Ram, Chief Manager Arvind Kumar Srivastava from Bank of Baroda Regional Office Prayagraj-II, Lead District Manager Naveen Kumar Jha, district coordinators of all banks operating in the district, and officers from Life Insurance Corporation of India, Post Office, and other



departments. Customers from each branch also participated. It is noteworthy that the "Your Capital, Your Right" campaign is being run across the country by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, from October 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025. Under this campaign, funds deposited in accounts for more than 10 years,

which were returned to the Reserve Bank of India by the banks, are being returned to the rightful account holders after selecting the correct beneficiary and completing the KYC process. Under this campaign of the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, all banks operating in Kaushambi district returned a total

of Rs. 61,08,430 in unclaimed funds to the rightful owners across 154 accounts. The Chief Development Officer provided awareness to the people about this initiative of the Government of India. He emphasized the importance of making the "Your Capital, Your Right" campaign a resounding success and reaching every person in Kaushambi district. The RBI officer discussed customer rights as defined by the RBI. The Lead District Manager appreciated the contribution of all the banks in the district and stressed the need for greater participation to make this campaign a success. Arvind Kumar Srivastava also provided financial literacy to the customers regarding banking services.

## Special Registration Camp Held at Shahninda Police Post, Consumers Show Enthusiasm

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Ghazipur.** With the aim of providing financial relief to the general public and simplifying the process of paying electricity bill arrears, a special registration camp was organized by the electricity department near the Shahninda police post on Friday under the Electricity Bill Relief Scheme 2025. The camp was conducted by the team of the 33/11 KV substation under the leadership of Junior Engineer Vinod Yadav. A large crowd of consumers started gathering from the morning, and many people arrived to get information about their old outstanding bills. Departmental employ

ees provided detailed information to each consumer about the terms, benefits, and registration process of the scheme. The atmosphere at the camp was full of enthusiasm. Fifteen consumers completed the registration process on the spot and availed the benefits of the scheme.

According to departmental officials, seeing the increasing interest of people in registration and payment related to the relief scheme, similar camps will be organized in other areas in the coming days so that more and more consumers can benefit from it. Junior Engineer Vinod Yadav said that the objective of the relief scheme is to provide

financial convenience to consumers and facilitate the recovery of arrears. He said that through the camp, consumers get information, registration, and guidance at one place, which saves their time and effort. Several employees of the electricity department, including Feeder Managers Suresh Singh Kushwaha, Sunil Kumar, Avnish Awasthi, Rohit Gupta, and Dheeraj Kumar, were present at the camp. Departmental officials said that in the coming days, more facilities will be provided to consumers through such camps so that the benefits of the relief scheme can reach every eligible person.

## Hindu Hriday Samrat Dr. Praveen Togadia's 69th Birthday Celebrated with Great Enthusiasm



**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

The 69th birthday of Hindu Hriday Samrat Dr. Praveen Bhai Togadia, the founder president of the International Hindu Council and Rashtriya Bajrang Dal, was celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm by his followers in Kada, Kaushambi. The birthday celebration was held at a school

in Kamalpur, under the Kada block, and was successfully completed amidst chants of "Jai Shri Ram," "Vande Mataram," and "Bharat Mata Ki Jai," along with the recitation of the Hanuman Chalisa. Those present at the event included Rashtriya Bajrang Dal District President Yashraj Mishra, District General Secretary Anurag Bhatt, Ankush Mishra, District Treasurer Shivam Sahu, District President of Gau Raksha Parishad Rajveer Maurya, Block President of Kada Pramod Pandey, Rajesh Goswami, Village President Vikram Singh, Ram Karan Maurya, Sandeep Dubey, Swaraj Mishra, Vikas Pal, Parmesh Kumar, and other workers.

## "UP Should Become India First AI Education Model State"

**Lucknow**

Sarojini Nagar MLA Dr. Rajeshwar Singh has written to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath proposing the introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) education at the school level and the establishment of a 'Uttar Pradesh State Artificial Intelligence Commission'. From Digital Revolution to the Age of AI Dr. Rajeshwar Singh stated that today era belongs to Artificial Intelligence, a transformation that is reshaping humanity itself. He appreciated that under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh has pioneered a digital revolution in education through smart classrooms, digital libraries, ICT labs and e-content platforms.

"Now is the time for Uttar Pradesh to lead India transition from Digital Bharat to AI Bharat," said Dr.

formed with experts from IIT Kanpur, IIIT Lucknow, NCERT and NITI Aayog, to submit a phased action plan within six months. 2. Pilot Project: 200 schools (urban, rural & minority areas) to start bilingual AI education. 3. Teacher Training: 10,000 teachers to be trained through AI Teaching Excellence Programme in collaboration with IIT Kanpur, Microsoft, Infosys or Google. 4. Curriculum Integration: Grades 3-5: Logic, patterns and digital behaviour. Grades 6-8: Coding, robotics, data fundamentals. 5. Digital Infrastructure: Smart Class Panels, AI Kits, Digital Libraries and RBS Digital Empowerment Centres to serve as training hubs. Formation of the "Uttar Pradesh State Artificial Intelligence

Singh. The Need for AI Education in Schools: The letter emphasizes that AI is transforming every sector - agriculture, health, governance, transport and education. Early exposure to AI will prepare students for the jobs, innovations and social responsibilities of the future. Citing global best practices, Dr. Singh noted that countries like Singapore, Finland, China and the UAE have already introduced AI education from early grades (age 9-10), resulting in 25-30% better STEM performance and 40% higher innovation tendencies among students. Proposed Framework: 1. State Task Force: To be

## MOU signed between Uttar Pradesh and Belgium AMPL at Global Potato Summit 202

**Lucknow:** An important Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the Horticulture and Food Processing Department of Uttar Pradesh and M/s Agristo Masha Pvt. Co.

(AMPL) a leading Belgian company, during the Global Potato Summit 2025 held at the India Expo Mart, Greater Noida. This MOU will prove to be a historic step towards the overall development of horticultural crops in the state, dissemination of advanced technologies and taking the food processing industry to new heights. Additional Chief Secretary, Horticulture and Food Processing, B.L. Meena informed that potatoes are cultivated on more than 6.0 lakh hectares in Uttar Pradesh and with a productivity of 28.9 tonnes per hectare, the state ranks first in potato production in the country. Agra, Farrukhabad, Meerut, Mathura, Mainpuri, Etawah, Kanpur and Aligarh are the major potato producing districts in the state. He stated that the MOU will directly benefit farmers through advanced technologies, scientific collaboration and skill-based training. This partnership has been established with AMPL, a joint venture between Agristo NV, a world-renowned Belgian company and Wave Group of India, which has already established a state-of-the-art potato dry flakes production and research unit in Bijnor. The MoU will enhance value addition, processing-based industries and export potential, playing a key role in the state goal of achieving a \$1 trillion economy. It was also announced at the event that the Horticulture Department has established the state first Center of Excellence (Aeroponics Unit and Tissue Culture Lab) in Babugarh, Hapur.



## The Mayor welcomed and felicitated the members of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam upon their arrival in Prayagraj

**The Kashi Tamil Sangamam journey is the greatest force for cultural, spiritual, and social unity - Hon'ble Mayor**  
**The Kashi Tamil Sangamam journey provides an opportunity for cultural exchange - District Magistrate**



**Prayagraj.** Upon the arrival of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam delegation in Prayagraj district on Friday, Mayor Umesh Chandra Ganesh Kesarwani, District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma, and City Magistrate Vinod Kumar Singh grandly welcomed the team members by applying tilak and garlanding them. On this occasion, at a program organized near the VIP Ghat in the Sangam area, the Mayor honored the team leader by presenting him with a memento and a shawl, and also offered him Ganga water. On this occasion, the Regional Archives and the State

Manuscript Library also organized an exhibition of records and manuscripts, in which the display of ancient texts on paper and palm leaves was a special attraction. Cultural programs were also presented by NCZCC on this occasion. On this occasion, Mayor Umesh Chandra Ganesh Kesarwani welcomed and felicitated the people from Tamil Nadu who had come to the Sangam city of Prayagraj under the Kashi Tamil Sangamam. He said that the Kashi Tamil Sangamam journey is a symbol of that India envisioned by the Prime Minister, where cultural,

spiritual, and social unity is the greatest strength of the nation. This journey is not just an event, but a bridge connecting the cultures of North and South India. He said that "the Kashi Tamil Sangamam journey is an important initiative of the Honorable Prime Minister, which has dispelled the misconceptions spread in the name of language, culture, and regional differences." He said that the spiritual land of Kashi and the cultural heritage of Tamil Nadu are coming together at the Sangam to present a magnificent picture of one India. District Magistrate Manish

Kumar Verma, while welcoming and felicitating the members who arrived in Prayagraj as part of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam journey, said that it is a matter of pride for us that the members participating in this journey are reaching Prayagraj from Kashi, and we are getting an opportunity for cultural exchange.

The members of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam team were taken from the VIP ghat to the confluence of the rivers in decorated boats, where they witnessed and bathed in the sacred waters of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the invisible

Saraswati. They were also informed about the significance of Prayagraj, the king of pilgrimage sites. The members were mesmerized by the breathtaking and captivating views of the confluence area.

They also viewed the sand art created at the VIP ghat in the Sangam area. After the program at the confluence, the Kashi Tamil Sangamam participants was successfully completed. The program was conducted by Dr. Prabhakar Tripathi. City Magistrate Vinod Kumar Singh, Assistant Rakesh Kumar Verma, Harishchandra Dubey, and a large number of other people were present on this occasion.

## Meeting the wife of the country's illustrious PM, Yashoda Ben, is a source of inspiration for me - Durga Gupta

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**



at the forefront of helping the poor and needy, and also has a deep interest in religious events and politics due to his visionary thinking.

With another new idea, he recently visited Gujarat and had a fortunate formal meeting with Mrs. Yashoda Ben, the wife of the country's illustrious

Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He touched her feet and received her affectionate blessings. During this time, he also presented her with a booklet from ML Public School. He presented the school's booklet and shared information about the school's educational activities and the all-round development of the children. It is noteworthy that Durga Prasad Gupta, a resident of Khanpur village in Meja tehsil, said about this glorious meeting that his meeting with Mrs.

Yashoda Ben was an extremely inspiring moment in his life. He further said that her simplicity and warmth deeply inspired him. He said that while presenting the school booklet, Mrs. Ben praised his commitment to the education and values of the children. He also said that her blessings are a great source of energy for him in life. He resolved that he will remain continuously committed to providing better and quality education to every child in the region.

## The noble work being done by public servant Indradev Shukla for the welfare of the people is highly commendable - Rajesh Shukla

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**



highly commendable. His efforts to make Meja green and his act of performing the Kanyadaan (giving away of daughters in marriage) for 51 girls is a virtuous deed like a great sacrifice. In the same vein, Meja Surendra Pratap Yadav and ACP Meja SP Upadhyay also shared their thoughts on this occasion. Present on the occasion were Vishwa Hindu Parishad District President E. Nityanand

Upadhyay, Meja Road Police Station In-charge Sudhir Pandey, Teachers' Association President Manish Tiwari, Meja Public School Director Amresh Tiwari, Vineet Shukla, Hemant Dubey, Bhagwan Das, Rinku Ojha, Neeraj Dwivedi, Shivam Dubey, and Om Prakash Mishra, among others, along with a large number of disabled people, widows, elderly people, and common citizens. A case was registered at Gyanpur police sta-

## Interstate gang of fraudsters making fake certificates arrested by police

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Bhadoli.** Under the direction of Abhimanyu Manglik, Superintendent of Police, Bhadoli, and under the supervision of Shubham Agarwal, Additional Superintendent of Police, Bhadoli, an interstate accused, Sanjay Dubey, son of Shivdutt Dubey, resident of Jasa, Vindhya Chal police station, Mirzapur district, aged approximately 48 years, who was part of an interstate gang of fraudsters making fake certificates and facilitating admissions to medical colleges (MBBS) by fraudulently obtaining freedom fighter certificates, has been arrested from Gyanpur Road.

**Brief description of the incident:** On September 20, 2025, a complaint was filed at Gyanpur police station by the complainant Shahid Ali, son of Danish Khan, resident of Gori Khamaria, Aurai police station, Bhadoli district, regarding letter number 3/Student Cell/2025/1984 Lucknow dated August 27, 2025, stating that the freedom fighter certificate presented by the candidates in the dependent/sub-dependent category of freedom fighters in government/autonomous state medical colleges appears suspicious and forged. A case was registered at Gyanpur police sta-



tion under relevant sections regarding the forged freedom fighter certificate, and accused Shubham Singh, son of Ravindra Pratap Singh, resident of Jigna Purv Court, Jigna police station, Mirzapur district, aged approximately 27 years, a member of the interstate gang of fraudsters, was arrested and sent to jail.

During the investigative proceedings conducted by Sub-Inspector Ramesh Kumar, in the course of questioning the families of students who had obtained fake certificates, the name of the ringleader of an interstate gang of fraudsters, accused Sanjay Dubey, son of Shivdutt Dubey, resident of Jasa, Vindhya Chal Police Station, Mirzapur district, aged approximately 48 years, came to light, and action was initiated for his arrest.

**Details of the arrest:** Under the direction of Abhimanyu Manglik, Superintendent of Police, Bhadoli, and under the close supervision of Shubham Agarwal, Additional Superintendent of Police, in the ongoing campaign for

the swift detection of incidents related to forgery and fraud and the arrest of the criminals involved, on December 11, 2025, the Gyanpur Police Station team, during area patrolling and checking, acting on a tip-off, successfully arrested the interstate accused Sanjay Dubey, son of Shivdutt Dubey, resident of Jasa, Vindhya Chal Police Station, Mirzapur district, aged approximately 48 years, who was involved in fraudulently securing admission to medical graduate (MBBS) courses. He was arrested from Gyanpur Road, Gopiganj. Investigation against other wanted persons is ongoing.

**Details of Interrogation:** During interrogation, the accused revealed that they have an organized gang that creates fake freedom fighter certificates and uses them to secure admission to medical graduate (MBBS) courses. They also use these fake freedom fighter certificates to secure recruitment in various government jobs. Previously, they had created fake freedom fighter certificates and used them to secure direct recruitment to police positions in 2023. In that case, the Bhadoli police had arrested five members of the gang, including the accused, and sent them to jail.

**Saraswati Vidya Mandir Inter College Celebrates Deepotsav on Diwali's Declaration as a World Heritage Site**



**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Prayagraj.** According to Shreya Singh, Media In-charge of Saraswati Vidya Mandir Inter College, Sarvodaya Nagar, a program was held on Friday in the school's Saraswati Auditorium during the morning assembly to celebrate UNESCO's inclusion of Diwali in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The program, symbolizing Diwali, involved lighting lamps and reciting the Deep Mantra. The chief guest was Satish Kumar Gupta, convenor of the school's academic council and city president of the Indian Cultural Council. The program began with offering flowers and lighting lamps before the idol of Goddess Saraswati, followed by a prayer to the goddess. Thereafter, the chief guest, the principal, and all the students and teachers lit lamps to express their joy. Chief speaker Satish Kumar Gupta discussed with the students why Diwali was declared a World Heritage site, explaining that this process had been proposed to UNESCO for a long time and was finally included in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on Wednesday. The school principal, Suresh Chandra Tiwari, stated that UNESCO recognized Diwali as a cultural heritage based on its symbolism of the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. Currently, Diwali is being celebrated as a global festival. At the end of the program, Vijay Abhinandan Mishra, the school's administrative head, delivered the vote of thanks. The program was conducted by Jyoti Singh. All the students and teachers were present and contributed to the success of the program.

## Two Bikes Collide in a Head-on Collision, Three Injured, Two in Critical Condition

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Kaushambi**

In the Kaushambi district, under the Kokhraj police station area, a horrific collision occurred between two motorcycles on Thursday night. Three people riding the two bikes were seriously injured in the accident, and the condition of two of the injured is critical. Police arrived at the scene and, with the help of locals, sent all the injured to the district hospital by ambulance, where they are

currently receiving treatment. According to reports, Pushpraj, from the Sultanpur Ghosh police station area of ??Fatehpur district, was traveling with another person on a motorcycle (UP 71 V 4073). As the motorcyclists reached Singhiya Bharwari in the Kokhraj police station area, their bike collided head-on with another motorcycle (UP 67K 2357) which had a police logo on it. Following the accident, all three young men fell onto the road and were injured. Chaos ensued at the scene. Seeing

the accident, people from the surrounding area rushed to the spot and informed the police. One young man sustained a serious head injury, and another suffered a broken leg. The rider of the motorcycle with the police logo was also seriously injured. Upon receiving information about the incident, Dial 112 police and Singhiya outpost police arrived at the scene. With the help of local residents, the police sent all three injured to the district hospital by ambulance and informed their families.

## Voter Revision Campaign Gains Momentum, Concerns Rise as SIR Forms Fail to Reach Many Households

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Ghazipur.** Amidst preparations for the assembly elections, the special voter list revision campaign launched by the Election Commission has now gained momentum. Door-to-door verification of voters is underway in the area, but during this process, several citizens have complained that they have not yet received the SIR form. In many families, some members received the form while others did not, leading to confusion among the people.



According to sources, voters whose SIR forms were not available with the BLOs were missed during the distribution. This is why some voters are still waiting for the form. However, the Election Commission has extended the last date for submitting SIR forms in six states, including Uttar Pradesh, providing relief to the people and further accelerating the pace of voter list revision. In view of the complaints, the concerned officials have clarified that those who have not received the SIR form need not worry. All such eligible citizens can directly fill out Form 6 and get their names added to the voter list. Officials have assured that upon submission of Form 6, the names of eligible voters will be included in the list without any hindrance. Form 6 is easily available at the district BLO office, local tehsil premises, and with the concerned BLOs in the area. Due to the extension of the deadline, interested citizens can now fill out this form as soon as possible and complete the process of inclusion of their names. The administration has appealed to the general public that no eligible person should be deprived of the right to vote. All citizens should fill and submit Form 6 in time so that every eligible voter can ensure their participation in the upcoming elections.

## Editorial

## Tax terror and India's same-sex couples

These gaps are not just about money; they appear in moments of crisis. Research on discrimination in Indian hospitals has shown that queer people are often denied recognition of their chosen partners as next of kin. In emergencies, this can mean being refused entry to an intensive care unit (ICU) or being blocked from giving consent for urgent treatment. The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act of 2021 and the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021 go further, excluding same-sex couples from surrogacy and restricting adoption to single individuals or married heterosexual couples. In effect, the laws treat them as incapable of raising a child together, no matter their stability or commitment. Employment rules reinforce the same pattern. In government service, Leave Travel Concession (LTC), medical reimbursement, and family pension benefits are tied to a recognised spouse. Private companies may choose to extend coverage, but the default language in most HR manuals mirrors the government's. Studies of India's insurance sector show that traditional group health insurance schemes frequently exclude same-sex partners, and even where some progressive companies extend coverage, it is not guaranteed by law. The Employees' Provident Fund allows broader nominations, but pension rules under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995 limit eligibility to spouses or children. Even when a company accepts a same-sex partner as a nominee, it is a discretionary gesture, not a right protected by law. Immigration policy adds another layer of instability. A foreign national married to an Indian citizen can apply for a dependent visa or be registered as an Overseas Citizen of India, but same-sex partners cannot. They rely on tourist or business visas that require regular renewals, creating a constant risk of separation if paperwork lapses or rules change. These are invisible forms of insecurity that heterosexual couples rarely have to confront. The lack of recognition also weakens legal protections when relationships end. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, while covering women in domestic relationships, leaves uncertainty about its application to same-sex couples. Maintenance and alimony provisions in personal laws and the Criminal Procedure Code apply to spouses, shutting out partners who may have been financially dependent for years. Without these remedies, breakups can mean abrupt eviction, loss of shared assets, and no legal recourse. India's own courts have already recognised that families do not fit a single template. In the Deepika Singh v. Central Administrative Tribunal judgment, the court observed that such atypical manifestations of the family unit.

are equally deserving not only of protection under law but also of the benefits available under social welfare legislation. Legal scholars have warned that ignoring these exclusions perpetuates a silent inequality. As Gautam Bhan and Arvind Narain argue in *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*, queer lives in India are erased not only through criminal laws, but also through the civil law regime that denies them the right to marry, nominate a partner, and other benefits that heterosexuals are entitled to. These quiet denials accumulate into a systemic injustice. All of these examples show that the absence of marriage recognition is not neutral. It actively produces disadvantages across tax policy, property rights, healthcare access, child-rearing, employment benefits, immigration, and personal security. It creates a quiet hierarchy where only one kind of couple is rewarded by the law, while others must navigate life as if the state refuses to admit they exist. There is a way to reduce this harm without waiting for the larger question of marriage equality to be resolved. Legislatures and ministries can amend definitions in existing laws, replacing the word 'spouse' with gender neutral terms like 'partner' or 'cohabitating partner.'



## Leaves little chance of building a strong, centralised state

This creates a dynamic balance of power, but leaves little chance of building a strong, centralised state. What really matters is how these groups see themselves—and that depends on the local context. For instance, in Iran, they rally Sunni opposition to a Shi'a theocracy, sometimes with Pakistani support. However, in Pakistan, they mobilise ethnonationalist resistance to an Islamic state, occasionally with Iranian backing. India, unlike the US, is directly involved in the region, but Balochistan's uncertain and unstable and liminal status still attracts global powers, reinforcing its complexities. To

understand the Indian angle better, I would argue its relevance at both tactical and strategic levels. Tactically, perceived Indian support for Baloch forces could stretch Pakistani military capacity, limiting its ability to project power along the Indian border—a posture sometimes described as "offensive defence." Strategically, Balochistan is a transit corridor between Afghanistan and Chabahar. Therefore, it becomes central to India's ambition to establish an alternative route to Central Asia that counters China's Belt and Road Initiative. This vision mirrors the China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor (CPEC), which positions Balochistan as a link between Xinjiang and Gwadar. But the latter utility of Balochistan remains limited too. At present, there are only two conceivable ways to use it as a transit region—colonisation, through top-down development, or integration, via local empowerment. Needless to say, both pathways remain complex. Resistance to externally-led colonisation is fierce in the region. Baloch fighters routinely sabotage connectivity projects. In my discussions with British, Turkish, and Iranian experts, a common concern emerged: while infrastructure projects promise

investment and better living standards, they usually rely on foreign workers and offer little benefit to local people—appearing instead like a new kind of colonisation. There is yet another issue that complicates Balochistan's connectivity potential.

Investment in connectivity threatens the transborder smuggling economy that sustains the region. Afghan opium, ephedra-based amphetamines, Iranian diesel, Russian arms, and human trafficking. Regular state armies are frequently entangled in smuggling and other informal networks that sustain frontier politics and economy.

## Land record portal to water atlas



To amplify outreach, we engaged PR professionals to leverage social media platforms like X and Meta aligning with PM Modi's innovative communication strategies and Nitish Kumar's focus on public engagement. This has educated Biharis on land rights, driving transparency and participation, much like the state's successful awareness campaigns for schemes like Saat Nishchay. On 7 May this year, Bihar, under Nitish Kumar's visionary Jal-Jeevan-Harayali Mission, became the first Indian state to launch the Gazetteer-cum-Atlas of Water Bodies, mapping over 550 rivers, 4,500 wetlands, and 1.06 lakh ponds with Unique Identification Numbers (UIDs). This initiative, inspired by water body depletion in Darbhanga, supports PM Modi's Jal Jeevan Mission and Viksit Bharat's sustainability goals, as well as Nitish Kumar's environmental agenda. Enriched with historical, socio-economic, and environmental data, the atlas aids anti-encroachment efforts, plans new ponds in water-scarce areas, and strengthens water conservation.

It aligns with PM Modi's praise for the Jal Jeevan Mission's success in providing tap water to about 15.7 crore rural households and Nitish Kumar's focus on sustainable rural development, positioning Bihar as a model for water resource management. Beyond digitalisation, the state government has prioritised structural reforms to support PM Modi's vision of a streamlined, self-reliant governance framework and Nitish Kumar's goal of administrative efficiency. The Bihar Amin Cadre Rules, 2025,

enforced in August, reorganise amin's cadres with seniority lists and performance-based promotions, ensuring a skilled workforce for land surveys. This supports the statewide survey, extended to December 2026, covering 661 villages with GPS and drone technology to update cadastral maps and resolve disputes. These efforts echo PM Modi's push for institutional reforms, as seen in his Task Force for Next-Generation Economic Reforms, and Nitish Kumar's focus on disciplined governance. Our district-wise ranking system, introduced in April 2025, evaluates performance on mutation efficiency and revenue collection, with Sheikhpura leading the state. This fosters competition and efficiency, aligning with PM Modi's call for accountability and Nitish Kumar's emphasis on performance-driven administration. We have also addressed disruptions like the recent survey workers' strike, reflecting the state government's resolve for uninterrupted progress, a principle shared with Viksit Bharat. These reforms—digital platforms, water atlas, and structural changes—have reduced litigation, improved

revenue collection, and enhanced economic opportunities, particularly for farmers. Accurate land records and mapped water bodies facilitate access to loans, subsidies, and irrigation, supporting PM Modi's vision of empowering small farmers (85 per cent of India's agrarian population) and Nitish Kumar's agricultural development goals. The PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana, targeting 100 backward farming districts, finds synergy in our efforts to strengthen Bihar's agrarian backbone, contributing to India's global food security leadership and Bihar's economic resilience. Our initiatives are deeply rooted in PM Modi's Viksit Bharat 2047 vision and Nitish Kumar's transformative leadership, which together envision a technologically advanced, economically robust, and inclusive Bihar within a developed India. We are exploring AI-driven analytics for the Bihar Bhumi portal to predict and resolve disputes, with voice-assisted services for non-digital natives, aligning with PM Modi's innovation focus and Nitish Kumar's inclusivity agenda. Collaborations with panchayat bodies, supported

by groups like the Bihar State Panchayat Secretary Union, ensure grassroots involvement, mirroring the Janbhagidari ethos of Viksit Bharat and Bihar's participatory governance model. In conclusion, Bihar's land and water reforms are a vital step toward PM Modi's dream of a Viksit Bharat by 2047 and Nitish Kumar's vision of a prosperous Bihar—a state where every citizen is empowered, resources are secure, and governance is transparent. I urge Biharis to engage with the Bihar Bhumi portal, follow our updates on social media, and join us in building a self-reliant state that contributes to India's global leadership. Together, we can transform challenges into opportunities for a brighter, developed Bharat. As the Minister of Revenue and Land Reforms in Bihar, I am honoured to lead a department that forms the bedrock of our state's socio-economic framework under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and the visionary guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Land is not merely an asset in Bihar; it is the foundation of livelihoods, heritage, and progress. Since assuming this role in February 2025, my team and I, in alignment with the state government's commitment to transformative governance, have prioritised reforms to modernise the land management system. These initiatives, rooted in digital innovation and citizen-centric policies, aim to eliminate inefficiencies, reduce disputes, and empower millions with secure property rights. They resonate with PM Modi's ambitious vision for a Viksit Bharat by

## India-China ties—improvement signs are loud, problems sliding under the radar

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar recently warned journalists against linking present trends in India-China relations with India's more recent frustrations vis-à-vis the US. There is a strong degree of truth in this warning. Contrary to the prevailing analysis that Trump has induced India and China to improve and repair ties, the bilateral relationship has shown little to no sign of improvement and arguably has even deteriorated under the calmer surface. Let me explain. At present, the quantum of trends as well as indications of 'improved' ties in the bilateral relationship can be divided into four categories. First, a return to diplomatic and economic 'normalcy' such as the resumption of flights, religious pilgrimages and border trade. Second, increasing talk of economic convergence amid a gradual return of Chinese investments. Third, growing peace and tranquillity at the border. And finally, strategic/geopolitical convergences in the age of

Trump. Across all these four domains, 'improvement signs' are loud but misleading or chimeral, while 'deteriorating' trends are getting more entrenched under the radar. This entails signs such as resumption (or planned resumption) of direct flights, exchange of journalists, enhanced people-to-people ties, issuing of visas for businesspersons, resumption of border trade and the sharing of hydrological data. The drip-feed of small but persistent and incremental news pertaining to these developments shapes and reinforces the idea that ties are improving over time. However, this is based on a false causal theory. The two countries are aiming to reinstate exchanges and processes that were the norm until 2019. However, no one was ever of the view back in 2019 that relations were positive and improving because such exchanges existed. In other words, the resumption of these processes says very little about real improvement in ties.

## India must move Japan from 'old friend' trap to real partners

By staying cautious instead of ambitious, India has allowed a "natural partnership" to remain overwhelming, missing the chance to shape the regional order alongside one of its most reliable allies. To be sure, there are visible positives with the latest visit. Japan is expected to invest around \$68 billion in India's semiconductor and other tech sectors, part of its strategy to diversify away from China. For decades, Japan's overseas development assistance (ODA) was its primary foreign policy tool, compensating for constitutional restrictions on military engagement.

India has been the largest ODA recipient, benefitting from infrastructure investments ranging from the Delhi Metro to the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor. Between 2000-2024, Japanese investments in India have reached nearly \$43 billion, with the Maruti-Suzuki partnership standing as a symbol of successful collaboration. But the fundamentals have shifted. ODA-driven partnerships are no longer enough. To capitalise on this "natural partnership", India must understand Japan's contemporary transformation and recalibrate its

strategies accordingly. While China aggressively positions itself as leader of the "Global South", Japan has quietly invested more deeply in these regions. Through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), Japan has shifted from paternalistic, top-down aid to co-creation, prioritising private-sector partnerships and mutual growth. For India, this offers a natural platform to co-shape developmental narratives in Africa, South Asia, and the Indian Ocean Region. India's own neighbourhood engagement remains fractured. SAARC is dormant, and nearly every South Asian neighbour (except Bhutan) has signed on to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Chinese investments in strategic ports and infrastructure across Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Maldives have created a quasi-encirclement. India's neighbours, while wary of Beijing's debt traps, continue to welcome its financial largesse—often more readily than they do India's outreach. Here, Japan's credibility matters. Unlike India, Tokyo is perceived by smaller states as a benevolent partner without hegemonic pretensions.

Building joint India-Japan working groups for South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region could create sustainable alternatives to China's dominance. Synergising India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) framework, especially its pillar on Connectivity in the 2023 iteration, would provide the architecture for such cooperation. Second, technology, defence, and strategic industries. Semiconductors are the immediate headline. India welcomes Japan's investments in this critical sector. Taiwan's TSMC has been hesitant to enter India directly but has invested heavily in Japan, building two plants worth over \$20 billion in Kumamoto with support from Japanese firms such as Sony and Toyota. This creates a potential bridge: through Japan's investments in chips, TSMC could be incentivised to establish a presence in India, enabling integration into global value chains. Defence cooperation, however, is the area of greatest untapped potential. Past missteps—such as the aborted ShinMaywa US-2 amphibious aircraft deal—may have left unpleasantness.

## Briefs

LUCKNOW  
UP assembly winter session from Dec 19

The Uttar Pradesh Assembly will convene on December 19 for its winter session, where the Yogi government is expected to present the first supplementary budget and take up key legislative and political discussions.

LALITPUR  
Free eye camp screens 638 patients

A free eye camp organized by Jhansi-Vigakhet Tollway Private Ltd. and Cube Roots Foundation at the Vigakhet Toll Plaza screened 638 patients, many of whom were truck and vehicle drivers. Free spectacles were distributed to needy drivers. The initiative aims to ensure regular eye check-ups for drivers to reduce the potential for road accidents.

KANPUR  
RTO collects ₹2 Crore, Acts on 2900 vehicles

The Kanpur RTO enforcement team has collected ₹2 crore in revenue in 12 days, acting against nearly 2,900 vehicles as part of a divisional campaign targeting a ₹5 crore monthly goal. Officials state efforts to achieve 100% of the target are ongoing. From December 15, RTO officers will also hold road safety meetings with school operators and transport associations to reduce accidents.

VARANASI  
Farmer's Son Shines at BHU Convocation

Sudhanshu Gupta, from a farmer's family in Ramsinghpur village, brought pride to his region by graduating with a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy degree from Kashi Hindu University's 105th convocation. His journey from the village fields to BHU's stage is seen as an inspirational story of hard work and determination for rural youth.

BALLIA  
Three-Year-Old Boy Goes Missing

A three-year-old boy, Fuzail Ahmad, went missing from his home in Ekasar Piprula, Bara Gaon, on December 11. Despite extensive searches by the family, no trace has been found. Ubhawani police have registered a case and formed two special teams to find the child, assuring his swift recovery with the family's cooperation.

KUSHINAGAR  
DIG Flags Off Nine Modern Dial-112 vehicles

DIG Gorakhpur Zone S. Chinnappa flagged off nine modern Dial-112 vehicles equipped with GPS, advanced communication systems, and first-aid kits. He also inspected police stations, ordered technical issue fixes, and directed weekly rural cyber-awareness camps to enhance public safety.

JAUNPUR  
4 arrested in separate Jaunpur raids

Jaunpur police nabbed attempted-murder accused Deepak Singh and separately arrested three youths for selling banned nylon manja, seizing a large quantity of illegal kite string during the raid.

**CRACKDOWN | ED conducts simultaneous raids at 25 locations**

## Mastermind still loose as ED tightens grip on Codein syndicate

LUCKNOW

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday carried out a coordinated operation across multiple states as part of its investigation into the illegal trade of codeine-based cough syrup. According to early information, the agency conducted simultaneous raids at around 25 locations, including Lucknow, Varanasi, Jaunpur, Saharanpur, Ranchi and Ahmedabad.

The case, which involves large-scale diversion and trafficking of codeine cough syrup, has led to a series of disclosures as probe agencies dig deeper. Authorities believe that the trade extended beyond India, with links reportedly traced to Nepal, Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries, prompting close coordination between multiple enforcement bodies.

In Lucknow, the ED



**Raids cover Lucknow, Varanasi, Jaunpur, Saharanpur, Ranchi and Ahmedabad**

searched the residence of Alok Singh, a dismissed STF constable. The operation began around 7 am, with the team entering his Swastik City residence after sustained attempts to open the gate. Women were present in the house at the time of the raid. Officials recovered several documents, files and mobile phones during the search. Additional searches were carried out at other city locations, including LDA



Shubham Jaiswal Vibhor Rana Vishal Rana

remarks targeting political rivals, following which ED intensified its action.

Authorities have already arrested multiple persons connected to the case. Alok Singh and Amit Singh Tata are currently on a 55-hour police remand until 14 December. Both are lodged in Lucknow jail. The main accused, Shubham Jaiswal, continues to evade arrest and is suspected to have fled abroad. His father, Bholu Jaiswal, was recently detained at Kolkata Airport. So

far, about 32 individuals have been arrested in connection with the wider network. ED teams also searched premises linked to Vibhor Rana, owner of Abbott Healthcare Pvt. Ltd., who along with his brother stands arrested.

With multiple agencies involved, including the UP Police, STF, SIT and ED, the investigation remains active, and more disclosures are expected as teams analyse seized documents and electronic data.



**Exporters say currency conversion charges drop significantly under the new system**

that during international payment disruptions in the early phase of the Russia-Ukraine war, many exporters faced uncertainty in dollar settlements, pushing them toward rupee-based systems.

By 2025, India has expanded rupee trade with countries including Russia, Japan, China, the UAE, the UK, Bangladesh, Australia, Kenya, Indonesia and South Korea. Export associations say the shift offers greater convenience and reduces risks linked to currency fluctuations.

## Army recruitment syndicate exposed in Meerut

MEERUT

A major fraud targeting unemployed youth under the pretext of recruitment into the Territorial Army has been exposed in Meerut. The operation unfolded in Sofipur, where police, assisted by Army Intelligence, arrested Shane Alam, an active member of the racket. The alleged mastermind, Pratap, remains missing and has been linked to multiple recruitment-related fraud cases across different districts.

According to the investigation, Pratap, a resident of Fatehgarh, had been operating in several parts of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. He reportedly lured more than 100 youths by promising them entry into the Territorial Army. For the groundwork, he



**Key operative arrested, main accused linked to similar cases across multiple districts**

assigned Meerut-based Shane Alam to identify potential victims and collect money. Shane allegedly took 1 lakh each from 10 youths, after which the entire amount was transferred to Pratap's account.

One of the victims, Adarsh

from Hardoi, filed a complaint after several months passed without any progress in the recruitment process. His report to Lal Kurti police station accelerated the investigation. Army Intelligence, which had also received inputs about the racket, coordinated with the police. On Thursday evening, Shane Alam was detained near RVC after surveillance efforts. During questioning, he admitted that Pratap had been defrauding youths for a long time under the guise of facilitating Army recruitment.

SP City Ayush Vikram Singh stated that efforts are underway to trace Pratap's hideouts, and information about other associates is being gathered. Police teams are conducting continuous raids, while Army Intelligence is pursuing the matter at its own level.

## Eight students hospitalized for suspected food poisoning

SITAPUR

Eight students at the Kasturba Gandhi Residential Girls School in Reusa, Sitapur, fell ill late Thursday night after complaining of stomach pain, headache, and difficulty breathing. The sudden illness caused a stir at the residential school. Police were immediately informed and transported all students to the Community Health Centre (CHC). Due to the serious condition of some girls, they were subsequently referred to the District Hospital. CHC doctors initially suggested the symptoms were due to food poisoning and the cold weather. Police have collected food and water samples for testing.

## Sunlight powered catalyst promises cleaner industrial wastewater



**Formula published in an international journal by CCSU researchers, industrial testing to begin**

reflecting UV light and initiating chemical reactions that break down contaminants. Titanium dioxide is widely used in sunscreen, white pigments and food-grade applications, making it a non-toxic base material. The new catalyst contains both ionic and metallic silver, increasing its photocatalytic strength.

Researchers stated that the work is still in the experimental phase. The team is now preparing to examine commercial-scale viability, production cost and industrial deployment.

and Methylene Blue when exposed to sunlight for an hour. These dyes are typically discharged from paint, cement, textiles and electronics industries and often enter drains, resulting in more hazardous chemical formations.

The catalyst works by

## Madrassa cleric killed in front of daughter

RAEBARELI

A shocking incident in Raebareli has left the local Muslim community distressed, after Maulana Murtaza, associated with a madrassa, was shot dead in broad daylight near the CHC under Deeh police station limits. The assailants opened fire while he was returning home with his daughter, who witnessed the entire attack. Murtaza, a resident of Pure Pathak Majre Binnawan, died on the spot.

The killing has triggered concern among residents, who point out that attacks on Muslims—particularly clerics and community leaders—have created an atmosphere of fear across several regions in recent years. Locals say that incidents of hostility, harassment and targeted violence



**Family alleges targeted attack, police launch investigation based on daughter's testimony**

have contributed to a growing sense of insecurity among Muslim families.

Police arrived shortly after the attack and sent the body for post-mortem. Based on the daughter's statement, a case has been filed against two identified individuals along with three unknown suspects.

## UNESCO puts Lucknow's food culture on world map



On Thursday. Along with the certificate, UNESCO has extended an invitation for the 2026 conference to be held in Morocco.

UNESCO had announced Lucknow's inclusion in October, following submissions made by the Ministry of Culture earlier this year. According to officials, Lucknow earned this recognition for its culinary legacy, traditional food practices and

cultural innovation. To celebrate the achievement, the Culture Department will host a two-day event titled 'Sangam' on December 24 and 25 at the Gomti Riverfront food zone, where visitors will be able to experience popular Lucknow specialities.

Tourism officials stated that Lucknow is now among the 70 cities featured in the global network, with eight new cities added this year.

## Meerut's air quality crashes into 'very poor' zone

MEERUT

Meerut has recorded one of the worst air quality levels in the country, emerging as India's second most polluted city among 245 locations monitored by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The city's Air Quality Index (AQI) climbed sharply from 224 to 345 within just two days, pushing it back into the "very poor" category.

According to CPCB data released on Thursday, Ghaziabad topped the list, while Muzaffarnagar ranked third, highlighting a severe pollution belt stretching across Western Uttar Pradesh.

Residents experienced heavy smog throughout the day, with sunlight remaining weak and visibility reduced by evening.

Local monitoring stations reported alarming values:



**AQI jumps from 224 to 345 in two days**

Pallavpuram recorded an AQI of 364, making it the most polluted locality on Thursday. Other sites also showed deteriorated air quality, with Gangapur at 329, Begumpur at 340, and Delhi Road at 350.

Rural areas around Meerut also reported intense smog early in the morning, with conditions appearing worse compared to urban centres. Weather patterns continue to shift, with temperatures falling steadily.

## Story of small and tiny enterprises in UP

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has intensified its focus on MSME growth, skill development, and district-level enterprise facilitation through coordinated initiatives across sectors. Senior officials reviewed progress under key programmes including ODOP, Vishwakarma Shram Samman Yojana (VSSY), Chief Minister Yuva Swarojgar Yojana (CM YUVA), and Mukhyamantri Gramodyog Rojgar Yojana. Emphasis was placed on



streamlining implementation, improving beneficiary outreach, and strengthening con-

vergence among departments. Officials highlighted that

ODOP remains a central pillar for promoting district-specific products, with renewed instructions to ensure visibility, marketing support, and training. District teams have been asked to monitor production clusters, evaluate artisan requirements, and

address supply chain gaps. The government reiterated that ODOP product inventories must be kept updated and beneficiary training aligned with market demand.

A coordinated approach was stressed for VSSY, with field units directed to ensure timely beneficiary verification, tool-kit distribution, and follow-up training. Officers were advised to maintain transparency in selection processes and accelerate pending approvals. Discussions also covered the need to improve digital uploads, documentation accuracy.

## Khushboo Nishad wins gold at IMMAF Asia MMA

PRAYAGRAJ

Prayagraj native Khushboo Nishad has made history by winning the gold medal at the IMMAF Asia MMA Championship 2025 held in Lebanon. Competing in the 47.6 kg Atomweight Category, Khushboo defeated Tajikistan's fighter Barfina Rahmatullozoda in a tough 13-minute, 12-second bout, showcasing superior technique and mental fortitude. The victory has brought immense joy to her family, who reside in Karela Bagh, and



the entire city of Prayagraj. Her father, Nandlal Nishad Nanda, expressed immense pride, stating that her achievement is a matter of great honor for the city and the entire nation. Khushboo Nishad is scheduled to return to India from Lebanon on December 13, and preparations are underway in Prayagraj for a grand welcome.

## Briefs

## More Epstein case pics out

House Democrats released a selection of photos from the estate of Jeffrey Epstein on Friday, including some of Donald Trump, Bill Clinton and the former Prince Andrew. The 19 photos released by Democratic lawmakers on the House Oversight Committee were a small part of more than 95,000 they received from the estate of Epstein, who died in a New York jail in 2019 awaiting sex trafficking charges. The photos were separate from the case files the Dept of Justice is compelled to release.

## 6 slain Israeli hostages' clip

New footage of six Israeli hostages shows them celebrating the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah while being held captive in a tunnel in Gaza, months before they were killed. Israel said all six were killed last August by Hamas, shortly before Israeli troops arrived. The videos and photos were published on Thursday for the first time by the forum representing hostage families. They were Israeli-American Hersh Goldberg-Polin, 23; Ori Danino, 25; Eden Yerushalmi, 24; Almog Sarusi, 27; Alexander Lobanov, 33; and Carmel Gat, 40.

## Iran arrests Nobel laureate

Iran has arrested Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, 53. A foundation in her name said she was detained at a memorial for a human rights lawyer recently found dead under disputed circumstances. There was no comment from Iran.

## Strike affects life in Italy

A national strike on Friday by Italy's largest trade union in protest against the govt's budget plans affected transportation, health and school services. The protest, which targets the 2026 budget bill proposed by conservative govt of PM Giorgia Meloni, comes 2 weeks after a general strike organised by smaller trade unions with same motivations.

## Jemima plea to Elon Musk

Jemima Goldsmith, the ex-wife of former Pakistani PM Imran Khan, publicly appealed to X owner Elon Musk, alleging her posts about Khan's situation are being suppressed on the platform. She said her updates about Khan's treatment by Pak officials and legal ordeal "do not reach the public" and urged Musk to fix what she described as visibility filtering on her account.

## Desi hand in Tesla crash

Indian-origin millionaire Vikram Beri, 42, was arrested for allegedly trying to set a winery afire in California, US. While trying to flee, he intentionally crashed into two parked cars. He threw a bottle of wine at the staff when they confronted him.

**STARKEST WARNING** | Frustration grows as peace efforts fail to break logjam

# Trump says Russia-Ukraine war heightens WW III risks

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has issued one of his starker warnings yet about the Russia-Ukraine conflict, cautioning the war could escalate into a "third world war" if both sides continue to hold ground. His remarks come at a time when Washington is attempting to push for swift peace negotiations, but with little progress to show.

Trump said he was deeply troubled by the bloodshed. Revealing 25,000 people, mostly soldiers, were killed last month, the president said he wanted the violence to end immediately. Trump, who has repeatedly claimed he could end the war quickly, expressed concern global powers were "playing games" despite the high stakes. "Things like this end up in third-world wars. And I said the other day. I said, everybody keeps playing games like this. We will end up in a third world war, and we don't want to see that happen," he warned.

The White House corroborated the president's growing frustration. Press secre-



'HE IS CONSTANTLY SHAKING HANDS': The White

House said the high volume of handshakes by Trump explains the adhesive bandages he has worn on the back of his right hand in recent days. His spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt reiterated a response she gave months ago after the 79-year-old president was seen with a bruise on his right hand covered by a thick layer of makeup. "As for the bandages on the hand, we've also given you an explanation for that," Leavitt told reporters. "In the past, the president is literally constantly shaking hands," she said. "He's also on a daily aspirin regimen, which is something his physical examinations has said in the past as well, which can contribute to the bruise that you see."

tary Karoline Leavitt said Trump had become increasingly weary of discussions that lead nowhere. "The president is extremely frustrated with both sides of this war, and he is sick of meetings just for the sake of meeting," she said. Leavitt added the US would send a represen-

tative to talks in Europe if there is a genuine prospect of signing a peace agreement.

#### SPOKE TO CHINA AND RUSSIA ON DE-NUKING OF WEAPONS: TRUMP

Trump said he has held discussions with China and Russia on the denuclearisa-

tion of weapons, expressing

hopes all sides could work towards reducing nuclear arsenals. Trump said the "denuclearisation of weapons" is something all these countries which possess the highest amount of nuclear weapons, "would want to do."

"One of the things I talked to China about is the denuclearisation of weapons. We'd like to see if we could stop that. I'm talking about nuclear weapons. I've spoken to China. I've spoken to Russia. It would be something we would want to do, and they would like to do," Trump said.

"They seem to be nuclear testing." "We have more nuclear weapons than anybody else. We don't do testing. But with others doing it, it's

appropriate if we too do it."

#### ORDER TO BLOCK STATE AI REGULATIONS

Trump signed an executive order to block states from crafting their own regulations for artificial intelligence, saying the burgeoning industry is at risk of being stifled by a patchwork of onerous rules while in a battle with Chinese competitors for supremacy.

#### POLLSTER WANTS TO 'DE-INDIANISE' US FIRMS

Mark Mitchell, the CEO of Rasmussen Reports, one of top polling firms, says he plans to "de-Indianise" US firms and is willing to start a consultancy firm towards that end. "I have never in my life wanted anything more than this: To build a new corporate consultancy helping firms de-Indianise," he wrote on X.

Speaking on 'The War Room' podcast with Stephen Bannon, Mitchell spoke against Indian dominance in H-1B and claimed sending back a senior H-1B developer at a company like Apple was economically similar to deporting 10 illegal migrants.

## Docs: Khaleda is on ventilator support

DHAKA



said, adding she currently needed blood transfusions.

#### RADICAL GROUP LEADER SHOT AT

A youth leader of a right-wing cultural group and a candidate at the February 12 general elections was on Friday shot at by unidentified gunmen in Dhaka, the Bangladeshi capital. Meanwhile, Awami League party rejected the schedule, arguing free and fair polls cannot be ensured under the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government.

## EU prepares to lock up Russia's frozen assets

BRUSSELS

The European Union was expected on Friday to lock up Russia's assets held in Europe until it gives up its war in Ukraine and compensates its neighbour for the heavy damage it has inflicted for almost four years.

The move is an important step that would allow EU leaders to work out at a summit next week how to use the tens of billions of euros in Russian Central Bank assets to underwrite a huge loan to help Ukraine meet its financial and military needs over the next two years.

Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán—Russia's closest ally in Europe—accused the European Commission, which pre-

pared the decision, "of systematically raping European law."

Meanwhile, Russia's Central Bank filed a lawsuit against Belgian financial institution Euroclear, the Brussels-based clearing house that holds most of Moscow's frozen assets in Europe, the bank said on Friday.

It wasn't clear what the lawsuit could achieve since it was filed in Moscow.

A total of 210 billion euros (\$247 billion) in Russian assets are frozen in Europe. The vast majority of the funds - around 193 billion euros (\$225 billion) at the end of September— are held in Euroclear, a Belgian financial clearing house.

Hungary and Slovakia oppose providing more support to Ukraine. Friday's expected decision, which is based on EU treaty rules allowing

the bloc to protect its economic interests in certain emergency situations, would prevent them from blocking the sanctions rollover and make it easier to use the assets.

Orbán said on social media it means "the rule of law in the European Union comes to an end, and Europe's leaders are placing themselves above the rules." "The European Commission is systematically raping European law. It is doing this in order to continue the war in Ukraine, a war that clearly isn't winnable," he said.

Meanwhile, Germany summoned Russia's ambassador following accusations of sabotage, cyberattacks and election interference, an official said. The German government has also accused Moscow of perpetrating disinformation campaigns.



## Sharif gatecrashes Putin-Erdogan meet

ASHGABAT

Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif was left red-faced at an international forum in Turkmenistan as he was made to wait for 40 minutes for a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The event was held in honour of the 30th anniversary of the former Soviet nation's declaration of neutrality, and he departed after 10 minutes.

leaders from Russia, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan were invited. A video showed Sharif waiting impatiently in an adjacent room, ahead of scheduled talks with Putin.

After waiting with Pakistan minister Ishaq Dar, Sharif decided to gatecrash the venue where Putin was holding talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for a quick interaction. He departed after 10 minutes.

## China's new 'condom tax' draws skepticism, health risks worries

Beijing: China will soon start collecting value-added tax on contraceptive drugs and products for the first time in over three decades, a move aligned with Beijing's effort to get families to have more children after decades of limiting most to one child.

"Contraceptive drugs and products" will not be tax-exempt as of January 1, according to the country's newest value-added tax law. Products such as condoms will be subject to the usual 13 per cent value-added tax imposed on most products.

While state-run outlets have not widely highlighted the change, it has been trending on Chinese social media, drawing ridicule

## Crypto mogul jailed for fraud

**D**o Kwon, the entrepreneur behind two cryptocurrencies that lost \$40bn (£29.8bn) 3 years ago and caused the sector to crash, has been sentenced to 15 years in prison for fraud.

The South Korean, 34, had pleaded guilty to two counts of US charges of conspiracy to defraud and wire fraud.

Kwon, who co-founded Singapore-based Terraform Labs and developed the TerraUSD and Luna currencies, was sentenced at a hearing in New York.

## Thousands told to evacuate as flood hits parts of US, Canada



Rescuers prepare to evacuate residents from an area flooded by the Snohomish River in the US

more rain is likely. In the US, the governor of Washington state, Bob Ferguson, declared a statewide emergency and estimated 100,000 residents could face evacuation orders.

The emergency declaration warned that rain and possibly snow at mountain elevations would exacerbate flood conditions. Governor Ferguson said there were no reports of

Brazil blackout leaves 1.4m sans power, scores of flights cancelled

**Sao Paulo:** More than 1.4 million Sao Paulo residents had no electricity on Thursday after strong winds caused several trees to collapse onto the Brazilian metropolis' grid the day before. There were no injuries, but 400 flights were cancelled, officials said.

Utility Enel has provided no deadline for services to return. One of its directors, Marcelo Puentes, said the Italian company has 1,300 people working to solve the issue since winds of about 100 kilometres per hour started hitting Sao Paulo.

Sao Paulo city hall said 231 trees have fallen due to what it calls effects of an extratropical cyclone formed in the south of Brazil.

—AP

## suspense in sky

## Skydiver dangles at 15,000 ft in Oz



altitude where the skydivers were planning to execute a 16-way formation jump. A 17th parachutist was at an open door waiting to record video as the

others jumped. Ferguson was leaving the plane when the ripcord of his reserve chute became snagged on a wing flap, the report said.

The chute released and immediately jerked Ferguson backward. He knocked the camera operator clear from the plane and into a free fall. Ferguson then struck the trail's horizontal stabilizer before the chute tangled around it and left him dangling.

Ferguson used a knife to cut 11 lines that enabled him to fall from the plane with part of the torn chute.

He released his main chute, which fully inflated despite becoming entangled with remnants of the reserve

chute, and he landed safely. Meanwhile, most of the other skydivers had jumped. The pilot was left with two skydivers aboard battling to control the plane with part of the chute still tangled around the tail.

The pilot made a mayday call and was prepared to bail out wearing an emergency chute. But Brisbane air traffic officials decided he had enough control of the plane to land safely at Tully. It landed safely. "Carrying a hook knife—though it is not a regulatory requirement—could be lifesaving in the event of a premature reserve parachute deployment," the bureau's chief commissioner Angus Mitchell said. —AP

## High on mushrooms, Alaska Air pilot tries to shut off plane engines mid-air



October 2023 on an Embraer E75 regional jet operated by Alaska's regional subsidiary Horizon Air. A cockpit audio of the flight recently emerged online, documenting the moment Emerson tried to shut off the plane's engine.

In the audio, the on-duty pilot can be heard asking

Emerson what's wrong after he tells him he wants to go home. This was followed by sounds of struggle and profanities as the pilot asks, "Dude, what's going on?"

"Horizon, we need to make an emergency landing," the now-out-of-breath pilot told air traffic controllers. "We've got a jump seater just tried to go direct to Portland now." Emerson told officials he was feeling the effects of so-called "magic mushrooms" he'd eaten two days earlier.

**TITLE:** *Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2*  
**DIRECTOR:** Anukalp Goswami  
**CAST:** Kapil Sharma, Manjot Singh, Hira Warina, Tridha Choudhary, Parul Gulati, Ayesha Khan, (the late) Asrani ji, Akhilendra Mishra, Vipin Sharma, Sushant Singh, Jamie Lever, Smita Jaykar, Supriya Shukla  
**WHERE:** In theatres near you  
**RATING:** ★★



## All about multiplication of love and division of sanity

**Actors' performance**

The film, which starts off with a tribute to the legendary (late) actor Asrani ji, introduces (commentary voiceover by the imitable Navjot Singh Sidhu) the Bhopal based Mohan Sharma (Kapil Sharma) running on the railway tracks... as if to save his life from a lady with a garland in her hands! This is followed by a flashback highlighting the flow of events which has led to Mohan's present situation.

Mohan Sharma is a happy go lucky man, who becomes a victim of circumstances and lands up marrying three ladies on different occasions.

These three ladies are Meera (Tridha Choudhary), Jenny (Parul Gulati) and Ruh (Ayesha Khan). Even though Mohan marries these three ladies, he is head over heels in love with Sanya (Hira Warina) with whom he wants to spend the rest of his life with. Since Meera, Jenny and Ruh happen to be Hindu, Christian and Muslim respectively, our

man becomes Mohan for Meera, Mehmood for Ruh and Michael for Jenny.

Amid all the chaos, will Mohan be able to do justice to his three wives, does he manage to marry his 'OG' ladylove Sanya and what is the ultimate resultant of this 'K-aos' (chaos) is what forms the rest of the film.

**Actors' performance**

*Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2* truly and rightfully belongs to Kapil Sharma, who pulls yet another rabbit out of his hat. Those who have seen the first part (*Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon*) may not find any novelty or 'nayapan' in the second part. But, we advise you to watch the film with a clean 'slate' of mind, for you to enjoy it thoroughly.

Seems like Kapil Sharma has been a regular at the gym working out. No wonder he carries the film convincingly on his 'shoulders'. Besides Kapil, there is Manjot Singh,

who shines with his endearing screen presence in his role of Harbir Singh Hubby.

As for the ladies, while Tridha Choudhary, Parul Gulati and Ayesha Khan impress in their roles, Hira Warina does struggle esp. during emotional scenes. Veteran actors Vipin Sharma, Akhilendra Mishra and Smita Jaykar flawlessly mould themselves in their respective roles.

One does wish Sushant Singh and Jamie Lever's characters could have melted down a bit. The surprise of the film is a cameo by Ginni Kapil Sharma- the real life wife of Kapil Sharma. The late Asrani ji is a delight to watch in the role of a multi-linguistic father.

As for Anukalp Goswami,

he does a good job with direction, storyline and screenplay... all three being simple and lucid. One does feel the need for more one liners and punches considering it's a

Kapil Sharma film. Since Anukalp fit the film's second part along with its characters into the 'tried-and-tested' mould of the first part, many may feel about him not bringing anything new to the table.

The film's cinematography (Ravi Yadav) and editing (Hussain A Burmawala) are ok. For the lack of a hit track, the film's music (Yo Yo Honey Singh, DigV, Yug Bhusal, Parikshit & Nishadhi) fails to leave an impression. Ditto for the background music (Parikshit Sharma, Nishadhi Chandra).

For all those wanting to see a clean and decent film that's devoid of abusive language and also promises squeaky clean fun, *Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2* should be your go-to film this weekend.

## FILM REVIEWS

**TITLE:** *Christmas Karma*

**DIRECTOR:** Gurinder Chadha  
**CAST:** Kunal Nayyar, Danny Dyer, Eva Longoria, Billy Porter, Boy George  
**WHERE:** In theatres near you  
**RATING:** ★★

This film is the cinematic equivalent of a Christmas hamper packed by multiple relatives: some gifts thoughtful, others questionable, but undeniably assembled with affection. Gurinder Chadha's reworking of Dickens is both wildly ambitious and unmistakably personal, blending diaspora memory with festive mythology. The film reimagines Scrooge as Eshaan Sood, a man forged by displacement from Uganda and hardened by the small cruelties of immigrant survival. This emotional foundation gives the film unexpected depth, even as Chadha piles on spectacle with the gusto of a child decorating a tree for the first time.

The opening stretch is disorienting in a playful, bordering on chaotic way. Between irrepressible visual flourishes, musical detours and an onslaught of seasonal kitsch, the film takes a while to find its footing. Yet once the narrative settles, a more contemplative rhythm emerges. Beneath the glitter and good humour lies a film earnestly wrestling with belonging, grief, cultural inheritance and the universal yearning for forgiveness. Chadha's London is intentionally heightened, a candy-

## A carol reborn with colour and chaos, but not consistently



coloured fantasia where pain and celebration sit side by side, and where the familiar Dickensian journey becomes a vessel for contemporary anxieties.

The result is uneven but intriguing: a film that sometimes overshoots in its pursuit of joy, yet manages to craft an identity distinct from the countless Christmas Carol adaptations cluttering the cultural attic.

**Actors' performance**

Kunal Nayyar's portrayal of Sood anchors the film. While some may find him stiff, some may find him commanding and finely calibrated, and the truth lies somewhere in between: his performance is alternately mannered and moving, with flashes of emotional intelligence that deepen the character's arc.

The trio of spirits, Eva Lon-

goria, Billy Porter and Boy George, brings an eccentric theatricality that may puzzle purists but undeniably keeps the film lively. Danny Dyer offers an affable turn as the good-natured cabbie, providing warmth whenever the plot veers toward indulgence. The British-Asian supporting cast brightens the film considerably, adding texture and grounding the story in lived experience.

**Music**

Visually, the film oscillates between exuberant charm and conspicuous strain. The colour palette is joyous, but the effects occasionally betray their budget. Chadha's fondness for flamboyance is evident in the lavish costumes, vivid sets and unabashed references to pop culture, pantomime and Bollywood. The music, however, remains divisive. Some songs

feel spirited but interruptive, while others enrich the emotional landscape. The Bhangra-infused sequences burst with cultural pride, and the Desi rendition of "Last Christmas" leaves a lingering warmth. Yet the soundtrack as a whole never quite achieves the sweep the film aspires to.

Overall, this film is a heartfelt, imperfect, culturally rich festive drama that is far from flawless, yet it is fearless in its intent. It overreaches, dazzles, falters, and gets back up again, much like the immigrant story at its core. For some viewers, the chaos will be a deterrent; for others, it will feel like home. The film's heart is unmistakably in the right place, and its cultural resonance gives it a freshness that its more uneven elements cannot entirely dim.

## Salman Khan joins H'wood icon Depp



Superstar Salman Khan poses with Johnny Depp at Red Sea Film Festival, honours Hollywood star Idris Elba



## Dhurandhar's online rage timeline

As *Dhurandhar* sets the box office on fire, a separate combustion has taken place online. Film critics and celebrities have been trolled over their comments regarding the 'politics' of the film and other perspectives. Here's a mini explainer about what all is going on.

### Box Office

The movie has so far crossed 250 crores at the Box Office in India, and has been predominantly praised for its story, acting, action and music.

### Critics attacked

After film critic Anupama Chopra's review disappeared from YouTube, and critic Sucharita Tyagi was trolled for her review of the film, The Film Critics Guild issued a statement.

"The Film Critics Guild (FCG) strongly condemns the targeted attacks, harassment, and hate directed toward film critics for their reviews of *Dhurandhar*. What began as disagreement has rapidly devolved into coordinated abuse, personal attacks on individual critics, and organised attempts to discredit their professional integrity," read the statement by The Film Critics Guild.

"In recent days, several of our members have faced intimidation, including direct threats and vicious online campaigns aimed at silencing their perspectives, simply for expressing their professional assessment of a film. More concerning, there have been attempts to tamper with existing reviews, influence editorial positions, and persuade publications to alter or dilute their stance. Liking or disliking a film is your right, but expecting critics to fall in line is not."

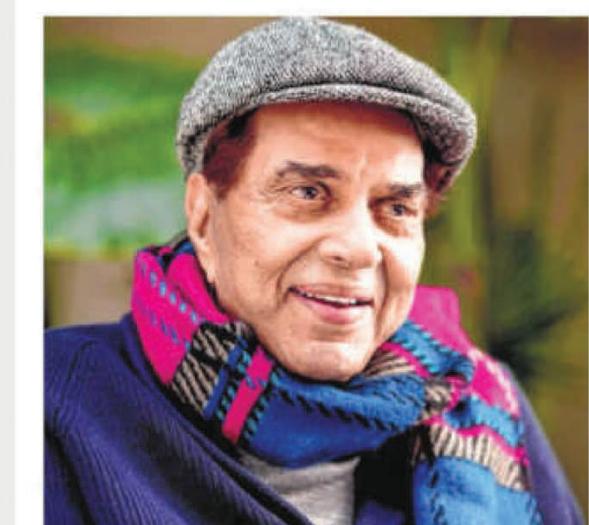
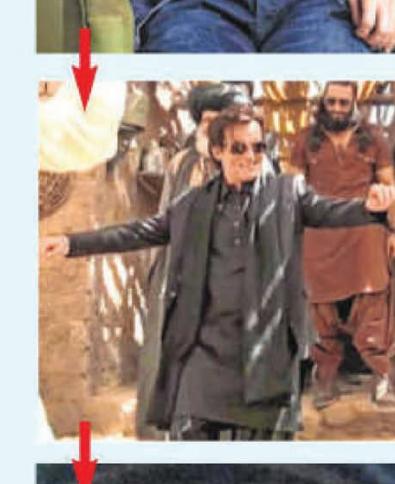
### Hrithik Roshan's statements

Hrithik Roshan on Wednesday shared an Instagram story, in which he praised *Dhurandhar*, but also wrote that he 'may disagree with the politics of it'. The actor faced a lot of backlash for his post, and on Thursday, he shared another Instagram story, in which he praised the film and the actors.

The *War 2* actor wrote, "Still can't get DHURANDHAR out of my mind. @AdityaDharFilms you are an incredible maker man. @RanveerOfficial the silent to the fierce what a journey and so damn consistent. #akshayekhanna has always been my fav and this film is proof why. @ActorMadhavan bloody mad grace, strength and dignity!! But man @rakeshbedi what you did was phenomenal.. what an ACT, brilliant !! A huge big round of applause for everyone especially the makeup and prosthetics dept! I can't wait for part 2 !!! (sic)."

### Akshay's dominance

However, the one thing which no one can debate about is Akshay Khan's performance, not only in *Dhurandhar*, but before that in *Chhavva*, and now the look from his next film *Mahakali*, where he plays Shukracharya, has been released. Finally, it seems, the low key actor, spoken about for years as being underappreciated, seems to be getting his due.



## Dharmendra remembered

Hema Malini, along with her daughters Esha and Ahana Deol, held a prayer meet on Thursday for veteran actor Dharmendra. The prayer meet reportedly took place around 4-5 pm to honour the memory of the late actor.

The event was hosted at Delhi's Dr Ambedkar International Centre, Janpath. The prayer meet was attended by several prominent political personalities, including Amit Shah, Nirav Malhotra, Bhupender Yadav, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Ashwini Vaishnaw and others. During the prayer meet, Hema reflected on her life with Dharmendra. She said,

"Jis shaks ke sath maine kayi filmon mein pyar ka abhinaya kiya, wahi mere jivan saathi ban gaye." She added, "Hamara pyaar sacha tha to ham kisi bhi paristhitii ka saama karne ki himmat thi..." The actress further recalled how Dharmendra was a dedicated husband and a loving father to her two daughters.

She then broke down while addressing the gathering, saying, "Aaj ki is prarthana sabha mein aap sab ka swagat karte hue, main bahut hi bhavuk ho rahi hoon. Maine kabhi nahi socha tha ki meri zindagi mein aisa ek pal aayega, jab mujhe bhi yeh shok sabha rakhn padegi, woh bhi mere Dharam ji ke liye (sic)."



Superstar Salman Khan is currently in Saudi Arabia for the fifth edition of the ongoing Red Sea Film Festival. On Thursday, he participated in an interactive session, where he reflected on his cinematic journey. The Dabangg star also walked down the red carpet of the Awards ceremony. And guess what? He bumped into global star Johnny Depp. A picture of Salman with the Pirates of the Caribbean star was posted on the official account of the Red Sea Film Festival. In no time, the above-mentioned image of Salman with Depp went viral on social media, courtesy of Bhajiaan's fans.

### Salman Khan honours Idris

Salman Khan also met Hollywood icons Idris Elba and Edgar Ramirez at the festival, and these pictures also went viral quickly. At the ceremony, Salman Khan presented the Red Sea Honoree Award to Hollywood actor-director Idris Elba. Congratulations to actor and filmmaker Idris Elba for being honored at #RedSeaFF25 with the Red Sea Honoree Award, presented to him by Salman Khan," read the caption on the festival's official social media handle.

## Briefs

DUBAI

Suryavanshi powers India to huge win



Vaibhav Suryavanshi was at his imperious best while smashing a 171 off 95 balls, powering India to a mammoth 234-run win over hosts UAE in the inaugural match of the U19 Asia Cup here on Friday.

The 14-year-old from Samastipur, Bihar, unleashed a stunning display of batting, hitting 14 sixes -- the most by any batter in a single innings in the U19 level -- en-route his breathtaking innings. Half-centuries from Vihann Malhotra (69) and Aaron George (69) further bolstered India's charge as they piled up 433 for 6 in 50 overs. The 400-plus total is India's highest-ever in U19 ODIs and is the highest in the U-19 Asia Cup's history. In reply, UAE were never in the contest despite fifties from Prithvi Madhu (50) and Uddish Suri (78 no.).

AMBI (MAHARASHTRA)  
Siraj-led H'bad shock Mumbai



The presence of a clutch of India stars failed to inspire Mumbai and Andhra, as they went down to Hyderabad and Madhya Pradesh respectively in their Super League matches of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy here on Friday. Mumbai had Yashasvi Jaiswal (29), Sarfaraz Khan (5), Ajinkya Rahane (9) and Shardul Thakur (0) in their line-up but folded for 131 as India pacer Mohammad Siraj took three for 17 in 3.5 overs for Hyderabad. Tanay Thyagarajan took two wickets to support Siraj. In reply, the promising Aman Rao (52 no.) and Tanmay Agarwal (75), helped a spirited Hyderabad side chase down the target in just 11.5 overs.

NEW DELHI  
Usha bats for anti-doping kits in India



Indian Olympic Association President (IOA) and Rajya Sabha member PT Usha on Friday urged the central government to promote production of indigenous

## Team management wants Gill to play freely: Doeschate

Gill was brought back into the T20 set-up with the Asia Cup in Sept

MULLAPUR



Shubman Gill has been a "bit too tight" since his T20 comeback as he has been trying to "justify" his place in the side but the Indian team management wants him to free up and play like he does in the IPL, assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate has said.

Gill was brought back into the T20 setup with the Asia Cup in September after he led India to two famous Test wins in the drawn five-match series in England. He replaced Sanju Samson at the top but runs have not flown from his bat, raising questions ahead of the T20 World Cup at home in February-March.

After the loss in the second T20 against South Africa here on Thursday, ten Doeschate said Gill needed to loosen up a bit in the shortest format.

**Ryan ten Doeschate,**  
India assistant coach

ing IPL seasons. We believe in his class and we believe he will come good, and exactly the same with Surya (captain Suryakumar Yadav who has also had an extended lean run)," added ten Doeschate.

The former Netherlands all-rounder firmly backed Suryakumar, who has not been able to find consistency since taking over as captain last year. "Surya again is such quality and we have high expectations of the players. If you are going to be India's number three, there is pressure on you to score runs.

"There has been a fairly long string of form now where he hasn't got the scores we like. But in isolation, we are certainly not worried about it," he added.

## NEHRA SPEAKS | Gujarat Titans head coach feels judgements passed too soon 'Gill's criticism not amusing'

NEW DELHI

Gujarat Titans head coach Ashish Nehra is not amused by the snap judgements being passed on skipper Shubman Gill's form, cautioning that writing him off after a couple of outings in the volatile T20 format reflects the growing tendency of arriving at quick conclusions.

Gill, who made a comeback to the T20I set-up as vice-captain during the Asia Cup, has totalled 181 runs in the last 10 games at a below 140 strike-rate.

Nehra, who has watched Gill from close quarters as the GT head coach for the past two seasons, was asked whether he is worried considering that IPL is three months away.

"Forget three months, had IPL been three weeks away, I (still) wouldn't be worried. Because you are talking about a format like T20. And only two matches have been played against South Africa, if I am not wrong," Nehra, the former fast bowler known for straight shooting, replied to a query from PTI during an interaction with a select group.

Nehra feels that the fundamental problem with criticism in India is reaching a conclusion on the basis of numbers alone.

"This is our problem. In such a fast-paced tournament format, whether it's international cricket or IPL, if a player like Shubman Gill is judged after not coming good in two to three matches, then it will be difficult," Nehra said.

In his inimitable style laced with sarcasm, Nehra said if one reckons that change is needed, so many options are there to be tried.

"You have a lot of options if you want to see. You can remove Abhishek Sharma and Shubman Gill and you can open with Sai Sudharsan and Ruturaj Gaikwad," Nehra said and his dig at critics wasn't lost on anyone.

"If you want to remove them (Sai and Ruturaj), you can open with Washington Sundar and Ishan Kishan. So, you have a lot of options."

"Now, if you lose 1 or 2 matches, if the stats of the so-called batsmen or bowlers are not good and if you talk about changing them, then it will be difficult," Nehra batted with full force for Gill.

Washi is a batter who can play anywhere from 1 to 6

Washington Sundar played only six

games for Titans last season because of a set combination but Nehra did drop hints that if fit, the Tamil Nadu man would be used way more this time.

Washington's role in the Indian team has created a lot of confusion as to whether he is more of a batting all-rounder or a specialist spinner who is also a capable bat.

Nehra has no such confusion as he feels that Washington's primary skill-set is being a top class batter and on conducive surfaces, he is a complete package with his off-breaks also coming into play.

"Washington Sundar, the kind of skill-set he has, number one, for me, Washington Sundar is a batsman who can bat at any slot between 1 to 6 or 7, whatever number you want him to bat. He has the ability to bat that much.

"And coming back to your question (batter or bowler), it depends on the conditions. As I said, if there is a little help on the pitch, then Washington Sundar has the full package with both batting and bowling.

"He has done very well in Powerplays, bowling with new ball when he started his career. It depends on how a team uses it. Washington Sundar is still not a finished product and sky is the limit. He will keep getting better from here," the head coach encouraged his ward.

"He is only 25-26 years old and has been in the system for so many years. So, now his experience is coming in

front of you. Due to the combination of last year, he was not able to play that much (in IPL).

"But next year, I hope he stays in form, then you will see him playing more compared to last year," he assured.

Not much option at auction

The mini-auctions in Abu Dhabi, slated for December 16, will be huge for teams like KKR (Rs 64.30 crore) and Chennai Super Kings (Rs 43.40 crore), who are

rebuilding their core.

But Titans need only five players and are going in with a purse of Rs 12.90 crore, which is third lowest among 10 teams.

"Our core team is set and we have released only 4-5 players. So, we go into the auction with a very open mind. See, when you are making a team from scratch, like last year, it was a different kind of strategy.

"But right now, pretty much all the slots are filled. So, we'll see what we get, the kind of purse we have because other teams have so much purse. So, you have to go with the flow during the auction," Nehra said.

In fact, if one looks at Titans's line-up, when all players are fit, 10 slots -- Jos Buttler, Gill, Sudharsan, Rahul Tewatia, Shahrkhan Khan, Rashid Khan, R Sai Kishore, Kagiso Rabada, Prasidh Krishna and Mohammed Siraj are filled.

In the one slot remaining, New Zealander Glenn Phillips, who was retained instead of Sherfane Rutherford, could be used as a big-hitting all-rounder, where Washington is the Indian option.

"Like I said earlier, we go with an open mind. Our team is set. Rahul Tewatia, Shah Rukh Khan, Washington Sundar, and so many middle order batsmen already. If I'm not wrong, the highest purse, CSK has it. But they also need players. So, we are sitting in a very comfortable position," he added.



Shubman Gill arrives at Kangra Airport ahead of the third T20I. PTI

## Gill's poor form is bad sign, says Pathan

NEW DELHI

In a blunt assessment of India's batting woes, former pacer Irfan Pathan has said that Shubman Gill's lack of form is piling up pressure not just on him personally but also the team management, which is wondering "what to do" besides hoping that it doesn't get any worse.

Speaking on 'JioHotstar', Pathan said even bringing back Sanju Samson to restore the previously

successful batting structure won't be as smooth given that the Kerala player would also need some time to find his touch again.

Samson was a largely successful T20 opener for India before being replaced by Gill, the T20 vice-captain now. Gill, who is the Test and ODI captain, has struggled to get going in the shortest format and was dismissed for a no-ball in the second T20I against South Africa on Thursday in Mullanpur.

"Shubman Gill will say he got a

very good ball and looked stuck at the crease. For captain Suryakumar Yadav, I feel he needs to focus on his offside play. He was completely out of position when he got out...if Gill was in form, he would have played that ball easily. He is not in form," Pathan said.

"The runs not coming from Gill's bat is a bad sign and increases the pressure on him and the team management. They will be asking what to do. This situation should not get worse."

## Indian women's kabaddi team felicitated by PKL

Skipper Ritu Negi feels team's unity won them the World Cup title



**Ritu Negi,** India captain

35-28 in the final to secure their second consecutive World Cup title, reaffirming their dominance in the sport.

India remained unbeaten through the tournament, sweeping all their group matches before defeating Iran 33-21 in the semi-final. Chinese Taipei, also unbeaten in their group, entered the final after overcoming hosts Bangladesh 25-18.

Head coach V Tejeswini Bai

highlighted the team's evolution and preparation, saying, "This is the third time I've been part of a coaching set-up that has won a medal, and every single one of them feels incredibly special. I'm proud not just of the result, but of the journey this group has taken... What you're seeing in this victory is the result of months and months of disciplined preparation." Speaking at the ceremony, Ishan Chatterjee,

highlighted the team's evolution and preparation, saying, "This is the third time I've been part of a coaching set-up that has won a medal, and every single one of them feels incredibly special. I'm proud not just of the result, but of the journey this group has taken... What you're seeing in this victory is the result of months and months of disciplined preparation." Speaking at the ceremony, Ishan Chatterjee,

will be missing this time. It would be quite unlike 2011 when more than 85,000 fans packed the stadium, some even perched on terrace edges, to watch Argentina edge Venezuela 1-0 in a FIFA friendly.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or

winner is not scheduled to play

serious football on the 'G.O.A.T.

India Tour 2025'. It is a fully

promotional, and commercially-

curated event which will begin

on Saturday here and wind up

on Monday in New Delhi.

Yet, for a city that once wor-

shipped Maradona, Pele, dazzling

CHANDIGARH

Reversing her decision to retire, star wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Friday announced that she would return to the mat to take another shot at an elusive Olympic medal at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

A three-time Olympian, she has won gold medals at both the Asian Games and the Commonwealth Games. She won World Championships bronze medals in 2019 and 2022, a gold in Asian Games in 2018, a bronze in 2014 and multiple medals at the Asian Championship. An Olympic medal has eluded her in three attempts.

Vinesh, who is currently a Congress MLA from Haryana's Julana seat (district Jind), had announced her retirement from wrestling following her disqualification from the Paris Olympics gold medal bout. Though she moved the Court of Arbitration of Sports (CAS) against her disqualification, she did not get a favourable judgement.

Elaborating on her decision to return to wrestling, she said in her post on X: People kept asking if Paris was the end. For a long time, I didn't have the answer. I needed to step away from the mat, from the pressure, from the expectations, even from my own ambitions. For the first time in years, I allowed myself to breathe."

"In that silence, I found something, I'd forgotten 'the fire never left'. It was only buried under the exhaustion and noise. The discipline, the routine, the fight... it's in my system. No matter how far I walked away, a part of me stayed on the mat", she said.

"So here I am, stepping back toward LA28 with a heart that's unafraid and a spirit that refuses to bow. And this time, I'm not walking alone my son is joining my team, my biggest motivation, my little cheerleader on this road to the LA Olympics." She added.

After the Paris Olympics, Vinesh joined Congress and won the Julana seat in 2024.

tour will be a 45-minute philanthropic fashion event in Mumbai on Sunday, featuring Messi, his long-time strike partner Luis Suarez and Argentina midfielder Rodrigo De Paul. "There will be celebrity models, cricketers, Bollywood celebrities, millionaires, founders, Tiger and Jackie Shroff, John Abraham among others," said Satadru Dutta, sole promoter of the tour.

Suarez will also feature in a Spanish music show. The organisers have requested Messi to bring "some memorabilia" of his trophy-winning 2022 World Cup.

## GOAT India Tour

## Messi set to dazzle, but without 2011 magic

KOLKATA

Argentine superstar Lionel Messi's long-awaited return to India, after a magical maiden visit back in 2011, will be high on glitz but low on actual football, promising a spectacle that may not recapture the raw sporting frenzy that once shook the Salt Lake Stadium here.

His artistry in a competitive match

Dunga and embraced Ronaldinho, the arrival of Messi even without football is unmissable because Kolkata cannot ignore him. The organisers have opened 78,000 seats at the Salt Lake Stadium with ticket prices going up to Rs 7,000 for his 45-minute appearance on Saturday morning, raising questions on whether the city will respond with the same unrestrained passion.

Messi will spend less than 72 hours in India but will traverse four metropolis -- Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi --

in what has increasingly begun

to resemble a high-profile road-

show involving chief ministers,

corporate heavyweights,

Bollywood celebrities and even a

scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Messi's last appearance in

India remains etched in memory

when on September 3, 2011, he

danced past defenders, mesmerised with his left-footed grace

and triggered waves of ecstasy in a packed stadium.

Though he