

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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

## The 'Romeo' helicopter will now destroy Pakistani and Chinese submarines at sea

New Delhi

It has now become easier for India to detect and neutralize Pakistani and Chinese submarines at sea, as the Navy commissioned the second squadron of MH-60R 'Romeo' helicopters at INS Hansa in Goa on Wednesday. The commissioning of INAS 335, in the presence of Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, is part of the Indian Navy's continuous efforts to modernize and enhance its maritime capabilities. This will further strengthen India's maritime combat capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region. Navy Chief Admiral Tripathi commissioned the second squadron of the American MH-60R Seahawk multi-role helicopters at INS Hansa in Goa. This squadron will be known as INAS 335, while the first squadron, commissioned in March last year, was formally inducted into the air fleet as INAS 334. These advanced helicopters, part of the second 'Romeo' squadron, are capable of anti-submarine warfare, missile attacks, and surveillance. The multi-role American maritime helicopter MH-60R is designed for anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, search and rescue, and medical evacuation. According to the Ministry of Defence, the commissioning of the second squadron of MH-60R helicopters.

## Ordering CBI probe should be the last resort, not routine: SC

NEW DELHI:

Cautioning high courts, and itself, against routinely ordering CBI probes, Supreme Court on Thursday said courts should invoke their power to direct an inquiry by the central agency as a last resort in an exceptional situation. A bench of justices J K Maheshwari and Vijay Bishnoi set aside Allahabad high court's order directing a CBI probe into alleged irregularities in the recruitment process for UP legislative council staff, saying the order was passed by HC on the basis of some doubt and assumptions. The bench also referred the matter back to the high court for a rehearing.

## India-Oman Free Trade Agreement

98% of Indian exports will be possible without any tariffs; the India-Oman relationship is 70 years old

New Delhi

India and Oman signed a free trade agreement on Thursday, under which 98 percent of India's exports will get duty-free access to the Omani market. This agreement is expected to significantly benefit the textile, agricultural products, and leather industries. In return, India will reduce import duties on certain products from Oman, including dates, marble, and petrochemical products. The agreement is likely to come into effect in the first quarter of the next financial year. This agreement is considered significant at a time when India is facing high tariffs of up to 50 percent in its largest



export market, the US. Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal met with Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef. The meeting discussed ways to further strengthen economic cooperation between India and Oman. Goyal described the talks as productive, stating that trade and investment

relations between the two countries are already strong and there is immense potential to take them to new heights. In a message shared on social media, Piyush Goyal said that the growing economic engagement between India and Oman is progressing under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. He expressed confidence

that the upcoming discussions between the leaders will transform the civilizational ties into a new chapter of deeper economic cooperation. Modi receives invitation from Sultan of Oman. This meeting took place at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Oman on Wednesday, the final leg of his four-day, three-nation tour. He had earlier completed visits to Jordan and Ethiopia. PM Modi is visiting Oman at the invitation of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. During the visit, the two leaders will discuss strengthening the strategic partnership and expanding cooperation in commercial and economic .

## Shivraj expressed his pain over the uproar and paper-throwing incident



New Delhi

Union Minister Shivraj Singh expressed his displeasure over the uproar in Parliament regarding the VB-G Ram Ji Bill and the throwing of papers by MPs. Shivraj Singh Chouhan questioned the conduct of Congress and INDIA bloc MPs. He said that these MPs have tarnished democracy and violated the dignity of Parliament. He said that the opposition MPs have turned democracy into hooliganism. The Union Agriculture Minister referred to the discussion on the

Developed India Guarantee for Employment and Livelihood Mission Rural (VB-G Ram Ji) Bill, which continued late into Wednesday night. Shivraj Singh said, "I listened to the views of 98 honorable MPs on this bill. I was supposed to respond to it today." Expressing his displeasure, he said that undignified conduct was displayed in Parliament. Papers were torn and thrown, and MPs climbed onto the tables. "Isn't this a betrayal of Bapu's ideals?" He said, "I was not allowed to speak in Parliament.

## 'Urban phobia towards the rich': Supreme Court

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking the adoption of stricter World Health Organization (WHO) standards for the permissible limits of carcinogenic chemicals antimony and DEHP (di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate) in packaged drinking water and food packaging. The court made strong



remarks, calling it an "urbanized fear of the rich." The petition filed in the Supreme Court challenged the existing standards that allow certain

levels of chemicals like antimony and DEHP, which can leach from plastic water bottles and food packaging. A bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant dismissed the petition, terming it an "urbanized fear of the rich." Remove ads Read the news only Watch this video too What was the petitioner's claim? The petitioner claimed that Indian standards are lax compared to WHO standards.

## The 'VB-G-Ram-G' bill was passed by the Lok Sabha

New Delhi

Amidst the uproar by opposition parties in Parliament, Shivraj Singh Chouhan gave a detailed response on the Developed India G-Ram-G Bill. He said that the opposition does not even want to listen to the government's response. The Union Agriculture Minister, presenting the data released by the government, said that the previous governments misused the funds, but our government has emphasized spending on development works. Shivraj Singh Chouhan claimed that the government has brought the bill for the welfare of farmers as well as the poor, which is being opposed. He said, "First of all, I want to thank you in



this sacred House. I want to thank the Chairman. We have heard the views of the Honorable Members on this subject. Now it is my right to respond. I seek your protection. I have listened to the Honorable Members until 1:30 AM. To speak your mind and then not listen to the response is to tear apart democratic traditions. It is to violate the Constitution. They are also killing the ideals of Bapu. Speak your

mind and don't listen to us. This is also violence. The Congress and the rest of the opposition are doing the work of killing Bapu's ideals. "We are people who follow Gandhi's ideals: Agriculture Minister He said, "First of all, I want to pay my respects at the feet of revered Bapu (Mahatma Gandhi). Bapu is our reverence. Bapu is our ideal. Bapu is our inspiration. Bapu is our faith.

## Chief Justice expressed concern over the retirement of judges

New Delhi

Regarding cases of judicial corruption, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said on Thursday that there is a growing trend among judges to pass several orders due to external influences on the eve of their retirement. A bench headed by CJI Surya Kant, which



also included Justice Joymalya Bagchi, expressed concern over this "unfortunate trend" of judges "hit-

ting sixes" just before retirement.

The Supreme Court was hearing a petition filed by a Principal District Judge from Madhya Pradesh, who had challenged his suspension just 10 days before his retirement. The suspension was reportedly linked to two judicial orders

passed by the judge. The bench remarked, "The petitioner started hitting sixes just before retirement. This is an unfortunate trend. I don't want to say anything more on this.

"The dis-strict judge was actually supposed to retire on November 30, but he was suspended on November 19 due to

the two judicial orders. Although he was initially scheduled to retire on November 30, the Supreme Court on November 20 directed the Madhya Pradesh government to extend his retirement by one year, as the state had increased the retirement age of its employees to 62 years.

## The railways have found a formula to control passenger crowds, and it will now be implement

New Delhi

To cope with the crowds that throng railway stations across the country during the festive season, Indian Railways has taken a significant step. After the successful implementation of a holding area system at New Delhi Railway Station, Indian Railways has decided to replicate this model at stations in other major cities across the country. The Railway Minister has



instructed officials to adopt the Delhi model at other railway stations nationwide to provide better facilities to passengers and manage crowds during the festive season. Recently,

the Railway Minister and Minister of State for Railways, Ravneet Singh Bittu, reviewed the progress of the holding areas being constructed at 76 major railway stations.

## Tilak Varma jumps up in T20 rankings

New Delhi

Indian players have made significant gains in the latest update of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Men's T20I Player Rankings. India's explosive batsman Tilak Varma has jumped two places to reach fourth position in the batsmen's list, while spinner Varun Chakravarthy has further strengthened his top spot in the bowlers' rankings. Tilak Varma had a stellar performance in the recent T20I series against South Africa.

## The court took a strict stance in the stray dog ??case, telling the petitioner, "We will play the video and ask you"

New Delhi

The Supreme Court took a tough stand on Thursday during the hearing of a petition regarding stray dogs. Responding to objections that some rules made by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi were "inhumane," the court said that a video would be played at the next hearing and asked, "What exactly is humanity?" Hearing to be held on January



7Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, who is representing the case, informed the bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta that the three-judge special bench scheduled to hear

the matter on Thursday had been cancelled. Justice Nath clarified that the matter would now be listed on January 7. What happened during the hearing? Advocate

Sibal said that the problem is that in the meantime, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has made some rules that are completely contrary to the law. When the bench said it would consider the matter on January 7, Sibal said that the officials would implement the rules in December itself. He argued that they would enforce it and remove the dogs. They don't have shelters.

## Fugitive Choksi suffers major setback in Belgian court

New Delhi

Fugitive diamond merchant Mehul Choksi, accused in a multi-billion dollar banking scam, has suffered a major setback in a Belgian court. The

Belgian Supreme Court – the Court of Cassation – has rejected Mehul Choksi's petition against his extradition to India. The Belgian court dismissed Choksi's petition against extradition to

India, stating that his arguments lacked merit and that he failed to prove any legal or factual basis to prevent extradition. The court stated that the extradition process is in accordance with Indian laws

and European human rights standards. The court upheld the Antwerp Court of Appeal's Chamber of Indictment's view that the documents provided by Choksi were insufficient to prove that he

faced a real, present, and serious risk of being denied justice or subjected to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment. The court also imposed a fine of 104 Euros on Mehul Choksi.

## A seabird equipped with a Chinese GPS device was found in a sensitive naval area

New Delhi

A seabird with a Chinese GPS tracking device attached to its body has been found in the Karwar area of ??Uttara Kannada,

Karnataka. The bird was found in an area close to a sensitive zone of the Indian Navy. Following the discovery of the bird with the Chinese GPS device, security agencies and the forest depart-

ment were immediately alerted and launched a serious investigation into the matter. According to the police, the Chinese GPS tracking device was recovered from the body of a seagull .



## A young man was shot dead in the temple. The incident occurred after a dispute with friends

Prayagraj

A young man was shot dead in Prayagraj. The young man was sitting with his friends in the Rajapur Kachhar area when an argument broke out. During the altercation, a bullet was fired, hitting the young man's temple. He was immediately taken to the hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Police took possession of the body and sent it for a postmortem. The incident occurred in Rajapur Kachhar, located in the Cantonment police station area. Akash Soni, alias Golu (26), a resident of Rajapur Kachhar, drives an auto-rickshaw. His brother runs a vegetable and coconut stall near the AG's office. He has two brothers and a sister. They are originally from Phulpur and lived in a rented room in the Om Nagar neighborhood of Rajapur. He was sitting with his friends in Rajapur Kachhar at 9 pm tonight when an argument broke out, leading to the shooting. A bullet struck Akash in the temple, causing him to fall on the spot.

**The sound of the gun-**



### shot caused panic

Upon hearing the gunshot, people sitting at a distance informed the police about the incident. Police from the Cantonment Police Station arrived at the scene immediately. Police recovered a pistol and a shell casing from the scene. The sound of the gunshot caused panic. Upon hearing the gunshot, people sitting at a distance informed the police about the incident. Police from the Cantonment Police Station arrived at the scene immediately. Police recovered a pistol and a shell casing from the scene.

### Declared dead at the hospital

Akash was immediately taken to the hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Police took possession of the body and sent it for a postmortem. **Suspicion of**

### murder following a dispute

The motive behind the murder is currently unclear. Police say that preliminary investigations have revealed that Akash had a dispute with the people he was sitting with, and the incident occurred during that time. Panic has spread in the Rajapur Kachhar area following the incident. Police are examining CCTV footage from the surrounding areas and claim they will soon uncover the full details of the case. DCP City Manish Kumar Shandilya stated that family members are being questioned and efforts are underway to identify those present at the scene at the time of the incident. A case will be registered and further legal action will be taken after a formal complaint is received.

## Workshop organized on transmission system modernization

Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Power Transmission Corporation Limited organized a one-day workshop on transmission system modernization at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan, Lucknow. Urban Development and Energy Minister A.K Sharma participated as the chief guest. The workshop aimed to make the state vast and complex transmission network more efficient, effective and result-oriented. In his address, Energy Minister A.K Sharma stated that Uttar Pradesh Power Transmission Corporation Limited is today one of the country's most prominent and reliable transmission utilities. He stated that Uttar Pradesh has consistently been the state with the highest peak load in the country for several years and the recent successful handling of a peak power demand of 31,486 MW is a testament to the state's strong transmission network, sound planning and technical expertise. Minister Sharma said that Uttar Pradesh, once known as a sick state, is now making steady progress in every field under the guidance of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The power sector has undergone historic changes at all three levels: generation, transmission and distribution. In the past few years, electricity has been provided to nearly 150,000 villages and settlements that previously lacked electricity. He further stated that the country is rapidly progressing in the field of green energy and solar power. Solar energy capacity has reached approximately 130 gigawatts, with Uttar Pradesh playing a significant role. Uttar Pradesh ranks second in the country in the development of green energy corridors. The transmission system plays a crucial role in the roadmap outlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to achieve net zero by 2070. The Energy Minister discussed both

achievements and challenges in detail. He stated that despite significant progress, there is still considerable room for improvement. This workshop should seriously deliberate on technological solutions, the use of modern equipment and safe practices to completely prevent electrical accidents. Furthermore, special attention needs to be paid to cyber data challenges, cybersecurity and making transmission systems more secure and robust for the future. At the event, Minister of State for Energy Somendra Tomar, Additional Chief Secretary for Energy Narendra Bhushan and Chairman Ashish Goyal also emphasized the need to make the power transmission system more robust, modern and reliable. They stated that such workshops play a vital role in preparing officials and technical experts for future challenges. In attendance were MD Mayur Maheshwari and Pankaj Kumar, along with senior officials from the Electricity Department, Superintending Engineers and Executive Engineers from across the state.

## Mantri Kapil Dev Aggarwal Pays Courtesy Call to the Newly Appointed National Executive President of the BJP



**Lucknow:** Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Vocational Education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Kapil Dev Aggarwal paid a courtesy call to the newly appointed National Executive President of the party Nitin Nabin, at the BJP Central Office in New Delhi. He extended his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the party on this important organizational responsibility. Minister Kapil Dev Aggarwal stated that organizational strength is the BJP's greatest strength and this leadership change will inject new energy into the organization. During the meeting, National Executive President Nitin Nabin and Minister Kapil Dev Aggarwal held a meaningful and positive dialogue on the organization's current activities, future plans and further strengthening the party at the grassroots level. The meeting focused on organizational expansion, worker training, strengthening public relations and effectively disseminating the government welfare schemes to the public. On this occasion, Minister Kapil Dev Aggarwal while praising the organizational experience and leadership ability of Nitin Nabin, expressed confidence that under his able guidance, the Bharatiya Janata Party will become more organizationally strong and will achieve new heights with the resolve of service, good governance and development.

## Legacy of Scams, Silence on Terror, This Is the Dark Truth of Congress-SP: Dr. Rajeshwar Singh

Lucknow

Sarojini Nagar MLA and senior BJP leader Dr. Rajeshwar Singh, through a series of messages on the social media platform X, raised serious questions over the political credibility, moral courage and public accountability of the Congress and the Samajwadi Party. He stated that parties which, while in power, were associated with policy-driven corruption, administrative failures and environmental degradation have no moral authority today to lecture the nation on ethics, the Constitution or good governance. **Recalling Congress's Scams** Referring to the Congress tenure, Dr. Rajeshwar Singh pointed out that the 2G spectrum allocation, cancellation of coal block allocations, the Commonwealth Games scam, the AgustaWestland helicopter deal, the Adarsh Housing case, the INX Media matter and cash-for-votes inside Parliament are not political allegations. These are part of CAG reports,



Supreme Court judgments and the public record of constitutional institutions. He asserted that political memory cannot be selective and that the nation runs not on amnesia, but on accountability.

**SP Rule: Weak Governance and Political Patronage for Corruption** Continuing his critique, Dr. Rajeshwar Singh questioned the state of environmental governance during the Samajwadi Party rule in Uttar Pradesh. He said that illegal sand mining, tampering with river floodplains, untreated sewage and industrial waste being discharged into rivers such as the Ganga, Gomti, Yamuna and Hindon, large-

scale tree felling and weak action against polluters were not coincidences. They were outcomes of policy neglect and a politics of protection. He emphasized that environmental damage was not accidental but the product of weak governance and political patronage. Parties that shielded corruption and environmental destruction, he said, must introspect before preaching morality to the nation.

### Opposition Silence on Terror Attacks Is Inhuman

In his messages, Dr. Rajeshwar Singh also strongly reacted to the silence of Congress and Samajwadi Party leadership on the terror attack at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia. He asked why their sensitivities fell silent when 15 innocent people were killed and dozens injured during an attack around the Hanukkah celebrations. Terrorism, he said, must be condemned immediately, unconditionally and universally, not based on religion, geography or vote-bank calculations. Dr. Singh stated unequivocally that this silence

reflects not sensitivity but selective conscience, vote-bank politics and moral bankruptcy. When victims do not fit political equations, empathy disappears—and this opportunistic politics weakens national unity and moral leadership.

### Silence Against Sanatan Culture Is a Political Stand

Speaking on Sanatan Dharma and India's civilizational identity, Dr. Rajeshwar Singh asked when Rahul Gandhi or Akhilesh Yadav clearly acknowledged Sanatan Dharma as they unequivocally, by name, condemn attacks on Hindu temples, the erosion of temple culture or the open propagation of religious extremism? He said that temple visits and rituals may be matters of personal faith, but silence on Sanatan, temple culture and Hindu institutions is a political stand. When power becomes supreme, morality is rebranded as "balance," clarity is labelled "polarization," and silence is marketed as "mature politics"—and this is where public trust erodes.

Lucknow

The Yogi government is preparing to give a historic gift to the youth of Uttar Pradesh in 2026. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, in a recent high-level meeting, directed officials to provide department-wise details of vacant posts so that recruitment could be expedited. After reviewing the vacancies, CM Yogi has approved the recruitment of 1.5 lakh government jobs across various departments next year. The largest share of appointments will be in the Police and Education departments with 50,000 posts each followed by 20,000 posts in the

## CM Yogi reviews vacant posts department wise in high level meeting

Revenue department. Additional recruitments will also take place in Housing Development, Health, Child Development, Nutrition and Prisons. With this, the Yogi government is set to create a record by providing the highest number of government jobs in a single year.

More importantly, by 2026 the government will achieve the milestone of 10 lakh government jobs in 10 years, becoming the first in the state's history to do so. So far, the Yogi government has already provided over 8.5 lakh jobs in the last 8.5 years, all through a transparent and fair process. This has significantly

boosted the confidence of the state's youth in the recruitment system, which earlier lacked transparency under previous governments. According to official sources, the Police department will recruit 30,000 constables, 5,000 sub-inspectors and 15,000 personnel in other categories. The Education department will fill around 50,000 posts ranging from assistant teachers to lecturers and principals. The Revenue department will recruit 20,000 personnel, primarily for the post of Lekhpal. Recruitment advertisements are in the final stages of preparation and processes have already begun in departments.

## GGIC Students Conduct Educational Visit to Open University

**Prayagraj:** Under the Uttar Pradesh government's highly important mission, the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, and as part of the plan to provide students of government secondary schools with exposure to higher educational, technical, and management institutions and universities, 100 students from Government Girls Inter College, Bihar, Pratapgarh, led by Principal Manisha Rawat, conducted an educational visit to Uttar Pradesh's Rajarshi Tandon Open University on Thursday. During the visit, they gained a detailed understanding of the open university's educational system. The educational visit was coordinated by Professor Devesh Ranjan Tripathi. First, all the students were divided into five groups. Each group was led and guided by Assistant Professors Dr. Neeta Mishra, Dr. Safina Samavi, Dr. Deepshikha Srivastava, Dr. Kamna Yadav, Dr. Suman Singh, Dr. Sushma Singh, and Soumya Tiwari from the university. From the gov-



ernment school, teachers Apama Tripathi, Nisha Pandey, Mrs. Avantika, and Renu Singh provided their support and guidance to each group. Upon arrival at the university, the groups were welcomed by Professor Devesh, who provided them with necessary instructions regarding the visit. Registrar Colonel Vinay Kumar apprised the students about the university's activities. During the educational visit, everyone received special information about the Media Cell, Admission Section, Self-Study Material Cell, Examination Department, etc., located in the university's Ganga campus. In this campus, they understood the various activities of the Vice-Chancellor's office, Registrar's office, Finance Officer's office, and Controller of Examinations office. In

the second phase of the visit, the groups went to the faculties located in the Saraswati campus, where the concerned directors and teachers provided detailed information about various programs and courses. Director of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell, Professor Ashutosh Gupta, informed the teachers in the visiting group about the various qualitative aspects of open education and encouraged them to connect with the open university for their career advancement. In the third phase of the visit, the students and teachers visited the university library, satisfied their curiosity about various books, and expressed their desire to use the library in the future. Finally, the visiting group gathered in the Atal Auditorium at the Saraswati campus.

## Balanced Fertilizer Use Can Boost Crop Yield, Avoid Unnecessary Storage: District Agriculture Officer

District Agriculture Officer Manveer Singh has urged farmers across the district to use fertilizers in balanced quantities according to crop requirements and to avoid storing them unnecessarily. He emphasized that proper fertilizer management not only increases crop yield but also helps maintain soil fertility. The District Agriculture Officer provided recommended fertilizer doses for various crops: for potatoes – NPK 170:80:100 kg per hectare; wheat – 150:60:40; mustard – 120:60:60; barley – 30:30:20; chickpeas and lentils – 20:60:20; and tobacco – 150:40:230 kg per hectare. Similarly, crops such as peas, cauliflower, cabbage, tomato, carrot, radish, garlic and onion should receive urea, DAP and muriate of



potash in prescribed quantities. He informed that under the Rabi campaign, top-dressing is currently being carried out for potato, mustard, tobacco and wheat crops. All wholesale and retail fertilizer dealers, as well as cooperative society secretaries in the district, have been instructed to sell quality fertilizers at the prescribed rates based on POS machine verification using farmers' land records or khatouni and 100% Aadhaar verification. Sales to farmers from other districts have been prohibited. The officer also clarified that private and coop-

erative fertilizer outlets in the district are being regularly monitored. Any dealer found selling fertilizers above the prescribed rates will face strict action under the Fertilizer Control Order, 1985 and the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. Currently, the district has 18,460 metric tons of urea, 13,991.85 metric tons of DAP, 5,715.60 metric tons of NPK, 8,539.80 metric tons of MOP and 1,070.75 metric tons of SSP available for distribution. Continuous supply is being ensured through racks and farmers are urged to purchase fertilizers.

## Apna Dal (S) Party Mandal-wise Organizational Review Meetings

Lucknow

On the instructions of Apna Dal (S) National President and Union Minister Anupriya Patel, the party has decided to review its organization at the Mandal level in Uttar Pradesh. Attendance at these meetings is mandatory for current and former district presidents, regional presidents and all national and state officials residing in the respective Mandal. At the meetings, the party National Vice President and Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister Ashish Patel will directly communicate with all officials. The main objectives of the meeting: To assess the state of the party organization in all Assembly constituencies of Uttar Pradesh. To review the work of Assembly Presidents, Zone Presidents, Sector Presidents and Booth Presidents. To formulate strategies to activate and strengthen the organization where it is weak or inactive. To ensure strong participation of the party in the three-tier Panchayat elections to be held in 2026 and to prepare officials for the victory of candidates. **First Phase Schedule (December 21-24, 2025):** December 21: Azamgarh and Basti Division; December 22: Lucknow and Varanasi Division; December 23: Ayodhya and Deopatan Division; December 24: Kanpur and Chitrakoot Division. This information was provided by the party's state spokesperson, Rajesh Srivastava. These meetings are expected to strengthen the party's grassroots, especially in view of the upcoming Panchayat elections.





# Speeding Dumper Truck Crushes Two Bikers on Shastri Bridge; One Body Trapped in Truck After Accident



**Dumper Truck Drags Biker for One Kilometer, Intestines Exposed**

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Prayagraj:** A speeding dumper truck crushed two bikers on the Shastri Bridge, killing both on the spot. After the accident, one body became trapped in the truck. The truck driver then dragged the body for about a kilometer. When people tried to stop him, the driver crashed the dumper into

the divider and fled the scene. This tragic accident occurred around 10:30 PM on Thursday night. The two bikers were coming from Prayagraj towards Jhansi when the accident happened. They had crossed more than half of the Shastri Bridge and were approaching Jhansi when a speeding dumper truck hit them from behind. The person riding pillion fell off, and then both were run over by the dumper. The bike and one of the riders became trapped under the truck. The dumper dragged the



biker for about a kilometer at full speed, causing the victim's intestines to be exposed.

The bike under the dumper was completely destroyed. When people saw the person

trapped under the dumper, they tried to stop it.

The driver

crashed the dumper into the divider and escaped. According to the police, the truck/dumper (number UP 70 GT 8444), which was going from Daraganj towards Andawa, suddenly hit two people riding a two-wheeler (UP 70 BS 4494). One of the victims was identified as Vishal Mishra, a resident of Mori Daraganj, approximately 34 years old; the other person remains unidentified. Both died on the spot. The bodies were sent to the SRN mortuary, and the truck was seized.

## Important Review Meeting Held in Tehsil Auditorium to Finalize SIR Work



**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Ghazipur.** An important review meeting was held in the Mohammadabad Tehsil auditorium of the district to finalize the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) campaign in the block development area. The meeting was chaired by Sub-Divisional Magistrate Dr. Harshita Tiwari. During the meeting, the verification process was completed by the concerned BLOs (Booth Level Officers) by cross-referencing the family registers of ration shop owners, Panchayat secretaries, and other available records. All Booth Level Officers (BLOs), village secretaries, teachers, ration shop owners, and officers from concerned departments were present. A detailed review of the work completed so far was conducted, and clear instructions were given to complete the remaining work within the stipulated timeframe. Sub-Divisional Magistrate Dr. Tiwari said that the process of certifying and finalizing all records related to SIR is being expedited so that the voter list can be prepared in an error-free, updated, and reliable manner. She appealed to the officers to work in coordination with each other and to honestly discharge their responsibilities. Tehsildar Mahendra Bahadur, Naib Tehsildar Vipin Kumar, Block Development Officer Yashwant K. Rao, ADO (ISB) Sanjay Kumar Singh, Food Inspector Praveen Kumar, and ADO (Panchayat) Ashok Kumar were also present at the meeting. Sector-wise duties were assigned to Panchayat secretaries, teachers, and other officers to ensure that the work is conducted in an organized and smooth manner. At the end of the meeting, emphasis was placed on ensuring that the SIR process is completed in a completely transparent, impartial, and time-bound manner so that the names of all eligible voters in rural areas can be included in the voter list.

## Farmers Receive Benefits of Schemes, Special Guidance on Rabi Crops, Successful Organization of a One-Day Farmers' Workshop

**This program was conducted under the strengthening of the agricultural information**

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Ghazipur.** A one-day farmers' workshop was organized at the local block development complex in Mohammadabad, Ghazipur district, with the aim of providing farmers with maximum benefits from government schemes and connecting them with modern agricultural techniques. This program was conducted under the strengthening of the agricultural information system and the farmer awareness campaign, focusing on Rabi crops and the National Mission on Agricultural Extension. The event was organized by the Agriculture



Department. In the workshop, farmers were given detailed information about the mandatory nature of farmer registration and the process of quickly availing benefits of schemes through it.

Officials laid special

emphasis on ensuring the digital identification of farmers' records. The assistance amount, eligibility, and application process under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana were also explained in simple lan-

guage. During the program, useful information related to improved seeds, pesticides and agricultural medicines, modern agricultural implements, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and the Soil Health Card scheme was also shared. The large number of farmers from rural areas who attended, despite the cold weather, underscored the success of the workshop. Various stalls related to agriculture were set up in the complex, where farmers received information directly from experts. The workshop was presided over by Pyare Mohan Singh Yadav, while Dr. Bhaskar Dubey conducted

the proceedings. BJP Mohammadabad President Alok Sharma was present as the chief guest. Besides them, Block Development Officer Yashwant Rao, ADO (Panchayat) Ashok Kumar, Land Conservation Officer and Nodal Officer Jeet Lal Gupta, Satish Chandra Rai, and several other officers and employees were also present at the program. On the concluding occasion, the chairman expressed gratitude to all the guests, officers, and farmers and urged the farmers to make their farming more advanced and profitable by taking advantage of government schemes.?

## New ACP Takes Charge as Assistant Commissioner of Police, Tharwai

**Tharwai**

Arun Parashar, a dynamic officer from Agra district, has taken charge as the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Tharwai Police Commissionerate, Prayagraj. Upon assuming charge, he gathered information about the areas falling under the police stations of his circle. During this time, he stated that this is his first assignment in the police department as ACP Tharwai. As the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Tharwai, Arun Parashar will fulfill his duties responsibly and will take strict action against anyone who creates any kind of disorder in the area. He will ensure the quick resolution of problems faced by complainants, and will crack down on crime and criminals. No laxity in work will be tolerated. Strict action will be taken against those



involved in incidents of robbery, snatching, theft, etc. He will also expedite the resolution of public grievances. Arun Parashar is originally from Agra district and previously served as a Medical Officer in the Indian Army for 11 years. After that, he was selected as a PCS officer in the 2023 batch of the Uttar Pradesh Police Department. He has now taken charge as the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Tharwai, and has familiarized himself with the problems of the area, paying

special attention to sensitive areas. He stated that action will be taken against anyone who disrupts peace and order in the area, and criminals will be dealt with strictly. His father was also involved in education, and his wife is a computer engineer. It is evident that the entire family is highly educated, and each son and daughter has achieved a good position through hard work and dedication. The newly appointed ACP Arun Parashar has been a top performer in academics, studying science in high school and intermediate, and also pursuing an MBBS degree. He served as a Medical Officer in the Indian Army for eleven years. His dream is to perform his duties diligently and responsibly and to ensure that justice prevails in every case of injustice. No matter what the crime, it will not be tolerated, and action will be taken.

## SDM conducts surprise inspection of Sherpur SIR camp in Bhanwarkol block, orders completion of work today

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Ghazipur.** The Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) inspected the SIR camp in Sherpur village under the Bhanwarkol block of the district. Under the intensive voter revision campaign, in Sherpur, the largest Gram Panchayat of the area, the SDM verified the four categories of voters – Absent, Shifted, Double, and Deceased (ASDD) – by questioning each BLO (Booth Level Officer) at the camp organized at UPS Sherpur Kala, as per government instructions. He also interacted with the ration shop owner, Panchayat Secretary, and booth-level agents of political parties present there. He explained the importance of the process to



everyone and instructed them to cooperate and complete it immediately. He instructed the AERO (Assistant Electoral Registration Officer) of the area, Block Development Officer Mahendra Prasad, to complete the SIR work in Sherpur by this evening. On this occasion, all the BLOs of Sherpur, Supervisor Sudarshan Kumar, Secretary and ADO

Panchayat Suryabhan Rai Prasad, party BLOs Damodar Rai, Omprakash Rai, Ashok Rai, Shyamanrai Yadav, Neeraj Kumar Rai, Manjeet Yadav, ration shop owners Tungnath Rai, Paras Rai, Shashikant Yadav, Omprakash Rai Munna, Kesari Kumar Rai, Headmaster, and hundreds of other officers, employees, and public representatives were present.

## People shivered in their homes, the sun remained hidden all day

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Prayagraj:** The cold wave continues to intensify. On Thursday, the sun remained hidden throughout the day. Cold winds blowing from the northwest increased the humidity in the atmosphere, causing a blanket of fog to cover the entire city. According to meteorologists, when westerly winds become active in the plains, a sudden drop in temperature is observed, and this is the situation currently prevailing in Prayagraj. The sun remained invisible all day. Dense fog prevailed from morning till afternoon. Visibility was extremely low on roads, streets, bridges, and open fields. In many areas, visibility was recorded at less than 50 meters, causing



great difficulties for drivers. People shivered, bonfires provided relief. This double blow of cold and fog severely affected daily life. People going to work in the early morning, rickshaw pullers, street vendors, laborers, and students were seen shivering in the cold. In many parts of the city, people were seen trying to ward off the cold by lighting bonfires. However, due to the lack of bonfires in many places, the poor and needy sections of society faced greater hardship. Impact on schools, offices, and markets. The cold and fog also affected attendance at schools and

offices. Children going to school in the morning faced extreme cold. Many parents sent their children to school wearing extra warm clothes. Similarly, the movement of employees in offices started late. Markets remained deserted in the morning and only regained some activity after noon. Road traffic was also affected due to the dense fog. Drivers had to drive slowly on highways and major roads. In many places, drivers used headlights and fog lights. Railway and bus services were also affected by the fog, causing some trains and buses to run late.

## As the cold intensifies, school timings changed in Prayagraj

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Prayagraj:** Due to the severe cold, school timings have been changed. This order was issued on Thursday evening by District Basic Education Officer Anil Kumar and District Inspector of Schools P.N. Singh. The order applies to classes from nursery to 12th grade and will remain in effect until further notice. DIOS P.N. Singh stated that this decision was taken under the direction of the District Magistrate, considering the prevailing cold weather. The BSA informed that all schools, including government primary and upper primary schools, as well as CBSE and ICSE schools, will now operate from 10 AM to 3 PM. School administrators and principals have been instructed by the authorities to strictly implement this change starting Friday.

## ACP Chandrapal Singh transferred: Emotional farewell from the office

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Tharwai / ACP** Chandrapal Singh served as the ACP of Tharwai for approximately two years.

He assumed charge on February 5, 2024, and his tenure lasted a total of 22 months until December 17, 2025. During this time, he remained active in his duties and strived to resolve every case promptly. He listened attentively to the problems of complainants and took immediate action on any incident in the area, working to ensure justice for the victims. There was an emotional atmosphere in the area upon ACP Chandrapal Singh's transfer. He also played a crucial role in the grand fair held at Pandeshwar Nath Dham in Padila, similar to the scale of the Mahakumbh Mela, where he performed his duties admirably. He was originally from Bulandshahr district and had also served in the PAC (Provincial Armed Constabulary). Due to his dedication and vigilance, he rose from the rank of constable to Assistant Commissioner of Police, and he performed his duties with distinction. His work was widely appreciated in the area. Assistant Commissioner of Police Chandrapal Singh has now been transferred to a VIP security assignment. Following his transfer, there was much discussion in the area about his attentiveness to every case, his willingness to listen to complainants' problems in detail, and his respectful treatment of everyone. He received a grand farewell from the office, and everyone honored him with bouquets and garlands.





## Editorial

### Priyanka to Sharmila, Kanimozhi to Misa—KCR’s daughter Kavitha is fighting a bigger battle

**KKavitha**, daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrasekhara Rao, is hurting. She began her 72-hour hunger strike Monday, demanding 42 per cent reservation for backward classes in jobs, educational institutions and local bodies. Her party, the Bharat Rashtra Samithi, is staying away from it. While she is being trolled and ridiculed by political rivals as also party colleagues, nobody has come to her defense. Even her brother and the party’s working president, KT Rama Rao, hasn’t said a word. To make matters worse, she was dropped as honorary president of the Telangana Boggu Ghani Karmika Sangham (TBGKS), a BRS-affiliated trade union. Kavitha, a BRS legislator, has accused ‘party insiders’ of encouraging those attacking her and also questioned the silence of BRS ‘brothers’. So, what’s happening in the BRS’ ‘first family’? In August last year when she came out of Tihar jail on bail in the alleged liquor scam, her family was waiting for her outside. With tears in her eyes, she kissed her brother KT Rama Rao’s hand. A year later, she is looking isolated and abandoned by the family. The controversy surrounding her ‘letter bomb’ refuses to die down. Not because her father is upset about the letter, in which she expressed disagreement with his way of functioning, but because of how her party has reacted — by virtually abandoning her. Party insiders tell me that while the father did call the daughter “three or four times”, the brother has cut off all communication with her. These developments are being interpreted in political circles as a full-blown succession war between Kavitha and KTR, with cousin Harish Rao keeping his ambitions in abeyance and pledging allegiance to KTR. But it’s not as simple as that. Party insiders close to the BRS first family tell me that the man behind Kavitha’s current woes is not her brother. The one who triggered this storm is someone party circles are calling the ‘VK Pandian of Telangana’ — a reference to the former IAS officer in Odisha whose “control” over ex-CM Naveen Patnaik alienated Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leaders and eventually led to Patnaik’s fall from power. In the case of the BRS’ family feud, it’s not an ex-IAS officer. It’s a close relative and KCR’s trusted confidant who, insiders say, has gained ‘control’ over the former CM. And it’s this person that Kavitha has taken up the cudgels against. She has been hurting ever since her letter to KCR was “leaked” — a letter in which she questioned her father for being soft on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during his speech marking the BRS’ 25th anniversary. She said this gave the impression that the BRS and BJP could work together in the future. The letter also flagged other concerns about the way her party leadership was functioning. It was ‘leaked’ while she was in the US visiting her elder son. Though she had sent the letter before leaving, many might find it strange that she chose to write rather than speak to her father, possibly a sign of a rift. The fact, however, is that she has been writing hand-written letters — not emails, which KCR doesn’t use — for years. The usual practice was that she would hand over a letter during a meeting, which he would read and respond to later. This time, Kavitha sent the letter through her mother, as she was sick and didn’t want to risk infecting her elderly father. But when the letter surfaced just before her return to India, she was furious.

She apparently saw a pattern — and a familiar hand, someone she always suspected of working against her. Party insiders say she suspects her cousin Joginapally Santhosh Kumar to be behind the leak. Santhosh is her mother Shobha’s sister’s son, who is like KCR’s “nurse and PA” who stays with him 24x7, taking care of him — much like Pandian did with Patnaik. KCR has given him untrammelled clout.



India’s defence relationship with the US has been maturing over the last decade — from cautious engagement to structured partnerships, driven by shared strategic interest. What was once a purely transactional partnership, a buyer/seller relationship involving specific procurement contracts, has now assumed a pivotal role in the global geopolitical calculus. However, this evolving alliance is under stress, especially in light of President Donald Trump’s sudden imposition of a 25 per cent tariff on Indian exports, with additional as yet unspecified ‘penalties’ for importing oil from Russia. Yet even as economic ties fray, the depth of security cooperation, and the numerous formal agreements that sustain it, offers India both an opportunity and a challenge. The key question is whether India can deepen its defence cooperation with the US, without ceding its strategic autonomy or aligning it with shifting political agendas. At the heart of India–US defence ties lies an architecture of agreements, joint exercises, and co-development initiatives that extend well beyond symbolism. The signing of foundational accords such as COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement), BECA (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement), and the Industrial Security Annex have facilitated real-time intelligence sharing, logistical interoperability, and protected access to cutting-edge military technology. These treaties, once perceived as



intrusive or incompatible with India’s traditional non-alignment posture, are now actively deployed to bolster maritime surveillance, domain awareness, and air defence capabilities. Operational collaboration has also deepened. India’s acquisition of MQ-9B Predator drones, MH-60R multi-role naval helicopters, and the proposed co-production of GE-414 engines for indigenous fighter jets signal not just defence modernisation, but also a convergence in regional threat assessments, especially vis-à-vis China’s assertive posture in the Indo-Pacific. Initiatives such as INDUS-X and ICET are moving beyond procurement to include co-development, startup incubation, and collaborative research in emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum Computing (QC), and Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS). These engagements point to a long-term strategic partnership rather than short-term expediency. However, there is a fly in the ointment. The July 30 announcement of 25 per cent US tariffs on Indian exports, couched vaguely in terms of India’s ongoing

defence and energy cooperation with Russia, reveals a recurring dilemma: how stable and reliable is US strategic posture and unconditional support when tested by domestic political imperatives or ideological shifts like MAGA? The tariffs, affecting nearly three-quarters of India’s exports, suggest that economic retaliation may be used as a convenient foreign policy tool for strategic coercion. That the current proposed tariffs were triggered not by any rupture in defence ties, but by dissatisfaction over India’s continued import of Russian oil and military platforms, underscores the complexity of American reliability. This tension exposes the somewhat hypocritical duality of US diplomacy, in that it seeks convergence on strategic goals while retaining coercive tools to enforce alignment. For India, such moves raise critical questions and strike at the heart of its policy of strategic autonomy. Can the US-India defence partnership flourish in an environment where India’s broader economic or foreign policy decisions invite punitive countermeasures? Will access to US platforms and supply chains be withdrawn

or restricted, especially in times of conflict, if India continues to pursue a multi-pronged foreign policy that includes countries like Russia and Iran, which the US views as enemies? The answer probably lies in separating the institutional depth of security cooperation from the dynamic volatility arising out of political posturing. Unlike trade, which is often driven by electoral considerations and domestic imperatives like MAGA, defence collaboration is sustained by bureaucratic processes, institutional memory, and mutual threat recognition. The US Defence and State Departments, and India’s Ministries of Defence and External Affairs, operate on longer timelines and are often shielded, though not immune, from the ups and downs arising out of political turnarounds. For example, platforms like the Reciprocal Defence Procurement (RDP), offset clauses, and co-development agreements are more likely to endure and evolve, perhaps with some tweaks, than suffer abrupt reversals. The 2+2 dialogue has endured many political hiccups. The MEA’s statement — “This partnership has weathered several transitions and challenges” — reflects the long-term nature of the relationship. India’s recent strategic decisions suggest a pragmatic reading of this duality. While defence cooperation with the US has accelerated, India continues to diversify its military suppliers, including France (Rafale jets), Israel (missile defence), and Russia (S-400 systems).

This hedging reflects India’s understanding that a strategic partnership does not mean strategic dependence. The refusal to proceed with the proposed F-35 acquisition, despite its symbolic value, signals India’s intent to avoid politically sensitive purchases that may jeopardise its diplomatic flexibility or trigger regional escalations. At the same time, India could astutely use its defence commitments as a bargaining tool. By advertising possible future purchases — from Predator drones and GE-414 engines to naval platforms — as strategic inducements, India has levers to secure tariff concessions, obtain market access, and reduce regulatory barriers in trade negotiations with the US. The trade-off is clear. Defence offsets, which require US firms to invest a portion of contract value in India, can be portrayed domestically in the US as job-creating and strategically aligned, softening opposition to trade waivers or procurement reciprocity. Yet this ‘carrot’ strategy can only go so far. US negotiators remain dissatisfied with India’s high tariffs on agriculture, digital localisation policies, and resistance to GM crops, which are seen as barriers to open trade. Even if India were to boost its defence purchases from the US, these unresolved economic grievances will persist. More critically, India’s energy and defence ties with Russia and its refusal to adhere to US-driven sanctions create minefields that defence collaboration alone may not be able to navigate.

### Geopolitical forces beyond New Delhi’s control are at play in Trump’s approach to India

US President Donald Trump reignited trade tensions with India on 30 July, accusing it of imposing “far too high” tariffs and threatening a 25 per cent levy starting 1 August. Despite ongoing efforts toward a mini trade deal and a \$500 billion trade target by 2030, Trump’s obsession with trade reciprocity and a “messianic” zeal to correct any trade imbalance overnight with partner countries, looms large over the relationship. He also criticised India’s defense and oil ties with Russia, hinting at potential penalties. Still, in typical Trump fashion, he later softened his stance, saying India was now willing to reduce tariffs “very substantially,” adding, “We’re talking to India now — we’ll see what happens.” That Trump is displeased with a number of allies and partners has almost become a constant fixture in his second term, and India does not enjoy any special privilege. So, there are two ways of looking at the current spat and the low point in the India-US partnership. First, there is a broader geopol-

itics reshaping Trump’s almost pretzelian foreign policy twists. Second, a painful road awaits as Washington-New Delhi negotiations over a mini trade deal whose terms and conditions will remain uncertain, and even if agreed upon, will remain largely ad hoc and piecemeal. Behind Trump’s fresh round of rants and wrath aimed at India lies a broader geopolitical curve in Trump’s foreign and national security policy. In Trump’s first as well second terms, his positive vibe towards President Vladimir Putin of Russia, otherwise an eyesore for America’s western allies, has been relatively more welcomed in India. Compared to the Biden presidency, which was crystal clear on confronting Russia and supporting Ukraine sans conditions, the Trump presidency was more forthcoming on talking to Moscow and more circumscribed in its support for Ukraine. However, of late, amid dwindling prospects of a peace deal with Putin, Trump has taken a U-turn in his approach to the Russia-Ukraine war.

### Trump tariff forces India to shed illusion. Stop conflating status with power

India now faces what can be best described as the Trump pill — a bracing dose of transactional geopolitics and neo-mercantilist tariffs that upend the diplomatic comfort of the past decade. With sweeping 25 per cent tariffs targeting Indian exports, our longstanding belief in strategic autonomy and global goodwill is being challenged by the brutal arithmetic of trade imbalances and national interests. This isn’t just a policy shift; it’s a call to recalibrate how India positions itself economically and diplomatically in a world now shaped by profit-first diplomacy. The newly announced tariffs by the Trump administration pose a direct threat to India’s export competitiveness. Sectors such as electronics, smartphones, automobile parts, and gemstones will be hit hardest. Comparatively, Vietnam faces only 20 per cent tariffs, and economies like Indonesia enjoy relatively lighter penalties. While pharmaceutical products, semiconductors, and critical rare earths remain exempt for now, there is a growing uncertainty about India’s continued access to these carve-outs, particularly as Trump intensifies his focus on bilateral trade “wins.” Further compounding this threat is the ambiguity around secondary sanctions tied to India’s oil imports from Russia. A punitive surcharge, conveyed repeatedly but not yet formalised, could be crippling. As we shall see, this issue is not merely economic — it strikes at the heart of India’s strategic alignment. The stakes for India are high. Without a trade deal with the United States, economic ramifications could be severe. Capital flows may dry up, leading to a weakening rupee. Stock markets are already reflecting investor nervousness, and early estimates suggest India’s GDP could suffer a 0.2–0.5 per cent contraction. Unlike Brazil,

which enjoys a trade surplus with the US, or China, which retains leverage through its monopoly over rare earth elements, India finds itself in a vulnerable middle. India has little immediate leverage in trade. Brazil, for example, will enjoy strategic concessions from Washington, thanks to the US having a trade surplus with it. China, with its iron grip over rare earth supplies, forced the US to capitulate during past confrontations. Meanwhile, Trump has succeeded in strong-arming traditional allies. He finalised a trade agreement with the EU after imposing 25 per cent tariffs on select sectors and billions of dollars promised in investment. He has also coaxed Japan into signing a deal with 15 per cent tariffs and \$550 billion in investments. Likewise, he has already finalised a deal with Indonesia and Vietnam, both with lesser tariffs than India’s. With India, however, talks have hit roadblocks — both economic and geopolitical. The US’ objections to India’s protectionism in agriculture and dairy are longstanding. But the deeper threat comes from Washington’s insistence on penalising Indian oil imports from Russia. Trump’s sudden support for the Blumenthal-Graham bill, threatening secondary sanctions on nations buying discounted Russian crude, marks a shift. Initially dismissed due to Trump’s own ambivalence toward Ukraine and open admiration for Vladimir Putin, the bill has reemerged as Trump pivots back toward Europe, leaving India exposed. India’s rise on the global stage in the past decade owed much to its favorable geopolitical moment. As the Indo-Pacific became the centre of global strategic focus, India was cast as a vital counterweight to China. Western powers embraced New Delhi’s role, drawn by its demographic strength, huge market, and democratic credentials.

## Do Chola kings represent a culturally united Hindu India? It’s a modern fantasy

History has rarely been away from the headlines over the last few weeks, whether through the rewriting of NCERT textbooks or PM Modi’s tribute to the Chola dynasty of medieval South India. The coming month will see the millennial celebrations of the 11th-century Chola emperor Rajendra I, specifically of his conquests in Southeast Asia. There is a loud chorus, at least on social media, that the Cholas—and South India in general—haven’t gotten their due in the national historical imagination. But there’s more going

on than meets the eye. The fact is that celebrating the conquests of the Cholas misses the woods for the trees. Rather than encourage a deeper understanding of regional histories, we are instead forcing a remarkable medieval society into today’s culture wars. To understand the recent political bonanza about the Cholas, first we need to understand what they’ve left behind—and the many ways in which we’ve understood this over the decades. Most of what we know about the Cholas derives from donative inscriptions

that adorn the walls of medieval Tamil temples. Interestingly, most Chola-period donative inscriptions were not commissioned by the Chola court, but a broad, shifting spectrum of Tamil-speaking society.

Through these inscriptions, we can see broad social trends. As historians Noboru Karashima, Y Subbarayalu, and James Heitzman have shown, most temple affairs—and, by extension, village affairs—depended on local collectives, rather than royal officials. These might be collectives of Vellala cultivator families, or

Brahmin landlords, or merchants. These collectives, as we’ll see soon, were not mute recipients of royal commandments. Temple donors were fairly diverse in the early 10th century (when the Chola dynasty was rising), sometimes including shepherds and washer-people. Over time, temple activities were steadily taken over by men of elite martial or landed backgrounds, often linked to the Chola court. These families were progenitors of some dominant castes in Tamil Nadu today. Inscriptions also show growing discrimination.



## Briefs

LUCKNOW

## University Initiative for Children's Home Inmates

Inspired by Chancellor and Governor Anandiben Patel, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Language University has launched an initiative for children in correctional homes. A team visited government homes for girls and juvenile boys in Lucknow, distributing study materials, books, and art supplies. Under the Vice-Chancellor's guidance, the university assured continued support for the education, protection, and guidance of these children.

LALITPUR

## Leopard Sighting Sparks Alert

Panic spread among villagers in Gouna range after a leopard was sighted near Dongra Khurd forest on Thursday morning. A video of the leopard roaming near the forest edge went viral. Forest department teams rushed to the spot and increased patrols. Officials have urged villagers to remain cautious, avoid the forest alone, and keep children and livestock away, stating the situation is under control.

BALLIA

## Khadi Board Holds Awareness Camp

The Uttar Pradesh Khadi and Village Industries Board organized a one-day awareness camp in Jigirsand village, Maniyar block. The camp informed villagers about key government employment schemes like the PM Employment Generation Programme and the CM Gramodyog Rozgar Yojana. Speakers encouraged rural youth to adopt self-employment and become self-reliant.

JAUNPUR

## University Holds Placement Drive

A placement drive for Chemistry and Microbiology students was organized by Alivas Life Sciences Limited at Veer Bahadur Singh Purvanchal University. A large number of students participated in the selection process, which included a company presentation, aptitude test, and interviews. The drive was conducted under the aegis of the university's Central Training and Placement Cell.

MAU

## Police Intensify Night Patrols in Cold

In light of the cold wave and dense fog, Ghost Police Station In-Charge Pramendra Singh has ordered intensified night patrolling. He stated that fog can increase the risk of crime, and no laxity will be tolerated. Beat officers have been directed to conduct regular patrols, intensify checks on suspicious persons and vehicles, and maintain special vigilance at sensitive locations.

RAEBARELI

## 'Our Courtyard, Our Children' Festival Held

The "Hamaara Aangan Hamare Bachche" festival was organized at the BRC Rohania campus. The event saw participation from Anganwadi workers, nodal teachers, and proficient children from Anganwadi and council schools.

## ACTION | State tightens grip to protect farmers and provide food security

## NIA cracks down on fertilizer hoarding and overpricing

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has adopted a stricter approach against fertilizer black marketing, making it clear that offences affecting agriculture and farmers' interests will no longer be treated as routine violations. Acting on administrative directions, authorities have begun invoking stringent legal provisions, including the National Security Act (NSA), against those involved in hoarding, overpricing and illegal diversion of fertilizers.

Officials have stated that fertilizer black marketing is not merely a supply-related lapse but a serious offence linked to food security, farmers' livelihoods and the wider rural economy. The administration has directed that complaints related to black marketing, forced tagging and overpricing must result in immediate



registration of FIRs. District administrations have been empowered to take direct action at the field level instead of limiting responses to notices or warnings. To improve monitoring and accountability, a system of surprise inspections has been strengthened across the state. During these checks, fertilizer shops are being examined for stock availability, sales records, rate lists and compliance with prescribed norms. Responsibility

## Over 5,000 shops inspected in two years, daily stock reporting made mandatory across districts

has also been fixed on officials tasked with monitoring the supply chain. Any instance of collusion, negligence or failure to act on complaints is liable to invite disciplinary action.

A daily online stock reporting system has been implemented in all districts. Under this mechanism, fertilizer retailers and warehouses are required to upload details of daily receipts, sales and balance stock. This has improved transparency and enables early identification of potential shortages at the block or district level, allowing timely administrative intervention.

Data from the past two years shows that more than 5,000

fertilizer shops have been inspected across Uttar Pradesh. As a result, hundreds of licences have been suspended or cancelled after irregularities were detected, and penalties have been imposed in several cases. Officials have been instructed that enforcement should lead to visible improvement on the ground rather than remain limited to official records.

The government has also clarified that there is no shortage of fertilizers for the Rabi season 2025-26. According to official figures, total availability of urea, DAP and NPK in the state exceeds 130 lakh metric tonnes. Authorities have noted that creating artificial shortages despite adequate stock will be treated as a deliberate criminal act.

Farmers have been advised to report any instances of black marketing or overpricing to the administration without delay.

## SIRD trains officials and teachers



LUCKNOW

The Deendayal Upadhyaya State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Bakshi Ka Talab, is conducting specialised training programmes for government and semi-government officials, teachers and professionals associated with developmental work. The programmes are being organised under the guidance of Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya.

Under the institutional supervision of Director General L. Venkateshwar Lu and administrative guidance of Additional Director Subodh Dixit, two major training programmes were held at the

## Focus on "Learning by Doing", Mission Karmayogi and hospital disaster management planning

institute. From December 15 to 17, a training programme on "Learning by Doing" was organised for 91 teachers and officials from primary and upper primary schools. In parallel, a five-day residential programme on "Hospital Disaster Management and Planning" is being conducted from December 15 to 19 in collaboration with the Relief Commissioner's office for officers of the revenue, police and fire services.

## Winter Session: SIR and Codeine syrup to dominate assembly

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Assembly's winter session will begin on December 19, with major issues such as SIR and the alleged misuse of codeine-based cough syrup expected to be raised. An all-party meeting chaired by the Chief Minister ahead of the session saw opposition parties expressing concern over the limited duration of the sittings, arguing that it may not allow adequate discussion on key legislation.

According to the official schedule, the session will open with an obituary reference on December 19. December 20 and 21 will be holidays. The House will reconvene on December 22, when proceedings will begin at 11 am. A five-



hour discussion on 'Vande Mataram' is scheduled for the same day, making it one of the longest single-item debates of the session.

The Finance Minister is set to present the second supplementary demands for grants for the financial year 2025-26, followed by discussion on supplementary appropriations. Voting on these demands and passage of the related appropriation bill are scheduled for

December 24. In total, five bills are proposed to be introduced during the five working days of the session.

Opposition leaders have indicated they will raise issues related to SIR, alleged trafficking and misuse of codeine syrup, inflation, unemployment, and law and order. The government has assured that future Assembly sessions will be of longer duration to allow more detailed deliberations.

## Maulana Kalbe Jawad honored with Khomeini international award

LUCKNOW



Maulana Kalbe Jawad Naqvi, General Secretary of Majlis-e-Ulama-e-Hind, received the inaugural 'Imam Khomeini International Award' in Iran. President Masoud Pezeshkian presented the honor for Naqvi's promotion of Imam Khomeini's principles in India. Naqvi thanked Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and the Iranian government for the recognition.

## Akhilesh targets government on multiple fronts

LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party national president Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday questioned the ongoing investigation into the alleged codeine-based cough syrup scam and accused the state government of being complicit with those involved. Addressing a press conference at the party office in Lucknow along with party legislators, he said the issue was not limited to Uttar Pradesh but had wider national and international implications.

Akhilesh alleged that the scale of the scam had expanded from initial estimates of around 100 crore to figures running into thousands of crores. He raised concerns over the role of the Special Task Force (STF), claiming that



## SP chief raises SIR, vote deletion allegations, seeks EC intervention

the investigation lacked neutrality due to the posting of officers from the same district and community. He also questioned how an accused linked to the case could allegedly evade action.

The SP chief said his party

would raise several issues during the upcoming winter session of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, including inflation, unemployment, law and order, the SIR process, pollution, and the alleged misuse of state machinery during elections. On SIR, he alleged irregularities in voter deletions and demanded that the Election Commission take suo motu cognisance of statements made by political leaders regarding vote cuts.

## LDA housing project sparks environmental debate

LUCKNOW

The Lucknow Development Authority's (LDA) proposed residential and commercial housing scheme near the Gomti River has triggered concerns among environmentalists and local residents, who fear it could endanger the river's ecological balance. The project is planned on around 43 acres of land in Gomti Nagar Extension Sector-7, close to the riverbank.

Environmental experts argue that areas near rivers are part of the floodplain and should remain free from construction. They claim that allowing housing projects so close to the Gomti could disrupt natural water flow, increase flood risks, and cause long-term environmental damage. Some activists have warned that if the project is not halted, they may approach



## Environmentalists warn of potential threat to Gomti's floodplain as project planned close to riverbank

the court.

LDA officials, however, have defended the project, stating that it follows the provisions of the Building Construction and Development Byelaws 2025. According to the authority, the land lies beyond the restricted flood zone, and construction will begin only after a green belt is developed on 15 percent of the surrounding area.

## Fog paralyzes state: Late trains, grounded flights, schools rescheduled

UP State Bureau

LUCKNOW

A cold wave and dense fog have severely impacted daily life in Uttar Pradesh. On Thursday morning, thick fog blanketed nearly 30 districts, including Prayagraj, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, and Ayodhya. The minimum temperature plunged to 6°C, while visibility dropped to less than 50 meters in several areas. According to the Meteorological Department, a western disturbance and cold winds have intensified the chill.

The fog has most affected rail and air traffic. Over 50 trains were delayed by several hours at multiple stations, including Lucknow, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, and Etawah. Seven flights were canceled from Varanasi Airport, while several others were delayed or



## Schools' timings changed in multiple districts as cold wave and poor visibility disrupt daily life across the state

diverted. Poor visibility continues to persistently disrupt flight operations.

In view of the cold wave, school timings have been altered in several districts. In most districts, schools up to

class 8 are operating from 10 a.m., while in Lucknow, schools up to class 12 will begin at 9 a.m. Orders have also been issued to keep schools closed in some districts until December 20.

According to the Regional Meteorological Centre, Lucknow, dense fog is likely to persist in eastern and western Uttar Pradesh until December 20. The department has advised drivers to remain cautious and avoid non-essential travel.

## State consumer commission hit by staff shortage

LUCKNOW

The State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission is facing a serious operational crisis, with only one court currently functioning against a sanctioned strength of five. As a result, nearly 15,000 consumer cases are pending, and litigants are receiving hearing dates months apart, raising concerns over access to timely justice.

The commission, located in Gomti Nagar, requires each bench to have one presiding judicial member and one technical member to conduct hearings. Over time, judicial members and panel members retired one after another, leading to the gradual closure of four courts. At present, only the bench headed by Commission President Justice Ajay Kumar Srivastava, along with member Sudha



## Four out of five benches shut due to retirements, consumers face long wait for justice

Upadhyay, is hearing cases.

With a single bench in operation, the commission is able to hear only about 100 to 125 cases daily, which is insufficient given the volume of pending matters. Appeals from district consumer commissions across the state are heard here, further adding to the workload.

## UP to mark Atal Jayanti with statewide campaign

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government will organise a statewide cleanliness campaign on December 25 as part of the concluding programme of the centenary celebrations of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary. The special drive will be held across the state following instructions issued by the Chief Minister.

According to official information, the campaign aims to promote the message of cleanliness and collective

civic responsibility, aligning with the broader vision of a clean and self-reliant India. The initiative will be implemented simultaneously in urban and rural areas to ensure statewide participation.

The responsibility for conducting the special cleanliness drive has been assigned to Local Urban Bodies and the Panchayati Raj Department. While municipal bodies will oversee activities in towns and cities, the Panchayati Raj Department will coordinate the programme in villages, ensuring coverage at the grass-



roots level.

As part of the campaign, cleanliness activities will be carried out at public places, roads, markets, government offices, educational institutions and Gram Panchayat premises. Officials stated that

## Cleanliness activities, competitions and cultural programmes planned at district and state levels

public representatives, government workers, voluntary organisations, youth groups and local residents will be encouraged to actively participate in the drive.

The programme is intended to strengthen public awareness about cleanliness and

civic duties while marking the conclusion of the Atal Jayanti Centenary Year. The government has indicated that the initiative also seeks to engage the younger generation and highlight democratic values, social responsibility and public service.

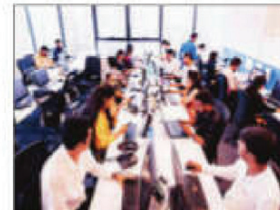
In addition to the cleanliness campaign, several activities are being organised at district and state levels. At the district level, competitions such as essay writing, speech, painting and poetry recitation are scheduled to be held between December 18 and December 22.

## 1.5 lakh jobs to be made available in 2026

LUCKNOW

In a major employment push, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has approved a plan to recruit 1.5 lakh personnel into government services in 2026. This initiative is designed to fulfill a historic milestone of providing 10 lakh government jobs within 10 years, making it the first administration in Uttar Pradesh's history to reach such a scale.

The recruitment drive will be led by the Police and Education departments, each offering 50,000 posts. In the



police force, the intake includes 30,000 constables and 5,000 sub-inspectors. The Education department will fill vacancies for assistant teachers, lecturers, and principals. Additionally, the Revenue department will recruit 20,000 personnel, primarily for Lekhpal positions.



## Briefs

## Bill's passage raises hopes for Bolsonaro

Brazil's Senate has passed a bill that could significantly reduce the 27-year prison sentence of former President **Jair Bolsonaro**, who was arrested in November for attempting a coup. The Chamber of Deputies had already approved the text, and it now goes to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva for signature.

## Oli 3rd time lucky, gets reelected

Ousted Nepal PM KP Sharma Oli was on Thursday elected as the CPN-UML's chairman for the third consecutive term with a two-thirds majority. Oli was elected the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) chairman in a contest held three months after his government was forced to resign following a student-led protest. During the 11th general convention of the party that concluded on Thursday, Oli secured 1,663 votes against his opponent Ishwor Pokharel, who received 584 votes, party sources said.

## Fresh clashes between Af, Pak in Kunar

Fresh clashes erupted between the forces of Afghanistan and Pakistan in Kunar as the two sides engaged in exchange of fire along the border, local media reported citing local residents. The clashes reportedly started on Wednesday after Pakistani forces fired rockets into Afghanistan territory. Taliban forces retaliated to the attack launched by the Pakistani forces, Afghanistan's Khaama Press reported. Pakistan and Afghanistan have not yet issued a statement.

## PIO cabbie rapes woman as she faints

An Indian-origin cab driver has been accused of raping an unconscious passenger in California, US. **Simranjit Singh Sekhon**, 35, was arrested following a probe into the sexual assault of a 21-year-old adult woman.

Police believe Sekhon, a resident of Bakersfield, may have additional unreported victims. He reportedly picked up the victim from a Thousand Oaks bar at 1am on November 27 to drive her home in Camarillo. "The female was intoxicated and unable to care for herself," police said.

## Pak writes to India on Chenab

Pakistan on Thursday voiced concerns over the alleged variations in the flow of the Chenab river, saying it has written a letter to India seeking clarification. "Our Indus Water Commissioner has written a letter to Indian counterpart seeking clarification on the matters in accordance with the procedures enshrined in the IWT," Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said. India put the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 in "abeyance" after the Pahalgam terror attack. Meanwhile, Islamabad High Court sacked one of its judges over an "invalid" educational degree. Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri was appointed as an IHC judge in Sept 2020. The issue of first came up in July 2024 when lawyer Mian Dawood challenged the law degree he got from the Univ of Karachi in 1989.

## YEAREND SPEECH | US prez lists his second term successes: cracking down on immigration, ending 8 wars, creating jobs

## INHERITED A MESS, &amp; I'M FIXING IT: TRUMP

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump touted his administration's successes on immigration and in ending eight wars as he listed the various accomplishments of his second term in the White House in a year-end address to the nation.

"Eleven months ago, I inherited a mess, and I'm fixing it," Trump said as he began his 19-minute special prime time address to the nation on Wednesday.

Trump listed his administration's achievements since he took office for a second term in January this year, including securing the border, "reverse migration", bringing prices down, ending conflicts, using tariffs to bring billions of dollars into the country, enabling job creation and cracking down on immigration. "I've restored American strength, settled eight wars in 10 months, destroyed the Iran nuclear threat and ended the war in Gaza, bringing for the first time in 3,000 years peace to the Middle East, and secured the release of the hostages, both living and dead," Trump said.

He also touted his administration's success in dealing with migrants coming into the



## MOCK TALES

The White House has unveiled new plaques beneath portraits of ex-presidents that mock Trump's recent predecessors:

**Joe Biden:** His photo has been replaced by the image of an autopen. Plaque reads: 'Sleepy Joe Biden was, by far, the worst president in American history'

**Barack Obama:** 'One of the most divisive political figures in US history'

**Bill Clinton:** 'In 2016, President Clinton's wife, Hillary, lost presidency to President Donald Trump!'

**George W Bush:** A fellow Republican, but not a Trump supporter. 'Started wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, both of which should not have happened'

country from around the world, taking up American jobs and driving up housing costs. Trump said the Biden administration and its allies in Congress brought in "millions and millions" of migrants and gave them taxpayer-funded housing, while the rent and

housing costs for Americans skyrocketed.

In the year before his election, all net creation of jobs was going to foreign migrants. "Since I took office, 100% of all net job creation has gone to American-born citizens. Hundred per cent," he said.

## BONUS FOR TROOPS

Trump said he was sending a \$1,776 bonus cheque to 1.45 million US military service members for Christmas.

## FBI NO.2 TO QUIT

FBI Dy Director Dan Bongino said he will resign next month. He had clashed with Justice dept over Epstein files. Jeffrey Epstein's ex-girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell asked a federal judge to set aside her sex trafficking conviction and free her from a 20-year jail term, saying "substantial new evidence" has emerged proving that constitutional violations spoiled her trial.

## DRUG BOAT HIT, 4 DEAD

The US military hit a boat accused of smuggling drugs in Pacific Ocean, killing 4 people. Meanwhile, the House rejected bids to limit Trump's power to use force against drug cartels.

## US OKs \$11bn arms package for Taiwan

**Taipei/ Washington:** The US has okayed an \$11.1 billion arms package for Taiwan, the largest-ever US weapons sale to the island, as military pressure from China continues to intensify, as per announcements on Wednesday.

It marks the second arms sale to Taiwan under Trump's current administration. The proposed package includes 8 items such as HIMARS rocket systems, howitzers, Javelin anti-tank missiles, Altius loitering munition drones and parts for other defence equipment, Taiwan's defence ministry said. "The US continues to assist Taiwan in maintaining sufficient self-defence capabilities and in rapidly building strong deterrent power and leveraging asymmetric warfare advantages, which form the foundation for maintaining regional peace and stability," the ministry said.

The arms package is now at the Congressional notification stage, during which the US Congress can block or modify the sale, though Taiwan enjoys broad bipartisan support in Washington.

The Pentagon said the sales serve US national, economic and security interests by supporting Taiwan's efforts to modernise its armed forces and maintain a "credible defensive capability". China sharply criticised the US, saying its move "grossly violates" the one-China principle and infringes on its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.

## 'Wanted to get the attacker down' PIO, 34, helped restrain Bondi Beach shooter

MELBOURNE

A 34-year-old Indian-origin man who helped restrain one of the alleged shooters of the Bondi Beach attack in Australia said he wanted to help bring one of the assailants down and assist anyone who needed help.

**Amandeep Singh-Bola**, born in New Zealand to Indian and Kiwi parents, helped tackle suspect Sajid Akram, SBS News reported.

Singh-Bola ran onto the bridge where the alleged shooter was firing at people, pinning him down with the help of a police officer. "I jumped on top of [the shooter] and grabbed his arms. The police officer helped me and said not to let him go," the report said. "I wanted to help get one of [the alleged shooters] down, or just help anybody that needed help," he said.

Singh-Bola, who initially dismissed the gunshots as fireworks, was eating a kebab and watching the sunset over the beach when the shooting occurred. "It was almost like tunnel vision — just trying to hide behind things and not

## Suspects barely left Philippines hotel

The father and son suspected of carrying out Bondi massacre holed up in a hotel for most of their almost month-long stay in the Philippines in November, rarely left their rooms and dined on fast food, a hotel employee told CNN. Sajid and Naveed Akram would only venture outside the building for almost one hour per day, every day, before returning to their rooms, said the hotel staff member who gave his name only as Jun. They had no visitors during their stay at the hotel in the southern city of Davao, according to the witness.

be seen, just trying to find out where he was. Once I saw where he was, nothing else really mattered," the personal trainer said. Singh-Bola said police had shot the alleged gunman, and while he lay on top of him, he could feel the shooter dying. Asserting he was not sick from the blood when he got up, Singh-Bola said, "I had just smashed back a kebab with spicy sauce on it, so I was actually sick from the run down."

## 'Dr Death': Killer of 12 sent to jail

PARIS

A French court has found anaesthetist Frédéric Péchier, 53, guilty of intentionally poisoning 30 patients and killing 12 over almost a decade, sentencing him to life in prison. Prosecutors described him as "Dr Death" and "one of the biggest criminals in the history of the French legal system".

State prosecutor Christine de Curraize told the court Péchier was a "serial killer" who was "highly twisted" and poisoned patients by tampering with paracetamol bags or anaesthesia pouches, triggering cardiac arrests. Another prosecutor, Thérèse Brunisso, said Péchier was not a doctor "but a criminal who used medicine to kill". His victims were aged



between 4 and 89, 'The Guardian' reports. The three-month trial examined incidents at private clinics in Besançon between 2008 and 2017, where more than 70 "serious adverse events" were reviewed. Prosecutors said Péchier poisoned patients to damage colleagues with whom he was in conflict, later resuscitating some victims to appear "all powerful". De Curraize said he had a "need for power" and that killing became "a way of life". Péchier denied the charges, saying: "I have never poisoned anyone ... I am not a poisoner." Victims' families described lasting trauma. Teddy's father said, "What happened to us is a nightmare. We trusted medicine and we feel betrayed."

## Noted scribe dies at 91

**Los Angeles:** Peter Arnett, the Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter who spent decades dodging bullets and bombs to bring the world eyewitness accounts of war from the rice paddies of Vietnam to the deserts of Iraq, has died. He was 91.

Arnett, who won the 1966 Pulitzer Prize for international reporting for his Vietnam War coverage for AP, died on Wednesday in Newport Beach, said his son Andrew Arnett. He had been suffering from prostate cancer.

"Peter Arnett was one of the greatest war correspondents of his generation — intrepid, fearless, and a beautiful writer and storyteller. His reporting in print and on camera will remain a legacy for aspiring journalists and historians for generations to come," said Edith Lederer, a fellow AP war correspondent in Vietnam.



## Belgium seeks protection from Russian retaliation

BRUSSELS

Belgium insisted on Thursday its EU partners must provide ironclad guarantees it will be protected from Russian retaliation before it would back a massive loan for Ukraine.

At a high-stakes EU summit in Brussels, the 27-nation bloc's leaders are set to decide on whether to use tens of billions of euros in frozen Russian assets to underwrite a loan to meet Ukraine's military and financial needs over the next two years. The bulk of the assets — some 193 billion Euros (\$227 billion) as of September — are held in the Brussels-based financial clearing house Euroclear.

Russia's Central Bank sued Euroclear last week. "Give me a parachute and we'll all jump together," Prime Minister Bart De Wever told members of

## EU leaders weigh massive loan for Kyiv

the Belgian parliament just before the summit began. "If we have confidence in the parachute that shouldn't be a problem."

**FROZEN ASSETS ANGLE** Belgium fears Russia will strike back and would prefer the bloc borrow the money on international markets. It wants frozen assets held in other European countries to be thrown into the pot as well, and for its partners to guarantee that Euroclear will have the funds it needs should it come under legal attack.

European officials say Russia is waging a campaign of sabotage and disruption across the continent. The Central Bank lawsuit ramped up pressure on Belgium and its European partners ahead of the summit. The "reparati-

ons loan" plan would see the EU give 90 billion Euros (\$106 bn) to Ukraine. Nations like the UK, Canada and Norway would make up any shortfall.

## RUSSIA PREPARING FOR ANOTHER YEAR OF WAR: ZELENSKY

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia is preparing "the coming year as a year of war", despite ongoing US-brokered peace talks to end Moscow's full-scale invasion of its neighbour.

Zelenskyy said Russian President Vladimir Putin sent "signals" of Moscow's aggressive intent in remarks on Wednesday, saying the bellicose comments were intended "not only for us". Also, Ukraine may need to cut drone production if no deal reached on frozen Russian assets.



## Xmas greeting

Prince William and Princess of Wales Katherine released a new family portrait which features on their 2025 Christmas card. Their children, Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis, feature in the photo. A post shared by them on social media reads: "Wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas."

## US govt admits negligence in Jan copter-plane crash that killed 67

**Washington:** The government on Wednesday admitted the Federal Aviation Administration and the Army played a role in causing the collision last January between an airliner and a Black Hawk helicopter near the nation's capital, killing 67 people.

The official response to the first lawsuit filed by one of the victims' families said the government is liable in the crash partly because the air traffic controller violated procedures that night.

The filing suggested others, including the pilots also played a role.

The lawsuit also blamed

**At least 28 bodies were pulled out of the icy waters of the Potomac River after the copter apparently flew into the path of the American Airlines regional jet while it was landing at Ronald Reagan Airport in Virginia**

American Airlines and its regional partner, PSA Airlines, for the crash, but those airlines have filed motions to dismiss.

At least 28 bodies were pulled out of the icy waters of the Potomac River after the

helicopter apparently flew into the path of the American Airlines regional jet while it was landing at Ronald Reagan National Airport in Virginia, officials said.

The plane carried 60 passengers and four crew members, and three soldiers were aboard the helicopter.

One of the attorneys for the family of Casey Crafton, Robert Clifford, said the government "rightfully acknowledges" it's not the only one responsible for the crash.

Clifford said his team would continue to investigate the crash and awaits findings from a Jan 26 NTSB hearing.

## ties with other kids cut

## China painter, 87, welcomes son with wife, 37

SHANGHAI

Shanghai-based contemporary Chinese painter Fan Zeng, 87, has again drawn public attention after announcing the birth of his only biological son with his wife, Xu Meng, 37, while formally cutting ties with other children amid ongoing family disputes and theft allegations.

Fan, one of China's most



valuable living artists, has seen his works generate more than four billion yuan (US \$567 million) in sales between 2008 and 2024, according to QQ.com. At least 10 of his paintings have sold for over 10 million yuan, including a 1991 work that fetched 18.4 million yuan at a Beijing auction in 2011. A renowned calligrapher as well, Fan's calligraphy reportedly sells for around 200,000 yuan (US \$28,000) per

0.11 square metre, the 'South China Morning Post' reports.

On December 11, Fan announced the birth of his son, born to Xu. "Recently, I welcomed a son, my sole child. I have also moved into a new house. My wife, our son, and I form a very happy family," he wrote on social media. He added, "Given my old age, I have entrusted my beloved wife Xu Meng to manage all internal and exter-

nal family matters from now on. Others have no right to interfere."

Fan also declared a complete break from his daughter Fan Xiaohui, his stepson Fan Zhongda, and their families, stating: "I revoke all trust, authorisation, and collaboration arrangements with them. They are not permitted to use my name for any future activities. If they do, I will hold them accountable."

## After yrs, smog back in Beijing

**Beijing:** Beijing was shrouded in heavy smog on Thursday with AQI climbing to "very unhealthy" levels of 215, a rare spike in pollution in the Chinese capital after years of expensive cleaning up.

China's national observatory on Wednesday issued a yellow alert for heavy fog in parts of the country, saying thick fog is expected to shroud Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu, Hubei, the Sichuan Basin and Chongqing on Thursday.

The smog with polluted air quality is rare these days in Beijing, which used to witness heavy pollution before the government initiated steps.



# Saumya pens heartfelt note for Akshaye

Saumya Tandon praises Akshaye Khanna's performance in *Dhurandhar*, recalling first-day shoot and celebrating their on-screen chemistry and collaboration

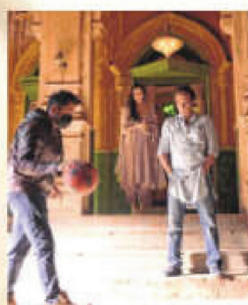
Actress Saumya Tandon shared a warm and heartfelt post for her *Dhurandhar* co-star Akshaye Khanna as she recalled her experience of working with him in Ranveer Singh's blockbuster film. As *Dhurandhar* continues to receive critical and audience appreciation, performances by both Saumya and Akshaye have been receiving praise.

In *Dhurandhar*, Saumya played the wife of Akshaye Khanna's character, Rehman Dakait. While Akshaye has been praised for his intense and restrained portrayal, Saumya's nuanced performance has also drawn attention for its quiet strength and impact. Taking to social media on Thursday, Saumya revisited her very first day on the sets of *Dhurandhar* and described the nervous excitement she felt while shooting with Akshaye.

She wrote, "The very first scene I shot for *Dhurandhar*, in Amritsar-Rehman Dakait's haveli. It was Nov last year- I was a mix of nerves and excitement. My first morning shot was with Akshay lighting his cigarette, silently urging him to take revenge."

She went on to shower praise on Akshaye, calling him a rare and gifted performer. "Akshay Khanna is pure magic. We barely had a chance to talk, but the moment the camera rolled, there was an instant connection. I truly feel we share a wonderful chemistry," she wrote, and explained how their on-screen bond came naturally despite limited interaction off camera. Saumya Tandon further described working with Akshaye as a learning experience. "It's an absolute dream to have a co-actor like him - such a pure artist, with so much to learn from. More than anything, it's a joy to perform with someone of his calibre," she added.

Concluding her note on an emotional and hopeful note, Saumya expressed her wish to collaborate with Akshaye again in the future. "I truly hope we're paired together again someday. Praying," she wrote.



Directed by Aditya Dhar, the film also stars Ranveer Singh, R Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Sara Arjun, Sanjay Dutt, Rakesh Bedi and others.

## Malti: He tried to kiss me & I froze

Bigg Boss 19's Malti Chahar recalls shocking casting couch experience with elderly filmmaker

Cricketer Deepak Chahar's sister and actress-filmmaker Malti Chahar, who was recently seen on Salman Khan's *Bigg Boss 19*, opened up about her experiences in the entertainment industry, including an unsettling incident related to casting couch. After stepping out of the *Bigg Boss* house, Malti shed light on both her reality show journey and her struggles in the film industry during an interview.

In a recent interaction with Siddharth Kannan, Malti addressed the issue of casting couch and revealed that she has faced uncomfortable situations during her career. She shared that on one occasion, an elderly and well-known filmmaker allegedly tried to forcibly kiss her, leaving her shocked and disturbed.

Speaking about casting couch experiences, Malti said that such incidents do happen in the industry. "Yes, sometimes it happens. Once or twice, people may try their luck," she said, adding that many people gauge a person's boundaries through body language.

"People here are very smart. They understand your nature and your body language. One or two people crossed the line, one even misbehaved, but most understood my boundaries," she stated.

Malti also mentioned that her upbringing played a role in how she handled such situations. She noted that her father served in the Indian Air Force, and that discipline and clarity reflect in her behaviour and conversations, which often deter people from crossing limits.

During the same conversation, Malti claimed that girls should assume that some men may misuse their power or position. "Girls should not fall for sweet talk. They should stay alert," she said, adding that awareness and strong boundaries are crucial.

Recalling the specific incident with the filmmaker, Malti revealed that she used to meet him frequently in connection with a project.



## Mahurat glimpses of *Aakhri Sawal*

National Award-winning director Abhijeet Mohan Warang unveils *Aakhri Sawal* mahurat glimpses, revealing untold pre-Independence stories with an ensemble cast

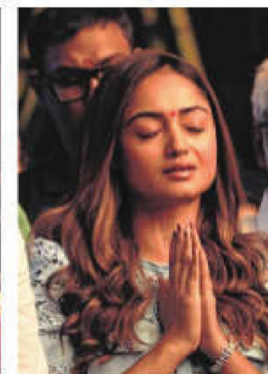
Nirvikar Films has released the mahurat glimpses of *Aakhri Sawal*, directed by National Award-winning filmmaker Abhijeet Mohan Warang. The historical drama features an ensemble cast including Sanjay Dutt, Neetu Chandra, Amit Sadh, Sameera Reddy, and others.

The film promises to unveil untold truths from the pre-Independence era, going beyond conventional historical narratives and textbook accounts. Rooted in real events, *Aakhri Sawal* explores a pivotal meeting that changed the course of Bharat's history.

Abhijeet Mohan Warang, known



for his Marathi debut *Picasso* and acclaimed works like *Deja Vu* and *Prem Pratha Dhumshan*, brings his signature storytelling to this ambitious project. Produced under Nirvikar Films



and Nikhil Nanda Motion Pictures, with writing by Utkarsh Naithani and co-production by Dr. Deepak Singh and Purna Arora, the film aims to present an unbiased, cinematic portrayal of history.

The team expressed excitement as they kick-start their journey, inviting audiences to witness a story that has remained hidden for decades.

## KGF co-director Kirtan loses his son

The Kannada film industry has been shaken by tragic news. *KGF: Chapter 2* co-director Kirtan Nadagouda has lost his four-year-old son, Chiranjeevi Sonarsh K. Nadagouda.

According to a report by News18 Kannada, the heartbreaking incident occurred three days ago when young Sonarsh entered an elevator without his parents' knowledge. He reportedly got trapped inside the lift, which led to a fatal fall. Despite the rescue team's efforts, the child could not be saved.

Kirtan confirmed the devastating news of his son's demise to NewsFirst. Following the tragic incident, Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan expressed his heartfelt condolences. Taking to X, he wrote, "The demise of director Shri Kirthan Naadagoud Kumar's son has caused profound grief. The tragedy that has struck the family of Shri Keerthan Naadagoud, who is known as a director in Telugu and Kannada languages, has left us in deep sorrow. Shri Keerthan's son, Chiranjeevi Sonarsh K. Naadagoud, has met with a tragic end (sic)."

He further prayed for the couple, Kirthan and Smt. Samruddhi, asking for mental "fortitude to recover from the grief of losing their son."



Teaser of Mrunal Thakur and Adivi Sesh's *Dacoit* released, showcasing high-octane action, heist plot and Anurag Kashyap's cameo



## Mrunal, Adivi starrer *Dacoit* teaser out

The makers of Mrunal Thakur and Adivi Sesh's starrer *Dacoit* have finally released the teaser of the film, offering a glimpse into high-octane action scenes featuring the lead duo. The film is directed by Shanel Deo. Apart from the lead duo, the film also stars director Anurag Kashyap in a prominent role. The teaser opened with Adivi Sesh, who is apparently planning a heist with Mrunal Thakur to teach a lesson to those who wronged them.

In the video, Mrunal Thakur was seen driving a car rashly, while Adivi Sesh was seen performing high-octane action scenes in the film. Adivi Sesh shared the video on his Instagram handle.

Shot simultaneously in Hindi and Telugu, the film's story and screenplay have been jointly crafted by Adivi Sesh and Shanel Deo. On being part of the film, Anurag said that this role is both fun and challenging for him, and that achieving the same impact in both languages is a challenge he is thoroughly enjoying.

"Playing a police officer who is an Ayyappa devotee is both fun and challenging. The conundrums of duty versus dharma, and to go about doing his job with a dry sense of humour, is fantastic. I am truly looking forward to playing this character in two languages, shooting in Hindi, as well as in Telugu. To get the same impact in both languages is the challenging part, something I am thoroughly enjoying," he said in a press note. The film is slated to release in theatres on March 19, 2026.





## Briefs

AHMEDABAD

## Gill reaches Ahmedabad with Team



**Shubman Gill** arrived here on Thursday with the Indian team for the fifth and final T20I against South Africa, even though he is under injury cloud after copping a blow to his toe in the lead-up to the fourth match. Gill was set to miss Wednesday's fourth T20I in Lucknow after he was injured in the nets but poor weather conditions forced the match to be abandoned. It remains to be seen if Gill, who has also struggled for runs, would be available for selection for the fifth T20I to be played here on Friday, or would Sanju Samson be picked in place of the Indian vice-captain. Gill had earlier missed the majority of the Test series against the Proteas due to a neck injury he had suffered in the series opener in Kolkata, which had also ruled him out of the three-match ODI series later.

PUNE

## Kishan lifts Jharkhand to maiden title



Out-of-favour India wicketkeeper-batter **Ishan Kishan** made a compelling case for a T20I recall with a belligerent hundred to power Jharkhand to their maiden Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy title with a 69-run victory over Haryana here on Thursday. Kishan went on a six-hitting spree, smashing 10 maximums en route to a breathtaking 49-ball 101, as Jharkhand piled up an imposing 262 for 3. Jharkhand bowlers, led by medium pacer Anukul Roy, then struck twice in his opening over while his team applied the brakes with regular wickets to bowl out Haryana for 193, despite a fighting half-century from wicketkeeper-batter Yashvardhan Dalal (53). Roy also also smashed a 20-ball 40.

KARACHI

## Pak kabbadi star plays for Indian team



A popular Pakistani international kabbadi player, **Ubaiddullah Rajput**, faces the prospect of a severe disciplinary action after he appeared for an Indian team in a private tournament in

## FIFTH T20I | Concerns mount around SKY and Shubman's form

## India look to seal series against plucky Proteas

AHMEDABAD

India would hope that the challenging home assignment against South Africa, which has exposed a few chinks in the armour and thrown up difficult questions on selection, ends on a positive note when the two sides clash in the fifth and final T20I International here on Friday.

After being blanked 0-2 in the Tests, India bounced back to win the ODI series and now have an unassailable lead 2-1 in the T20Is after the fourth game was abandoned due to poor weather conditions in Lucknow on Wednesday.

That India cannot lose the series should be comforting to embattled head coach Gautam Gambhir given that the other two leaders in the camp -- skipper Suryakumar Yadav and his deputy Shubman Gill -- are battling challenges of their own with less than two months to go for the T20 World Cup.

For someone who was ranked world No.1 not so long ago, Suryakumar's form has sharply nosedived in the only format he is assured a place in the XI for India.

Having gone through 18 innings in 20 matches this year without a single half-century while averaging a poor 14.20 for his 213 runs, every failure for Suryakumar is adding to the concerns of the Indian camp.

Adding to it is the Gill conundrum.

Gill's return as vice-captain in the T20I format might have been perceived as one which put Suryakumar on notice a few months ago, but the former's



India's captain Suryakumar Yadav (C) Harshit Rana (R), in Lucknow on Wednesday. PTI

ordinary run with the bat since his comeback and the latest injury setback only hampers the team's cause.

A toe injury suffered before the fourth T20I is set to keep Gill out of the final T20I here as India would want to take a cautious route, more so when there is a ready replacement for the top order slot in Sanju Samson.

Earlier, Gill had missed most of the two-Test affair following an injury to his neck which he suffered in the series-opener in Kolkata, something that also highlighted his busy schedule and growing list of responsibilities in Indian cricket across formats.

Samson was never the right fit in the lower order as the lowest he has batted apart from the top slot is at No.5, where the right-handed batter has scored a mere 138 runs in eight matches at an average of 23.

But each of his three T20I centuries and one half-century have come at the top slot in 14 innings, and in case of Gill's unavailability for the final game, the Kerala wicket-keeper-batter would be keen to make it count.

Aside from this, India have a settled unit with both the all-rounders, Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube, featuring in all three games so far. In the pace attack, Arshdeep Singh is coming into his elements and is also beginning to forge a

## Squads:

**India:** Suryakumar Yadav (c), Shubman Gill (vc), Sanju Samson (wk), Jitesh Sharma (wk), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Hardik Pandya, Shahbaz Ahmed, Washington Sundar, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Harshit Rana, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy.

**South Africa:** Aiden Markram (c), Dewald Brevis, Quinton de Kock (wk), Reeza Hendricks, David Miller, Tristan Stubbs, Corbin Bosch, Donovan Ferreira, Marco Jansen, George Linde, Ottneil Baartman, Keshav Maharaj, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Lutho Sipamla.

partnership with Harshit Rana with the ball.

Meanwhile, Jasprit Bumrah, who missed the third T20I due to personal reasons, joined the team's camp before the fourth match.

## UPCA to refund ticket prices in Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association (UPCA) on Thursday announced a full refund of ticket prices for spectators after the fourth T20 International between India and South Africa was abandoned due to fog here.

"Spectators who booked tickets online will receive a refund of the ticket amount through their original mode of payment," UPCA secretary, Prem Manohar Gupta, said.

## Lyon moves to 2nd on Oz all-time bowling list

England's struggles continue in the third Ashes Test

ADELAIDE

Nathan Lyon took two wickets to surpass Glenn McGrath at No. 2 on Australia's all-time bowling list, and returning skipper Pat Cummins took his first wickets of the series as a relentless bowling attack kept England in trouble in the third Ashes test.

Australia resumed Day 2 at 326-8 and was out for 371 with Mitchell Starc posting a half-century before Jofra Archer finished off the tailenders to return 5-53, his fourth five-wicket haul in test cricket.

By stumps England had struggled to 213 for eight, still 158 behind.

England was coasting at 37-0 in reply until Cummins struck. Lyon then took two wickets in his first over as England lost three wickets in 15 balls.

It was a struggle the rest of the day for England, which needs to bat long to revive its chances in this five-test series on a pitch and conditions that traditionally favor batting at the Adelaide Oval.

The Australian bowlers and fielders spent most of the day in the field in temperatures hitting 40C (104F), but most of the heat was on England skipper Ben Stokes.

He spent around four hours at the crease, getting hit on the helmet and the body and appearing to struggle with cramping. His mood wasn't helped by more contentious outcomes from the Decision Review System technology.

His defiant, unbeaten 45 from 151 balls and his



Australia's Nathan Lyon (L) celebrates with teammate Mitchell Starc after dismissing England's Ben Duckett during the third Test in Adelaide on Thursday. AP

unbroken 45-run stand with No. 10 Archer (30) at least helped England's innings go into another day.

## Early wickets

Cummins was recovering from a back injury when he missed the wins in Perth and Brisbane which gave Australia a 2-0 series lead. In his first spell on return, he dismissed opener Zak Crawley (9) to trigger a top-order slide.

Lyon was introduced for the 10th over and the 38-year-old offspinner had immediate success with two wickets in four balls to remove Ollie

Pope (3) and Ben Duckett (29) as England slumped to 42-3.

Pope's wicket allowed him to equal retired paceman McGrath's career haul of 563.

Lyon soon bowled Duckett with a drifting delivery that took out off stump. TV coverage showed McGrath in a stadium commentary booth pretending to throw a chair around in mock annoyance.

Only Shane Warne - with 708 wickets in 145 tests from 1992-2007 - is above Lyon on the Australia's list of test wicket-takers.

It was a huge comeback for Lyon, who only bowled two overs in Perth and was omitted from the lineup that won the second test. He bowled 22 overs for figures of 2-51. Cummins had 3-54 and Scott Boland returned 2-31.

## Top 3 Test wicket takers for Australia

708

Shane Warne

564

Nathan Lyon

563

McGrath

## Shiva Shankara's 67 in vain as India A beat India Seniors

Three-match T20 Physical Disability Series concludes

MUMBAI

GS Shiva Shankara scored 67 off 43 balls but his effort went in vain as India A got the better of India Seniors in the third and final match of the Physical Disability T20 series, here on Thursday.

India A, who had lost both the matches of the series here at the Wankhede Stadium, posted 164 for eight in the third match and restricted the India Seniors side for 136 in 19.3 overs.

Nonsola Adil claimed 3/40 while G Prashant and Mohammed Sadiq claimed one wicket apiece for the winning side.

GS Shiva Shankara struck four boundaries and five sixes to revive India Seniors, who had slipped to 38 for five at one stage, but his effort was not enough in averting a defeat. Player of the match in each of the three games were handed ₹11,000 each and the player of the series, India Senior's Wasim Iqbal received ₹21,000 from Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA).

Player of the match in the



final game, Shiva Shankara was thrilled to have got the opportunity to play the series. "It has been a terrific experience to play at the iconic Wankhede Stadium," said Shiva Shankara.

Hailing from Bengaluru, Shiva Shankara plays with only his left-hand and enjoys the challenge of playing at this level. "It is difficult, but I train quite regularly in the gym at least three-four times a week. I play regularly with able bodied cricketers in corporate tournaments and have scored heavily. I can only thank Mr Ravi Kant Chauhan and his team for all their

efforts."

The Player of the Match in each of the three T20Is got Rs 11,000 as prize money while the Player of the Series, India Seniors' Wasim Iqbal, was given a prize money of Rs 21,000 by the MCA.

On organising the series at the iconic Wankhede Stadium, the MCA secretary Dr Umesh Khanvilkar said, "It reflects our collective belief in inclusivity, equality, dignity, and opportunity for every sportsperson, irrespective of physical or intellectual ability. Sport has always been a powerful platform for empowerment."

## Record stand from Latham and Conway gives NZ edge

AP

MOUNT MAUNGANUI

Tom Latham took a close look at the pitch at Bay Oval Thursday and made the inspired decision to bat first.

Inspired ultimately because at stumps New Zealand was 334-1 against West Indies, Devon Conway was 178 not out and night-watchman Jacob Duffy was 9.

Latham and Conway put on 323 for New Zealand's first wicket in a partnership that ended just three overs from stumps when Latham was out for 137. The partnership was New Zealand's second-highest opening stand in tests and the highest for all wickets and all teams in 2025.

Latham faced 245 balls before falling to a slip catch shortly after the arrival of the second new ball. Conway faced 279 deliveries, batted throughout the day and at stumps was approaching his highest test score - his 200 on debut against England in 2021.

Latham's decision to bat first was bold because the pitch was unusually green for Bay Oval.

## Sumit Nagal, Paula Badosa help Eagles decimate Kites in WTL

BENGALURU

Sumit Nagal leaned on his vast experience to overcome the power game of Kites' Dhakshinewar Suresh in the tie-break, keeping the Eagles well on course for the World Tennis League final here on Thursday.

Nothing much separated Nagal and Dhakshinewar in the first 12 games of the men's singles, as they held on to their serves easily.

Nagal relied on a consistent game - cleverly-placed serves and fine angles on ground shots to keep pace with his younger rival.

On the other hand, Dhakshinewar's primary weapon was his massive serve and he followed it up with some crisp approach shots to keep the veteran under pressure.

In the tie-break, Dhakshinewar quickly worked up a 4-1 lead. But couple of unforced errors by the 25-year-old, helped Nagal to level the scores at 4-4.

The 28-year-old then surged to a 6-4 lead but Dhakshinewar executed two brilliant forehand winners to



Sumit Nagal (R) in action in WTL on Thursday.

make the scoreline 6-6, bringing into play the Golden Point for the first time in this edition of the WTL. Nagal won the match 7-6 after a nearly 40-minute intense tussle.

Dhakshinewar received the serve from the deuce court. He made a good return but Nagal retrieved the ball superbly and then eventually finished it with a neat forehand cross-court volley.

Eagles won the day's match emphatically 25-13, for an overall score of 43-34 as points are carried over from the pre-

vious days' tie.

However, Paula Badosa too can claim a large chunk of credit for Eagles' easy win over Kites.

In the women's singles, Badosa dismantled Marta Kostyuk 6-1 to give the Eagles a lighting start to the day.

Badosa then teamed up with Gael Monfils to beat Eagles' Dhakshinewar and Kostyuk 6-3 in the mixed doubles. Later, Monfils and Nagal outwitted Nick Kyrgios and Dhakshinewar 6-3 in the men's doubles.

## WADA's 2024 Testing Report

## India has highest positivity rate among major nations

NEW DELHI

There seems no end in sight to India's doping woes with the country throwing up the highest number of violators among nations which conducted 5,000 or more tests in the World Anti-Doping Agency's Testing Figures Report for 2024.

As per the WADA report, India conducted 7113 tests (6576 urine samples and 537 blood samples) last year, which threw up 260 adverse

analytical findings, accounting for a positivity rate of 3.6 per cent, the highest among all major countries.

India's poor doping record would be among the major concerns when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) evaluates its bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games in near future.

"...this position may appear concerning at both national and international levels, it is essential to underscore that the figures are a direct out-

come of India's intensified anti-doping efforts, marked by expanded testing and stronger detection mechanisms rather than a surge in doping prevalence," stated a note from the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) as it sought to explain the continued high rate of positivity.

In the 2023 testing figures, India's positivity rate stood at 3.8 per cent after 213 adverse results from 5606 tests.

China, which conducted a whopping 24,214 tests in 2024, showed a positivity rate



of just 0.2 per cent. The US anti-doping agency did a lesser number of tests than India, 6592 in total, and had a positivity rate of 1.1 per cent.

Russia, which has been ostracized globally for its failure to tackle doping, conducted 10,514 tests and returned a positivity rate of

As per the WADA report, India conducted 7113 tests (6576 urine samples and 537 blood samples) last year, which threw up 260 adverse analytical findings, accounting for a positivity rate of 3.6 per cent, the highest among all major countries.

0.7 per cent with just 76 adverse results. A few countries like Pakistan and Mongolia have higher positivity rates than India but they tested very less number of samples. In 2025, NADA said it has so far conducted 7068 tests with a positivity rate of 1.5 per cent after a

relatively lower adverse results count of 110.

In comparative analysis, the numbers released for 2024 indicate a marginal improvement in the positivity rate but overall, it remains too high and keeps India at the pinnacle of a list no country would want to be

seen in. "In recent years, India has witnessed a significant strengthening of its anti-doping framework. To tackle the menace of doping in sports NADA India has not only increased the number of tests but also has increased the emphasis on education and awareness," NADA said.

"The available data reflects that the overall anti-doping ecosystem is becoming more robust, with improvements visible across testing, awareness, and preventive mechanisms," it added.