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

Briefs

KOLKATA

Sandeshkhali mob attacks police, 9 held

Six policemen were injured and a police vehicle vandalised in a mob attack during an attempt to arrest a TMC worker in Sandeshkhali, once again pushing the coastal block into political focus ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections. The incident occurred on Friday night when a team from Nazat police station went to Boyermari village in Sandeshkhali to arrest local TMC activist Musa Mollah in connection with alleged illegal occupation of land and water bodies for pisciculture, police said. As officers tried to pick up Mollah from his residence and place him inside the police vehicle, a group of villagers, described by police as his supporters, allegedly blocked the car, threw stones and vandalised it.

PATNA

Elderly to get doorstep healthcare

Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar on Saturday announced a scheme for providing healthcare facilities for elderly at their doorsteps. Providing details, Nitish wrote on social media, "To ensure that people from every section of society in the state can live their lives with respect and ease, we have started working on this with seriousness. We have implemented the programmes under 'Saat Nischay-3' to include the state in the category of the most developed states in the country for the period from 2025 to 2030." "First and foremost, our effort is to ensure that the needy senior citizens of the state can avail essential health services at their homes at the time of need."

GUWAHATI

Bail decision pending in Zubeen case

The Kamrup (Metro) District and Sessions Court reserved its order on the bail plea of accused Amritprabha Mahanta, in the Zubeen Garg death case while postponing the framing of charges to January 17. The court had earlier been scheduled to frame charges on Saturday, but granted an extension, citing procedural considerations. The development comes amid mounting calls from legal bodies, civil society and the singer's family for a fast and transparent trial. Addressing the media after the hearing, advocate Apurba Sharma said the court has kept its decision on Mahanta's bail plea pending, while fixing January 17 as the next date for framing charges.

KILLING FIELDS | Two top commanders among the dead, cache of weapons recovered from the gunfight sites in Chhattisgarh

14 Naxals gunned down in 2 Bastar encounters

SUKMA/BIJAPUR

In the first Naxalite encounter of 2026, at least 14 Maoists, including wanted ultras Vetti Mangdu and Madvi Hunga, were killed in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh's Sukma and Bijapur districts in the Bastar region on Saturday, officials said. While 12 Naxalites, including Mangdu and Madkam, and five women, were neutralised by the security forces during an exchange of fire in Sukma, the bodies of two Maoist cadres were found in the forests of Gaganpalli village in Basaguda, Bijapur. State Police unit, District Reserve Guard (DRG) had launched the anti-naxal operations based on inputs about the presence of Maoist cadres, a senior police official said.



IGP (Bastar Range) Sundarraj Pattilingam, front left, addresses a press conference, after security forces killed 14 Naxalites, in Chhattisgarh's Sukma and Bijapur districts, on Saturday

Hailing the security personnel, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said that due to the precise strategy, sustained pressure, and strong ground presence of the security forces, the Maoist network has been rapidly weakening. The operation in the south-

ern region of Sukma was launched on Friday night by the DRG. An exchange of fire broke out around 8 am in the forest of the Kistaram area, said Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan. "The bodies of 12 cadres, including five women, and

automatic weapons were recovered from the encounter site," he said.

Two among them were identified as Vetti Mangdu, incharge of the Konta area committee of Maoists, and Madvi Hitesh alias Hunga, the secretary of the same formation, Chavan said, adding that the identity of the remaining cadres is yet to be ascertained.

A cache of weapons, including AK-47, INSAS, and self-loading rifles, has been recovered from the encounter site.

Mangdu and Hunga were involved in several Maoist incidents, including an IED blast in Konta area in June last year in which then Additional Superintendent of Police (Konta) Akash Rao Girepunje was killed, Chavan said.

BENGALURU

Ballari Superintendent of Police Pavan Nejjur, who was suspended within hours of being posted to the district after a Congress worker was killed during a clash between Congress and BJP supporters, attempted suicide by consuming sleeping pills. He survived after being rushed to the hospital and is now stated to be stable.

The incident followed violence in Ballari over the tying of Congress banners near the residence of BJP leader Gali Janardhan Reddy. During the clash, a Congress worker, Rajashekhar, was killed in crossfire. Holding Pavan Nejjur responsible for the incident, the government suspended him even before he could formally assume charge as Ballari SP. Nejjur had taken over on Thursday evening after having served in non-executive posts for the past 10

After treatment, his condition was said to be stable, and he was later moved to Bengaluru for further care

years, but had not entered the office when the suspension order was issued.

Soon after his suspension, Nejjur went to his friend Haribabu's farmhouse at Handigunte Agrahara near Baragur in Tumkur district. On Monday morning, he consumed a heavy dose of sleeping pills and fell unconscious. Haribabu noticed the empty pill bottle and immediately shifted him to a hospital in Tumkur. After treatment, his condition was said to be stable, and he was later moved to Bengaluru for further care.

Reacting to the incident, Karnataka Home Minister Dr G. Parameshwar said the officer may have become

depressed due to the unfortunate developments and reacted impulsively. He added that Nejjur was safe and there was nothing to worry about.

Meanwhile, the incident has exposed divisions within the Congress government. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is said to be upset over the episode and reportedly refused to speak to Ballari MLA NaRa Bharath Reddy. According to officials, the trouble began when Bharath Reddy's associates entered the premises of Gali Janardhan Reddy's residence. Video clips circulating showed Satish Reddy, an associate of Bharath Reddy, and his private gunmen allegedly opening fire during the clash.

Police have confirmed that the bullet recovered from Rajashekhar's body did not belong to the police department. They said verification was still underway to identify the weapon that caused his death.

HP govt, UGC launch probe into student's ragging death

SHIMLA

The Himachal Pradesh government and the University Grants Commission (UGC) have initiated separate investigations into the suspected ragging-linked death of a 19-year-old Dalit student of Government Degree College, Dharamshala. The state government set up a four-member inquiry committee to examine all aspects of the case, with Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu promising strict action against the guilty.

Sukhu said, "Based on the video statement of the deceased woman in which she had named the professor, the

accused professor would be immediately suspended." He added, "An inquiry.. would be initiated against him and strict action would be taken against all those involved."

The UGC has also constituted a five-member fact-finding committee following a suo-motu complaint registered with the UGC Anti-Ragging Helpline. A senior UGC official said, "Student safety is paramount," and assured that "culprits will not be spared and that stringent action will follow."

The student's father alleged three seniors assaulted his daughter on September 18, 2025, while Assistant Professor Ashok Kumar indulged in obscene acts, charges he

Doc harassed in Bengaluru

Bengaluru: A woman doctor was allegedly sexually harassed by an unidentified man near her paying guest (PG) hostel at AGB Layout in Chikkabanavara in Bengaluru, police said on Saturday. According to police, the incident occurred when the doctor was returning to her PG hostel after completing duty at a private hospital. —Agencies

denied. Following harassment, she was hospitalised and died during treatment at a Ludhiana hospital on December 26, 2025.

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Grand International Exposition of Sacred Pirapahwa Relics, titled "The Light & the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One," at the Rai Pithora Cultural Complex here on Saturday.

The exhibition marks a historic moment with the reunification of the Pirapahwa gem relics of Lord Buddha, repatriated after 127 years. The display also features relics, gem relics, and reliquaries unearthed during the 1898 excavation and the subsequent 1971-1975 excavations at the Pirapahwa site.

PM Modi had posted pic-



tures from the exhibition and exhorted visitors to experience the exposition.

"This Exposition brings together: The Pirapahwa relics repatriated after more than a century. Authentic relics and

archaeological materials from Pirapahwa that are preserved in the collections of the National Museum, New Delhi and the Indian Museum, Kolkata. This Exposition is in line with our commitment to further popu-

larising the noble thoughts of Bhagwan Buddha. It is also an effort to further deepen the bond between our youth and our rich culture. I would also like to appreciate everyone who worked towards the repatriation of these relics," he said.

The event has drawn attention from historians, cultural enthusiasts, and Buddhist followers from across the country and abroad, showcasing India's efforts to preserve and celebrate its ancient heritage.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday paid tributes to Savitribai Phule and Rani Velu Nachiyar on their birth anniversary, acknowledging their inspirational contributions to society.

Cong's MGNREGA campaign from Jan 8

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday announced the launch of a nationwide MGNREGA Bachao Sangram (campaign) from January 8 till February 25 under which various programmes and agitations would be organised to protest against the reframing of the scheme and the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from it through the enactment of the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB G RAM G Act), 2025 or the "VB G RAM G Act" that was passed in the Winter Session of Parliament.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge while explaining the need of the protest said "by attacking MGNREGA the Centre is attacking crores of workers

and their constitutional rights". He said the Congress would "resist peacefully and firmly from every panchayat to Parliament" the replacement of the original act with VB G RAM G Act. Through its protests, Kharge said the Congress demands that the Centre "withdraw the VB GRAM G Act; restore MGNREGA as a rights based law; and restore the Right to Work and panchayats' authority". He said MGNREGA was not a charity but a "legal guarantee" to ensure that crores of poorest people got work in their own villages. "MGNREGA reduced hunger and distress migration, raised rural wages, and strengthened women's economic dignity" whereas "VB GRAM G is designed to dismantle this right," he added.

IIT Jodhpur files record 86 IPRs in 2025

Jaipur: The Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur (IIT Jodhpur) has seen a record 86 Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) filed during 2025, marking the highest number of IPR filings in a single year since the institute's inception in 2008.

The IPR filings in 2025 include 77 patent applications, 5 design registrations, and 4 copyrights, spanning a wide spectrum of emerging and interdisciplinary domains. This is a year-on-year growth of more than 150 percent over the previous year's IPR filings.

The officials of IIT Jodhpur said that the patent applications cover advanced engineering solutions, healthcare technologies, materials and manufacturing processes, energy systems, and digital innovations, among others.

—Manish Godha

A&N Islands to be significant revenue hub in 10 years: Shah

SRI VIJAYA PURAM

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday asserted that Andaman & Nicobar Islands will become a major contributor to the country's treasury in 10 years.

He also expressed optimism that in two years, India will advance to become the third-largest economy in the world from the current fourth.

Shah was speaking at the inauguration and foundation stone-laying of various projects worth Rs 373 crore in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which he described as a "pilgrimage site" when it comes to India's independence struggle.

Hinting at the International transhipment project, oil exploration trial and other



developmental projects in the archipelago, the Union Home Minister said this group of islands was once considered a drain on the country's treasury.

"But today, under (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi ji's vision, I am confident that after the next 10 years, this island group will be a major contributor to the country's treasury. Not the least, India has now become the fourth-

largest economy, and I am confident that in two years, it will be the third-largest economy in the world," he said.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose unfurled the national flag and liberated Andaman on December 30, 1943. Shah said, adding that in his honour, the Prime Minister has named the two islands Andaman and Nicobar as 'Shaheed' and 'Swaraj' respectively after his wish.

money special

Centre pushes states to speed up farm scheme spending

MUMBAI

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday urged states to adopt a strategic approach to budget utilisation, warning that delays in spending allocated funds result in losses for states and hamper the timely release of subsequent central instalments.

Addressing a review meeting with state agriculture ministers, Chouhan said states must ensure funds earmarked for various schemes are spent before March to avoid administrative bottlenecks that delay the effective implementation of programmes.



"If states are unable to spend their budgets on time, it only results in losses for them," the minister said, adding that budget allocations are often held up due to minor administrative and procedural issues.

The meeting reviewed the progress and budget utilisation of central agriculture schemes, including the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-

RKVV) and Krishonnati Yojana (KY).

Chouhan stressed the need for prompt verification of eligible farmers under the PM-KISAN scheme, expanding coverage under the crop insurance scheme, and ensuring timely settlement of claims. He also emphasised the importance of seed and fertiliser availability, their balanced use, and strengthening central-state coordination.

The meeting was attended by agriculture ministers from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and Mizoram, along with Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi, and senior ministry officials.

Govt proposes Aadhaar-like number to EV batteries for efficient traceability

NEW DELHI

The transport ministry has proposed assigning Aadhaar-like unique identification number to EV batteries to ensure their end-to-end traceability and efficient recycling. The proposed framework will make it mandatory for battery producer or importer to assign a 21-character Battery Pack Aadhaar Number (BPAN) to batteries, as per the draft guidelines issued by the ministry. They will also have to upload the relevant Battery Pack Dynamic data on the official portal of BPAN.

"The battery producer or importer shall have the obligation of assigning a unique Battery Pack Aadhaar Number (BPAN) to each battery that they introduce in the market,

and the battery they put to self-use." "BPAN shall be in a clearly visible and accessible position. The location shall be chosen in a way that it cannot be destroyed or deteriorate," the guidelines said. BPAN will capture and store vital information starting from raw material extraction and manufacturing to its usage, recycling, or final disposal, as per the 'Guidelines For Implementation Of Battery Pack Aadhaar System'.

According to the guidelines, any change in attributes of BPAN due to recycling and repurposing shall result in a new BPAN by the same or a new producer or importer. This system aims to bring transparency, accountability, and sustainability to the battery ecosystem by enabling accurate tracking of performance, and environmental impact.

'Zomato delivery partner earnings up 10.9% in 2025'

Deepinder Goyal, Founder of Zomato has reiterated his position after a purported strike call by certain gig workers brought the gig-model into the spotlight.

According to Goyal, average hourly earnings for delivery partners at Zomato increased by approximately 10.9% y-o-y in 2025, reaching Rs 102 compared to Rs 92 in 2024, according to data shared by him. The figures, which exclude tips, reflect a steady growth in earnings over a longer horizon for the gig workforce. Goyal noted that if a partner works for 10 hours a day for 26 days a month, the gross earnings translate to approximately Rs 26,500. After accounting for roughly 20% in fuel and maintenance costs, net earnings stand at about Rs 21,000 per month.

Rally in industrial metals pushes household goods prices

Industrial metals including copper, aluminium and nickel have surged sharply, due to tightening supply and robust demand. Aluminium climbed past \$3,000 a tonne mark for the first time in over three years, while copper traded near all-time highs surging beyond \$12,000 per tonne mark. Many household appliance manufacturers struggled to absorb higher input costs which affected household budgets with copper-intensive goods such as air-conditioners, kitchen appliances, bath fittings and cookware facing higher costs.

Defence, capital goods to lead India's capex revival: Report

India's capital expenditure (capex) upcycle is showing early but credible signs of revival, and market strategists believe several investment-linked sectors are poised to benefit the most over the next two to three years. According to Antique Stock Broking, improving macros, policy support, and rising private and household investment are setting the stage for a broad-based capex recovery.

Gold and silver may extend gains

Speaking to IANS, Nainesh Pachchigar, Gujarat President of the India Bullion and Jewellers Association, said gold and silver rewarded investors handsomely in 2025, and given prevailing global conditions, the positive momentum could continue this year as well.

Birth Anniversary of India First Woman Teacher Savitribai Phule Celebrated with Enthusiasm

Etah

The birth anniversary of renowned social reformer and India first woman teacher Savitribai Phule was celebrated with great enthusiasm and fervour at the premises of Shakya Muni Buddha Vihar in village Agaunapur of the Aliganj area. The programme was organised by the Savitribai Phule Educational Upliftment Committee, Aliganj (Etah). The event commenced with the chief guests lighting the ceremonial lamp and offering floral tributes to the portraits of Lord Shakya Muni Buddha and Savitribai Phule. With the objective of motivating children towards education, a general knowledge competition was organised, in which school students from Aliganj, Jhakarai, Garhiya, Jaunra, Kalinjar, Rai, Kayamganj and surrounding areas participated enthusiastically. In the competition, Ayush, Divyansh, Tripti and Aryan



Shakya secured first position in the Classes 4 to 5 category, while Harsh Pratap, Kinsuk and Aarthav emerged as winners in the Classes 6 to 8 category. The winning participants were awarded shields by the committee and all participating children were given educational materials as consolation prizes. On this occasion, the dignitaries present on the dais were honoured by the committee with mementoes of Savitribai Phule and shawls. Speakers highlighted the life, struggles and invaluable contributions of Savitribai Phule in the field of education, inspiring society to adopt education as a tool for social reform and equality. The programme was attended by chief

guests Dr Alok Singh Shakya, Pramod Kumar Yadav, Dr Bhupendra Singh Shakya and Bhupendra Ratan, along with K.P Singh, Munnalal, Arvind Singh, Arjun Singh, Saurav, Rahul and Ompal, among others. From the organising committee, President Ramnaresh Shakya, Jayant Baudh, Ashutosh, Abhishek, Anubhav, Ajay Kumar, Jaiveer Singh, Prashant Pal, Himanshu, Chandrashekhar, Shivam Pal, Aamir Khan, Narendra Singh, Sachin Darshu Shakya, Sanju, Sahil, Vipin and Deepak Ratan, along with a large number of present. The programme concluded with a strong message promoting education and social equality.

In view of upcoming festivals, intensive checking campaign launched against those selling Chinese Manja



Chandauli

In view of the upcoming festivals, under the direction of Superintendent of Police Chandauli Aditya Langhe and under the leadership of Area Officer Sadar Devendra Kumar, a special checking campaign was conducted by the Chandauli police station team against the sellers of Chinese Manja in Chandauli town. During the campaign, Area Officer Sadar conducted a thorough search of the shops selling Manja in the town area. Police clarified that strict legal action will

be taken against any shopkeeper who is found selling banned Chinese Manja surreptitiously for the purpose of earning profit or who is found in possession of Chinese Manja. The police administration has appealed to the general public to make their family members and friends aware about the dangers of Chinese Manja. Use only safe and legal floats to fly kites. The Chinese manja is extremely sharp, which poses a risk of serious injury and is also extremely harmful for the environment. If information is received about the sale of

Chinese Manja in any market or shop, citizens can inform their nearest police station. The name of the person giving information will be kept completely confidential. Checking of 15 shops, 120 bundles of Chinese Manja recovered. During the operation, a total of 15 shops were checked by the police team, in which 120 bundles/loaches of banned Chinese Manja were recovered. Necessary legal action is being taken regarding material. Police have appealed to the general public to stay away from Chinese Manja and stay safe.

Awartika Secures Second Place in State Competition



Ghazipur

Students of the Government Homeopathic Medical College and Hospital have brought laurels to the institution by showcasing their talent. Under the guidance of Principal Professor Dr. Rajendra Rajput, fourth-year BHMS students secured second place at the all-India level in poster and paper presentations at the Indian Science Congress held at IIT Shillong, bringing pride to the state and district. Meanwhile, second-year student Awartika Srivastava secured second place in the state-level "Viksit Bharat Challenge" competition, part of the "Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2025-26," organized by the Youth Welfare Department of Lucknow University. Awartika Srivastava's journey doesn't end here, she will now present her work at the all-India level before Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. Similarly, Shreya Singh has also made the college proud by reaching this stage in the Youth Parliament program. Professor Dr. Subodh Tripathi, Professor D.P. Singh, Professor Dr. Sengar, Dr. Pranesh, Dr. Srivastava, Dr. Awadhesh and all the staff members congratulated the students on their outstanding performance and wished them continued success.

DM, SP offered prayers at Baba Semradhanath Dham and prayed for the welfare of Bhadohi residents

Bhadohi

On the auspicious occasion of the 31st year of Kalpvas at Mahatirth Semradhanath Dham, the great confluence of Kashi-Vindhya-Prayag, District Magistrate Shailesh Kumar and Superintendent of Police Abhimanyu Manglik inaugurated Shri Kalpvas Makar Magh Mela by worshipping Mother Ganga, chanting Vedic mantras, doing Bhoomi Pujan and installing the religious flag. Did. First of all, District Magistrate Shailesh Kumar and Superintendent of Police Abhimanyu Manglik prayed for the welfare of the people of Bhadohi at Baba Semradhanath Dham. Thereafter, while giving good wishes for the New Year to the visitors who had come for darshan and worship on the New Year, he inquired about their well-being in a



heartfelt spirit. On the most auspicious occasion of the 31st year of Kalpvas at Mahatirth Semradhanath Dham, the great confluence of Kashi-Vindhya-Prayag, worship was done by chanting Vedic mantras for the pure and continuous flow of Mother Ganga on the banks of Ganga. He symbolically inaugurated Indian Sanatan Dharma and faith by hoisting the religious flag on the banks of Maa Ganga as a

symbol of Magh Mela Kalpvas. After the darshan puja, the District Magistrate said that in the new year 2026, I feel proud to participate in this sacred program with the respected public, public and scholars. It is a matter of pride for the district that Kalpvas is being organized in Magh Mela on the banks of Ganga for the last 31 years. Seeing the grandeur of Shri Kalpvas Makar Magh Mela, the District

Magistrate made a proposal to declare it as a provincial fair and assured to send it to the government. Emphasis was laid on the availability of toilets, drinking water and hospitals in the entire temple and fair area.

He said that to ensure successful completion of this Kalpvas Magh Mela, ground work is being done by holding regular meetings with the government administration. In view of the convenience of the devotees in Kalpvas Magh Mela, checked plates for the road are provided by the Public Works Department, smooth arrangement of lighting, cleanliness, sanitation, drinking water arrangement by the Electricity Department, sound arrangement, tents, toilets, barricading in the fair premises by the District Panchayat Department, bonfire by the Forest

Department. For the arrangement of wood, peace and security, work is being done at a fast pace with the mutual coordination of all the concerned departments including police administration, traffic police. He visited the pilgrimage site and observed the Kalpavriksha, Vanshi tree, Sindoor tree, Lotus lake etc. in the natural environment there and made people aware by throwing light on the importance of trees, plants and environment. Superintendent of Police Abhimanyu Manglik toured the entire Kalpvas fair area and took stock of peace and law and order and gave necessary guidelines. He said that the fair will be completed safely with adequate police arrangements. Water police and divers have also been deployed in view of the Ganga river. The District Magistrate and Superintendent of

Police inaugurated the health camp organized by the National Medicos Organization by cutting the ribbon. On this occasion, Additional District Magistrate Kunwar Virendra Maurya, Fair Incharge/Deputy District Magistrate Gyanpur Bhan Singh, Police Area Officer Gyanpur Prabhat Rai, Executive Engineer PWD Sandeep Saroj, DPRO Sanjay Mishra, AMA Anil Tyagi, BDO Diwakar Singh, EO Gopiganj RB Yadav, Junior Engineer Electrical, District Information Officer Dr. Pankaj Kumar, Mahant Karunashankar Das, Village Head Semradh Alok Kumar Singh, President Magh Mela Committee Rambali Singh, Ajit Pratap Singh, Narendra Shukla, Sherbahadur, Dinesh Singh along with saints, Kalpvasis and devotees were present.

Confluence of reverence and faith on the inauguration of Magh Mela, Prince Gupta congratulated the people of the state

Bhadohi

A wonderful confluence of devotion, faith and Sanatan tradition is being seen in Tirtharaj Prayagraj on the occasion of the inauguration of Magh Mela and the holy Paush Purnima. On this auspicious occasion, former city president BJP Bhadohi Prince Gupta sent hearty congratulations and best wishes to all the devotees, Kalpvasis and people of the state. Prince Gupta said that Magh Mela is not just a religious event, but a living symbol of Indian culture, spirituality and unity. He heartily welcomed and congratulated all the revered saints, religious leaders, various Akharas and Kalpvasis who had come to Tirtharaj Prayag to



take a dip of faith in the holy Sangam. While praying to Mother Ganga, Mother Yamuna and Mother Saraswati, he said that by the grace of Triveni, the wishes of all the devotees should be fulfilled and there should be happiness,

peace and prosperity in the state and the country. Prince Gupta expressed confidence that Magh Mela will become a powerful medium to convey Sanatan culture to the new generation and will further strengthen social harmony.

Mother Savitribai Phule's birthday was celebrated with great pomp in Samyak Buddha Vihar

Chandauli

The birthday of the country first teacher Mata Savitribai Phule was celebrated with enthusiasm at Samyak Buddha Vihar complex located in Dabriya village under Dhanapur development block of Chandauli district at 2 pm on Saturday afternoon. On this occasion, the speakers remembered the struggles of Savitribai Phule and Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and highlighted the importance of education in detail. While addressing the program, Hemant Kushwaha paid tribute to Mata Savitribai Phule. He said that with the construction of Buddha Vihar at every place, people will celebrate the birthday of Savitribai Phule there. He stressed that only when the society moves towards education, people will be



able to demand their rights and entitlements. Referring to Gautam Buddha Vihar, New Sarnath, located in Chandauli district near Ramnagar, Hemant Kushwaha said that 7.5 bighas of land situated on the banks of Ganga, which was bought by the people with mutual cooperation, is being forcibly acquired by the Uttar Pradesh government and an attempt

is being made to sell it to Adani. He told that 50 people are continuously sitting on strike every day in protest against this acquisition. He also announced to celebrate the birth anniversary of Jagdev Babu on 8th February at Gautam Buddha Vihar, in which a large number of people from entire Purvanchal are expected to reach. District Panchayat member

Rajesh Yadav said that the biggest need of today is to educate our children by adopting the thoughts of Mata Savitribai Phule. He said that only educated children can bring positive change in the society. On this occasion, District Panchayat members Ganesh Prasad, Rajneesh Yadav, Dr. A large number of men and women including Hanslal Maurya, Paras

Singh Maurya, Sukhraj, Lalit Maurya, Pappu Raja, Dr. Chandrika, Dr. Kashinath, Bhante Mahakashyap, Dr. Sunil Maurya, Rajkumar Maurya, Geeta Devi, Shail Maurya, Mamta Devi were present. The program was presided over by former soldier Munna Singh Dada, while Vijay Kumar conducted it.

Massive Influx of Devotees at Paush Purnima Bathing Festival

3.1 million devotees took a dip in the holy Sangam, Administrative vigilance ensured the Magh Mela was completely safe and well-organized



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj

An unprecedented confluence of faith and devotion was witnessed on Saturday on the auspicious occasion of Paush Purnima, the first bathing festival of the Magh Mela. From early morning, there was a continuous flow of devotees towards the Sangam ghats. By 8 PM, approximately 3.1 million devotees had taken a dip

in the holy Sangam, including about 500,000 Kalpavasis (devotees observing a month-long religious vow). To ensure the safety, convenience, and smooth conduct of the event, all senior officers were active in the Mela area since last night. Additional Director General of Police Sanjeev Gupta, Inspector General of Police Ajay Mishra, Divisional Commissioner Saumya Agarwal, Police

Commissioner Prayagraj Joginder Singh, Additional Police Commissioner Ajaypal Sharma, District Magistrate Manish Verma, Mela Officer Rishiraj, and Mela Superintendent of Police Neeraj Pandey continuously monitored the arrangements and issued necessary instructions. As a result of the vigilant, well-planned, and coordinated arrangements made by the administration, the first

bathing festival of Paush Purnima concluded peacefully without any untoward incident, and all devotees were safely escorted to their destinations. Keeping in mind the convenience of the devotees, several innovations were introduced in the Magh Mela area this year. The golf cart service operating from Parking Lot No. 17 to the Bade Hanuman Temple was utilized by approximately

9,500 devotees, with a large number of devotees receiving this service free of charge. This initiative provided special convenience to senior citizens, women, and differently-abled devotees. In addition, approximately 10,000 bookings were made through the Rapido bike service, which was operated to quickly transport devotees from various pickup points to the parking lots near the Magh Mela

area, helping devotees reach the Mela area easily and in less time. Due to the continuous presence of administrative officials, effective monitoring, and innovative arrangements, the first bathing ritual of Paush Purnima was completed in a completely safe, orderly, and successful manner, which was clearly reflected in the sense of satisfaction and confidence among the devotees.

Free Eye Examination and Cataract Surgery Camp Organized Today

Tharwai/ Amrit

Educational and Charitable Trust,

Prayagraj, in collaboration with Riti Eye Care Hospital, is organizing a free eye examination and cataract surgery camp today. The camp aims to provide quality eye care facilities free of charge to needy people. The camp will offer comprehensive eye examinations, spectacle testing, and free distribution of necessary medicines.

Free cataract surgery will also be provided for Ayushman Card holders. Free transportation to and from the hospital will be arranged for patients selected for surgery. The camp will be held at Gayadeen Vishwakarma Inter College, Bhidiura, Tharwai, from 10:30 AM to 3:00 PM. Beneficiaries attending

Disarray Angers Religious Community, Serious Allegations Levelled Against Administration?

Prayagraj. The Magh Mela 2026 commenced in Prayagraj on January 3rd, but serious questions have already been raised about the functioning of the administration. In this great festival of faith, penance, and devotion, sadhus, saints, Kalpavasis, and cultural organizations are facing immense difficulties due to the lack of land allocation and basic facilities. The religious community alleges that they have been visiting the administration offices day and night for the past month, but their problems are not being addressed. They allege that even after wandering for 16 hours a day without finding a solution, the frustrated saints are forced to roam around the officer's office to seek justice, which exposes the administrative insensitivity. Arun Tripathi, secretary of the Krishak Utthan Seva Samiti, Kaundhiyara-Karchhana, said that his organization's camp has been set up at the Magh Mela continuously for the past 20 years, but this year, despite visiting the offices for a month for land allocation, their pleas are being ignored.

the camp are required to bring their Aadhaar card, ration card, and mobile number. This information was provided by the Trust's President, Teerthraj Vishwakarma.

Grand cultural performances to be organized in Prayagraj from January 3 to 30, 2026

Colorful programs will be presented by renowned artists through the Department of Culture - Jaiveer Singh

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: Under the Department of Culture, Government of Uttar Pradesh, autonomous institutions working under the Directorate of Culture are organizing grand cultural performances in Prayagraj from January 3 to 30, 2026, on the auspicious occasion of Magh Mela-2026. This event will be a vibrant symbol of the confluence of Indian culture, Sanatan tradition, and spiritual consciousness. The state's Tourism and Culture Minister, Jaiveer Singh, said that the Magh Mela, held in Prayagraj, the sacred land of the Triveni Sangam, has been a center of penance, meditation, bathing, charity, and spiritual gatherings since ancient times. Inspired by this spiritual energy, the cultural performances will provide a powerful expression of Indian philosophy of life and cultural values through classical, folk, and devotional traditions. He informed that the Department of Culture, Uttar Pradesh, will organize vari-

ous cultural programs under the process of selecting and determining the honorarium of highly distinguished and renowned artists from the world of art and literature. These will include classical music (Dhrupad, Khayal), instrumental music (Sitar, Sarod, Flute, Panchanaad, orchestra), classical dance and dance-dramas (Kathak, Odissi), folk dances (Dhedhiya, Karma, Mayur, Faruwahi, Awadhi folk dances, Phoolon ki Holi, Pai Danda), bhajans, Kabir Vani, Sundarkand, conch shell playing, classical/semi-classical singing, and patriotic performances. On this occasion, Jayveer Singh, the Honorable Minister of Culture and Tourism, Uttar Pradesh, said that "the Magh Mela is not just a religious event, but a vibrant expression of the Indian spirit. These cultural performances organized by the Directorate of Culture will connect our classical and folk traditions with spiritual consciousness, awakening a sense of values, harmony, and cultural pride in the public. This confluence of art and

spirituality on the sacred land of Prayagraj will further strengthen the spirit of 'Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat' (One India-Great India). To further enhance the dignity of the cultural and spiritual traditions under the Magh Mela-2026 being held in Prayagraj, it is proposed to invite renowned and celebrated celebrity artists from across the country. The performances of these artists, through various genres of folk, devotional, classical, and contemporary music, will make the cultural evenings of the Magh Mela especially attractive, soulful, and memorable. The artists include the renowned folk singer Malini Awasthi, the popular classical and devotional singer Mamta Joshi, the Maihar Band (Uttam Pandey) associated with the Maihar Gharana tradition, Bhajan Samrat Anup Jalota, and the extremely popular spiritual folk fusion group Kabir Cafe among the youth. After Makar Sankranti, performances by Rishi Singh, after Mauni Amavasya by Suresh Shukla, Pratibha Singh

Baghel and Piyusha Kailash, and on the occasion of Basant Panchami by Sam Workshop, Sadho Band, Shivam Mishra (Andaz Band), Swati Mishra and Akanksha Tripathi are proposed. With the participation of these celebrity artists, the Magh Mela will be further enriched." The Magh Mela 2026 will be celebrated as a grand festival of art, culture, and spirituality. Devotees, saints, tourists, and art lovers will experience the vibrant, emotional, and spiritual essence of Indian culture at the confluence of the rivers, further strengthening the dignity and cultural significance of the Magh Mela. These cultural initiatives at Magh Mela 2026 will connect devotees, saints, tourists, and art enthusiasts with the spiritual depths of Indian culture and the rich heritage of its folk traditions. This event will embody the concept of "spirituality through art," widely disseminating the eternal values of Indian culture: truth, compassion, devotion, and harmony.

Editorial

Punjab govt must take Centre into confidence on new anti-sacrilege bill

The Aam Aadmi Party-led Punjab government has tabled the Punjab Prevention of Offences Against Holy Scripture(s) Bill, 2025 which was discussed in the Assembly on Tuesday amidst ruckus and then referred to a select committee. It might take about six months for the committee to send the bill back to the Assembly for clearing and then to the governor for approval. If the bill is referred to the Union government, then it would be another year before it finally becomes an Act. Earlier governments — the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) coalition government and the Congress government headed by Captain Amarinder Singh — had also brought similar bills which were found to be insufficient to meet the demands of the situation and hence junked. The new anti-sacrilege bill is said to have taken note of the shortcomings of the earlier bills and is hence more comprehensive, secular, and sufficiently stringent to be a deterrence for sacrilege offences considered very serious in the state. Meanwhile, 42-year-old Gurjeet Singh Khalsa, supposedly a non-political activist, has been staging a protest on top of a BSNL mobile tower in Punjab's Samana since October 2024 demanding an anti-sacrilege law. Though not widely reported in the mainstream media, such protests should be handled deftly by the government, lest it rakes up discontents of the past. In fact, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), under Sections 298, 299, and 300, already provides stringent punishments for religious offences. Punjab government as well as the activists who are protesting for a new law against sacrilege of religious texts are of the view that the provisions of the current Union laws are not stringent enough. Incidentally, the bill inadvertently equates the Bhagavad Gita with the holy books of other faiths, which may trigger a controversy. The bill could be amended to also include other religious texts considered holy by a vast majority of Hindus and/or be worded appropriately to capture the essence of all holy books of all faiths without naming any of them. Needless to say, the issue is a complex one. Going by the text of the present bill, albeit a short one, there are sufficient indications to suggest that adequate care has been taken to make the acts of sacrilege a serious offence inviting harsh punishments. But it is not clear why these provisions could not be added to the existing Sections of the BNS. After all, the BNS is an all-India law that applies equally to all states and all faiths. The AAP-led Punjab government appears to have not consulted the Union government or had any discussions with the Union Law Ministry on this issue. What should be of concern are the possibilities of other states following suit and enacting separate laws to suit the political environment of respective states citing the Punjab bill as a precedent. In a federal setup, the Constitution allows states to enact sufficient laws to maintain law and order and preserve religious harmony through stringent punishments for offences involving religious practices, texts, icons, and symbols. There have been instances of religious books being vandalised, places of worship desecrated, and statues of widely revered socio-political leaders popular among certain communities damaged. Another aspect of concern should be the misuse of any law, however sincere the intentions of the lawmakers might be. The anti-sacrilege bill may have good intentions, but there is hardly any guarantee that such a law will not become a tool for miscreants wanting to drive a wedge between communities and followers of different faiths in the state. In a politically volatile border state where religious fault lines have been exploited by extreme elements bent on hurting the unity and integrity of the country, the state government needs to be extra vigilant and take the Union government into confidence at every stage.



Critical minerals are the new oil. India can't afford to depend on China

Critical minerals have now become instruments of geopolitical bargaining and means to assert domestic autonomy and security. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Argentina and meeting with Chilean President, Gabriel Boric, the two legs of the lithium triangle, on the sidelines of the recently held BRICS summit in Brazil, were strategically aimed at exploring cooperation and engagement on critical minerals. At the Summit, Modi warned against the weaponization of critical minerals and stressed the need to

work together to make supply chains secure and reliable. Other global leaders have also echoed similar concerns at the G20, Quad, and BRICS summits, and have discussed collaborating to secure and diversify critical mineral supply chains. Currently, India is heavily dependent on imports for critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements (REE). Much of this supply comes through re-export channels, which creates a third-level dependency while exposing us to potential supply shocks and strategic coercion.

Mineral security is no longer just an economic concern but a national security imperative, underpinning the country's ambitions in clean energy, defence self-reliance, and advanced manufacturing. Globally, China holds roughly 62 per cent of lithium refining capacity, 33 per cent for nickel, 77 per cent for cobalt, 87 per cent for graphite, and 76 per cent for REEs, according to the International Energy Agency's (IEA) Global Critical Minerals Outlook 2025. This underscores China's overwhelming dominance in supply

chains, even though it does not host most raw material reserves. Compared to 2023, India's lithium imports from China surged by roughly 921 per cent in 2024, while graphite imports rose 85 per cent between 2022 and 2024 and Nickel imports jumped 137 per cent in 2024. Such dominance gives Beijing an asymmetric leverage over supply chains vital to clean-tech sectors and key defence applications, including advanced electronics, missile systems, and communication technologies. As a result, securing reliab

India's TRP ecosystem needs a reset. Time to end BARC monopoly



Television advertising revenues have been in freefall, declining from Rs 334 billion to Rs 294 billion in just two years. Twelve per cent of the brands that used TV to reach the masses in 2023 adopted a different distribution medium in 2024. Despite this, the TV industry continues to expand its offerings. DD Free Dish, a state-run distribution platform that requires only a one-time installation fee and no subscription charges, added both consumers and channels last year. The number of Free-to-Air channels on TV that recover costs from advertising is also increasing. Clearly, there is a disconnect between broadcasters' and advertisers' assessment of the true value of India's 160 million-household-strong TV market. At the heart of this mismatch is a measurement gap that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) is now trying to resolve through reforms to TV ratings guidelines. The MIB is in the process of amending the 2014 television ratings guidelines that led to the accreditation of the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) to measure the relative popularity of TV channels. This much-needed proposal aims to end BARC's monopoly and allow additional entities to conduct TV ratings,

which can revitalise TV advertising. Before BARC, TAM (Television Audience Measurement)—a joint media research venture by Kantar and Nielsen—tracked what India watched. But India is a large country, and TAM could only place meters to measure audience preferences in a limited number of households, that too mostly in urban areas. As a solution, broadcasters, advertisers, and media agencies came together in 2010 to form BARC, which was empanelled by the MIB and started operations in 2015. BARC roped in TAM for back-end technological expertise and rejigged sampling methods. When BARC was rolled out, it measured 12,000 out of the 145 million TV households in India.

This was still only 0.008 per cent. Panel sizes have grown over the years to 55,000, but BARC continues to use the same data-collection methods. Watch time is measured in clock minutes through audio-watermarking technology that detects the channel being viewed. Before watching, each family member in a metered household must press a button to indicate whether they are an adult or a child, and to record their gender. They must press the same button again when they stop viewing. This approach rests on the optimistic assumption that viewers comply every time they switch channels. Meanwhile, the global media landscape has been moving ahead with qualitative, platform-agnostic measurement tools enabled by big data, advanced meter technologies, and more demographically inclusive panels. Advertisers rely on BARC's single measurement currency, Television Rating Point (TRP), which estimates the duration and frequency of viewership. These ratings help them determine which channels attract the most viewers and where to spend their ad budgets. There are no alternative estimates to go by. In con-

trast, financial institutions can access data from seven credit rating agencies to determine the creditworthiness of a borrower. There are a dozen or more agencies that news channels can commission for exit poll surveys of elections. A one-agency, one-currency system also leaves TV audience measurement vulnerable to manipulation. The first complaints of TRP manipulation emerged in 2018, when Hansa Research — the entity that installs meters for audience measurement — filed a police complaint alleging that households were being paid to watch a particular channel. Later, in 2020, the TRP scam implicated broadcasters and former officials at BARC, with allegations of manipulation dating back to 2016, according to an audit report that Mumbai Police received from BARC. The council suspended ratings for three months, but the damage had already been done: advertisers had lost trust in the TRP system, and some broadcasters exited BARC. Other mature media markets have gone through challenges involved in relying on a single entity to track consumer attention across platforms, devices, and demographics, and have therefore transitioned to 'multi-currency models' that allow multi-

ple measurement providers to coexist. Ad-industry bodies in the US, such as the Video Advertising Bureau and the Television Bureau of Advertising, encourage alternative measurement providers. Even in Singapore, where the TV market is smaller than those in India and the US, multiple agencies operate. A ratings monopoly in India has led to a lack of technological variation, resulting in sluggish systems detached from market dynamics. The rationale for MIB's latest move is therefore strong, and if advertisers can choose between multiple measurement providers, they will gain access to sharper audience data and become more confident in their fiscal planning. This policy rejig also makes room for multi-stakeholder collaborations between distributors with last-mile reach and specialist measurement companies. The resulting competition will drive improvements in advertisers' access to quality data.

The ministry should allow the players to freely collaborate, and the best measurement models to emerge in the market. Even as advertising revenue dwindles, TV in India is far from its swan song. This year, 169 million people tuned in to the Indian Premier League final on TV.

India's solar ambition needs financial vision – ISA must move from commitments to execution

As the world confronts the realities of climate change and energy insecurity, solar energy presents itself not merely as a technological solution but as a transformative geopolitical and developmental strategy. The International Solar Alliance is uniquely positioned to catalyse this transformation. But to succeed, it must go beyond declarations. It must now design and implement financial architectures capable of supporting its ambitions. The potential of solar energy is undeniable. It is modular, scalable, and increasingly cost-effective. Yet, for the nations most abundant in sunlight, finance remains a key constraint. The International Energy Agency estimates that clean energy investments in emerging economies must rise from \$770 billion in 2022 to over \$2.2 trillion annually by 2030. A significant portion of this must be allocated to solar energy.

However, the fiscal realities of many countries—either still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, burdened by debt, or struggling to cope with press-

ing social needs—limit the ability of governments to invest at scale. India's experience illustrates this well. Despite policy successes in solar deployment, the government's ability to directly invest in grid infrastructure or generation assets is capped by fiscal deficit targets and debt ceilings. Even green bonds, while helpful, are bound by ring-fenced rules and are limited in scale. Public financing, therefore, can only act as a catalytic lever—it cannot be the backbone. Turning to the private sector, we find both potential and limitations. Many solar developers operate on highly leveraged balance sheets, and with rising global interest rates, the space for fresh capital is narrowing. Moreover, risks such as currency volatility, regulatory uncertainty, and weak transmission infrastructure dampen investor appetite, especially in frontier markets. Private capital is crucial but requires structured entry points, credible exit mechanisms, and active risk mitigation to be effective.

Trump's sanctions have failed to deter Russia. Now the West faces a dilemma

Last week, Russia once again pulled the nuclear weapon threat out of its sleeves, two days after US President Donald Trump — following his meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte — threatened to impose 100 per cent secondary tariffs on Moscow if it doesn't reach a deal with Kyiv in 50 days. Trump also confirmed that "top-of-the-line" weapons, including the Patriot missile defence system and batteries, would be sent to Ukraine in an operation coordinated by NATO members. Russia's newly updated nuclear doctrine apparently allows Moscow to use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear weapon state that is supported by a nuclear one, unsettling deterrence dynamics in Europe. Though Trump's about-turn on the Russia-Ukraine war might bring some sigh of relief in Kyiv, Moscow's counter-threats echo a Biden-era tit-for-tat escalation when Washington's no-holds-barred support for Ukraine's war efforts was met with Moscow's nuclear threats. The question is: will Trump's threats be enough to affect any change in Russia's behaviour? Or will such threats be counter-productive, embolden Putin's hand, and give him more ammunition to project a Russia reclaiming its lost status of parity with the US and standing up to the combined might of the Western alliance? Sanctions are meant to bite, and not just bark. They are coercive economic tools that the US and its Western allies have often used as a default policy to punish adversaries. However, do they really affect consequential changes in a country's behaviour as expected? In the case of Russia, sanctions have won tactical gains, but have failed to achieve the desired strategic goals. US-led Western sanctions have hit Russia since 2014, when the latter annexed Crimea from Ukraine after the Maidan Square event. Though Russia has seen rising infla-

tion, labour shortage, and devaluation of its currency, the sanctions have had too little impact to make Moscow kowtow. On the contrary, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation has kept the key rate at 21.5 percent per annum, indicating that inflation and economic growth are relatively stable under the current circumstances. The Russian stock exchange market has also continued to grow despite Trump's warnings. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has forecasted Russia's growth rate in 2025 at 1.5 per cent while the Russian Economic Development Ministry has kept it at 2.5 per cent. This month, the US Senate tabled additional sanctions on Russia, calling them a 'sledgehammer'.

Sanctions on Russia will also impact countries that trade with Russia in oil, gas, uranium, and other products. Such secondary sanctions on third countries are reportedly proposed to touch 500 per cent. Some US lawmakers are even hinting at the US, together with its European allies, accessing frozen Russian assets, including the \$5 billion located in the US, to dent Russia's warfighting resources and utilise the money in Ukraine's reconstruction. This would be an unprecedented move as no US president has ever taken the central bank assets of a foreign country that the US is not at war with. However, secondary sanctions have not been too successful either, with Russia, through its 'shadow fleet', exporting energy to the other countries, including China, Turkey, UAE, Belarus, and Armenia. Moreover, partner countries of the US such as Turkey, UAE, and Armenia have not participated in sanctions, creating an enforcement gap, helping Russia maintain access to sanctioned goods and continue its economic activities. A report, published by the Kyiv School of Economics,.

Hadiyakol: Minister takes pledge of service at the Human Service Mahakumbh



Barabanki

At the Human Service Mahakumbh being organised at Ramvan Kutir Ashram, located on the banks of the Reth River in the Hadiyakol forest area, the Minister of State for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Satish Chandra Sharma, participated in the service activities. The Minister offered flowers at the statue of Swami Vivekananda installed at the free OPD centre and visited the Rogharan Shri Hanuman Temple, where he prayed for the speedy recovery of patients who underwent eye surgeries starting from December 28. He sought blessings from Bhagwan Das, Chairman of Shri Ramvan Kutir Trust Committee and Tulsi Das Maharaj from Haridwar. The Minister congratulated eye surgeon Dr. Jacob Prabhakar and his team on behalf of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for restoring vision to poor patients of the state. He also visited the OPD services and met Dr. Ramesh Hunda from Rohtak, Haryana, congratulating him for his

dedicated service. The Minister encouraged volunteers who had come from across the country to serve the patients. Ashram volunteer Manish Mehrotra informed that all the doctors performing the surgeries are followers of Lord Jesus Christ. On this occasion, members of Dr. Jacob Prabhakar team participated in a collective prayer along with intellectuals from all faiths, wishing for the speedy recovery of all patients. Those present at the programme included Dharmendra Yadav (Block Pramukh, Deva), City Circle Officer Sangam Kumar, Jahangirabad In-charge Inspector Durga Prasad Shukla, Dr. Sanjeev Sahu, Senior Eye Examination Officer T.N Verma, Eye Examination Officer Arvind Kumar, senior trust members Shankar Lal Somani, Ramkishan Rath, Shiv Kumar Nigam, Ramashankar Jhanwar, Ankit Gupta, Anjani Kumar, Balwant Singh, Adarsh Verma, youth leader Sanjay Yadav (Paliya) along with Richa, Pooja Mehrotra, Rimjhim, Shashi Nigam, Manju Gupta and many other dignitaries.

Inspection of Divisional Railway Manager at DDU JuRaju Bhaiya and Saurabh Singh



Bahraich

National Patron of the All India Lodhi Rajput Welfare Mahasabha, Rajveer Singh alias Raju Bhaiya and National President of the Youth Wing, Saurabh Singh Verma, were given a grand welcome on the main road of Jarwal town on Saturday.

The program was led by Vikas Rajput. Members of the community warmly greeted both leaders with garlands and shawls. On this occa-

sion, National Treasurer and Dibai MLA Chandrapal Singh, National President of the Women Wing and former Mayor of Bhilai Neeta Lodhi, State General Secretary and Syana MLA Devendra Singh Lodhi, State General Secretary and former Babina MLA Krishnapal Rajput, State Organizing General Secretary Dinesh Lodhi and Ashish Lodhi were specially present. Anil Verma, Vikas Rajput,

Krishnapal, Rahul Dudh Dairy, Rambabu Lodhi and dozens of other local workers from the Jarwal area participated in the program. In his address, Raju Bhaiya emphasized the unity of the community, the strength of the organization and mutual cooperation, while Saurabh Singh Verma appealed to the youth to play an active role in social and organizational activities. The program concluded in a cordial atmosphere.

Tributes paid to Savitribai Phule on her birth anniversary at MP Residence, Obari



Barabanki

Former Member of Parliament P. L. Punia paid floral tributes to Savitribai Phule on her birth anniversary on Friday at the MP Residence in Obari. Remembering her as India first woman teacher, a great social reformer and a Marathi poet, he said that Savitribai Phule strongly raised her voice against untouchability, casteism and the exploitation of widows. On this occasion, District Congress President Mohammad Mohsin, City President Rajendra Verma Photowala, National Secretary of Youth Congress Gyanesh Shukla, Advocate K.C. Srivastava, Irfan Qureshi, Ramharakh Rawat, Vijaypal Gautam, Lallan Shah Warsi, Santaram Gautam, Advocate Kamlesh Gautam, Jayant Gautam, Arvind Singh, Mohammad Saiyyad Arshad, Alauddin, Aslam Rayan and others were present.

A Spectacular Glimpse of the Brave Tradition of the Khalsa Panth. The town resonated with slogans of “Jo Bole So Nihal” and praises of Guru Gobind Singh

Touch With World

Shobit Shukla

Barabanki. On the occasion of the Prakash Purab (birth anniversary) of the tenth Sikh Guru, Shri Guru Gobind Singh, a grand Nagar Kirtan procession was taken out on Saturday from Gurdwara Guru Singh Sabha, Barabanki. The procession began at around 2 pm, led by the Panj Pyare with Guru Granth Sahib seated in a beautifully flower-decorated palaki. Dressed in traditional attire, the Panj Pyare walked with kirpans in their hands, while Gyani Tirath Singh waved the chaur sahib. Devotees walked alongside, cleaning the route and showering flower petals as a mark of reverence.

(An extraordinary confluence of valour and devotion)

The procession passed through the



main streets of the town, where devotees bowed in reverence to Guru Granth Sahib. The world-famous Bir Khalsa Gatra Group from Punjab captivated the audience with a spectacular display of traditional Sikh

martial arts. Daring feats such as breaking coconuts while blindfolded left spectators amazed. The military-style performance by the Punjab Hasda Band further filled the atmosphere with enthusiasm and energy. **(Shabad Kirtan, service and harmony)** Amarjeet Singh Goldy and his kirtan group from Lucknow rendered soulful recitations of Gurbani, including “Deh Shiva Bar Mohe Ehae.” A special attraction of the procession was the majestic falcon brought by the Nihangs known as “Baaj Wale Singh” from Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab. The spirit of service shown by the Sikh Youth Association of Lucknow was also commendable. Tea, snacks and prasad stalls were set up at various places along the route. **(Guard of honour and continuous**

langar)

The Nagar Kirtan passed through Lajpat Nagar, Chhaya Chauraha, Rajkamal Marg, Pir Batawan, Nageshwar Temple Road, Darpan, Dhanokhar, Niblet and Begumganj Chauraha before returning to the Gurdwara Sahib. There, the ceremonial procession of Guru Granth Sahib was accorded a guard of honour. At the conclusion, an uninterrupted langar was served and kesariya (saffron-flavoured) milk prasad was distributed to devotees despite the biting cold. Gurdwara Management Committee President Bhupinder Singh stated that with the cooperation of the sangat and volunteers, the event became a symbol of unity within the Sikh community. The Nagar Kirtan concluded with the message of devotion, selfless service and brotherhood.

NNB Group honored bouncer team, more than 50 soldiers got encouragement Mathura

Mathura

A felicitation ceremony was organized at a local hotel on Govardhan Road in honor of the NNB bouncer team under the auspices of NNB Group, which is fast making its mark in Mathura. In the program, NNB Group founder and journalist Kunwar Gopal Thakur honored the entire bouncer team including NNB bouncer team co-founder Vikas Thakur alias VK Baba for their outstanding work, discipline and professional services. On this occasion, discussing the responsibilities and working style of bouncers, the speakers said that security arrangements, crowd control, VIP movement, emergency management and maintaining the dignity of the program in any event is the main responsibility of the bouncer team. It was reported that the NNB bouncer team never compromises discipline, vigilance and professional code of con-



duct in their work. The program informed that NNB Bouncer Group is a fast emerging professional bouncer group of Mathura, which is active in celebrity events, marriage functions, corporate events, private parties and private security services. The team methodology is considered strict, well-planned and thoroughly professional. More than 50 bouncers were invited to the function in view of their loyalty and services. A mass banquet was also organized with everyone during this time. All the guests and

team members were awarded with special certificates on behalf of NNB Group. Raju Thakur and Ajit Chauhan (Journalist), Prakash Singh (Jaswant Telecom), Pranjal Agarwal (Coco India Cafe), Dr. S.P. Jadaun (New Pulse Hospital), Thakur Dinesh Singh (Karni Seva District President), Thakur Bhupendra Singh, Thakur Bablu Singh and Thakur Dharendra Parihar (Kisan Union District President) and many other dignitaries were present. The program was presided over by founder and journalist Kunwar Gopal Thakur, while co-founder Vikas Thakur alias VK Baba was specially present. The purpose of the program was to boost the morale of the bouncer team and motivate them to deliver more responsible and professional services in the future. The function concluded with wishing Power Supply) team a bright future.

Bahraich

Under the Mission Shakti 5.0 campaign, Mission Shakti teams formed at all police stations in the district, through women police personnel, visited major markets, towns, intersections, religious places and other important public places to raise awareness among women and girls about the objectives of the campaign. During the awareness program, information was provided about various schemes and facilities operated by the government and the police department for the safety, empowerment and self-reliance of women. Women and girls were informed in detail about their rights, safety measures and the resources available under Mission Shakti. Under the Mission Shakti 5.0 campaign, information was given about various schemes being run for the safety and empowerment of women, such as the Chief



Minister Kanya Sumangala Yojana, Destitute Women Pension Scheme, Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission, National Nutrition Mission, Chief Minister Mass Marriage Scheme, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Swanidhi Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Samman Nidhi Yojana, One Stop Center, Ayushman Bharat Yojana, Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN) Yojana, Mahila Shakti Kendra Yojana, Chief Minister Abhyudaya Yojana etc. Along with this, pamphlets were distributed to

raise awareness about various helpline numbers related to the police department, such as Women Power Line 1090, Police Emergency Service 112 (Emergency Call, demonstration of panic button on mobile), CM Helpline 1076, Health Service Helpline 102, Ambulance Service 108, Women Helpline 181 and Cyber Crime Helpline 1930. The objective of this campaign was to provide a safe environment for women and girls, make them self-reliant and make them aware of how to seek help in any emergency situation.

Assam DGP Harmeet Singh Firm Resolve: Police to Ensure Public

Assam

On the advent of 2026, Assam Director General of Police (DGP) Harmeet Singh extended heartfelt New Year greetings to the state residents via a social media message on Thursday. In the message issued on behalf of the Assam Police, DGP Singh wished all citizens of Assam a happy new year, reaffirming that under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, the police



force remains steadfast in upholding peace and law and order. He highlighted that the Assam Police has worked with full dedication to safeguard vulnerable sections of society and address public needs with sensitivity and courage. The DGP acknowledged the

trust placed by the people of Assam in the police, stating that this confidence further strengthens the force's commitment to its duties. He expressed hope that collective cooperation will ensure a safe, harmonious and optimistic year ahead for the state.

Free Plastic Surgery Camp: BJS Delhi

Delhi

BJS Delhi (Bharatiya Jain Sangathan-Delhi) is organizing a three-day free plastic surgery camp from January 14 to 16 at Muni Mayaram Jain Hospital, Pitampura for underprivileged children and adults suffering from congenital facial deformities.

This camp will provide world-class corrective surgeries free of charge to



needy patients from across the country. The press conference held at Anuvrat Bhavan, New Delhi to announce the camp, began with the chanting of the Navkar Mantra by Shasan, Muni, Vimal Kumar and Bahushrut Muni, Udit Kumar. The Munis urged society to adopt a drug-free and virtuous life, stating that the objective of social service should not be merely physical treatment, but holistic well-being. Dr. Kamal Jain Sethia, President of BJS Delhi said that this camp symbolizes the organization's ethical commitment to dignified and accessible healthcare. Camp coordinator Vijay Jain informed that deformities such as cleft lip and palate, strabismus and facial scars will be treated completely free of charge. OPD and examinations will be conducted on January 14, while surgeries and post-operative care will be provided on January 15-16. National Secretary Pradeep Jain stated that BJS has conducted more than three lakh free surgeries to date. National Head Rajesh Khivansara described it as a life-changing initiative. This will be BJS Delhi sixth major camp with over 100 beneficiaries expected. Renowned plastic surgeons Dr. Larry Weinstein and Dr. Whitney Pafford from the USA will be providing their services alongside Indian doctors at the camp. A helpline number 902433322 has been issued for registration. Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta is expected to visit the camp on January 14. This initiative reinforces the message that quality healthcare should be accessible to all.

Always alert around Manoj: Priyamani

Priyamani opens up about Manoj Bajpayee's instinctive acting, revealing how his surprises keep co-stars alert during rehearsals for the new season

Actress Priyamani opened up about her experience working with veteran actor Manoj Bajpayee on the sets of *The Family Man 3*. In an interview with IANS, she revealed how his instinctive acting keeps co-actors alert on set.

She shared that being around Bajpayee requires constant focus, as you never know what surprises he might bring to a scene. When asked about working with Manoj Bajpayee, Priyamani described the on-set process of bringing the layered and authentic relationship between his character and Suchitra to life.

She shared, "I believe both of us are very instinctive actors. Whenever Manoj sir is on set, we rehearse thoroughly before going for a take. But you have to be very alert around him - always on your toes. You never know what surprise he might throw your way, so your presence of mind needs to be sharp."

Speaking about her character, Priyamani shared, "I don't think Suchi has grey shades. From her perspective, she's absolutely justified. At the end of the day, she just wants to be seen and heard. She wants someone to sit down, have a conversation with her - about what's happening around her, especially in her personal and professional life. She's seeking understanding, and in that sense, she's valid in her stance. I wouldn't take that away from her." "I can't reveal much about the guilt or tension. But as a character, Suchi has grown a lot. Her dynamics have evolved significantly. You'll understand more once season three releases," she added.

Priyamani is set to return as Suchitra Tiwari in *The Family Man 3*, the upcoming season of the Amazon Prime Video series. The show, created by Raj and DK, also stars Manoj Bajpayee, Sharib Hashmi, Ashlesha Thakur, and Vedant Sinha. The new season is reportedly slated for release around *Diwali* 2025.



A still from *Barfi*

Saurabh Shukla overcomes acting struggles

Saurabh Shukla opened up about his low phase, overcoming frustration with cameo roles, and rediscovering passion through *Barfi*

Actor and writer Saurabh Shukla recently opened up about a difficult time in his life when he had almost started to lose interest in acting.

The veteran performer, known for his outstanding roles in films like *Satya* and *Jolly LLB*, shared that there was a phase when he only received small "cameos" in movies, which left him "frustrated." However, it was during the filming of *Barfi* that he rediscovered his love for acting, thanks to his interactions with Ranbir Kapoor.

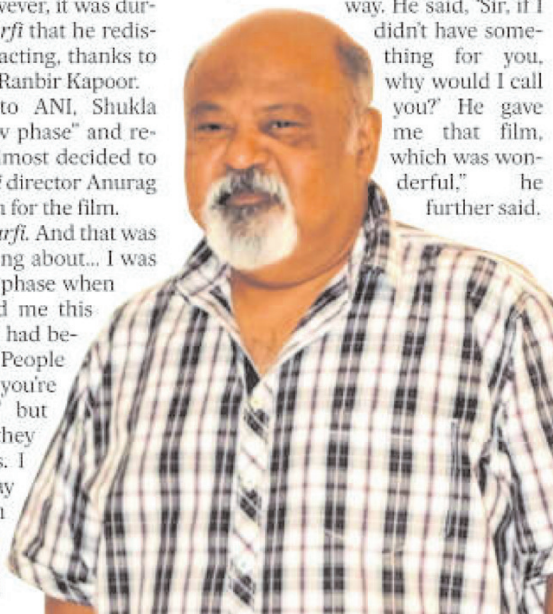
While speaking to ANI, Shukla talked about the "low phase" and recalled how he had almost decided to step away when *Barfi* director Anurag Basu approached him for the film.

"I met Ranbir in *Barfi*. And that was the phase I was talking about... I was going through a low phase when Anurag Basu offered me this film, *Barfi*. By then, I had become so frustrated. People used to say, 'Saurabh, you're such a good actor', but when roles came, they were always cameos. I mean, you'd have a day of shooting... and in that one day, what could you do? How much of a role would

you have, and how much of your acting could you show?" said Shukla.

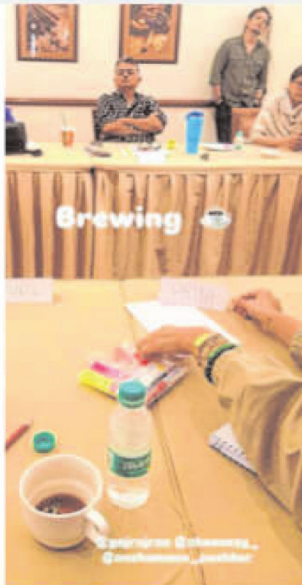
"I was really struggling. So, I started telling people that I don't act; I'm not an actor. I'm a writer, and I've made films. I started saying that. I was going through a low phase at that time," he added.

"When Anurag offered me this film, my first words were, 'Anurag, if you have something for me, call me. Otherwise, don't call me at all.' And I'm so lucky that he didn't take it the wrong way. He said, 'Sir, if I didn't have something for you, why would I call you?' He gave me that film, which was wonderful," he further said.



New film brewing

Abhishek Banerjee, Gajraj Rao, Ahsaas Channa, and Anshumaan spark buzz with social media posts hinting at new project



Actors Abhishek Banerjee, Gajraj Rao, Ahsaas Channa, and Anshumaan Pushkar have sparked excitement on social media, fueling speculation about a new project.

The talented performers shared glimpses of a table read, with scripts spread across tables, hinting at a collaboration. Fans quickly connected the dots as the actors

tagged each other with intriguing captions and behind-the-scenes photos.

Known for their distinct screen presence, Abhishek Banerjee's versatility, Gajraj Rao's charm, Ahsaas Channa's fresh appeal, and Anshumaan Pushkar's nuanced performances have heightened curiosity about the project. While details remain under wraps, a source revealed that the film blends humour, emotion, and a rooted story. "The chemistry between the cast is already quite electric," the insider shared.



LAKME FASHION WEEK 2025

Runway filled with glamour

Vaani Kapoor closed the show at Lakmé Fashion Week X FDCI Day 3, walking the ramp in a swirling pink floral lehenga paired with a corset blouse and spaghetti straps.



Mrunal Thakur stole the spotlight as she walked for designer duo Pankaj & Nidhi in a bold golden metallic bodice and sleek black skirt. Her powerful, futuristic look wowed audiences.

Veteran actress Tabu mesmerized in a deep green embellished *Anarkali* for ITRH's "Noor" collection. Her graceful presence and traditional look radiated elegance and timeless beauty on the runway.



Yacht date sparks rumors

Katy Perry and Justin Trudeau spark dating rumors again after being spotted sharing a passionate kiss on her yacht in California



the guy's arm and I immediately realised it was Justin Trudeau."

As of now, neither Katy Perry nor Justin Trudeau have reacted to the dating rumours. Earlier in July, the duo were spotted together for the first time, enjoying a cosy dinner date in Montreal. Trudeau later attended Perry's sold-out *Lifetimes* tour stop in Canada.

Popstar Katy Perry and former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau have once again ignited dating rumours after being spotted getting cosy and sharing a kiss on her lavish yacht in Santa Barbara, California.

This comes after reports suggested the two had drifted apart, with Trudeau reportedly feeling 'uncomfortable' with the media frenzy following their intimate dinner date in Montreal. However, the recent photos seem to put those rumours to rest.

In the viral photos, Katy was seen in a black swimsuit, passionately kissing a shirtless Justin, who wore denim jeans, as they enjoyed some quality time together. The couple was also spotted hugging, with Trudeau seemingly nuzzling Perry's cheek.

A witness told *The Daily Mail*, "She pulled up her boat next to a small public whale-watching boat, then they started making out. I didn't realise who she was with until I saw the tattoo on



Briefs

China expels three corrupt military men

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

Thailand parties name PM nominees

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

S Africa bldg collapse kills baby, 2 others

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

Three dead, scores hurt in Syria clashes

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

Khaleda Zia is 'extremely critical'

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

NY subway switches to tap-go fares

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

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

First round: Myanmar poll 'widely criticised'

YANGON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"An election organised by a junta that continues to bomb civilians, jail political leaders, and criminalise all forms of dissent is not an election — it is a theatre of the absurd performed at gunpoint," Tom Andrews, the UN-appointed human rights expert for Myanmar, posted on X.

Khin Marlar, 51, a Yangon's Kyauktada township voter, said she felt she needed to vote as she hoped peace would follow afterwards. "I had fled my village in Thauंगा in central Mandalay due to the fighting. I will go back to my village when it is peaceful," she said.

A resident of Mon state, Khin, fearing arrest by the military, said, "I have to go and vote even though I don't want to, because soldiers showed up with guns to our village to pressure us yesterday."

Suu Kyi, 80, Myanmar's former leader, and her party are not participating.

KOSOVO TRIES TO END CRISIS

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



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GUINEA VOTES IN FIRST POLL SINCE 2021 COUP

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



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KATHMANDU MAYOR PM FACE

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

Agitating Serbia students urge support for early poll to oust Vucic

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

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

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

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

MOSCOW

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

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

"However, should anyone consider attacking Russia, they would face a devastating blow," Lavrov added.

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

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

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KYIV MUST END THINGS PEACEFULLY: PUTIN

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

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

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

ZARDARI WAS ADVISED TO 'HIDE IN A BUNKER'

OP SINDOOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dhaka rejects India's claim of hostilities against minorities

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

Thai and Cambodian envoys meet in China to solidify ceasefire

BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 KILLED IN SWEDEN AS MAJOR STORM SWEEPS ACROSS NORDIC COUNTRIES



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

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

Police said a man in 60s was hospitalised after being hit by a tree while working in a forest in Hofors, Sweden, and later died. Thousands of homes in Sweden, Norway and Finland have been left without power. In Sweden, over 40,000 homes were affected by power outages and numerous rail services were cancelled, Swedish news agency TT reported.

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



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

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

There have been no reported injuries.



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

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

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

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

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

LONDON

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

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

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

"The complaints of direct race discrimination are well-



founded and succeed," reads the judgment.

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

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

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

Judge Abbott said he

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

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

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

The tribunal concluded that

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

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

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

Briefs

MUMBAI

Anish, Nirmaben to headline TMM

A mix of seasoned champions and emerging talent led by defending champions **Anish Thapa** and Nirmaben Thakor will be among the leading contenders in the men's and women's elite races at the Tata Mumbai Marathon, a World Athletics Gold Label Race here on January 18. This year's race will feature 36 of the country's top athletes who will compete fiercely for the men's and women's titles, comprising 23 men and 13 women athletes. The top three finishers in the Indian Elite men's and women's categories will be awarded prize money of Rs 5 lakh, Rs 4 lakh, and Rs 3 lakh respectively. In addition, an event record bonus of Rs 2 lakh is on offer, along with an Indian event record jackpot of Rs 1 lakh.

NEW DELHI

Mayank attains 90 per cent fitness

Injury-prone Indian pace sensation **Mayank Yadav** is close to attaining full bowling fitness after spending almost a year on the sidelines due to a lower back stress fracture. The 23-year-old made heads turn with his express pace in IPL 2024 and went on to play for India in the shortest format. However, he played just two competitive games in the 2025 edition due to the back injury. Despite his fitness issues, his IPL side Lucknow Super Giants showed faith in the Delhi fast bowler and retained him ahead of the auction last month. "Mayank Yadav is progressing well through his rehabilitation and has successfully achieved bowling."

NEW DELHI

AIFF to reveal ISL schedule next week

The Indian Football crisis could be coming to an end. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has confirmed that it will reveal the dates for the ISL.

VHT: Pant slams unbeaten half-ton in Delhi victory

Axar Patel hits century for Gujarat

BENGALURU

India keeper-batter **Rishabh Pant** overcame a patchy form to strike an unbeaten half-century as Delhi thrashed Services by eight wickets to return to winning ways in a fifth-round Vijay Hazare Trophy Group D match here on Saturday.

Delhi rode on opener Priyansh Arya (72 not out off 45 balls) and Pant's (67 not out off 37 balls) half-tons to overhaul Services' meagre total of 178 all out in just 19.4 overs. The Pant-led side drastically improved their net run rate (NRR), which was battered following their crushing defeat by Odisha in the previous round in Alur.

Delhi are back on top of the table with 16 points and a healthy NRR of +0.803, followed by Haryana (16 points, +0.460). Odisha, Railways and Saurashtra are on 12 points each while Gujarat are on eight points.

This was Pant's second half-century in five games and came after two below-par



performances with the bat. **Maharashtra inflict Mumbai's first defeat**

Arshin Kulkarni struck a run-a-ball 114 while Ramakrishna Ghosh made a stunning 27-ball 64 not out to set up Maharashtra's comprehensive 128-run win over Mumbai in their Vijay Hazare Trophy Group C match here on Saturday. It was Mumbai's first loss but they remained in top-two along with Punjab on 16 points each. Maharashtra are at third spot with 12 points with three wins from five matches. Kulkarni shared 140 runs with Prithvi Shaw (71 off 75 balls) for the opening wicket to lay foundation for Maharashtra's massive 366.

Brief Scores

Group D: Services: 178 all out in 42.5 overs (Harshit Rana 4/47, Prince Yadav 3/28) **lost to Delhi** 182 for 2 in 19.4 overs (Priyansh Arya 72 not out, Nitish Rana 32, Rishabh Pant 67 not out) by 8 wickets. **Odisha:** 305 for 9 in 50 overs (Swastik Samal 101, Govinda Poddar 77, Biplob Samantray 47; Anuj Thakral 3/68, Parth Vats 3/60) **lost to Haryana** 309 for 6 in 48.4 overs (Parth Vats 157 not out, Anuj Thakral 59 not out) by 4 wickets. **Saurashtra:** 294 for 8 in 50 overs (Sammar Gajjar 147; Rahul Sharma 2/32, Kunal Yadav 3/71, Zubair Ali 3/82) beat **Railways** 263 in 49.1 overs (Upendra Yadav 86, Ashutosh Sharma 65; Ankur Panwar 3/49, Prerak Mankad 3/48) by 31 runs. **Gujarat:** 318 for 9 in 50 overs (Axar Patel 130, Vishal Jayswal 70; Nitish Kumar Reddy 2/65, Satyanarayanan Raju 4/53, Midee Anjaneyulu 2/45) beat **Andhra** 311 for 7 in 50 overs (CR Gnaneshwar 102, SD Prasad 48 not out; Arzan Nagwaswalla 2/69, Axar Patel 2/27, Ravi Bishnoi 3/64) by 7 runs. **Group C: Maharashtra:** 366 for 4 in 50 overs (Arshin Kulkarni 114, Prithvi Shaw 71, Ruturaj Gaikwad 66; Ramakrishna Ghosh not out; Tushar Deshpande 2/83) beat **Mumbai** 238 all out in 42 overs (Ankrish Raghuwanshi 92, Siddhesh Lad 52; Pradeep Dadhe 3/43, Satyajit Bachhav 2/44)

NZ SERIES |

Despite speculation, Pant has retained his place in the squad

Siraj makes ODI comeback

NEW DELHI

Senior India fast bowler Mohammed Siraj on Saturday made a comeback to the ODI side for the three-match home series against New Zealand while batter Shreyas Iyer was included subject to fitness clearance.

Siraj, who was overlooked for the home series against South Africa, is back in the ODI setup. His new ball partner Jasprit Bumrah was expectedly rested from the series with the focus on the shortest format ahead of the T20 World Cup beginning next month.

Iyer, who was hospitalised during the ODI series in Australia in November for spleen laceration, will need to prove his match fitness in a Vijay Hazare Trophy game on January 6 to get fitness clearance from the Centre of Excellence (COE). He returns to the squad as vice-captain.

Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya was not cleared by the COE to bowl 10 overs in a match and therefore the selectors did not include him in the team for the series beginning in Vadodra on January 11. There is also little point in risking him with T20 show-piece around the corner.

The other two matches will be played in Rajkot and Indore on January 14 and 18 respectively.

"Shreyas Iyer's availability is subject to fitness clearance from BCCI COE," said the BCCI in a statement.

"Hardik Pandya has not been cleared by the BCCI COE to bowl 10 overs in a match, and considering the ICC Men's T20 World Cup to follow, his workload is being managed," it added.

Ruturaj Gaikwad could not get the selectors' nod



Members of India's ODI squad for series against New Zealand; top row left to right, captain Shubman Gill, vice captain Shreyas Iyer, Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Ravindra Jadeja; middle row left to right, Nitish Kumar Reddy, KL Rahul, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Washington Sundar, Harshit Rana; bottom row left to right, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Kuldeep Yadav, Rishabh Pant, and Arshdeep Singh.

PTI

despite scoring a fine hundred during the South Africa series. With captain Shubman Gill and Shreyas Iyer not part of the South Africa ODIs due to injuries, Gaikwad had made a splendid 105 off 83 balls batting at number four in Raipur.

After being dropped from the T20 World Cup squad, Gill will take back the ODI leadership mantle from KL Rahul, who led the team in the former's absence.

Despite speculation, Rishabh Pant has retained his place as the second wicket-keeper in the squad.

Tilak Varma and Dhruv Jurel, who were part of the previous series, have been left out with senior players returning from injuries.

The pace attack comprises Siraj, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh with all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy being the fourth option.

India superstars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, now one format players, are once again expected to draw huge crowds to the three venues.

With the ODI World Cup just over a year away, Rohit and Kohli would look to push their case certainly.

Shreyas Iyer to play VHT tie on Jan 6

MUMBAI: India batter Shreyas Iyer is set to play his first competitive match since sustaining a spleen injury last October when he turns out for Mumbai against Himachal Pradesh in the Vijay Hazare Trophy but his availability for the upcoming series against New Zealand will be subject to fitness. Iyer had suffered the injury during the third and final ODI against Australia in Sydney and was hospitalised for spleen laceration with internal bleeding. The BCCI had informed about Iyer's release in early November and the right-handed batter has been on a comeback trail since. According to a source in the BCCI's Centre Of Excellence in Bengaluru, the 31-year-old will play in the 50-overs premier domestic competition for his home side Mumbai, but his availability for New Zealand series will be subjected to fitness. "Shreyas successfully completed the first 50-over RTP (return to play) match on January 2, 2026. He will be playing the Vijay Hazare match on January 6th as part of his second RTP match before final fitness clearance," the official told PTI on Saturday.

KKR release Mustafizur after BCCI instructions

Knight Riders had acquired the Bangladeshi player for Rs 9.20 crore

GUWAHATI

Bangladesh pacer **Mustafizur Rahman** has been released by IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders after being instructed to do so by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) amid heightening diplomatic tensions between the two neighbouring countries.

KKR had acquired the services of the 30-year-old left-arm for Rs 9.20 crore from a base price of Rs 2 crore after an intense bidding war with Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals at the players' auction last month.

The BCCI said KKR will be allowed to name a replacement player if required for the event scheduled to start on March 26.

"The BCCI has asked Kolkata Knight Riders to release Mustafizur Rahman from its squad. They can ask for replacement, if needed. And upon request, BCCI will allow a replacement player," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI

The BCCI has asked Kolkata Knight Riders to release Mustafizur Rahman from its squad. They can ask for replacement, if needed. And upon request, BCCI will allow a replacement player

Devajit Saikia, BCCI secretary

here on Saturday.

Asked why the BCCI has asked Kolkata Knight Riders to do so, he replied, "Because of recent developments all across." In a statement, the franchise said it has released the player as instructed by the BCCI.

"Kolkata Knight Riders confirms that BCCI/IPL as the regulator of IPL has instructed it to release Mustafizur Rahman from the squad ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season. "The release has been carried out following due process and consultations, upon the instruction of the Board of Control of Cricket in India," KKR said in a statement. In Sylhet, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Aminul Islam Bulbul announced an emergency meeting of the body to discuss the issue later tonight.

"...we have arranged to call an emergency meeting at 9:30pm (10pm IST) to know about the matter in detail. Then, we will get a clear overview and may issue a media release.

"...we don't have the full information. That's why, we have called the emergency meeting," Bulbul said.

The pressure had been mounting on the BCCI over Rahman's participation after recent killing of a Hindu man in the country and India's expression of concern for the safety of minorities there.

The criticism has also extended to KKR co-owner and Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan with some politicians from the ruling BJP questioning the call to include the bowler in the current scenario. Rahman has featured in eight IPL editions since 2016, missing the tournament only in 2019 and 2020.

He has played for teams such as Sunrisers Hyderabad, Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals, Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals. The upcoming edition was going to be his first for three-time IPL winners KKR.

Neither him, nor the Bangladesh Cricket Board have reacted to the development yet.

Ashes

Rifle-toting police will patrol the 5th test in Sydney

AP SYDNEY

Police with long-armed rifles, a rarity at sporting events in Australia, will patrol the final Ashes cricket test in Sydney starting Sunday as part of heightened security measures following the Bondi Beach terror attack in the city.

Uniformed and mounted police along with public order and riot squad officers will watch over the sold-out

match at the Sydney Cricket Ground. It comes three weeks after two gunmen killed 15 people and injured many more at a Hanukkah celebration at Bondi.

The increased visibility of the rifles is intended to reassure the public and there is no threat to the community, New South Wales state Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon said Saturday.

"Many people may not be used to seeing police carrying rifles at sporting events,

but our objective here is to help the public feel safe and police will be out in force," he said. "The difference will be in the visibility of long-arms and a stronger presence. Police will otherwise be targeting anti-social and unsafe behavior as usual."

The measures are similar to those for the fourth Ashes test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground which began Dec. 26 where specialist police officers were armed with semiautomatic rifles and

The difference will be in the visibility of long-arms and a stronger presence. Police will otherwise be targeting anti-social and unsafe behavior as usual

Mal Lanyon, NSW Police Commissioner

patrolled around the busy stadium, a nearby park and railway station.

Seven people remain hospitalized following the Dec. 14 attack at Bondi. Six remain in stable condition, while one is in a critical but

stable condition.

Naveed Akram, 24, one of the two accused gunmen, is facing 59 charges over the attack that includes 15 counts of murder. Akram was shot by police at the scene and spent days in a coma.



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