

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ Wednesday, 17 December, 2025 UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

Unemployment rate: Fell to a seven-month low in November

New Delhi

There is good news on the unemployment front. The unemployment rate among individuals aged 15 years and above in India fell to 4.7 percent in November, the lowest level since April. This is down from 5.2 percent in October. A steady and broad-based



decline in the unemployment rate has been observed among men, women, and the overall population during the

April-November period. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

released the data on Tuesday. The data shows a significant decline in the unemployment rate for both men and women aged 15 years and above in November. The rural unemployment rate fell to a new low of 3.9 percent. Similarly, the urban unemployment rate declined to 6.5 percent, matching its previous

lowest level recorded in April. The overall unemployment rate in April was 5.1 percent.

According to the ministry, these trends indicate a strengthening of labor market conditions, supported by increased rural employment, higher female participation, and a gradual

improvement in urban labor demand. According to the ministry, the unemployment rate among women fell to 4.8 percent in November, down from 5.4 percent in October. This decline was due to a decrease in the unemployment rate for women in both rural and urban areas.

PM visit to Jordan: Both countries share a common stance on terrorism



New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is currently on a visit to Jordan, where he reiterated India's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism. Meanwhile, Secretary (South) in the Ministry of External Affairs, Dr. Neena Malhotra, emphasized the significance of PM Modi's visit to Jordan. She stated that the visit coincides with the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. She added that this is the first full-fledged bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Jordan in 37 years. PM Modi and King Abdullah II of Jordan

also addressed the India-Jordan Business Forum, which was attended by leading business figures from both countries. During the visit, several agreements and MoUs were signed between the two countries in areas such as energy, digital technology, water management, culture, and people-to-people contact. AdvertisementA Iso Read: 'Attackers, father and son, went to Manila on Indian passports...'. Philippines' claim on Bondi Beach attackIndia-Jordan's shared stance on terrorismSpeaking to reporters, Dr. Malhotra said that Jordan supported India's fight against terrorism.

There was a huge uproar in Parliament over "V.B.G. Ram"

New Delhi

Amid protests from the opposition in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, the 'G Ram Ji' Bill, related to changes in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), was introduced. The opposition protested against the bill, objecting to the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the scheme. Most members requested that the bill be sent to the Standing Committee of the House. Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan introduced the Developed India - Employment and Livelihood Mission (Rural) Guarantee: (Developed India - G Ram Ji) Bill, 2025. This bill will establish a rural development framework aligned with the national vision of Developed India



'The Congress changed the name of the Jawaharlal scheme; was that an insult to'

New Delhi

The Lok Sabha witnessed a major uproar on Tuesday over the bill introduced by the government to rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA). Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan sought permission in the House to introduce the 'Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Employment and Livelihood Mission (Rural)' or 'V-BHARAT Bill 2025'.

@2047. It will provide a legal guarantee of 125 days of employment to every rural household in each financial year. An adult member of the family will be given unskilled work as per their preference. Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said

that Mahatma Gandhi resides in the hearts of the people of the country, and he and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya had given the vision of welfare for the poorest of the poor (Antyodaya). In the bill, the government has provisioned for 125

"I don't know why the opposition objects to the name of Ram being included in the plan"

Shivraj said, "The Congress party changed the name of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, so did that insult Jawaharlal Nehru?" The Agriculture Minister said that the India Guarantee for Employment and Livelihood Mission (Rural) Bill is completely in line with the sentiments of Mahatma Gandhi. Shivraj said, "I don't understand why the opposition is objecting to the inclusion of the name 'Ram' in the scheme." Meanwhile, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra today opposed the Developed India.

days of employment guarantee instead of 100 days, for which an amount of Rs. 1,51,282 crore has been allocated. He asked the opposition whether changing the name of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana



The 54th Vijay Diwas (Victory Day) was celebrated to commemorate the Indian Armed Forces' victory in the 1971 Indo-Pak War. A wreath-laying ceremony was held on Tuesday at the National War Memorial in New Delhi. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, and Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi were present at the event.

India will receive 3 Apache helicopters from the US

New Delhi

The Indian Air Force is soon to receive the remaining 3 Apache AH-64 attack helicopters from the US. Simultaneously, the Indian Navy is set to induct the MH-60R Seahawk helicopters into its squadron this week. The arrival of

these helicopters will significantly enhance the capabilities of the Indian Air Force and Navy. The Army and Air Force also expect to begin receiving 156 indigenously developed Light Combat Helicopters from 2028 onwards. 1000 New Helicopters to Join the ArmyOver the next 10-

15 years, the Indian Army requires more than 1000 helicopters of various types. These will replace the Cheetah and Chetak helicopters currently in service. This includes 484 light helicopters weighing up to 3.5 tons, and 419 helicopters weighing 10-15 tons, capable of per-

forming a variety of roles. According to a defense official, the 3 Apache gunships can destroy tanks from the air. They will be equipped with air-to-air missiles, air-to-ground missiles, as well as guns and rockets. This consignment of helicopters will arrive in India shortly.

'The Election Commission was under the control of one family for a long time,' JP Nadda

New Delhi

In the Rajya Sabha, Union Health Minister JP Nadda discussed several issues one by one. During this time, he clarified the central government's stance on all matters, from electoral reforms to the allegations leveled by the opposition. Nadda also strongly criticized the Congress party regarding allegations of 'vote theft and tampering with EVMs' and accused the Congress of misleading the country



regarding the Election Commission and EVMs. He said that for a long time, the work of the Commission was controlled by a party run by a single family, but no questions were ever raised about it.

SIR: Draft of West Bengal's voter list published

New Delhi

The Election Commission on Tuesday published the draft voter list for West Bengal based on census feedback. The Commission also published on its website the names of voters who were included in the 2025 voter list but have been removed from the 2026 draft list, along with the reasons for the removal. Elections for the 294 seats of the West Bengal Assembly are scheduled to be held early next year, further



fueling political divisions. The draft list can be viewed on the official website of the Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal, or on the Election Commission's voter portal and application. The list of deleted voters is available on the

Commission's portal link. Over 5.8 million people failed to submit SIR census forms. According to Commission sources, the number of people who failed to submit SIR census forms is over 5.8 million. These voters were removed

on grounds such as being absent from their registered address, permanently relocating, death, or being a duplicate voter in more than one constituency. Over 2.4 million voters declared dead. More than 1.2 million voters could not be located at their registered addresses. Additionally, approximately 2 million voters have permanently relocated from their previous constituencies, and 138,000 voters have been registered twice.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath bowed his head at the feet of Lord Ramlala

Ayodhya

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath arrived in Ayodhya on a one-day visit on Tuesday. Upon his arrival in Ayodhya, the Chief Minister was warmly welcomed by the mayor, public representatives, and leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party. The Chief Minister first arrived at Maharishi Valmiki International Airport in the morning. From there, he went directly to



Hanumangarhi and offered prayers at the shrine of Sankatmochan Hanuman. After the darshan and prayers, the Chief Minister accepted the greetings of the general public present. After this, Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath reached the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple. He bowed his head at the feet of Shri Ramlala, expressing his devotion, and performed the rituals of worship. Amidst the spiritual atmosphere

in the temple complex, the Chief Minister prayed for the prosperity and welfare of the state. There was special enthusiasm in Ayodhya regarding the Chief Minister's visit. Devotees and local citizens welcomed the Chief Minister. Public representatives also said that under the leadership of the Chief Minister, Ayodhya's overall development and religious tourism have received a new identity.

Jordan can benefit from India's experience in digital inclusion: PM

New Delhi

PM Narendra Modi, addressing the India-Jordan Business Meet on Tuesday, proposed cooperation in the fields of agriculture, healthcare, and digital inclusion. He said that historical trust and future economic opportunities connect the two countries. Al-Hussein bin Abdullah II at the India-Jordan Business Forum today.

The Everyone's Insurance, Everyone's Security Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha

New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha providing for 100 percent foreign direct investment in the insurance sector. The bill is titled "Sabka Bima Sabki Suraksha (Insurance Laws Amendment) Bill, 2025." Some members raised objections regarding the bill's name, purpose, and language. A bill to amend



the Insurance Act, 1938, the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956, and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999 was introduced for consideration in the House.

Several members opposed the introduction of the bill in the Lok Sabha. Members objected to the bill's name, stating that it was not related to its purpose and that it was in Hindi. RSP leader N.K. Premachandran said that the bill's name has no connection to its function. He said that the bill provides for 100 percent foreign direct investment in the insurance sector, which affects the national interest.

Briefs

CHANDIGARH

Cong plans no-trust vote in Haryana

The Congress party will bring a no-confidence motion against the BJP government during the upcoming winter session of Haryana assembly, scheduled to begin from December 18. This decision was taken at a meeting chaired by former chief minister and Leader of the Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

INDORE

10 people get 5-year RI in Vyapam scam

A special Central Bureau of Investigation court in Indore on Tuesday sentenced 10 people to five years of rigorous imprisonment in connection with irregularities in the Patwari recruitment exam linked to Madhya Pradesh's Vyapam scam, said the probe agency.

CHANDIGARH

Jailed MP 'appears before' HC

Jailed under national security Act (NSA), the pro-Khalistan Sikh radical leader and MP Amritpal Singh, who appeared before Punjab and Haryana High Court via video-conferencing, on Tuesday said that his detention was preventing him from raising his constituency Khadoor Sahib's issues in the Parliament.

NEW DELHI

Af health minister seeks to boost ties

Afghanistan's Minister of Public Health, Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali, arrived in India on Tuesday for his first official visit aimed at holding discussions to enhance bilateral cooperation in the healthcare sector. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) posted on X, "The visit reflects India's enduring support for Afghanistan's healthcare system, and we look forward to productive discussions."

CHANDIGARH

Hansi is now 23rd district of Haryana

Haryana chief minister Nayab Saini on Tuesday declared Hansi as the state's 23rd district. Hansi was earlier part of Hisar district. The CM said the official notification in this regard will be issued within a week, after which Hansi will formally attain district status from the revenue administration perspective.

PATNA

Nitin Nabin quits Bihar minister post

Senior BJP leader Nitin Nabin on Tuesday resigned from Bihar cabinet after his appointment as the party's national working president.

KOLKATA

A Trinamool Congress councillor on Tuesday walked into a crematorium near Kolkata and demanded that his last rites be performed, claiming that the Election Commission listed him among the "dead" in the draft electoral rolls.

A booth-wise list of the deceased and migrated voters

IN PARLIAMENT | Legislation's title sparks charges of 'Hindi imposition', MPs caution 100% FDI in sector would hurt LIC

Insurance bill clears LS hurdle amid Oppn fury



Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman arrives at Parliament premises during the ongoing Winter Session, in New Delhi on Tuesday

NEW DELHI

As the Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed a bill to raise FDI in the insurance sector to 100%, with a view to providing coverage to all by 2047, the discussions preceding the passage turned into a fierce onslaught from the opposition benches against "Hindi imposition".

Opposing the Bill, RSP MP NK Premchandran took umbrage over the legislation being titled in Hindi. "The nomenclature of the Bill has nothing to do with its contents," he said, opposing the ideal of allowing 100% FDI in the insurance sector.

Trinamool Congress MP Saugata Roy also questioned the need to give the amendment a Hindi title terming it, "Hindi imposition". He also cautioned against greater access to foreign players, saying, "We are going backwards in the insurance sector... it is giving private players the ultimate say in insurance and will hamper India's government insurer LIC."

Introducing the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Act, 2025 in the House, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

Edu bill sent to joint panel

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed a resolution to refer a bill to set up a 13-member body for regulating higher education institutions to a joint committee of Parliament.

The proposal was moved by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, and it was approved by voice vote in the House.

assured the members that the common people's insurance has always been the focus of the government and the Centre had also provided insurance to the marginal sections of the society even during the Covid pandemic.

As per the objectives of the new legislation, it seeks to amend Insurance Act, 1938, Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956, and Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999.

The amendment Bill also seeks to raise the FDI limit in the insurance sector from 74 per cent to 100 per cent.

SIDELIGHTS

Sonia seeks pay hike for ASHA workers

Senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday raised the issue of distress faced by women frontline workers in the Rajya Sabha, seeking doubling of the Centre's contribution to their pay and filling of nearly 3 lakh vacancies in the ICDS.

Must block infiltrators in voters' list: Nadda

Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha and Union Minister JP Nadda asserted that purifying voter lists is the Election Commission's core constitutional mandate, ensuring only citizens vote while no eligible voter is excluded.

Rupee fall linked to multiple factors: Govt

The depreciation of the rupee during current financial year 2025-26 has been influenced by the increase in trade deficit and likely prospects arising from the ongoing developments in India's trade agreement with the US, amid relatively weak support from the capital account, the Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

Climate change hits rural women most, LS told

Climate change is increasing the workload of women and enhancing their vulnerability, particularly in rural areas, the government told the Lok Sabha.

Over 93% of border with Pak fenced: MHA

India has physically fenced over 93 per cent length of India-Pakistan International Border as well as nearly 79 per cent India-Bangladesh border, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

LS nod to bill to junk 71 obsolete Acts of Raj era

NEW DELHI

As many as 71 Acts would be repealed through the Repealing and Amending Bill, 2025, which was taken up in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday for consideration and later passed.

Tabling the Bill for consideration, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said, "The Modi government is trying to pull India out of the colonial mindset by abolishing British era bills."

Meghwal asserted that by removing the obsolete and

outdated laws, the legislation would contribute to ease of living for citizens.

He said the Bill was aimed at removing outdated laws, correcting errors that had crept in during the law-making process and removing discriminatory aspects of certain laws.

The Bill seeks to repeal 71 Acts, including The Indian Tramways Act, 1886, the Levy Sugar Price Equalisation Fund Act, 1976, and the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (Determination of Conditions of Service of Employees) Act, 1988.



salute to bravehearts on Vijay Diwas

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP Singh and Vice Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan pay tribute to fallen heroes on the occasion of the 54th Vijay Diwas at the National War Memorial, in New Delhi on Tuesday. PM Narendra Modi lauded the valour of the armed forces. "On Vijay Diwas, we remember the brave soldiers whose courage and sacrifice ensured India had a historic victory in 1971," Modi said. — ANI

Trump's Modi praise goes public as US embassy shares shoutout

MUMBAI

US President Donald Trump has reaffirmed Washington's strategic partnership with New Delhi, calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi a "great friend" and India an ancient civilisation and a key Indo-Pacific partner.

The remarks were shared on X by the US Embassy in India, underscoring the growing warmth in bilateral ties amid ongoing talks on trade, defence and regional security.

"India is home to one of the world's oldest civilizations. It is an amazing country and an important strategic partner for America in the Indo-Pacific region. We have a great friend in PM Modi," Trump said, according to moneycontro.com

The post comes days after Modi and Trump spoke by phone to review bilateral ties



and explore ways to maintain momentum in trade engagement. The conversation marked their first direct contact since October and took place amid renewed efforts to ease trade frictions between the two countries.

It also coincided with a two-day India visit by US Deputy Trade Representative Rick Switzer, who held meetings with senior Indian officials, including Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal. India-US relations have witnessed multiple phases of strain in recent years, shaped largely by trade disputes, geopolitical differences and regional security concerns.

One of the sharpest flash-points emerged earlier this year when the Donald Trump administration imposed reciprocal tariffs of up to 50 per cent on select Indian goods. Washington justified the move by citing long-standing trade imbalances and New Delhi's continued purchase of Russian oil.

A stance that drew strong pushback from Indian officials, who termed the measures "unilateral" and harmful to a trusted economic partnership.

Despite these challenges, channels of communication remained open. Both sides continued engagement through strategic dialogues, defence cooperation frameworks and diplomatic visits, underscoring the depth of the partnership beyond episodic disagreements. Recent signals suggest a conscious effort to reset ties, particularly on the economic front.

All cancelled films will be screened at IFFK: Vijayan

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

After the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting refused screening permission for several films at the International Film Festival of Kerala 2025, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that all films that were denied screening permission will be screened at the festival.

Vijayan wrote on his Facebook page that the Union Government's decision to deny screening of scheduled films was "unacceptable".

"The censorship imposed at the film festival is a stark example of the authoritarian rule of the Sangh Parivar regime, which seeks to sup-



press dissenting voices and diverse creative expressions in the country. Enlightened Kerala will not bow to such acts of censorship. All films that were denied screening permission will be screened at the festival," said Vijayan.

According to organisers, screenings of seven films scheduled over the last two days were stalled due to the absence of the mandatory exemption certificate. At present, 19 films have not received permission for screening.

Saat Nischay-3 programme approved by Bihar cabinet

State plans to develop industrial areas in every district and attract at least Rs 50L crore in private investment

PATNA

Bihar cabinet on Tuesday approved the 'Saat Nishchay-3' programme with an objective to create one crore jobs in the next five years.

The approval was given in a cabinet meeting chaired by chief minister Nitish Kumar. Under the "Saat Nishchay-3" programme, the target has also been fixed to bring Bihar into the category of most developed states.

While providing details, Nitish wrote on X: "Since our government was formed on

November 24, 2005, the state has been governed by the rule of law, and for 20 consecutive years, work has been done for the development of all sectors and all sections. I am happy to inform that after achieving the goals related to development with justice in the 7 Nischay (2015-2020) and 7 Nischay-2 (2020-2025) programmes under the good governance in the state, it has now been decided to implement 7 Nischay-3 programme to include Bihar in the category of most developed states."

The government has set a target of creating employ-

ment and livelihood opportunities for one crore youths in the next five years. Under the "Double Employment – Double Income" resolve, efforts will be made to increase per capita income through skill development, self-employment and enterprise support. Women will receive Rs 10,000 for self-employment, with financial assistance of up to Rs 2 lakh to expand businesses. Poor families identified in the recent caste-based socio-economic survey will be prioritised for employment schemes.

Bondi Beach attack sparks intelligence alert in India

NEW DELHI

Indian Intelligence agencies have alerted the state police about the possibility of Islamic State-inspired attacks in the wake of the Bondi Beach shooting in Australia.

As many as 16 people were killed after a father-son duo, aged 50 and 24 years, respectively, fired mostly at Jewish people during the first day of Hanukkah.

Officials say that the alert has been sounded since many Islamic State-related handles would use the attack for their propaganda and try to inspire people in India to carry out similar strikes. With the New Year coming up, Islamic State-inspired terrorists will look to carry out similar attacks at crowded venues during the festivities.

Intelligence agencies are keeping a close watch on the online activities of the Islamic

State-linked handles. Officials say that the Bondi Beach attack may be cited as an example of how to carry out an attack at crowded places. The Islamic State has a lot of takers, especially in south India, where radicalisation drives are ongoing.

Moreover, India recently witnessed a deadly attack in Delhi by the Jaish-e-Mohammad-inspired Faridabad module. All these factors are being taken into

account, and hence a high level of alert has been advised by the Intelligence Bureau.

States such as Goa, which draw huge crowds during the New Year, are being closely watched by the agencies. In the past, too, the agencies have picked up intercepts suggesting that terror groups would plan attacks around the New Year.

In recent years, the Israel-Hamas war has been a huge topic of debate in Islamic State

circles. Even terror groups in Pakistan are upset with the response by Israel after Hamas carried out a massive attack. The Hamas-Palestine issue has become the main recruitment tool for terror groups.

The two terrorists in the Sydney attack, Sajid Akram and Naveed Akram, were inspired by the violent ideology of the Islamic State, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said.



6 kids test HIV+, contaminated blood transfusion suspected

SATNA, (MP)

A routine necessity turned into a nightmare for six families in Madhya Pradesh's Satna after their children, already battling severe blood disorder thalassemia, tested positive for HIV, which officials suspect was transmitted via contaminated blood transfusions at different hospitals.

All these cases were

reported between January and May this year, and all the affected children – aged between 12 and 15 – are being treated under HIV protocols, an official said. Madhya Pradesh Health Minister Rajendra Shukla ordered a probe into the matter. "It is also being investigated whether the blood transfusion took place in other hospitals also or only in the government hospital," Shukla said.

SIR-STRUCK

'Dead' in rolls, TMC councillor demands own rites

was released ahead of West Bengal's draft electoral rolls earlier in the day.

Surya Dey, the TMC councillor of Dankuni Municipality's Ward 18, said that while checking the lists linked to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, he claimed his name figured among the "dead", though he had filled and submitted his enumeration form to the booth-level officer.

"Since the Commission has declared me dead, it should complete the process," Dey told reporters as he walked into Kalipur crematorium, flanked by supporters. "Let the officials come and cremate me."

He called this administrative absurdity with serious consequences.

"I am an elected public representative. If I can be shown

dead on paper while I am very much alive, imagine what can happen to ordinary voters," he said.

He held Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar responsible for what he termed a "conspiracy" behind the deletion.

Dey asserted he had complied with every procedural requirement under the SIR, submitting forms and docu-

ments during the enumeration drive. "Despite that, I have been struck off. This is not a clerical error; this is dangerous," he alleged.

The episode quickly travelled from the crematorium to social media.

TMC spokesperson Arup Chakraborty, in a Facebook post, said, "Dankuni Municipality Ward 18 councillor Surya Dey, resident of

Chanditala Assembly constituency. Serial number 40, Booth number 226. According to the voter list on Tuesday, he is dead. Is this SIR or a farce?"

The Election Commission has not responded to the specific allegation.

The incident comes on a politically charged day, with the EC on Tuesday publishing West Bengal's draft electoral rolls.

Pharmacist and Doctor Arrive at Hospital After Receiving Information About DM's Inspection

The doctor and pharmacist at the Naveen Primary Health Center, Selarha West, are always absent. For the past 15 years, patients have not been receiving proper treatment

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Kaushambi. The doctor and pharmacist at the Naveen Primary Health Center, Selarha West, are always absent. For the past 15 years, patients have not been receiving proper treatment at this hospital. If the hospital's register is examined, the entire truth about the dilapidated state of this hospital will be revealed. The husband of a female employee runs the entire hospital. On Tuesday, the District Magistrate (DM) was scheduled to conduct an inspection, and the doctor and pharmacist received prior information about the inspection. As a result, the doctor and pharmacist were present at the hospital during the DM's inspection, and therefore, no



deficiencies were found during the inspection. District Magistrate Dr. Amit Pal conducted a surprise inspection of the Naveen Primary Health Center, Selarha West, on Tuesday. The District Magistrate

inquired about the daily OPD, availability of medicines, and staff availability from the doctor, Dr. Harsh Kiran, and instructed that better medical facilities be provided to the patients. He also instructed that



proper cleanliness be maintained in the hospital and its premises. During the inspection of the Ayushman Arogya Mandir, the District Magistrate obtained information about the available health facilities from

the Community Health Officer (CHO) and gave necessary instructions. Now the question arises: how did the doctor and pharmacist receive information about the District Magistrate's inspection? Which

officer or employee of the health department leaked the information about the DM's surprise inspection to the doctor and pharmacist? This inspection of the hospital has raised serious questions.

Villagers live in fear of a female politician who is encroaching on govt. land



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Kaushambi: In Chauradih village of Chayal tehsil, a female politician from the Ponghat bridge Mundera area of ??Prayagraj has started encroaching on government land, blocking the villagers' access routes. Since independence, the villagers have been struggling for a proper road, but to no avail. The closure of the road has caused widespread anger in the village. The villagers complained to the tehsil officials. Meanwhile, the female politician who was encroaching on the land also arrived at the official's office. The people of the Dalit community in the village are terrified of this female politician who is illegally occupying government land. The villagers have demanded action against her, and the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) has assured them that no one will encroach on their road. He summoned the revenue officer and instructed him to clear the government land and take action against the encroachers under the relevant sections of the Revenue Code. Following the official's instructions, a solution to the villagers' problem seems to be in sight. The villagers' plight raises questions about the growing influence of this female politician. While she is openly flouting the law and regulations by encroaching on government land, she is also disregarding government directives by citing the government itself. The villagers are terrified of the tyranny and oppression of this female politician who is occupying government land. The government land in the area does not appear to be safe. Dozens of villagers were present when they went to the official's office to plead their case.

History-Sheeteer Shot Dead, Assailants Blocked His Path and Shot Him Twice in the Head

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A history-sheeteer was shot dead late Tuesday night. Two to three assailants on a motorcycle were lying in wait. The history-sheeteer was coming on his motorcycle. The assailants stopped him and shot him in the head. The history-sheeteer died on the spot. The history-sheeteer had recently been released from jail on bail. He had murdered a criminal



two years ago and was imprisoned on charges of that murder. Members of the deceased criminal's gang had sworn

revenge against the history-sheeteer. In the initial investigation, the police are considering this a murder stemming from a gang

rivalry. The incident has created tension in the area. The incident took place near Kanchanpur in the Mau Aima police station area. The history-sheeteer was Afsar Ahmed, son of Raisul Jama.

He was originally a resident of Jagdalpur, Dehlpur police station area in Pratapgarh. Currently, he was living at his in-laws' house in Markha Mau, Prayagraj. Afsar Ahmed was returning home to Markha Mau

from Soraon. According to information, Afsar usually traveled in a Safari car, but today he was on a motorcycle. Around 9 pm, two to three assailants lying in ambush before the Kanchanpura intersection stopped him. They then shot him in the head. He died on the spot. The police have reached the spot and are investigating. Teams have been formed to search for the accused. There is an atmosphere of fear in the area.

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Karchhana. A serious incident has come to light in Mahewa Banka village of the Karchhana police station area, where a deadly method was used in the name of guarding fields. It is alleged that some villagers had run a 440-volt current around their field, and a young man was severely electrocuted after coming into contact with it. His condition is reported to be critical. The victim, Sarvesh Yadav, son of Rajmani Yadav, was

returning home from work around 6 PM on Monday evening. He fell after coming into contact with the live wire near the field. According to his family, two nilgai (blue bulls) had already died due to the current in the field, yet the responsible parties did not remove the electricity. This is being described not as negligence, but as a blatant crime. The accused are Shambhu Nishad, son of Nanhe Ram Nishad, Nanku Lal Nishad, son of Banwari Lal, and Rajendra Prasad

Nishad, son of Sarju Prasad Nishad, who allegedly illegally ran the current through their field. The victim's family has demanded strict action from the Bhirpur police outpost in-charge. There is widespread anger among the villagers regarding the incident. People say that spreading current in the fields in this manner is tantamount to playing with people's lives. They have demanded that the police register a case against the culprits under strict sections of the law and take immediate action.

Fire breaks out in railway cabin at Bampur level crossing due to short circuit, causing panic



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Manda A fire broke out in a railway cabin at the Bampur railway level crossing in the Manda area of ??Prayagraj district on Tuesday afternoon. The entire

cabin was quickly reduced to ashes. Local residents informed the authorities by calling 112, after which a police team arrived at the scene. Fortunately, there were no casualties in the incident. The cabin had been

constructed during the construction of the overbridge. Currently, no work was being carried out in the cabin, and no employees were present at the time of the incident, which is why there were no injuries.

Special Awareness Campaign on Fog at Bhavapur Toll Plaza

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Soraon. In view of the increased risk of road accidents during the cold weather and dense fog, a special awareness campaign was jointly conducted by the Kokhraj Hadiya Expressway Private Limited team at the Bhavapur Toll Plaza on Tuesday. Under the campaign, reflective tape was applied to four-wheelers and other slow-moving vehicles. Drivers were made aware of safe driving practices during foggy conditions. During the campaign, traffic personnel and toll plaza employees stopped drivers passing through the toll plaza and informed them about the causes of accidents during fog and measures to prevent them.



Visibility is significantly reduced in dense fog, which often leads to accidents.

Applying reflective tape to vehicles helps in identifying them from a distance, thus reducing the number of accidents. Drivers were advised to maintain a controlled speed, keep their headlights and fog lights on, maintain a safe distance from the

vehicle ahead, and avoid sudden braking. They were also informed that it is essential for vehicles like tractors, trolleys, and auto-rickshaws to have reflectors on the rear, so that fast-moving vehicles can be alerted in time. Manager Naveen Yadav, Assistant Manager Kaushal Kishore Singh, In-charge Vipin Singh, and others were present on the occasion.

Water corporation's water tank proves to be a failure; thousands of people are struggling for even a drop of water for the past 5 days

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Kaushambi. Under the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme, the central government spent crores of rupees constructing water tanks and tube wells in villages. The plan was to lay pipelines in the villages and supply water to every household. However, the companies contracted by the central government to construct the water tanks and tube wells, and the contractors involved in laying the pipelines, resorted to blatant corruption, planning to embezzle half of the central government's budget. Substandard water tanks were constructed, inferior quality submersible pumps were installed, and poor quality pipelines were laid. As a result, the pipelines burst in many places even before the project was completed. The water tanks, built at a cost of crores of rupees, developed leaks, causing water to flow into the streets instead of reaching the villagers' homes. Consequently, when the water supply is shut off, mud from the fields enters the pipelines, and when water does reach the homes, it is muddy and unfit for drinking. On one hand, the contractors and officials drink bottled mineral water, while on the other hand, the villagers are receiving dirty, muddy water through the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme, creating significant problems for them. Despite this, neither the contractors of the Jal Jeevan Mission nor the officials of the Water Corporation are willing to listen to the villagers' grievances. In hundreds of villages in the district, the water tanks and pipelines of the Jal Jeevan Mission have developed leaks in numerous places, yet no cases have been filed against the contractors. Only instructions are being issued; no arrests have been made. The fact that only instructions are being given raises serious questions about the role of the Water Corporation officials. In Balipur Tata village of Chayal tehsil, a water tank built under the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme by the Water Corporation is leaking and could collapse at any time, potentially causing a major accident and loss of life in the village. However, the water tank has not been repaired, and the contractor has not been arrested or sent to jail. This highlights the extent of corruption in the central government's scheme. The question arises: who is protecting the contractors involved in the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme? Under whose protection are these corrupt practices being carried out? The contractors of the Life Mission scheme have committed corruption, and this is a matter for a major investigation.

Editorial

India's online gaming ban shows today's thriving sector could be tomorrow's casualty

It took a mere six minutes in the Lok Sabha and a few minutes more in the Rajya Sabha to wipe out an established industry. In a matter of 48 hours, the passing of the Bill on Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill 2025 has adversely impacted 2,00,000 direct employees, Rs 23,613 crore in investments, over Rs 4,500 crore in advertisements and Rs 20,000 crores in direct and indirect taxes. The Bill, now an Act, was introduced in Parliament without undergoing the due process of a draft for public opinion, stakeholder consultations, or, at the very least, a warning. Policy corridor whispers imply that even allies were not aware of such a move. A decade-old, established sector constitutionally guaranteed under Article 19 has been asked to wrap up operations and told it will be held liable for criminal actions, including those of its employees, if it doesn't comply. While the Act aims to safeguard public health and address the concern of offshore illegal platforms, any ban, especially in the digital space, has consistently proven to have amplified the issue multiple times. The immediate fallout would include economic disruptions, shifts in user behaviour, and social harms. The opaque strategy adopted by the government in this case highlights the grave direction that policy-making is taking in India. The uncertainty goes far beyond the online real money gaming sector and will set a precedent for future policies in each sector. This swift and unconsulted legislative strike is not just a regulatory misstep but a stark warning of the growing unpredictability in India's policy landscape, one that could unravel investor confidence, domestic business trust, and exacerbate systemic issues like brain drain of talent and businesses. The immediate economic toll is staggering and underscores the bill's shortsightedness. Beyond the 2,00,000 direct jobs at risk, it affects ancillary industries like fintech, advertising, and content creation. Annual GST revenues of Rs 20,000-25,000 crore and TDS of Rs 1,080 crore (FY24) will evaporate, creating fiscal gaps at a time when India's fiscal deficit stands at Rs 15.77 lakh crore, amounting to 4.8 per cent of GDP. But the real cautionary tale lies in the investor disarray this creates. A reported foreign direct investment (FDI) of \$2.7 billion and startup funding of \$2.8 billion in real money gaming are now stranded. This unpredictability echoes broader patterns in India's policy environment, where sudden changes deter long-term commitments. For instance, the 2019 e-commerce FDI rules, which restricted inventory models for e-commerce platforms, led to a reported slowdown in US-India tech investments, with firms citing regulatory whiplash as a key barrier. Similarly, retrospective tax demands in the past (e.g., the Vodafone case) have been linked to a dip in FDI inflows, with studies showing that economic policy uncertainty reduces FDI by up to 30 per cent in emerging markets like India. The 2025 Kearney FDI Confidence Index highlights regulatory complexity and ease of doing business as concerns for investors in India, potentially showing off billions in inflows amid global uncertainties like US tariffs. Businesses, particularly in the digital economy, thrive on stability. This bill's passage without stakeholder input, bypassing the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy, sends a chilling message: Today's thriving sector could be tomorrow's casualty. As the industry voices alarm, with petitions likely heading to courts, the precedent risks cascading effects on adjacent digital fields where India aims for global leadership but faces investor hesitation due to such volatility. In the larger scheme, this policy unpredictability is accelerating India's brain drain, particularly in tech and digital innovation, where skilled professionals seek more stable environments abroad. Data from 2025 reveals a stark reality: Over 1,05,000 global tech layoffs this year alone, with 20 per cent occurring in India, have pushed thousands of engineers and developers to migrate.



Intelligence ties bind us together

Edward Heath, Great Britain's Prime Minister, felt the words wash over him, hot like a dragon's breath: "The United States had received nothing from India except a kick in the teeth, in exchange for \$3 billion last year," President Richard Nixon raged. The Indians, Nixon went on, thought "the white nations had no choice but to come in and bail India out." Alarmed, British Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home stepped in. "The Indians were admittedly intolerably high-minded," he accepted. "But there was an important common interest in preserving Indian independence from Soviet and Chinese domination." The invective against Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her nation, provoked by her refusal to back down on Bangladesh, continued in the privacy of Nixon's office, though: "A slippery, treacherous people," "bastards," "old witch," "b*tch". Even as the political leadership in both countries raged against each other, the relationship between the Central Intelligence Agency and the Research and Analysis Wing remained robust, historian Paul McGarr writes. In 1973, the head of Prime Minister Indira's secretariat, Prithvi Nath Dhar, and the chief of R&AW, Rameshwar Nath Kao, lobbied for CIA chief William Colby to visit New Delhi. As President Donald Trump appears to be leading the India-United States relationship into an abyss from which there is no return—adding restrictions to the outsourcing of jobs on the back of crippling tariffs—the period between 1971 and 1973 shows the two countries have



been locked in airless places before. The intelligence services of both countries, though, found ways to bypass potholes and cul-de-sacs, ensuring strategic conversation continued. Little understood, India-US intelligence ties flourished in the shadow of the Cold War, as New Delhi resolutely proclaimed its commitment to non-alignment. Late in the summer of 1949, India was struggling to contain its first post-Independence insurgency, an uprising by communists in the Telangana region. The Indian Army, sent to Hyderabad to battle the Nizam's armies, found itself at war with peasant insurgents in Telangana. Thousands died in the brutal conflict, Jonathan Kennedy and Sunil Purushotham have recorded, as the Army herded Adivasis into concentration camps in near-starvation conditions. Less than forty-seven years old and with little experience in global politics, an unassuming police officer was tasked with helping India find the right tools to deal with the crisis. TG Sanjeevi, earlier a Superintendent of Police in Madras, and now Director of the Intelligence Bureau, was ordered to make a three-week visit to Washington. For

decades before Independence, the Intelligence Bureau had been relentlessly focused on the threat of communist terrorism. Telangana was its first challenge after Independence—and, it seemed, its first potential failure. To Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, it seemed that the threat was transnational and a danger to the survival of the Indian republic. The colonial legacy meant India had a substantial relationship with the United Kingdom's intelligence services. The Security Service, popularly known as MI5, was a critical source of assistance in the first years after Independence. India became debilitingly reliant on this relationship, Avinash Paliwal has recorded. "This is satisfactory," an MI5 memo on general dependence smugly noted—but India understood the need to widen its partnerships. George Kennan, then director of policy planning at the State Department, agreed with Prime Minister Nehru's assessment. To address the challenge, Kennan recorded, Sanjeevi would have to "look beyond India's borders and seek to influence policy in regard to dangers from with-

out." This meant that, despite Nehru's socialism, America would help him push back against the Communist threat. The visit did not begin well, though. Sanjeevi was affronted by the imperious behaviour of the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, J Edgar Hoover, and vowed never to allow contact between the Intelligence Bureau and the FBI. The damage was contained, however, during his subsequent meetings with the Central Intelligence Agency. Sanjeevi came away with positive impressions of his meetings with Colonel Richard Stilwell, Kermit "Kim" Roosevelt, and the director of central intelligence, Roscoe Hillenkoetter. Even though the two countries clashed over questions of ideology and global politics, the alignment of their interests wasn't particularly opaque. India's government provided arms and training to Tibet's ramshackle military after 1949, and even considered deploying troops in support of its independence. The problem was that the Indian Army just didn't have the resources. In 1954, India formalised this reality, ceding many of its colonial-era rights, like stationing troops in Lhasa, historian Karunakar Gupta has written. The Intelligence Bureau, though, looked the other way, as the CIA supplied weapons and equipment to Khampa insurgents from 1958 on, historian Claude Arpi has written. India also ignored CIA flights in support of Tibetan insurgents, which crossed over its territory en route from Dhaka. Langley supported the founding of the Special Frontier Force,

intended to carry the PLA along the China-India Line of Actual Control. The CIA also oversaw the insertion of nuclear-powered surveillance equipment to gather intelligence on China's nuclear-weapons programme. Even as this intelligence cooperation continued, Prime Minister Nehru publicly complained that the United States was interfering in Indian politics, "buying up newspapers and spreading a network of publicity organisations." Later, Prime Minister Indira assailed foreign powers plotting to "run down India." CIA agents, American intelligence officer Russell Jack Smith wrote sharply, "were to be found according to Madame Gandhi, beneath every charpoy and behind every neem tree." Even as Prime Minister Indira frequently railed against CIA intervention to bring about regime change—and public outrage erupted when the journal Ramparts disclosed CIA funding for Indian anti-Communist political parties in 1967—the relationship carried on in the darkness, as it were. As Sanjeevi told CIA interlocutors in 1950, "he frequently had to take independent action without the knowledge of his government". The intelligence relationship survived even in the face of contradictory United States objectives. For example, CIA personnel told India they had detected signals linking the jihadist warlord Sirajuddin Haqqani .with the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate after the 2008 bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul, journalist Carlotta Gall has revealed. And although the FBI failed,

China will be more central to India now. Though an anti-US unity is premature

As I write this column from Boston, the biggest American newspapers have the Tianjin meeting of Prime Minister Modi, President Putin, and President Xi—all three smiling and shaking hands—as a leading news item. The sub-theme is also that President Trump's policies are driving them closer, perhaps opening the door to an anti-US unity in international geopolitics. The talk of an anti-American unity is perhaps premature. At least two of the three nations, China and India, have significant ties with the US, which can be ruptured only at a very great cost. Despite the talk of a decline, the US is still the world's largest economy. At the end of 2024, according to the World Bank, America's GDP was \$29.18 trillion, which amounted to 26.2 per cent of the world economy (\$111.33 trillion). A market of that size cannot easily be shunned. Indeed, most countries and corporations would covet access to it. But there is no doubt that Trump's radi-

cal break from America's post-Cold War foreign policy, especially his use of tariffs as an economic and political tool, is creating new geopolitical and economic scenarios. Countries must take into account these changes as they make adjustments in their foreign policies. Of course, Trump is known to be mercurial and abrupt changes in his policies cannot be wholly ruled out. However, three things are likely to remain constant: use of trade tariffs, opposition to immigration, and smaller American investments in international security. The changes in these realms, if any, are likely to be of degree. Fundamental changes can take place only if the results of these policies are catastrophic for his MAGA base, especially via inflation or if the judiciary intervenes more firmly than it has done so far. How should India, severely jolted by Trump's tariffs, imagine its way forward? Let me suggest that China will become even more central to India's foreign policy.

Vijay is winning the nickname war in Tamil Nadu. He's attacking Brand Stalin with 'uncle' taunt

In the world of marketing, a new entrant's toughest task is to break the perception built around the old guard. Established brands don't crumble because of direct attacks. They erode when their aura is punctured, when their carefully constructed image is made to look smaller, or even laughable. Politics is not different. Though for decades, MK Stalin was no more than a 'possible' political heir to former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu M Karunanidhi, things changed in 2019. Stalin was turned into a brand, crafted meticulously as the only answer, as an able administrator, and a calm and composed CM post the 2021 elections. He was presented as the inevitable figure, the steady numero uno of contemporary Tamil Nadu Politics, a man positioned above ridicule. Even his critics rarely succeed in dismantling his image. Actor turned politician Vijay was out to destroy that brand when he called him, "My dear Stalin uncle." With such an open taunt at his second public rally, Vijay wasn't merely addressing the Chief Minister; he was reframing him. What at first sounds like cinema dialogue is,

in LinkedIn lingo, classic disruption. A single word that wedges into the aura of authority, triggering what one might call the 'uncle-ification of a statesman'. Stalin was recast as just another politician, a figure who is now the subject of memes. This is not an insult for insult's sake, but rather is a strategy through vocabulary. Political authority in Tamil Nadu has always been theatrical. MGR's heroism, Jayalalithaa's imperiousness, Karunanidhi's oratory skills, Stalin's calm—these are curated performances. Brands with narratives. "Uncle" in this context is not reverential. It's casual, familiar, and even patronising. The strength of Stalin's brand lies in the distance it creates, and Vijay's jab collapses that distance instantly. It is lethal in politics. It forces a new narrative onto the mainstream discourse, away from discussions on policy and performance, and instead drags it into a battle of personalities. Marketing teaches us that the most viral campaigns are not the longest ones, but the most repeatable ones. The same applies to political communication in the social media age. 'Uncle' is not just a word but a weapon in what Tamil politics

increasingly resembles—nickname warfare. A meme-ready shorthand handed over to the trolls, clipped into reels, recycled into jokes, hash-tagged into tweets. DMK's own and meticulously built digital army, usually skilled at dictating the narrative, is now forced to rebut it. And rebuttal, sadly, is half the battle lost. As one would have expected, social media is abuzz with the keyword 'Uncle'. Not one but a thousand iterations of the same comment are afloat across the state's digital space — "What uncle. it is very wrong uncle." Every attempt at creating a 'third and alternate force' in Tamil Nadu—be it Kamal Haasan, Seeman, Vijayakanth, Vaiko, or GK Moopanar before them—has struggled because they failed to dent the DMK-AIADMK binary. Voters saw them as the 'Third' person outside of the duel, not mainstream players. Vijay is trying a different path. Not with a policy vision, not with organisational might, nor with uniquely positioned ideological sermons, but with classic brand disruption. By making Stalin react, or at least by forcing his sympathisers to, Vijay dug a pit in the binary. He no longer wants .

Why hasn't India won the Nobel Prize for literature after Independence? Quality of education

Speaking in a distinguished institution, a political leader expressed concern that after Rabindranath Tagore in 1913, no Indian has received the Nobel Prize in Literature. His question—"Is the writing of our country not at the level anymore? Or has it been ignored by international institutions?"—was thought-provoking. But the tone was aloof. However, when you think about it, the answer is obvious. During the British Raj, India produced a number of great poets, artists, scientists, scholars, and thinkers. Many of

them have an international reputation. The solitary Nobel Prize in literature was also received during the British period. Under the British, our talents flourished. The educational institutions of the British rulers encouraged talents without discrimination on any ground. Did our desi leaders, post-British rule, continue that noble tradition? It is well-recognised that the educational institutions of British India declined rapidly after Independence. Instead of nurturing talent, new policies, knowingly or unknowingly,

worked toward their suppression or migration to the West. Isn't it curious that during the British Raj, hardly any Indian writer, scientist, artist, or scholar decided to settle abroad? Whereas in Independent India, talent of all kinds began settling in Europe and America, leaving India for good. To come to the issue, the leader who pointed out our lack of Nobels seems unaware that there are two essential prerequisites to help grow quality writers. One, to connect children & youth with great literature, taking care that they also get time

and encouragement to savour it. Second, to maintain a whole system of good institutions and platforms for learning, teaching, writing, publishing, and interacting. To ensure all this, staying away from narrowness or compromise must be a rule. But desi leaders, preachy and voluble, did the opposite! The British made arrangements in every field of knowledge and science to promote talent—modern public institutions, great libraries, newspapers, magazines, entire new learning disciplines like history, civics, etc.

Briefs

LALITPUR

₹46.84 cr approved for road revival

The state government has sanctioned ₹46.84 crore for the widening and construction of the dilapidated Lalitpur-Jakhaura road. The Public Works Department has completed the tender process, and work will begin soon after financial approval. The road connects over fifty villages, schools, and health centers, witnessing heavy daily traffic and frequent accidents due to potholes.

BADAUN

10 kilns to close voluntarily

Ten brick kiln operators in Badaun district have applied to the Mining Department for permission to voluntarily shut down their kilns. This move will impact the local brick industry and reduce the government's royalty income. Officials are verifying the applications from kilns in areas like Bilsa, Dataganj, and Wazirganj before granting formal permission. Currently, 220 kilns operate in the district.

CHANDAULI

History sheeter injured in encounter

History-sheeter Nawhar Musahar was injured in a police encounter in the Saidraja area. He allegedly snatched a policeman's pistol while being taken to court and tried to flee. Police laid a cordon, and in retaliatory fire, he was shot in the leg. He was re-arrested and hospitalized. The Station House Officer's vehicle was damaged, and some police personnel were injured in the incident.

SAHARANPUR

Clerics condemn Bihar CM's harrasment

Scholars and clerics in Saharanpur and Deoband have expressed strong condemnation over the alleged incident where Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar pulled a Muslim woman doctor's hijab at a public event. They termed it an attack on women's dignity and the Constitution. The clerics have demanded the Prime Minister's intervention and a public apology from Kumar.

MAU

SP holds public hearing

SP Dr. Ilamrasi presided over a 'Wadi Diwas' (Complainant Day) at Ghosi police station, reviewing 25 cases. He directed investigators to ensure impartial and timely probes. Later, in a humanitarian gesture, the SP visited an old-age home in Kuchara Nadwasaray village and distributed blankets to 35 elderly residents, stating police must also help society's weaker sections.

JAUNPUR

MLA raises professor's demands in assembly

MLA Dr. Ragini Sonkar raised the issues of V.B.S. Purvanchal University teachers, including medical leave, in the UP Legislative Assembly through an unstarred question. She urged the government to clarify the situation and resolve the problems.

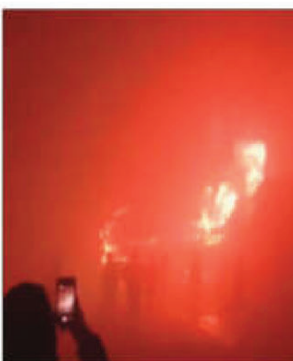
EXPRESSWAY HORROR | 13 burnt alive as buses and cars collide in dense fog

Fog turns deadly: Vehicles crash, victims burn beyond recognition

MATHURA

A devastating road accident triggered by dense fog claimed at least 13 lives on the Yamuna Expressway in Mathura district early Tuesday, after eight buses and three cars collided near milestone 127 in the Baldev police station area. Several vehicles caught fire immediately after the collision, leaving passengers trapped inside burning buses.

Police officials said visibility was near zero when the accident occurred around 3:30 am. According to preliminary findings, a sleeper bus slowed down abruptly due to fog, leading to a chain collision involving multiple buses and cars coming from behind. The impact caused at least one air-conditioned bus to catch fire, which quickly spread to other vehicles. Rescue operations involving police, fire brigade, SDRF, NHAI teams, and local residents continued for nearly

**Rescue and Identification**

Authorities confirmed that badly burnt remains recovered from the buses have made visual identification impossible. DNA profiling will be carried out to establish the identities of victims. Two medical teams have been deployed at the post-mortem house to expedite procedures.

six hours. Firefighters battled intense flames while rescuers broke windows and doors to pull out passengers. Charred remains and severed body parts were collected from the wreckage and transported to

the mortuary in 17 polythene bags. Authorities confirmed that DNA testing will be conducted to identify several victims. More than 70 injured passengers were rushed to Mathura District Hospital and

Helpline numbers issued

The district administration has released helpline numbers for relatives seeking information. Mathura Control Room: 0565-2403200. Additional District Magistrate (Finance & Revenue): 9454417583. SP Rural: 9454401103. Officials have appealed to the public to avoid spreading unverified information.

the Vrindavan Joint District Hospital using ambulances, while critically injured victims were referred to SN Medical College, Agra. Officials said many injured suffered burn injuries, fractures, and smoke

inhalation. Eyewitnesses described scenes of panic and chaos. Survivors reported hearing blast-like sounds moments after the collision, followed by rapid spread of fire.

Democracy demands responsibility with rights: speaker



LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana on Monday said that the Privilege Committee holds a vital position in the democratic system, as it safeguards the dignity, authority, and constitutional rights of the legislature. Addressing the inaugural meeting of the Assembly's Privilege Committee, he stressed that the committee must discharge its responsibilities strictly within constitutional limits and established procedures to avoid misunderstandings or unnecessary controversy.

Mahana stated that while there is no opposition to the functioning of the Privilege

Satish Mahana calls for restraint, constitutional propriety in functioning of privilege committee

Committee, it is essential that all public representatives and concerned parties exercise their rights within defined boundaries. He underlined that in a democracy, rights and responsibilities go hand in hand, and any conduct or language that could undermine the prestige of the House must be avoided.

The Assembly Speaker further said that all legislators are accountable to the people who have elected them with certain expectations.

IPL Auction: Prashant Veer bags ₹14.2 cr CSK deal

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh's Prashant Veer emerged as the most expensive uncapped player in the IPL auction after Chennai Super Kings (CSK) acquired him for ₹14.2 crore. The 20-year-old left-arm spinner from Amethi had a base price of ₹30 lakh, making his final bid nearly 47 times higher than the starting amount.

The bidding for Prashant witnessed intense competition among five franchises—Lucknow Super Giants (LSG), Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals, Sunrisers Hyderabad, and Rajasthan Royals. Sunrisers Hyderabad surprised many by bidding up to ₹6.80 crore, but CSK eventually secured the player after a prolonged contest. Prashant Veer is a left-arm

**Lucknow Super Giants sign Hasaranga and Nortje for ₹2 crore each, retain Mayank Yadav**

spinner who can contribute quick runs in the lower order. He made his Ranji Trophy debut for Uttar Pradesh this season. In his T20 career so far, he has taken 12 wickets in nine



matches at an average of 16.66 and has also scored 112 runs. In first-class cricket, he has claimed two wickets from two matches. He has cited Yuvraj Singh as his idol and mentioned Ben Stokes and MS Dhoni as key inspirations.

Meanwhile, Lucknow Super Giants purchased Sri Lanka's all-rounder Wanindu Hasaranga and South Africa fast bowler Anrich Nortje for ₹2 crore each.

Chargesheet filed against Maulana Tauqeer Raza and 89 others

BAREILLY

Police have filed a chargesheet in seven serious cases related to the September 26 violence in Bareilly, naming Maulana Tauqeer Raza and 89 others as accused. The chargesheet has been submitted before the court, marking a key step in the legal proceedings.

Officials said the unrest had led to incidents of stone-pelting, arson and damage to public property, prompting heavy police deployment and a detailed investigation.

SIR controversy deepens as CM and opposition read data differently

LUCKNOW

The ongoing Special Intensive Review (SIR) of electoral rolls in Uttar Pradesh has triggered a sharp political debate after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated that around four crore voter names were removed during the process. Addressing a party programme on December 14, the Chief Minister said that while about 12 crore voters are currently listed under SIR, the state's population exceeds 25 crore, suggesting the voter count should be closer to 16 crore.

He recalled that the 2024 voter list had around 15.44 crore voters and said the reduction raised legitimate questions. The Chief Minister remarked that the excluded voters were not opponents of the government, stating they were "our voters," and urged that the remaining two-week

**Debate open after 4 crore names dropped during SIR**

window be used transparently to add eligible names left out of the exercise.

Reacting to the statement, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav alleged on social media platform X that 85-90 per cent of the removed names belonged to BJP supporters. He presented a six-point political interpretation, claiming the deletions could significantly impact



the 403 assembly seats and reduce the ruling party's vote share.

Other political voices also weighed in. SBSP chief Om Prakash Rajbhar said the real test of these claims would come in the 2027 assembly elections, adding that names removed under SIR largely belonged to deceased or migrated individuals. Minority Welfare Minister Danish Azad Ansari rejected opposition allegations, stating that the sole objective of SIR is to ensure free, fair and transparent elections by retaining only eligible voters.

Hijab should not be politicised: Iqra

SHAMLI

Kairana Member of Parliament Iqra Hasan has said that wearing or not wearing the hijab is a personal decision of Muslim women and should not be turned into a political or social debate. Her remarks, made during a television discussion, have gained traction on social media.

Responding to a question on the ongoing hijab-related discourse in the country, Hasan said the issue should not be prioritised when there are far more pressing concerns facing society. She stated that personal attire is a matter of individual freedom and must be left to the choice of women themselves.

The MP emphasised that forcing a woman either to wear or not wear the hijab goes against democratic values. According to her, true freedom

**MP claims wearing or not wearing hijab is women's choice, calls for focus on education, inflation and women's safety**

lies in allowing women to decide for themselves without pressure from the state, society, or political groups. Referring to cultural practices, Hasan said that in many regions, including her own, women from different communities traditionally cover their heads.

Codeine trail discovered from Gujarat to Nepal

LUCKNOW

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has uncovered a separate syndicate involved in the illegal manufacture and smuggling of codeine-based cough syrup and other narcotic medicines from Gujarat to Nepal. The racket allegedly operated through pharmaceutical companies based in Ahmedabad and used fake firms across Uttar Pradesh to show domestic supply while diverting consignments across the international border.

According to investigators, drugs produced by Arpik Pharmaceuticals and its associate firm Ithica Pharmaceuticals were routed to warehouses in Lucknow's Transport Nagar. From there, billing was shown to multiple firms, while the actual con-

**ED probe finds separate network using pharma firms and fake billing routes across state**

signments were smuggled to Nepal at higher prices. ED officials stated that the syndicate was allegedly operated by Manohar Jaiswal and his wife Archana Jaiswal, both of whom have been summoned for questioning.

The probe began after the Food Safety and Drug Administration registered cases following the recovery of large quantities of narcotic medicines, including codeine syrup, tramadol tablets and alprazolam.

The ED later conducted searches at premises linked to the accused in Ahmedabad and Lucknow. Officials said the accused managed to flee before the raids but financial records and property documents were seized. Investigators have also found evidence of drug supplies to firms in Varanasi and Lakhimpur Kheri, strengthening the Nepal smuggling link. Separately, ED plans to question dismissed constable Alok Singh in jail regarding the source of funds used to acquire multiple properties.

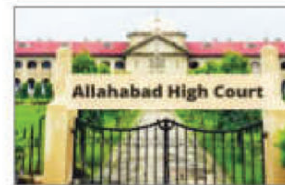
Soypur liquor tragedy verdict: 28 deaths, zero convictions

VARANASI

Varanasi's Special Gangster Act Court has acquitted 16 accused in the high-profile Soypur poisonous liquor case, which was linked to the deaths of 28 people in 2010. The verdict was delivered by Special Judge (Gangster Act) Sushil Kumar Kharrwar, who granted the accused the benefit of doubt citing lack of sufficient evidence.

The acquitted individuals include several members of the Jaiswal family and other co-accused, who were facing charges related to culpable homicide and offences under the Gangster Act. The court observed that the prosecution failed to establish a direct and conclusive link between the accused and the supply of toxic liquor.

According to the prosecution, the incident occurred on

**Special Gangster Act Court grants benefit of doubt due to lack of evidence**

February 16, 2010, following a funeral ceremony in Soypur village under the Cantonment police station area. Villagers allegedly consumed locally sourced liquor that contained poisonous substances. Several people fell seriously ill the same night and were admitted to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Hospital, where multiple deaths were reported. The death toll eventually rose to 28.

One stop centres enable abandoned women to rebuild lives

LUCKNOW

For women abandoned or neglected by their families, institutional support has emerged as a critical pathway to recovery and self-reliance. The One-Stop Centre (OSC) programme of the UP government has become a key support mechanism, enabling women to access justice, counselling, healthcare, shelter, and livelihood assistance under a single system.

Over the past eight-and-a-half years, OSCs have assisted more than 2.39 lakh women



across the state. Currently, 94 centres are operational in all 75 districts. These centres are designed to address cases of domestic violence, abandonment, harassment, and other forms of distress, ensuring timely intervention and coordinated services.

According to the Women

From trauma care to skill training, 94 centres across 75 districts provide integrated support under one roof

Welfare Department, OSCs focus not only on legal redress but also on psychological recovery. Trauma counselling is a core component, helping women stabilise emotionally before being linked to welfare schemes and skill development programmes. Once

counselling is completed, beneficiaries are connected with government initiatives aimed at economic independence. Skill training is provided in collaboration with the Skill Development Mission. Women receive training in areas such as tailoring, beauty services, mobile repair, hotel management, and other vocational courses. Many beneficiaries report monthly earnings ranging between 15,000 and 20,000 after completing training. Some private sector organisations, including hospitality and service-industry firms, also participate in train-

ing and placement initiatives.

Officials note that several women supported through OSCs have successfully resumed formal education and competitive exam preparation. In recent cases, beneficiaries have qualified for judicial services examinations in other states and joined public sector health services, highlighting the programme's long-term impact beyond immediate crisis response. The OSC model operates on the principle of inclusivity, aiming to reintegrate women into society with dignity and stability.

R1 RCM opens new strategic office



LUCKNOW

R1 RCM, a leading technology-enabled revenue cycle management (RCM) and healthcare services organization, today inaugurated a new office in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, marking its entry into a Tier-2

location and strengthening India's role as a strategic global delivery and innovation center. The new hub, located at Brilliant Summit, Vijay Nagar, is designed to be a modern and scalable workplace. R1 RCM plans to onboard approximately 500 associates by the end of 2026.

Briefs

LAHORE

Top leader of banned outfit gets jail term

A top leader of the banned radical outfit Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) has been sentenced to 35 years in jail by an anti-terrorist court for inciting people to "behead" Pakistan's then chief justice. The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Monday sentenced radical Islamist party TLP's deputy chief, Zaheerul Hassan Shah, for inciting the public against the then chief justice of Pakistan, Qazi Faiz Isa, in July 2024, a court official said. ATC Lahore Judge Arshad Javed announced the verdict in jail proceedings. The convict was then handed over to the superintendent of Kot Lakhpat Jail, Lahore, he added.

KARACHI

18 kidnapped from bus on way to Quetta

Eighteen people were abducted by unidentified gunmen in Pakistan's Sindh province while they were en route to Quetta in a bus. The incident took place near the Ghotki area on Monday night when the attackers opened fire on the bus at the Highway Link Road close to the Sindh and Punjab border, and took hostage 18 male passengers. The driver and a few passengers were injured in the firing. A total of 18 to 20 attackers were present at the scene, all armed and their faces covered, according to a female passenger travelling in the bus, Geo News reported.

MEXICO CITY

Small plane crashes while landing, 7 die

A small plane crashed in central Mexico while trying to make an emergency landing Monday, killing at least seven people, Mexico State Civil Protection Coordinator Adrian Hernandez said. The accident took place in San Mateo Atenco, an industrial area three miles (5 kilometres) from the Toluca airport, about 31 miles (50 kilometres) west of Mexico City. The plane had taken off from Acapulco, along Mexico's Pacific coast. Hernandez said the private jet had registered eight passengers and two crew, but hours after the crash only seven bodies had been recovered. He said the plane had apparently tried to land on a soccer field but hit the metal roof of a nearby business, starting a large fire. The crash is under investigation.

LONDON

Jail for man who drove car into crowd

A driver who injured more than 130 people when he plowed his car into a crowd of soccer fans celebrating Liverpool's Premier League championship has been sentenced to over 20 years in prison. Paul Doyle rammed his minivan through a sea of fans and finally halted after a bystander got in the vehicle and forced it into park as it came to a stop atop bodies. "The footage is truly shocking," Judge Andrew Menary said Tuesday. "It is difficult if not impossible to convey in words alone the scenes of devastation you caused. It shows you deliberately accelerating into groups of fans, time and time again." Doyle sobbed in Liverpool Crown Court over the two-day sentencing as prosecutors detailed the May 26 crime, using graphic video footage and reading emotional statements from dozens of victims.

UNDER GLARE | Trump admin justifies rising 'armed conflict' against cartels ahead of high-level briefings on Capitol Hill

US military strikes drug boats in Pacific, 8 killed

WASHINGTON

The US military said Monday that it attacked three boats accused of smuggling drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing a total of eight people as scrutiny over the boat strikes is intensifying in Congress.

The military said in a statement on social media that the strikes targeted "designated terrorist organisations," killing three people in the first vessel, two in the second boat and three in the third boat.

It didn't provide evidence of their alleged drug trafficking but posted a video of a boat moving through water before exploding.

President Donald Trump has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs into the United States and asserted the US is engaged in an "armed conflict" with drug cartels.

But the Trump administration is facing increasing scrutiny from lawmakers over the boat strike campaign, which has killed at least 95 people in



25 known strikes since early September, including a follow-up strike that killed two survivors clinging to the wreckage of a boat after the first hit.

The latest boat strikes come on the eve of briefings on Capitol Hill for all members of Congress as questions mount over the Trump administration's military campaign.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and other top national security officials are expected to provide closed-door briefings for lawmakers in the House and Senate.

The campaign has ramped up pressure on Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, who has been charged with

Fentanyl tagged 'weapon of mass destruction'

Washington: US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order, classifying fentanyl as a "weapon of mass destruction". The order was signed in the Oval Office on Monday in the presence of Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen Dan Caine, White House border czar Tom Homan and other top military officials.

Act passed to fast-track defence sales to Taiwan

Washington: The United States Senate has passed the Porcupine Act to speed up US defence sales and make it easier for American allies to transfer military equipment to Taiwan. The bill, formally called the Providing Our Regional Companions Upgraded Protection in Nefarious Environments Act, was cleared by the Senate by unanimous consent last week.

narcoterrorism in the US. In a sharp escalation last week, US forces seized a sanctioned oil tanker that the Trump administration has accused of smuggling illicit crude. Maduro has insisted the real purpose of the US military operations is to force him from office.

The US military has built up

its largest presence in the region in decades and launched a series of deadly strikes on alleged drug-smuggling boats in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean. Trump says land attacks are coming soon but has not offered any details on location.

In US for 30 yrs, Indian detained during Green Card interview

LONG BEACH

A 60-year-old Indian-origin woman and local business owner was detained by federal immigration officers earlier this month during what was expected to be the final step of her three-decade journey toward U.S. permanent residency.

Babblejit "Bubbly" Kaur, who has resided in the United States since 1994, was taken into custody on December 1 at an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office. According to her daughter, Joti, the arrest occurred while Kaur was attending a routine biometric scan appointment for her pending green card application. Despite having an approved petition sponsored by her U.S. citizen daughter and a husband who holds a green card, Kaur was shackled and transported overnight to the Adelanto ICE Processing Center, a high-desert facility near Victorville.

Kaur and her husband operated the popular restaurant Natraj Cuisine of India and Nepal in Belmont Shore for more than 20 years.

Will present peace plan to Moscow soon: Zelenskyy

KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says proposals being negotiated with US officials for a peace deal to end his country's nearly four-year war with Russia could be finalised within days, after which American envoys will present them to the Kremlin before further possible meetings in the United States next week-end.

Zelenskyy told reporters late Monday that a draft peace plan discussed with the US during talks in Berlin earlier in the day is "very workable." He cautioned, however, that some key issues - notably what happens to Ukrainian territory occupied by invading Russian forces - remain unresolved.

US-led peace efforts appear to be picking up momentum. But Russian President Vladimir Putin may balk at some of the proposals thrashed out by officials from Washington, Kyiv and Western Europe, including postwar security guarantees for Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman

Trump mocks Reiner after death, faces flak

WASHINGTON

US president Donald Trump mocked **Rob Reiner** in a social media post, suggesting the slain actor and director died because of his anti-Trump views — a remark that triggered swift and bipartisan backlash for injecting politics into a family tragedy.

A vocal Democratic activist, Reiner, 78, and his wife **Michele**, 70, were found dead in their home on Sunday.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump referred to Rob Reiner as "tortured and struggling" and said the couple had passed away "reportedly due to the anger he caused" by opposing the Republican president."

He was known to have driven people CRAZY by his raging obsession of President Donald J Trump," the president said. The White House reposted Trump's comments on its official "Rapid Response" account on X.

His comments drew criticism from across the political spectrum. "Regardless of how you felt about Rob Reiner, this is inappropriate and disrespectful discourse about a man who was just brutally murdered," wrote Republican Representative Thomas



Son held on murder charges

Washington: Police have arrested Nick Reiner in connection with the death of his parents, director Rob Reiner and Michele Singer. The 32-year-old, the couple's youngest son, was detained before being booked for felony murder. Jail records initially showed that his bail had been set at \$4m, but he was later ordered held without bail, the police said.

Massie of Kentucky, a Trump critic.

But even House Speaker Mike Johnson, a major Trump ally, distanced himself from the president's post. The Democratic Party called Trump's post "heartless." Asked if he stood by the post

after the Republican criticism, Trump replied that he was not a Reiner fan. Reiner told Variety in 2017 during Trump's first term that Trump was "mentally unfit" and called him "the single most unqualified human being to ever assume the presidency of the US."

Pakistan 'global epicentre' of terrorism: India at UNSC debate

NEW YORK

India on Monday (local time) delivered a stinging rebuttal to Pakistan at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on "Leadership for Peace", firmly rejecting Islamabad's claims over Jammu and Kashmir's "unresolved disputes" as "unwarranted", reiterating that the Union Territory along with Ladakh are an integral and inalienable part of India, and emphasising that they "were, are, and will always remain so."

Referring to Pakistan's comments during the debate, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni, labelled Pakistan as the "global epicentre of terror" while calling it out for using the UN platform to further its "obsessive focus on harming India and its people."

Highlighting Pakistan's long record of sponsoring terrorism, the Indian envoy strongly defended New Delhi's decision to place the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance.

Trump drags BBC to court, files \$10bn defamation lawsuit

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump filed a lawsuit Monday seeking USD 10 billion in damages from the BBC, accusing the British broadcaster of defamation as well as deceptive and unfair trade practices.

The 33-page lawsuit accuses the BBC of broadcasting a "false, defamatory, deceptive, disparaging, inflammatory, and malicious depiction of President Trump," calling it "a brazen attempt to interfere in and influence" the 2024 US presidential election.

It accused the BBC of "splicing together two entirely separate parts of President Trump's speech on January 6, 2021" in order to "intentionally misrepresent the meaning of what President Trump said."

The lawsuit, filed in a Florida court, seeks USD 5 billion in damages for defamation and USD 5 billion for unfair trade practices.

The broadcaster apologised last month to Trump

BBC vows fightback

London: The BBC has vowed to defend itself against the \$10bn lawsuit that the US president, Donald Trump filed against it. In a short statement on Tuesday, a BBC spokesperson said: "As we have made clear previously, we will be defending this case. We are not going to make further comment on ongoing legal proceedings."

over the edit of the Jan. 6 speech. But the publicly funded BBC rejected claims it had defamed him, after Trump threatened legal action.

The speech took place before some of Trump's supporters stormed the US Capitol as Congress was poised to certify President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election that Trump falsely alleged was stolen from him.

New videos spur hunt for US varsity shooter

PROVIDENCE

Authorities knocked on doors and scoured yards Monday in search of any video or other evidence that might lead them to the Brown University gunman, whose face was covered or not visible in footage captured before and after the weekend attack that killed two students and wounded nine others.

Officials released three new videos of the man they believe carried out Saturday's attack

that show him wearing a mask and a dark two-tone jacket. Although his face wasn't visible, the footage from about two hours before the shooting provided the clearest images yet of the suspect.

The FBI said the man is about 5 feet, 8 inches (173 centimetres) tall, with a stocky build. The agency offered a USD 50,000 reward for information leading to the identification, arrest and conviction of the person responsible.

"We're asking for the pub-

lic's assistance," Providence's police chief, Col Oscar Perez, said at a news conference, urging people who might recognise the suspect to call a tip line.

Police renewed their search after releasing a person of interest Sunday once they determined the evidence pointed elsewhere. Meanwhile, details began to emerge about the students who were shot.

The lockdown order for the Ivy League school was lifted Sunday after authorities said

they had detained the person of interest. But hopes for a quick resolution were dashed when they announced hours later that they had released him.

The abrupt change of direction marked a setback in the investigation as questions swirl about campus security, the apparent lack of school video evidence and whether the focus on the person of interest gave the attacker more time to escape.

Colin Moussette, who has friends at Brown and is con-

sidering enrolling next fall, said while visiting the campus Monday that he felt uneasy knowing the suspect hadn't been caught.

"How someone got away, like in the middle of the day is, to me, not only heartbreaking but very concerning," he said. "How they got access to the building is concerning."

Before Monday's news conference, police released a second video showing someone dressed in black walking along a city street minutes after the shooting.

sydney shocker

Envious taekwondo teacher gets life in jail for killings

SYDNEY

A judge sentenced a Sydney taekwondo instructor on Tuesday to life in prison without possibility of release for murdering a 7-year-old student and the boy's parents.

Kwang Kyung Yoo, 51, sat with his head bowed as Justice Ian Harrison said he would never be eligible for parole.

Harrison said Yoo has been motivated by the jealousy he felt for the family's financial success.

"I'm satisfied that the level of culpability in the commission of these

offences is so extreme that the community interest in retribution, punishment, community protection and deterrence can only be met through the imposition of a life sentence," Harrison told the New South Wales Supreme Court.

Harrison said Yoo had no reason to murder the boy or his parents in February last year.

State law prevents child victims of crime from being identified, so the boy's parents also can't be named.

Yoo and his victims were all born in South Korea.

Yoo had pleaded guilty to the three murders at an earlier court appear-

ance. He had no prior criminal record.

Yoo had strangled the boy and his 41-year-old mom in his Lion's Taekwondo and Martial Arts Academy in western Sydney. He owed tens of thousands of dollars at the time and was behind in rent on the academy.

He took the mother's Apple watch and drove her luxury BMW car to the family home, where he stabbed the boy's 39-year-old father to death.

Yoo was injured in a struggle in the home and drove himself to the hospital, where he told medical staff he had been attacked in a supermarket

car park. Police arrested him at the hospital.

After his arrest, Yoo could not explain how he intended to get the family's money and later detailed his remorse.

The former instructor, whose students called him Master Lion, did not look at the victims' family and other supporters as they sobbed in the court's public gallery after the sentence was handed down.

"These killings were horrific and violent acts, senselessly cruel and cynical, perpetrated without a trace of human compassion," the judge said.



Border 2: Sunny roars, gets emotional



The Border 2 teaser launch took place on Tuesday, marking Sunny's first public outing after his father Dharmendra's death

Bollywood actor Sunny Deol, who was last seen in *Jaat*, is all set to star next in *Border 2*, the sequel to J. P. Dutta's 1997 blockbuster *Border*. Set against the backdrop of the 1971 Indo-Pak war, the film also stars Diljit Dosanjh, Varun Dhawan and Ahan Shetty in lead roles, as they portray soldiers fighting to protect the nation.

At the teaser launch event of *Border 2* on Tuesday, Sunny made an appearance in the city, marking his first public outing after the death of his father, Dharmendra. During the event, Sunny was asked to deliver his powerful dialogue from the teaser. The ace actor thundered, "Awaaz kahan tak jaani chahiye?" to which the audience responded, "Lahore tak," leaving everyone deeply moved.

Soon after, the actor turned emotional. With his eyes filled with tears, Sunny tried to hold back his emotions, quietly wiped away the tears, and then flashed a warm, sweet smile at the audience.

Touted as one of the biggest sequels of 2026, the upcoming epic war film was announced on June 13, 2024, marking the original film's 27th anniversary.

In *Border 2*, Sunny will play Lt Colonel Fateh Singh Kaler, while Varun will be seen as Major Hoshiar Singh Dahiya, PVC. Diljit joins the cast in a role inspired by Fg Ofir Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, PVC, while Ahan will portray Lt Cdr Joseph Pius Alfred Noronha, MVC.

The film is scheduled to release in theatres on January 23, 2026, ahead of the Republic Day weekend. The female leads include Mona Singh, Sonam Bajwa, Anya Singh, and newcomer Medha Rana, opposite Sunny, Diljit, Varun, and Ahan, respectively.

'Daiva element is sensitive & sacred': Rishab Shetty

Expressing his discomfort, actor-filmmaker Rishab Shetty said that while cinema often involves performance and dramatisation, the Daiva element in *Kantara* holds deep emotional and spiritual significance.

Actor-filmmaker Rishab Shetty shared a measured yet firm response amid the controversy surrounding Ranveer Singh's imitation of a sacred Daiva scene from *Kantara*, stressing that certain onscreen moments rooted in faith and tradition should be treated with sensitivity. Speaking at a Behindwoods event in Chennai recently, Shetty addressed the issue without naming Ranveer directly, but his remarks come in the wake of the recent backlash over the Dhurandhar actor's mimicry of a ritualistic sequence from the film.

Expressing his discomfort, Shetty said that while cinema often involves performance and dramatisation, the Daiva element in *Kantara* holds deep emotional and spiritual significance.

"That makes me uncomfortable. While much of the film is cinema and performance, the Daiva element is sensitive and sacred. Wherever I go, I request people not to perform it on stage or mock it. It is emotionally deeply connected to us," he said.

Shetty further underlined the care and research that went into



portraying local customs authentically in *Kantara: A Legend Chapter 1*. He noted that the team made conscious efforts to respect traditions and rituals, not merely for cinematic effect but to help audiences understand their cultural importance.

According to him, these depictions were meant to convey the gravity and sanctity of the practices rather than turn them into spectacle.

The comments follow a controversy involving Ranveer, who recently issued a public apology after facing criticism for mimicking a scene inspired by *Kantara* during the closing ceremony of IFFI.

Performed in front of Shetty, the act referenced the iconic Chaundi sequence, which is associated with rituals dedicated to Goddess Chamundadevi.

In his apology, Ranveer clarified that his intention was to praise Shetty's performance and acknowledged the effort it takes to portray such a powerful scene. He also apologised to anyone whose sentiments may have been hurt.

However, the matter escalated further after the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS) filed a police complaint, alleging that the performance hurt religious sentiments. The organisation claimed that the portrayal disrespected Chamundi Daiva, considered sacred by the Tulu community.

Aneet Padda's time on *Saiyaara* wasn't just another film schedule... it was a mix of weather surprises, personal firsts and plenty of laughs



'We were running for our lives': Aneet Padda

Aneet Padda has been revisiting her entire *Saiyaara* experience as the film heads for its world television premiere on December 20, 2025 at 8 pm on Sony MAX.

The actress, who grew up in Amritsar before making her mark in Bollywood with this Yash Raj Films romance, says one of her favourite memories from the shoot came from way up north in Manali. "I saw snow for the first time in Manali and I was very excited," she shares.

While shooting for the song Tum Ho Toh with Ahaan Panday, the rising heat

made even the basics tricky. "The sand was so hot that our feet were burning, and even though the crew kept pouring cold water, it would disappear within seconds," she recounts. Things got tougher during a drone shot where she had to run across the beach. "I tripped and fell, and the heat was intense. Ahaan picked me up and we continued," she recalls, laughing as she adds, "I joke that even though the shot looks like we're happily running, we were actually running for our lives!"

Directed by Mohit Suri and produced by Yash Raj Films, *Saiyaara* became an instant crowd favourite, thanks to its emotional screenplay, riveting performances and a soundtrack for the ages.

Views

2025 Music Rewind

Looking back at which tracks had us grooving non-stop this year



Shreya Ghoshal



Karan Aujla



Taylor Swift



Ed Sheeran

ists capture the moods and movements that shaped listeners across the country. Sapphire by Ed Sheeran and Arijit Singh takes the crown as Amazon Music's most-played track of 2025, leading the Best of 2025: India playlist. In Hindi music, *Saiyaara* stood out as the year's breakout favourite, while Madhubanti Bagchi, Shreya Ghoshal and Sonu Nigam emerged as the top Hindi artists of 2025.

On the global front, Taylor

Swift dominated as the year's top international artist. Punjabi music continued its explosive rise, with Karan Aujla and Ikky topping the Best of 2025: Punjabi playlist with their hit For a Reason.

Sonu Nigam



Single Papa through Aisha's lens

'I had never thought about it so deeply before. Like most people, when I imagined parenting, I only thought of the cute parts: playing with my baby, watching them grow up': Aisha Ahmed

people, when I imagined parenting, I only thought of the cute parts: playing with my baby, watching them grow up.

But watching the show made me realise how difficult it really is. What stood out for me was the portrayal of a single father. I grew up with a single mother, and for me, that experience was wonderful. I never felt like I was missing out.

After watching *Single Papa*, I thought that even having a single father wouldn't be a bad thing. You see so much love in Gaurav's character for the baby. It definitely shifted my perspective and made me think differently about family structures.

Views

Q. Did portraying Dr Shreya challenge any preconceived notions you had about relationships or family?

A. It actually helped me more than it challenged me. Shreya is divorced, and Gaurav's character is also divorced and chooses to be a single parent. Because of my own life experiences, these things were always normal for me.

I never saw divorce as the end of someone's life, which society often tends to do. That openness really helped me play Shreya. She is not judgmental. She likes Gaurav for who he is: open-minded, kind, and charming. My personal experiences made it easier to bring that honesty to the character.

Q. Was there a scene that stayed with you even after the shoot wrapped?

A. Definitely the last scene, when Mrs Nehru takes baby Amul away. We were all very attached to the baby, Hami Ali Hamil, who played Amul. Everyone held him every day. While shooting that scene, the entire set was emotional. Kunal actually broke down, and it felt very real. I remember looking at Suhail, who was my closest friend on set, and his tears just wouldn't stop. That scene stayed with all of us, even after watching the final cut.

Q. Your scenes with Kunal Kemmu rely more on chemistry than confrontation. How did that equation develop?

A. I met Kunal briefly during the readings and then directly on set. We weren't friends before, and that taught me something important: acting is acting.

I used to believe that personal bonding was necessary for chemistry on screen, but this experience proved otherwise. We just did our scenes sincerely. The writing was simple and honest, and we trusted that. I think that's what made it work.

Q. Do you think Indian storytelling has moved beyond stereotypes for women?

A. I think this shift started years ago, especially after the OTT boom. Even *Adulthood* focused on women beyond clichés. Being modern was never reduced to just drinking or smoking. Today, it also depends on the makers what story they want to tell. Sometimes, just letting a woman exist without explaining her choices is powerful.

Briefs

PUNE

Rahane and Sarfaraz star for Mumbai



Ajinkya Rahane's unbeaten 72 and Sarfaraz Khan's brutal 22-ball 73 powered Mumbai to a three-wicket victory over Rajasthan in their Super League Group B match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, here on Tuesday. Rahane scored 72 off 41 balls (7 fours, 3 sixes) but it was Sarfaraz who went all guns blazing in yet another chase in excess of 200, clobbering seven sixes and six fours to make 73 off only 22 balls. Chasing 217, Mumbai never took the foot off the pedal and despite losing wickets in a heap they remained on track for another win, overhauling the target with 11 balls to spare with Rahane anchoring the pursuit. Rahane and Yashasvi Jaiswal (15) put up a 41-run opening stand. Rahane then teamed up with Sarfaraz to put on another 111 off only 39 balls for the second wicket.

NEW DELHI

Better late than never for Aujib



Better late than never is a phrase that fits Aujib Nabi Dar like a perfectly-upright seam. At 29, when most fast bowlers are either established or quietly drifting out of the spotlight, Nabi has finally arrived through patience, persistence and a refusal to let geography decide his fate. His journey has not followed the straightest of lines, but then neither does the sharp outswinger that has come to define him as he walked away with a whopping deal of ₹8.40 crore at the IPL auctions in Abu Dhabi. Nabi hails from Kreeeri, a tehsil that sits even farther from Baramulla, both in distance and in access. It is not the kind of place that produces professional cricketers with ease.

MANCHESTER

United and Bournemouth draw 4-4



Manchester United drew with Bournemouth 4-4 in one of the best games in the Premier League on Monday. United coach Ruben Amorim said before the match that "playing against

IPL 2026 AUCTION | Uncapped Prashant Veer, Kartik Sharma go to Chennai Super Kings for ₹14.20 crore each

ABU DHABI

Kolkata Knight Riders splurged a record-breaking ₹25.20 to land top Australian all-rounder Cameron Green and ₹18 crore to acquire the services of Sri Lankan pacer Matheesha Pathirana in the Indian Premier League players' auction here on Tuesday.

Uncapped Indian players were also a big hit with Uttar Pradesh's 20-year-old left-arm spinner Prashant Veer and Rajasthan's 19-year-old keeper-batter Kartik Sharma going to Chennai Super Kings for ₹14.20 crore each.

Both became the highest paid uncapped players in the history of IPL auction after coming in at a base price of ₹30 lakh each.

Jammu and Kashmir pacer Auqib Nabi Dar also attracted a hefty sum of ₹8.40 crore from Delhi Capitals to be among the top gainers in the mini auction. Dar's base price was also ₹30 lakh.

Prithvi unsold again

India internationals Prithvi Shaw and Sarfaraz Khan went unsold despite their good run of form with the bat. However, Sarfaraz was later bought by Chennai Super Kings for ₹75 lakh during the accelerated auction.

Green surpassed compatriot Mitchell Starc (₹24.75 crore) to become the most expensive overseas player at an IPL auction. This was after Kolkata Knight Riders and Chennai Super Kings were involved in an intense bidding war for him before the latter emerged winner.

KKR also went after Venkatesh Iyer before pulling out of the race against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, who got the India all-rounder for ₹7 crore. The three-time champions then entered the fray to buy Pathirana after Delhi Capitals and Lucknow Super Giants withdrew following an intense bidding war between the two franchises.

KKR GET GREEN, PATHIRANA; CSK SPEND ON YOUNGSTERS



Former Royal Challengers Bengaluru's all-rounder Cameron Green was bought by Kolkata Knight Riders for a record-breaking Rs 25.20 crore on Tuesday. PTI

Entering the auction at a base price of ₹2 crore, Pathirana became the most expensive Sri Lankan sold in an IPL auction.

As far as Green is concerned, his salary for the season would still be ₹18 crore (USD 1.9 million) as the rest of the amount will go towards the BCCI's player develop-

ment programme as per the rules of the auction for foreign players. Pathirana will get the full amount as it falls within the salary cap. KKR's managing director Venky Mysore said the franchise was happy at the price at which it got Green, who is expected to "add a lot" to the team in the upcoming season.

"We are very happy. Something that we were focussed on and hoping. Quite happy with price at which we got him," Mysore said.

"He will add lot to our team and with our new power coach Andre Russell, we know what he does, with bat and ball, couldn't be happier. "The rule the BCCI made on

TOP 5 EXPENSIVE BUYS IN IPL HISTORY

RISHABH PANT

₹27cr
(LSG, 2025 auction)

SHREYAS IYER

₹26.75cr
(PBKS, 2025 auction)

CAMEROON GREEN

₹25.20cr
(KKR, 2026 auction)

MITCHELL STARC

₹24.75Cr
(KKR, 2024 auction)

VENKATESH IYER

₹23.75Cr
(KKR, 2025 auction)

NUMBER GAME

77 Players Sold | 29 Overseas Players Sold

₹215.45 cr
Total Spent

the Rs 18 crore, our standpoint is there is no concern, in any case it's an outflow for franchise," he added.

Green said, "I'm so excited to be part of Kolkata for this year's IPL. To get down to the Eden Gardens, to get used to the atmosphere. I hope it is a great year for us. So see you soon. Ami KKR!"

Pressure building on Surya

Gill's T20I form also under scanner as India eye series win over Proteas

LUCKNOW

Shubman Gill's lean patch has been the talking point but an equally sour of runs' skipper Suryakumar Yadav is also under intense scrutiny as India look to find the right balance and seal the five-match series against South Africa in the fourth T20I here on Wednesday.

The third game was an ideal opportunity for Suryakumar to rediscover his touch while India chased a modest 118-run target, but the ease that once made him the top ranked batter in the world was noticeably missing.

Shots that defined his dominance have been producing erratic results and the match in Dharamsala was no different as he fell to his trademark pick-up stroke, highlighting a continued struggle.

The Indian captain has been searching for fluency for over a year, averaging under 15 in the format this season.

Additionally, he's still without a half-century in 2025, the longest such phase of his career.



India's captain Suryakumar Yadav plays a shot during the third T20I against South Africa on Sunday. PTI

Only twice during this period has he managed to bat beyond 20 balls.

With the T20 World Cup less than two months away, the defending champions would want their leader and premier batter to rediscover his rhythm sooner rather than later.

Vice-captain Shubman Gill's struggles are as bad if not worse. His elevation to the opening slot has

seemingly unsettled India's top order. Gill has shown his class in other formats, but in T20Is he is yet to come across the assured batter that he is in Tests and ODIs.

While he survived during Sunday's low-target chase, his scratchy run-a-ball 28 did little to ease concerns.

Dube backs his skipper All-rounder Shivam Dube on Tuesday threw his weight behind the out-of-form Suryakumar.

Squads

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

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

"He's the kind of player who can make you win five out of five matches on his own. If he is not in form, it doesn't mean he's not a good player. He is one of the best players. No one can do what he can. Yes, he is short of runs, but his form will return at the right time."

ADELAIDE

Veteran Usman Khawaja has missed selection to Australia's team for the third Ashes test against England with Travis Head kept at the top of the batting lineup with Jake Weatherald.

Just two days away from his 39th birthday, Khawaja was a notable omission Tuesday from Australia's XI for the test beginning Wednesday at Adelaide Oval. Australia leads the five-test series 2-0 and can retain the Ashes with a win or draw in Adelaide. England named its team Monday.

Captain Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon will return to the bowling attack at the expense of Brendan Doggett and Michael Neser, while the top seven is unchanged. That means Josh Inglis will remain in the side at No. 7, while Khawaja was not included after missing the Brisbane test with back spasms.

Khawaja had enjoyed one of the great late-career resurgences since his recall to the test team at the start of 2022, starting at the top of the order. He averaged 58.7 in his first two years back in the

IPL 2026 to be held from March 26 to May 31

MUMBAI

The 19th Indian Premier League will be held from March 26 to May 31 but it remains to be seen if defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru's home base gets a game after a deadly stampede halted all big-ticket cricket at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

As per established norms, the Chinnaswamy should host the tournament opener given the home side, RCB, won the IPL 2025 title but that is unlikely to be clear till the time BCCI comes out with the full-scale schedule.

The venue was witness to chaos and a stampede, which left 11 dead, after RCB's trophy celebrations drew lakhs on the streets, that was well over the state machinery's capacity to handle at a short notice in June this year.

While the venue has received conditional clearance from the Karnataka government, it also needs to meet the necessary safety and security standards following the deaths.

The franchise had drawn intense criticism for encouraging people to come out for the street celebrations without requisite clearances from govern-

It remains to be seen if defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru's home base gets a game

ment agencies.

"Every year, the IPL opening match traditionally takes place at the home ground of the team that won the trophy in the previous season," recently-elected KSCA president Venkatesh Prasad told reporters in Mysuru.

"But there was some uncertainty due to the stampede during RCB's IPL championship celebrations on June 4. So, I've held discussions with the BCCI about hosting the opening match in Bengaluru, and they are also discussing on the issue," he added.

After the stampede, Bengaluru lost the Women's World Cup matches held earlier this year due to security and administrative issues.

The mini-auction for IPL 2026 was held in Abu Dhabi with three-time winners Kolkata Knight Riders coming in with the biggest purse. KKR big buys were Cameroon Green, (₹25.20 cr) Matheesha Pathirana (₹18 cr) and Mustafizur Rahman (₹9.20 cr).

Ashes: Cummins, Lyon back for Oz, no place for Khawaja



Australia's Pat Cummins (C) ahead of the second Ashes Test with England in Brisbane on December 4. AP

Playing XIs

Australia: Jake Weatherald, Travis Head, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith (captain), Cameron Green, Alex Carey, Josh Inglis, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Scott Boland.

England: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ben Stokes (captain), Jamie Smith, Will Jacks, Josh Tongue, Brydon Carse, Jofra Archer.

side, but has now passed 50 just twice in his past 27 test innings.

Players to wear black armbands

England and Australia players will wear black armbands

and flags at Adelaide Oval will be flown at half-staff on Wednesday in an Ashes tribute to the victims of the Bondi beach shootings. On Sunday night, two gunmen killed 15 people and injured dozens more in Sydney.

WWC triumph

Muzumdar had sleepless nights before India-NZ game

MUMBAI

India women's team head coach Amol Muzumdar has said he never had a sleepless night during his playing days but the must-win Women's ODI World Cup match against New Zealand did put him under pressure and unable to take a decent nap in the lead-up to the contest.

With three defeats on the trot, India faced a premature exit in their home World Cup but they defeated the

White Ferns by 53 runs via DLS Method to secure the last semifinal berth.

India women then went on to defeat seven-time champions Australia in the semifinals and South Africa in the final to lift their maiden World Cup recently.

"I didn't have a sleepless night before my (first-class) debut for Mumbai because Kadu bhai (former India player Karsan Ghavri) was my manager. I knew he would take care of it," Muzumdar recalled during a

felicitation event at the Bombay Gymkhana on Monday. Muzumdar said Jemimah Rodrigues' unbeaten 127 in semifinal was the turning point, which gave India the confidence to lift the prestigious trophy.

"You can say so (beating Australia was the turning point)," he said.

"Before the New Zealand game, there were a couple of sleepless nights because that was the must-win game. We always believed that if we have to win the World Cup,

we'll have to beat Australia somewhere down the line, either in the semifinal or in the final."

"We were all geared up for that game but Jemimah's knock was phenomenal...a knock for the ages, I guess," he added.

Muzumdar said the World Cup-winning moment still felt unreal, and added that it would have changed the lives of many in the team.

"Lifting the World Cup has been a surreal moment and it has changed the lives of a

lot of cricketers in India, including me. I don't know about the film part. I really don't know where the parallels came from," said Muzumdar in response to a query if a Chak De-style movie was in the pipeline.

Muzumdar remembered the legendary Ramakant Achrekar, also his former coach, while discussing technology in coaching.

"I remember Achrekar sir everyday, I think. He was the epitome...he had a different style of doing it (coaching)."



Women's World Cup winning coach Amol Muzumdar (C) was felicitated at Bombay Gymkhana on Monday.