

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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

## Briefs

KOLKATA

### Coal mine collapses in Asansol

Several people were trapped after a coal mine collapsed on Tuesday at Asansol. BJP MLA Ajay Poddar said a landslide reportedly took place in the mining area 12 BCCL border patch at around 7.45 am. Poddar also said that coal was being extracted through a rat-hole. "They were extracting coal from the rat-hole. This is a syndicate. Police and mafia are involved. It is the villagers who die," alleged Poddar. Heavy machinery, including earth-moving equipment, has been deployed to clear debris. Till the time of reporting, police could not ascertain the exact figures of people trapped under the debris.

—Aritra Singha

MUMBAI

### Snag hits Akasa Air flight to B'luru

Akasa Air deplaned passengers from a Bengaluru-bound flight at Pune airport on Tuesday due to a technical glitch in the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, according to a source. The passengers were seated in the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft for nearly one-and-a-half hours before they were deplaned, one of the passengers who was on the flight told PTL.

## 'JANA NAYAGAN' | Rahul ups ante before TN polls, says PM will never succeed in 'suppressing voice of the Tamil people'

# 'Bid to block Vijay movie attack on Tamil culture'

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday alleged that the Centre's "attempt to block" Vijay-starrer 'Jana Nayagan' is an attack on Tamil culture, and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will never succeed in "suppressing the voice of the Tamil people".

His remarks come a day after the producer of the Tamil film Jana Nayagan approached the Supreme Court, challenging an interim order of the Madras High Court that stayed a single-judge direction to grant the CBFC clearance to the movie.

On January 9, the Madras High Court stayed a single judge's order directing the CBFC to immediately grant a censor certificate to Jana Nayagan, leaving the fate of actor-turned-politician Vijay's film, which has drawn attention for its political overtones, in limbo.

In a post on X, Gandhi said, "The I&B Ministry's attempt to block 'Jana Nayagan' is an attack on Tamil culture."

"Mr Modi, you will never succeed in suppressing the voice of the Tamil people," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

KVN Productions LLP has filed an appeal against the order passed by a division bench of the high court last Friday, which put on hold the



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi attends golden jubilee celebrations of St Thomas English High School, in Nilgiris district, Tamil Nadu, on Tuesday

### SC to hear film producer's plea on Jan 19

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court is slated to hear on January 19 the plea filed by the producer of Vijay-starrer Tamil film "Jana Nayagan", challenging an interim order of the Madras High Court that stayed a single-judge direction to grant CBFC clearance to the movie. As per the cause list of the apex court, the matter is likely to come up for hearing on Jan 19. The bench is yet to be assigned. On January 9, the High Court stayed a single judge's order directing CBFC to immediately grant a censor certificate to "Jana Nayagan".

single bench's directive to the board to issue the film's certificate forthwith.

Vijay recently launched his political party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK). Jana Nayagan, which is widely publicised as Vijay's final film before his full-fledged entry into politics, was slated for a Pongal release on January 9.

However, the film ran into last-minute hurdles after the Central Board of Film

Certification (CBFC) did not issue certification in time.

On January 9, the division bench's order came hours after Justice PT Asha directed the CBFC to give clearance to Jana Nayagan, setting aside the film board's directive to refer the matter to a review committee.

The first bench, comprising Chief Justice M M Shrivastava and G Arul Murugan, on an appeal filed by the CBFC,

## CBI calls actor again over Karur stampede

**New Delhi:** The CBI has summoned TVK chief and actor Vijay for second round of questioning on January 19 in connection with the Karur stampede case, officials said on Tuesday. Vijay, who was questioned at the CBI headquarters here on Monday for more than six hours, was asked to come again on Tuesday but the actor sought another date citing Pongal, they said. The CBI also questioned Tamil Nadu's former ADG (law and order) S Davidson Devasirvatham in the case on Monday.

granted an interim stay against the single judge's verdict.

Earlier, allowing the plea of KVN Productions seeking a direction to CBFC to issue a censor certificate, Justice Asha said once the board had decided to grant the certificate, the chairperson had no power to send the matter to the review committee.

The film board immediately preferred an appeal against the order.

## Security audit of mosques in Kashmir triggers row

SRINAGAR

Mutahida Majlis-e-Ulema (MMU), the largest conglomerate of Islamic religious organisations in Jammu and Kashmir, on Tuesday expressed deep concern and raised serious questions about the ongoing police exercise in the Valley seeking extensive and intrusive information regarding mosques, their management committees, imams, khatibs and individuals associated with places of worship and even their family members.

MMU has learnt that detailed multi-page forms are being distributed by the police seeking highly personal and sensitive information, including private identification details, family particulars, financial information, phone details, digital and social-media profiles, passport details, travel history and even

Phone IMEI details other personal data of all those connected with running and management of mosques. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, chairman of the conglomerate said here. Besides the mosques ideological sect identification — Bareilvi, Hanafi, Deobandi or Ahle-Hadith, is also being sought. Such an unprecedented and invasive data-collection exercise has caused widespread anxiety among religious institutions, imams Khateebbs and the public in general, he added.

The Body said, this exercise is in complete violation of fundamental rights and the right to privacy and personal information even guaranteed under the Constitution. Mosques are sacred institutions meant for worship, guidance and community service, and their internal religious affairs cannot be subjected to arbitrary surveillance and intrusive scrutiny.

## 5 govt employees sacked in J&K over 'terror links'

SRINAGAR

In a decisive move against the terror ecosystem, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has dismissed five government employees for alleged links to terrorist organisations, official sources said on Tuesday.

The number of dismissed government employees has risen to over 80, who were found involved in the ongoing militancy in Kashmir.

The latest set of terminated

employees include Mohammad Ishfaq, a teacher; Tariq Ahmad Shah, a laboratory technician; Bashir Ahmad Mir, an assistant line-man; Farooq Ahmad Bhat, a field worker in the Forest Department; and Mohammad Yousuf, a driver in the Health Department.

As per sources, investigations by security and intelligence agencies revealed that the employees were allegedly associated with banned terrorist outfits and involved in activities that aided terrorism.

## Any Pak mistake, Army set for ground offensive: Gen Dwivedi

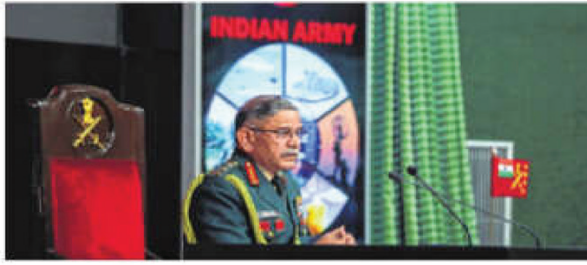
NEW DELHI

General Upendra Dwivedi on Tuesday stated that the Army had mobilised its personnel during Operation Sindoor and is "fully prepared" for ground operations should Pakistan commit any "mistake".

The Army chief reiterated that "Operation Sindoor remains ongoing, and a future misadventure will be resolutely responded to".

"As far as our eyes and ears are concerned, because Operation Sindoor is still on, those eyes and ears will remain open. Under this, whatever action we have to take, we have already taken it forward," he added.

He said that India can be satisfied with the progress made in the field of security in 2025, while mentioning that Operation Sindoor demonstrated India's readiness, precision and strategic clarity.



Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi at Annual Press Conference -2026 in New Delhi on Tuesday

Addressing the annual press conference of the Indian Army here, Gen Dwivedi said, "We had done major mobilisation (during Operation Sindoor)... We are still fully prepared for ground offensives if Pakistan makes any mistake."

"The past year saw a sharp rise in the number of armed conflicts worldwide. These global shifts underline a simple reality — nations that stay prepared prevail. In this backdrop, Operation Sindoor, India's calibrated, resolute

response to cross-border terrorism, demonstrated our readiness, precision and strategic clarity."

He mentioned that the situation along the North-western Front "remains stable, but needs constant vigil", adding that apex-level interactions, renewed contact, and confidence-building measures are contributing to the "gradual normalisation" of the situation that has also enabled grazing, hydrotherapy camps, and other activities along the Northern Borders.

## K'taka Cong set to counter G-Ram-G

**Bengaluru:** Terming it as 'killing Gandhi's name', the Karnataka Congress has decided to initiate an intensive campaign against the 'G-RAM-G' programme, which is set to replace MNREGA. The Congress had a preliminary meeting on Tuesday to work out the modalities of the agitation, which would start from the grassroot level in the entire state.

—Vinay Madhava Gowda



## night-long protest

# For Sir, with love: Raj students in dharna to revoke transfer



JAIPUR

Annoyed by the transfer of a teacher, the students of a government school staged a dharna and spent a full night outside the school in the chilling cold in Bhilwara, Rajasthan.

The incident took place at the Government Model Senior Secondary School in Nandray town of Bhilwara, where Shankar Lal Jat, a geography lecturer, was transferred on

January 11. Angered by this, the students staged a sit-in protest on Monday evening at 4 PM.

When no one came to address their concerns, the students, with the help of parents, set up tents outside the school and spent the night at the protest site.

A number of other students also joined the protest on Tuesday morning.

The students said that the teacher, Shankar Lal Jat, has been posted in this school for

## After taking dig at BJP, Cong holds meet with China team

Party says Khurshid's talks with CPC members took place at the request of visitors and with govt's nod

NEW DELHI

A Communist Party of China (CPC) delegation met the Congress's foreign affairs department head, Salman Khurshid, here on Tuesday, with the opposition party asserting that the meeting took place at the request of the visiting delegation and with the government's approval.

The meeting came hours after the Congress attacked the foreign policy of the BJP-led Narendra Modi government after reports emerged that the delegation of the Communist Party of China had visited the saffron party's headquarters on Monday.

Though the meeting was underplayed by the BJP in light of the estranged relations with China over border issues and its active engagement with Pakistan, the Congress was quick to lash out at the ruling party for rolling out the "red carpet" for China at a time when it has "repeatedly engaged in nefarious activities against India -- from Doklam, the Siliguri Corridor, Shaksgam to Arunachal Pradesh."

While the BJP usually plays up social and even diplomatic events, and a large number of its leaders then endorse them on their



Communist Party of China's Sun Haiyan visits BJP HQ. Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong was also present. They met BJP delegation headed by party general secretary Arun Singh

## Chinese delegation calls on RSS general secretary Hosabale

**New Delhi:** A delegation of the Communist Party of China called on RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale here on Tuesday, sources said. The Chinese delegation met the RSS second-in-command here at 11 am at his office, and the meeting lasted for about an hour, the sources said. "It was a courtesy call by them. The request for the meeting had come from the Chinese side," they said.

social media handles, the Monday meeting between delegations of two of the world's largest parties was grossly underplayed.

The BJP posted over 80 messages on its "X" handle during the day but not one pertained to this meeting with the CPC delegation.

It also did not share the post by its foreign affairs department in-charge Vijay Chauthaiwale regarding the meeting. In the brief post, Chauthaiwale had mentioned that a delegation of CPC under the leadership of

Sun Haiyan, Vice Minister of International Department of CPC, visited BJP head and that it held discussions with a BJP delegation headed by national general secretary Arun Singh "to advance inter party communications between BJP and CPC". He also mentioned that the Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong had joined the delegation.

Singh also posted about the meeting saying "we discussed how to enhance communication and interaction between BJP and CPC".

## EC: Can check citizenship for poll purposes

NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that it functions as the original authority in matters relating to electoral rolls and conduct of polls and its opinion is binding on the President if a person acquires citizenship of another country.

The panel submitted that the consequence of an adverse finding during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) would only be exclusion of the person's name from the electoral roll and does "not ipso facto (by that very fact) result in deportation", but it may be referred to the Centre for scrutiny and possible action under the Citizenship Act and related laws.

It also pointed out that in several regulatory frameworks, such as those governing mining leases or other statutory benefits, citizenship is a prerequisite and can be inquired into by the competent authority, countering the argument that the poll panel was exceeding its constitutional mandate.

The submissions were made by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi on behalf of EC before a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi which resumed final hearings on a batch of pleas that challenged EC's decision to undertake SIR exercise in several states raising significant constitutional questions on scope of poll panel's powers, citizenship and the right to vote.

## Didi again accuses BJP of deleting voter names



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee addresses a press conference over the issue of Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, in Kolkata, on Tuesday

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday once again accused Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for deleting names of genuine voters from the voters list in the name of SIR.

According to the TMC Supremo, she got to know that a car got caught in Bankura, which was carrying at least 3000-4000 Form 7 applications.

Showing a photo, the Chief Minister said that the picture makes it clear that deletion of names is being done by BJP.

Notably, though three BJP leaders fled but two BJP leaders got caught and were detained by police. One of the detained persons has been identified as Prabir Ghosh, husband of the former BJP Mandal president of Bibarda Gram Panchayat under the Taldangra Assembly constituency.

"This photo has reached me where a car is filled with thousands of Form 7 filled in advance. This is a clear picture of conspiracy. The Election Commission and

## Akhilesh threatens FIRs over SIR

**Lucknow:** Samajwadi Party chief and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday alleged that BJP was trying to manipulate the SIR of electoral rolls to create fake voters, warning that criminal cases would be filed against anyone found involved in irregularities. He said if any wrongdoing was detected in preparation of the voter list, FIRs would be lodged against those responsible.

state administration should investigate the matter," stated Mamata.

Mamata also mentioned that she and her party didn't get the details of the 54 lakh people whose names are deleted from the voter's list.

BJP Leader Sajal Ghosh however, said that investigation will be carried out to find the actual reason.

## Police to check on Bangladeshis: K'taka minister

**Bengaluru:** Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara has stated that Bangladeshi nationals are settling in Bengaluru as it is a peaceful city, and he has instructed the Karnataka Police Department to gather information in this regard. "They will look into the facts regarding where they are living and whether they possess documents. The probe will ascertain how and from where they obtained these documents," he said.



## Closing Ceremony of the Winter Session of the Girl Empowerment Mission Organized by Meja Urja Nigam Meja



Meja

On 12-01-2026, Meja Urja Nigam organized the closing ceremony of the Winter Session 2025-26 of the Girl Empowerment Mission under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative at the auditorium of St. Joseph School. The program commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by the Chief Guest, Shri G. Srinivasa Rao, CEO, MUNPL. On this occasion, he extended his best wishes to all and encouraged the girls to pursue education and move forward confidently in life. The welcome address was delivered by the DGM (HR), Shri Ajay Singh. The event was

attended by senior officials of Meja Urja Nigam, office bearers of Aparajita Mahila Samaj, GEM girls, and their parents. During the program, the GEM girls presented cultural performances including dance and songs. The Chief Guest also distributed mementos to all the participating girls. The objective of this one-week workshop was to enhance the creative and artistic talents of the girls, build their self-confidence, and promote awareness towards social equality. Meja Urja Nigam launched the Girl Empowerment Mission in 2019, inspired by the Government of India's "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" initiative. The

Girl Empowerment Mission organized by Meja Urja Nigam aims to provide greater opportunities to girls and eliminate gender inequality. Through this initiative, girls are made aware of important areas such as education, health, self-defense, and life skills. Under the Girl Empowerment Mission at Meja Urja Nigam, every year 40 girls from project-affected villages are provided one month of training through a summer residential workshop. After completion of the training, four girls are selected and provided free quality education at the Meja Urja Nigam school, studying shoulder to shoulder with other students.

## No Entry for Heavy Vehicles at Magh Mela; 12 Major Checkpoints Established Outside the City



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj:** The administration has made strict arrangements to ensure smooth traffic flow during the main bathing festivals of the Magh Mela. To avoid congestion and traffic jams in the city area, 12 major no-entry points have been designated for heavy vehicles outside the city. All heavy and light vehicles, except those associated with the Magh Mela, will be diverted to alternative routes before entering the Prayagraj city limits. According to the list released by the administration, Mandar Mod, Thana Pardi Gate, Police Chowki Bamrauli, Sahso Chowk, Habusa Mod, Soraon Bypass, Nawabganj Bypass, Malak Harhar Chowk, TP Nagar Katra, Rampur Chowk, Gauhania Gharpur, and 40 Number Gumti have

been designated as no-entry points. Diversion of Heavy Vehicles on Different Routes: Heavy goods vehicles coming to Prayagraj from Delhi, Kanpur, Fatehpur, Kaushambi, Lucknow, Raebareilly, Pratapgarh, Ayodhya, Sultanpur, Jaunpur, Varanasi, Bhadohi, Mirzapur, and Rewa (Madhya Pradesh) will be diverted before entering the city. These vehicles will be safely directed to their destinations via alternative routes including Raebareilly, Pratapgarh, Jaunpur, Varanasi, and Banda. The return journey will also be conducted through these designated routes.

Traffic diversions will be in effect during the main bathing festivals. The administration has also released the traffic diversion schedule for the major bathing

festivals: Makar Sankranti (January 15, 2026) Diversion: From 12:01 AM on January 14 to 12:00 AM on January 16 Mauni Amavasya (January 18, 2026) Diversion: From 12:01 AM on January 17 to 12:00 AM on January 19 Basant Panchami (January 23, 2026) Diversion: From 12:01 AM on January 22 to 12:00 AM on January 24 Maghi Purnima (February 1, 2026) Diversion: From 12:01 AM on January 31 to 12:00 AM on February 2 Maha Shivaratri (February 15, 2026) Diversion: From 12:01 AM on February 14 to 12:00 AM on February 16 The administration has appealed to motorists to follow the designated diversion routes and cooperate with the traffic police so that devotees do not face any inconvenience during the Magh Mela.

## Young Woman Killed in Truck Accident While on Her Way to Work

**Prayagraj:** A young woman was killed in a road accident near Tripathi Chowk in Mumfordganj area under Colonelganj police station today when she was hit by an army truck while on her way to work. The deceased has been identified as Astha Kumari (20), a resident of Sadiabad in the Kareli area. The incident occurred when Astha Kumari was riding her scooter to her workplace. According to reports, Astha Kumari was going to work on her scooter this morning. As she reached near Tripathi Chowk, an out-of-control army truck hit her. The young woman died on the spot due to the impact of the collision.

## Married Man's Promise of Marriage to a Woman to Obtain Consent for Sexual Relations Constitutes Deception; Case Will Not Be Quashed

**Prayagraj:** The Allahabad High Court has stated that if a married man obtains a woman's consent for sexual relations by promising marriage, it constitutes deception. This is a punishable offense under Section 69 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). With this observation, a single-judge bench of Justice Avnish Saxena rejected the plea of Kuldeep Verma, a resident of Aligarh, to quash the proceedings in the trial court. A woman had filed a First Information Report (FIR) against Kuldeep at the Quarsi police station on June 20, 2025. She alleged that she had been in a live-in relationship with him for 11 years. During this time, Kuldeep had sexual relations with her under the pretext of marriage. Later, she discovered that he was married and had three children. The case was ongoing in the trial court. The accused filed a petition in the High Court seeking to quash the proceedings. The advocate argued that the relationship between the petitioner and the woman was consensual. The victim was aware of the petitioner's marital status. However, after hearing both sides, the court stated that Section 69 of the BNS specifically declares sexual relations obtained through a false promise of marriage or other fraudulent means as a crime. The court cited the case of Pramod Suryabhan Pawar vs. State of Maharashtra. It stated that in the present case, the accused was already married and knew he could not marry the woman, which prima facie indicates deception. It is a matter of investigation whether the victim was aware of the accused's marriage beforehand. Considering the facts and the material on record, the court refused to interfere with the trial court proceedings and dismissed the application to quash the case.

# Mobile Snatching Gang Busted: Three Suspects Arrested with 28 Stolen Mobile Phones and Two Bikes

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj:** The Dhoomanganj police station, in a joint operation with the district SOG and surveillance team, has busted a gang involved in mobile phone snatching. Police arrested three members of the gang and recovered 28 stolen mobile phones and two motorcycles used in the crimes. According to the police, acting on case number 15/2026 registered at Dhoomanganj police station, the three accused were arrested on Monday near the Nehru Park ruins. The arrested individuals have been identified as Suhail alias Jigar (24 years), Sahil Hasmi (23 years), and



Aneesh (19 years). All three are residents of different police station areas in Prayagraj. Based on the interrogation and

recoveries, the police have added sections 317(2), 338, 336(3), and 340(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

(BNS) to the case.

Police said the gang used to snatch mobile phones from people walking on the

streets in different parts of the city and then flee. 28 Mobile Phones and Two Bikes Recovered: Police recovered a total of 28 mobile phones of various companies, including Vivo, Redmi, Samsung, Oppo, Realme, Motorola, and OnePlus, from the accused. Two motorcycles were also recovered, one with a fake number plate and the other without a number plate. Criminal History of the Accused: The arrested accused, Sahil Hasmi, already has more than half a dozen cases registered against him in various police stations of Prayagraj related to robbery, theft, and recovery of stolen goods.

Suhail alias Jigar also has previous criminal cases registered against him. This is reportedly the first registered case against Aneesh. Key Role of the Police Team: The Dhoomanganj police station, the district SOG, and the surveillance team played a crucial role in this success. Police officials said that other cases related to the gang are also being investigated, and the process of identifying the original owners of the recovered mobile phones and returning them will be initiated. The police said that similar strict action will continue to be taken to curb snatching and robbery incidents in the city.

## GAIL DAV Public School, Dibiyapur Students Win Medals at State-Level VVM

Auraiya

Students of GAIL DAV Public School, Dibiyapur brought laurels to their school by winning medals at the state-level Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan (VVM) competition, held at G.D. Goenka Public School, Lucknow. With their outstanding performance, the medal winners have also secured selection for the national-level competition. Yuvraj, a Class VIII student, secured first position at the state level. For his achievement, he was awarded a cash prize of ₹5000, a trophy, and a certificate. Similarly, Zehra Mazhar, a Class X student, also clinched first position, further establishing the academic excellence of the institution. She too received a cash prize of ₹5000 along with a trophy and a commendation certificate. In the Class VI (Group Category), Aditya Upadhyay achieved a commendable third position. He was honoured with a cash prize of



₹2000, a trophy and a certificate for his achievement. All the medal-winning students at the state level have now been selected to represent the school at the national-level VVM competition, which has become a matter of great pride and happiness for the entire school fraternity. Additionally, Class X student H. Haasini Barani was awarded a certificate of participation for her involvement in the competition. On this occasion, School Principal Priyanka Gaur expressed her happiness over the students' success and

stated that this achievement is the result of the students' dedication, hard work and the continuous guidance of their teachers. She added that competitions like Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan promote scientific thinking, curiosity and innovation among students and expressed confidence that equally well at the national level. The school family congratulated all the successful students, their parents and guiding teachers and extended best wishes for their bright future at the national-level competition.

# Sushruta Surgery and Cancer Clinic treated patients by organizing free health camps

Bhadohi

A free health camp was organized by Sushruta Surgery and Cancer Clinic at Bida Complex located at Rajpura Square in the city. 215 people took advantage of the free health camp by registering themselves. All types of patients who came to the camp were examined with great care by the doctors. On this occasion, Director of Sushruta Surgery and Cancer Clinic, MBBS, MS, Surgical Oncology (Laparoscopic Surgeon, Head Neck and Breast Cancer Specialist) and Gold Medalist IMS, BHU, Ex Sir Tata Memorial, Varanasi, Dr. R. Sinha and Gynecologist MBBS, DIGI Dr. Ajita



Srivastava, presented all types of medicines. Gave advice for successful treatment of cancer, breast lump and ovarian cancer. Dr. R. Sinha and Dr. Ajita Srivastava gave free consultation to the patients related to this disease and along with this, they were given one week medicines for free. In the camp, hydrocele and gall bladder were also examined using binoculars and normal techniques and advice for treatment and operation was given. In the camp, treatment and operation of hernia and stones, treatment of stomach and all types of tumors, treatment of piles and warts in anus, treatment of any kind of lump and pus in the body, formation of milk lump in the chest, treatment and operation of circumcision and chest tumor,

treatment of thyroid, getting stuck of stool in the intestine due to constipation, treatment of children All types of treatments and operations, including oral cancer, breast lump and ovarian cancer, were advised for successful treatment and operation after examination. On this occasion, Dr. R. Sinha, director of Sushruta Surgery and Cancer Clinic,

said that the purpose of organizing this free health medical counseling camp is that the people of Bhadohi and surrounding rural areas, who due to lack of money are not able to get treatment in expensive and big cities, can get treatment at low cost. He said that in the camp, along with free consultation, one week medicine is being given free of cost after free check-up. Sinha said that now this camp will be organized after 15 days on Sunday only at Rajpura Chauraha Beeda Complex. Said they should come to the camp first and take their number so that they can be given timely consultation and treatment.



# District Magistrate Inspects Holding Area at Khusro Bagh with Senior Officials

He instructed officials to ensure all necessary arrangements are in place



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj:** District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma, along with Additional Commissioner of Police Dr. Ajay Pal Sharma and Municipal Commissioner

Sai Teja, inspected the holding area being constructed at Khusro Bagh near Prayagraj Railway Station on Tuesday. This inspection was conducted in view of the upcoming major bathing festivals of Makar

Sankranti and Mauni Amavasya during the Magh Mela 2026, and the expected large influx of devotees to the Magh Mela area. He instructed officials to ensure all necessary arrangements are in



place. He directed that adequate arrangements for drinking water, mobile toilets, lighting, and proper sanitation be made in the holding area, which is being created for crowd management and the

safe movement of devotees. He also instructed that arrangements be made for bonfires. He inspected the holding area and inquired about the entry and exit routes

for devotees and the capacity of the holding area. He instructed the Municipal Corporation to ensure proper sanitation. He also inspected the night shelter built near the railway station.

## Fire breaks out at Magh Mela camp, two tents gutted, one person injured

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**Prayagraj:** A major tragedy was narrowly averted at the Magh Mela on the eve of Makar Sankranti. A fire broke out suddenly on Tuesday evening at a camp of pilgrims in Sector five on Kali Road, causing panic at the fair. Several fire tenders rushed to the spot and, after considerable effort, brought the fire under control. Two tents were completely destroyed in the fire. Cash, puja materials, and other essential items kept inside the tents were also destroyed. During the incident, a man was partially burned while trying to rescue his wife, and he was



sent for first aid. According to reports, Bharat Shankar Shukla, a resident of Garapur in the Sahso area, had set up a camp of the

Shri Ram Naam and Manas Prachar Sangh (Shri Namayan Shukla Dham) in Sector five, Kali Road, North side, at the Magh

Mela. On Tuesday evening, around 5 pm, some people were engaged in prayers and preparing prasad (offerings), while others were

warming themselves by a bonfire outside. At that moment, a short circuit occurred when the power came on, and a tent sudden-

ly caught fire. According to eyewitnesses, the fire quickly spread. There was chaos all around, and people started running in all directions to save their lives. An elderly woman, Santosh Shukla, who was resting in the camp, was somehow safely rescued by the people. The camp's operator, Pranshu Shukla, said that approximately one lakh rupees in cash, along with puja materials and all daily necessities, were destroyed in the fire. The prompt action of the fire brigade prevented the fire from spreading to other camps, thus averting a major tragedy.

**Higher Education Minister released 21 books at Lucknow University**

Uttar Pradesh Higher Education Minister Yogendra Upadhyay, as the chief guest, released 21 books based on arts, science and social science subjects. The book release program, held at Lucknow University campus was presided over by the Vice-Chancellor of the university, Prof. Manuka Khanna. The books were released under Vidya Bharati Higher Education Institute ambitious 'Bharat Boudhiks' scheme.

## BJP Minority Front officials meet Deputy CM, discuss health system in Prayagraj



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj:** In a bid to further improve health-care services in the Sangam city of Prayagraj, officials of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Minority Front paid a courtesy call on Deputy Chief Minister and Health Minister Brajesh Pathak in Lucknow. The meeting was led by BJP Minority Front Vice President Mohammad Sharif. During the

meeting, Mohammad Sharif honored Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak by presenting him with a shawl and a memento. Minority Front leader Mohammad Imtiaz alias Guddu also greeted the Deputy CM with a bouquet of flowers. Several other office bearers and workers of the front were also present on the occasion. During the courtesy call, the leaders appreciated the facilities provided by the health department

in Prayagraj and demanded that they be further strengthened. They discussed issues related to resources, facilities, and public amenities in government hospitals. Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak assured the delegation that the state government is committed to providing better healthcare services to the common people and that every possible support will be given to strengthen the health system in Prayagraj.

## District Magistrate holds meeting regarding ensuring clean water supply, gives necessary instructions to concerned officials

Instructions given to investigate complaints of contaminated water supply or other drinking water-related issues and to ensure quality resolution of all complaints

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** A meeting was held on Tuesday at the Sangam Auditorium in the Collectorate, chaired by District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma and attended by Municipal Commissioner Sai Teja, regarding ensuring the supply of clean water. In the meeting, the District Magistrate gave necessary instructions to all concerned officials to ensure the supply of clean drinking water. Referring to the incident in Indore, he told the Municipal Commissioner that under no circumstances should contaminated drinking water be supplied. He instructed the Municipal Commissioner to prepare a list of complaints regarding contaminated drinking water supply over the past six months and to obtain feedback on them again. He said that these complaints should be re-examined to ascertain whether the work related to the drinking water supply was done in a quality manner.



He said that if there are any shortcomings in the work, they should be rectified again with quality. He instructed that in areas where there are still complaints of contaminated water supply or other drinking water-related issues, the water quality should be tested and all complaints should be resolved in a quality manner. He said that in areas where complaints of contaminated water supply are frequently received, the pipelines should be inspected on a priority basis, leaks should be repaired, and if the pipelines are faulty or dilapidated, they should be

replaced. In the meeting, the District Magistrate instructed that in places and narrow lanes where drinking water pipelines are near sewer lines, it should be ensured that the drinking water pipelines are placed above the sewer lines. In the meeting, the District Magistrate instructed the Municipal Commissioner and the Chief Medical Officer that if any person suffering from infection due to contaminated water comes to medical colleges, private and government hospitals, and CHCs/PHCs, the information should be shared with the

Municipal Corporation and the Water Department, and the drinking water in the patient's residential area should be tested. If the water quality is not good, arrangements for the supply of clean water should be ensured immediately. The District Magistrate has directed that necessary action be taken to replace the old water supply lines, which are extremely old and prone to leakage. The District Magistrate instructed all concerned officials to coordinate with the councilors and other elected representatives to obtain a list of complaints regarding drinking water supply and locations of faulty pipelines in their respective areas, and to rectify them on a priority basis. He also directed the Chief Development Officer to ensure the supply of clean drinking water to all in rural areas and the Additional District Magistrate (Urban) to do the same in the Nagar Panchayats (town councils), by making all the necessary arrangements.



## Editorial

### Buying Russian oil, misreading Trump—3 points will define India's next energy strategy

India's crude oil trade has evolved from a purely economic exchange into both a geopolitical test of strategic autonomy and a measure of the constraints in its energy policy. Over the past three years, India has gone from being a marginal buyer of Russian crude to one of its largest importers, carefully balancing ties with the US, Europe, and shifting global energy markets. That balance is now under pressure from Donald Trump's 50 per cent tariff offensive, aimed selectively at India and leaving little ambiguity about his objectives—and in Trump's world, what he wants, he usually gets. Yet the national debate has taken too many assumptions for granted. It is worth applying a deconstruction approach to India's famous oil bargains with Russia—a decision once hailed as tactical brilliance, but one now risking entanglement in overlapping economic and diplomatic challenges. While public commentary has focused heavily on Trump, tariffs, and New Delhi's indignation, the more pressing task is to interrogate the rationale behind these choices. To navigate the road ahead, India must revisit three fundamentals: why it embraced Russian oil, how it misread Trump's European recalibration, and where future India–Russia energy engagement should head. Clarity on these three points may well define the next chapter of India's energy strategy. Despite close political ties and deep defence cooperation, India and Russia were never bound by energy dependence. Even with India's heavy reliance on imports—currently 88 per cent of its daily crude requirement of 5.5 million barrels—its primary suppliers have traditionally been Gulf countries. The earlier chapter of India capitulating to Trump 1.0's sanctions on Iran and Venezuela is well known; today, however, the challenge is starker. Russia entered India's energy equation only after the geopolitical earthquake of President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. That act shattered the European order painstakingly built since the Second World War and crystallised after the Soviet Union's collapse. Central to this upheaval was Putin's weaponization of energy: Europe's decades-long dependence on cheap Russian oil and gas became a vulnerability. In response, Europe diversified away from Russia, while the G7 imposed a \$60 per-barrel price cap on Russian crude in December 2022. The logic was clear: as one of the world's top three oil producers, Russia could not be cut off overnight. The aim was instead to squeeze Moscow's revenues, which were funding its war machine, while keeping prices stable and securing alternative supplies for Europe. India saw opportunity in this upheaval. With vast import needs, it began rerouting Russian oil at supposedly lower prices, rejecting G7 sanctions and arranging direct and indirect deals through intermediaries. Early reports spoke of a “free on board” discount of 30 per cent, though never confirmed.

Brent crude fell from \$86.51 in January 2022 to \$80.92 in December, peaking briefly at about \$90 in June 2023 before sliding again. While some credit India's purchases with stabilising prices, Russian oil for India almost always remained way above the \$60 price cap. The critical question is whether India ever bought below that threshold. Reports suggest an average discount of only \$5 per barrel—hardly transformative—and potentially offset by hidden costs and surcharges. Even so, large volumes (peaking at over 2 million barrels per day before dropping to 1.5 million) meant cumulative savings. But if cheap oil was the goal, why not join or informally align with the price cap, securing crude closer to \$60 without the complications of shadow fleets and sanctions risks?



## Government's outreach ties need renewed focus

India has enjoyed historical, cultural and civilisational links with Central Asia for several millennia. Brisk trade of goods, ideas and thoughts took place from India to Central Asia and beyond over the Silk Road from 3rd century BC to 15th century AD. Buddhism travelled to Afghanistan, Central Asia and western China from India over this route. India and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) viz. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan shared vibrant economic, people-to-people and cultural ties till recent times when the latter were a part of the Soviet Union. India has not been able to take full advantage of its close ancient linkages with this region after their independence from the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1991 because it does not share a de facto land boundary with any of these countries (although de jure it shares a border with Tajikistan through the Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir). To overcome this obstacle, several initiatives which have been in the pipeline for many years have now been fast-tracked. Two of the most significant are the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chabahar port.

### Evolution of relations

In current times, Central Asian Republics constitute the extended neighbourhood of India. Peace and security in Central Asia is



critical to peace and stability in India. This is intimately connected with peace and security in Afghanistan. Three Central Asian Republics — Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan — share borders with Afghanistan. India and Central Asia need to collaborate with other regional powers like Russia, Iran, China and Pakistan as also with the US and the EU to promote security and stability in Afghanistan. The advent of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in August 2021 after the sudden and unceremonious withdrawal of the US and NATO troops has introduced further complications in promoting connectivity between India and Central Asia. In addition to the

above, the region is also richly endowed with natural and mineral resources like oil, gas (Turkmenistan contains the world's fourth largest reserves of natural gas), uranium (Kazakhstan is the world's largest producer of uranium ore and has the world's second largest reserve of this mineral), lead, iron ore, coal, rare earths, water, etc. The region can contribute to India's energy security through fossil fuels and hydro-power.

and meet its need of many critical minerals and metals. The area is ideally situated for providing seamless connectivity between Europe and India. It encompasses the “heartland” of Halford Mackinder's “Heartland Theory” propounded in his

article “The Geographical Pivot of History” in 1904. Moreover, the region harbours great potential for promoting trade and investment, tourism, people-to-people connect, cultural, business and academic exchanges between India and these countries. India and Central Asia started on a strong and robust note when these countries attained freedom from the Soviet Union in 1991. The then Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao sensed the strategic significance of the region and visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in 1993, and Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1995. The next twenty years however witnessed a relative neglect of the region by the Indian leadership

owing to its preoccupation with domestic affairs, absence of a strong, single party government in New Delhi and its focus on expanding ties with major, strategic powers. The 20 years from 1995 to 2015 witnessed only four prime ministerial visits from India to the region — in 2002 by PM Vajpayee to Kazakhstan for the CICA (Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia) Summit followed by a half day bilateral visit, and in 2003 to Tajikistan; in 2006 by PM Manmohan Singh to Uzbekistan, and in 2011 to Kazakhstan for an overnight visit on his way back from Sanya, Hainan after the BRICS Summit.

### Relations expand in Modi era

This indifference was corrected after PM Narendra Modi assumed power in May 2014, becoming the first Prime Minister after 30 years with a full majority in the lower house of Parliament (Lok Sabha). In just a little more than a year after becoming PM, he travelled to all five Central Asian countries in July 2015, the first Indian Prime Minister to do so, sending out a clear message about India's intent in expanding its ties with these countries. The last 10 years of PM Modi's rule have witnessed a significant upswing in bilateral partnership and engageThe rapidly changing dynamics of Central nomic architecture provide a bright opportunity.

### Good politician, bad statesman — what Muhammad Yunus' one year in power reveals

If Sheikh Hasina had her way, Muhammad Yunus would have been dunked into the Padma River by now. Not once but twice. But it has been a year since the ousted Bangladeshi prime minister hasn't had her way. In that time, not only has Yunus avoided a plunge into the Padma, but also dashed Hasina's dreams of returning to Bangladesh, all while sitting pretty in the chair she was forced to vacate. In the one year since Yunus took over as the caretaker to the interim government of Bangladesh on 8 August 2024, the accidental politician has proved himself a consummate one. Detractors who had claimed he won't last three months are now worried if he will even vacate his chair. Not only has Yunus deftly navigated the choppy waters of Bangladeshi politics, he has even turned foes into friends. Plunged into chaos after Hasina's hasty exit on 5 August 2024, Bangladesh, though, is in desperate need of a statesman. There has been no love lost between Sheikh Hasina and Muhammad

Yunus, much before the latter replaced the former as Bangladesh's premier last year. On 18 May 2022, Hasina had allegedly said, “He (Yunus) stopped funding for a project like the Padma Bridge because of one managing director post. He should be given two dunks in the Padma River, but lifted up so he doesn't die. Then maybe he will learn a lesson.” Hasina had said this while blaming Nobel Peace Prize winner, economist Dr Muhammad Yunus, for blocking the World Bank's funding of the Padma bridge project. That's not all. As recently as 1 January 2024, a court in Bangladesh had sentenced the Nobel laureate to six months in jail for violating Bangladesh's labour laws. Yunus' supporters said the case was politically motivated. The acclaimed economist and three colleagues from Grameen Telecom—one of the firms Yunus founded—were found guilty of failing to create a welfare fund for their workers. I call for the Bangladeshi people to speak in one voice against injustice.

### Dharali floods a wake-up call for IMD, NDMA to buck up

The deadly flash floods and landslides in Uttarkashi on 5 August, in which 16 people were killed, highlight the problems of illegal riverbank constructions and inadequate warning systems. Videos of submerged villages, ravaging floods sweeping up buildings and cars in their tide, and stranded people have become an almost annual occurrence now in the Himalayan region. Dharali's floods struck in the absence of any weather warning, and authorities are still confused about the actual cause. While the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority called it a cloudburst, the India Meteorological Department could not confirm it with the available data. Uttarkashi district recorded 12.7 cm of rain in 8 hours on 5 August; it is still lower than districts such as Haridwar and Dehradun, which got 15-30 cm of rain on the same day. In a state that sees frequent cloudbursts and floods during the monsoon, and has been explicitly marked as a ‘high vulnerability zone’ for landslides by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the damage from the Dharali floods is not merely nature's fault. The blame also rests squarely on building norms, mass road construction and mining projects, and other anthropogenic activities that have exacerbated Uttarakhand's fragility. The floods should be another wake-up call for the IMD and the NDMA to buck up and ensure the safety of people and ecology in the Himalayas. Dharali is a small hamlet 2,680 metres above sea level, situated 18 km from Gangotri, and is a common stopover for tourists and pilgrims going to one of the Char Dhams of Uttarakhand. It is dotted with hotels, restaurants, and homes built precariously close to the banks of the Kheerganga River that runs through the village. On Tuesday afternoon, a barrage of water descended upon the village and

damaged houses, roads, and the one bridge connecting Dharali and Hershil, another area affected by the landslide. Satellite images from ISRO now show that deposits of mud and sediments from the floods cover all of the village. Alongside civilian settlements, an Army camp near Hershil too was impacted by the floods, although the number of people missing there hasn't been reported. The IMD had issued warnings of heavy to extremely heavy rainfall in all of Uttarakhand, including the Uttarkashi district, from 1 August onwards. But compared to other districts, Uttarkashi's rainfall during this monsoon was still pretty low. From 1 to 5 August, Uttarkashi's recorded rainfall was 6 percent lower than the average rainfall it gets during this period. Over the monsoon season so far this year in the state, Uttarkashi has recorded 7 per cent lower rainfall than average. If there was indeed a cloudburst—100 mm of rain falling in one hour in a small area—then the IMD is not aware of it. The closest Automatic Weather System (AWS) station that could record this cloudburst is 7 km from Dharali, and it did not catch a cloudburst. But experts say that even without a cloudburst, the possibility of heavy rainfall causing this disaster is not unfounded. Dharali's location and slope explain it. “The ‘cloudburst’ may have happened much higher at 12,000 ft above sea level, and Dharali is at 8,000 ft. Even this slope of 4,000 ft makes a huge difference to the intensity of the water flow,” Mahesh Palawat, vice president of meteorology and climate change at SkyMet Weather, told ThePrint. “The canal is very narrow, and a lot of trees and mud could have been uprooted and swept along with the water.” If extremely heavy rainfall can cause such damage without a rare event like a cloudburst, it should leave the system working toward India's disas-

### Bank nationalisation will be a blow to India's mixed economy, lead to totalitarianism: Phiroze Shroff

Every now and then we hear the cry that banks should be nationalised. The taking over of banks by the State is urged on various grounds, namely, that it is necessary in order “to mobilise resources” for the economic development of the country, “to prevent the concentration of economic power”, “to check malpractices in the working of banks” and to put a stop to profiteering” by banks. All these arguments will be found to be untenable on a dispassionate scrutiny of the issues involved. The primary function of banks

is to mobilise resources for economic development and that is exactly what the banks in our country have been doing. They have been working to attract deposits from those who have funds to spare on [a] long or short term basis. They have been making loans for industrial as well as agricultural expansion in accordance with numerous legislative requirements. During recent years, they have opened numerous branches in order to extend credit facilities to people even in remote areas, even though the banking business

in several branches has proved unremunerative. They have invested more than Rs 600 crore in Government securities. They have been broadening their capital base and increasing their reserves in accordance with statutory requirements. The enormous increase in their deposits during recent years bears testimony to the confidence which the public have in their working. By undertaking the foreign exchange business, our banks render considerable help in promoting exports. An occasional appearance of a black

sheep in the sphere of banking, as in any other sphere, does not detract from the value of the service which the banks as a whole are rendering to the country. What is regrettable is that though the Reserve Bank is invested with extensive powers to prevent malpractices, in one or two cases it failed to exercise them to protect the interests of the depositors as well as shareholders. Ninety-five per cent of bank advances in India are secured loans. The corresponding figures for the USA, is only thirty per cent.



## Zomato's Q4 net profit falls 77% to Rs 39 crore

**Delhi :** Eternal Ltd. (previously Zomato) announced a 77% drop in overall net profit to Rs 39 crore in Q4 FY25 from Rs 175 crore the year before. Zomato, which owns Blinkit, lost 33% of its quarterly net profit to Rs 59 crore in October-December. Overall expenditures rose 67% to Rs 6,104 crore from Rs 3,636 crore. QoQ, costs rose over 10%. Food delivery company consolidated income from operations rose 64% to Rs 5,833 crore from Rs 3,562 crore in the January-March quarter of the previous financial year. Zomato earned Rs 6,201 crore in the quarter, up from Rs 3,797 the year before. Its expenses rose from Rs 3,636 crore to Rs 6,104 crore. Zomato shares finished at Rs 232.5 on the BSE, up 0.58 percent. According to its stock exchange filing, Blinkit opened 294 net new stores in Q4 and is on track to reach 2,000 by



December 25. Deepinder Goyal, Founder and CEO, Eternal, said, "We don't see any long-term structural reason for this slowdown, as the fundamentals – low penetration of restaurant food and increasing urbanisation and per capita income in India – remain unchanged." The company has several promising initiatives in the pipeline and hopes some will work and lead to higher growth without compromising profitability. The company began reporting NOV and GOV for its B2C activities (food delivery, rapid commerce, and going-out) in Q4 FY25.

### Coconut oil prices rise, hurting users

**Delhi :** Coconut oil, a staple in most Indian households, may be raising your grocery expenditures. Due to rising coconut oil inflation, Marico and Dabur raised prices by 40% in the past year. According to Saugata Gupta, MD & CEO of Marico, commodity prices have 'peaked' and are unlikely to climb much unless a 'black swan event' occurs. He expects higher volume growth in the FMCG sector this financial year. For Marico, which creates Parachute coconut oil, copra dominates its commodity basket.

## Supreme Court rejects Airtel and Vodafone's requests to waive AGR fees

**Delhi :** Airtel and Vodafone Idea were denied a waiver of interest and penalty on their outstanding adjusted gross revenue (AGR) debts, totaling Rs 80,000 crore, by the Supreme Court. The order would have an effect on Tata Teleservices as well. After the initial SC order in 2019, which aimed to recover industrial dues, the outstanding AGR is now little less than 1.5 lakh crore.

Since it entered the telecom market in 2016 with only a



minor exposure to past dues and adjustments, Reliance Jio was the only company that walked out relatively unscathed.

The businesses' request for a postponement was denied by a panel of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan, who

deemed the companies' petitions "shocking and misconceived" and rejected them. Multinational corporations' filing procedures for petitions seeking remedies for enforcement of rights under Article 32 were also examined by the court.

## High prices reduce India's January-March gold demand by 15% to 118.1 tonnes

**Delhi:** The WGC predicts 700-800 tons of gold demand from India in 2025. Since 2025, gold prices have increased 25%, approaching the psychological threshold of ₹1,000,000 per 10 gm, impacting consumer purchasing behaviors. Price increases have hurt

affordability. However, gold's cultural significance, especially ahead of Akshaya Tritiya and the wedding season, supports buying sentiment. "WGC India CEO Sachin Jain stated in its quarterly report. Experts say the gold market is buzzing on Akshaya

Tritiya, a culturally significant day in India that generally boosts gold buying. Record costs have driven shoppers toward smaller, lighter pieces, with some delaying purchases awaiting price drops. Wedding demand remained consistent.

## Brokers can now invest in new business

**Delhi :** Brokers can now invest their own cash in enterprises beyond their jurisdiction after the government changed the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Rule. They can't invest clients' money in those businesses. They cannot borrow to invest in other firms either. Brokers indicated they'll await Sebi's rules. Brokers couldn't float subsidiaries before now. Top broking house officials stated the new rules allow that. "Given the growth in the scale and interconnectedness of the financial sector and the evolution of the nature of business of brokers with time, the DEA (Dept of Economic Affairs) felt it necessary to review the appropriateness of safeguards



embedded in the rules so that the intent of the rules is served without constraining activities of the stakeholders," the government said in a release. Broking house executives believe this SCRR modification is a major regulatory change. Leading broker

Motilal Oswal said stock brokers could only invest in securities and commodity derivatives until now. "This amendment allows stock brokers to invest in any firm without using client funds or securities or creating financial obligation.

### The cancellation of fleet talks by Uber is bad news for BluSmart.

**Delhi :** Two sources familiar with the matter have confirmed that Uber has canceled plans to transfer approximately 5,000 electric vehicles owned by Gensol Engineering Ltd. from BluSmart to its platform. The negotiations broke down because everyone was unhappy with the asking price for the autos. Discussions had begun as part of BluSmart's strategy to revitalise its taxi business. It was expected that BluSmart would partner with Uber's fleet. One of the individuals mentioned earlier asserted, "Uber has now withdrawn its interest," while requesting anonymity.

## Promoters of Prudential, HCL to form health insurer

**Delhi:** Prudential and HCL Group promoters announced a separate health insurance joint venture. Prudential Group Holdings, Prudential's UK affiliate, would own 70% of the joint venture, while HCL Group promoter Vama Sundari Investments will own 30%. HCL founder Shiv Nadar gave his daughter Roshni Nadar Malhotra large shares in Vama Sundari Investments, giving her power. Prudential had its first branch in Kolkata in



1923, making India a critical market, according to CEO Anil Wadhvani. "Today, we have a significant presence with life insurance and asset management businesses providing a comprehensive offering of insurance and wealth products," Wadhvani. ICICI Bank has partnered with Prudential, a FTSE 100

company, for over two decades in life insurance and asset management. The Prudential cooperation intends to provide quality health insurance in India, according to Vama executive director Shikhar Malhotra. "Through this collaboration, we aim to advance our common mission to enhance access to quality health insurance and drive greater penetration across the country," stated. If approved by regulators, Amar Joshi will lead the joint venture..

## Automakers from other countries are searching for ways to cut electric vehicle tariffs

**Delhi:** In March 2024, India offered to let international automakers import a certain number of electric cars with low duties in exchange for a commitment to invest a certain amount in the country. Meanwhile, three industry officials have stated that manufacturers are now focusing on anticipated tariff reductions in free trade agreements (FTAs) that are currently being discussed, as the scheme's criteria have not been finalized by the Centre. Following CEO Elon Musk's public criticism of India's high import levies on autos, the country's



plan to promote manufacturing of electric passenger cars in India (SPMEPC-I), also known as the "Tesla Policy," was viewed as an effort by New Delhi to entice the American automaker. The plan called for authorized automakers to be able to import 8,000 EVs per year for a 15% tariff, as opposed to the typical 70-110% tariff on

fully assembled cars, also known as CBUs. Minimum investments of ₹4,150 crore were required to qualify for the incentive. People and companies said to be interested in the project include Tesla, Vinfast of Vietnam, Toyota Kirloskar, Hyundai Motor Ltd., Volkswagen Group, and Hyundai Motor Ltd.

## Indian tourists boycott Turkey, Azerbaijan

**Delhi :** According to two travel agencies, Indian tourists are canceling vacations to Turkey and Azerbaijan after the two countries supported Pakistan in a recent armed war with New Delhi. India is considering boycotting Turkey and Azerbaijan after both publicly



supported Pakistan amid mounting tensions after Operation Sindoor and the April 22 Pahalgam terror assault. Turkey supported Pakistan's call for an international probe into the Pahalgam incident, while Azerbaijan repeated

Pakistan's position. Turkish weapons have also been given to Pakistan. "Bookings for Azerbaijan and Turkey decreasing by 60% (over the last week) while cancellations have surged by 250%," a MakeMyTrip spokeswoman told

## The 'Faster Service' Advance Tip Feature of Uber is Baffled by CCPA Notice

**Delhi :** In response to a contentious policy found inside the Uber app, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has given the company a notice. The app allegedly encouraged users to tip drivers in advance to potentially gain quicker pick-up services, according to Union Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi. According to Joshi, this method is exploitative and unethical. Feel free to become one of our three million satisfied clients. Free brokerage



For first 30 days" Publicly voicing his disapproval, the Minister said that gratuities should be an after-service, optional gift of appreciation rather than a prerequisite for better service. Uber is being asked to provide an official explanation by the CCPA about this behavior. Users alleged-

ly see a suggestion to tip ₹50, ₹75 or 100 when they book a ride on Uber. The app's messaging implies that tipping drivers ahead of time would improve the likelihood of faster acceptance. "Tip for faster pickup" is the message that appears in the alert. If you provide a gratuity, the driv-

### NBD Bank PJSC gets RBI approval for India wholly owned subsidiary

**Delhi:** Emirates NBD Bank PJSC, a renowned UAE banking firm, received "in-principle" approval from the RBI to create a wholly owned subsidiary (WOS) in India. This is part of the RBI's Scheme for Foreign Banks to Set Up WOS

in India. In India, Emirates NBD has branches in Mumbai, Chennai, and Gurugram. The RBI has allowed the bank to transform these branches into wholly owned subsidiaries, subject to regulatory compliance.

It elaborates by saying that the tip is final once chosen and belongs solely to the

driver. The present scrutiny is a result of this prompt, which seems to position the tip as a way to influence service speed rather than a reward.



## 'No malice in it at all'



Sunil Grover

**Aamir Khan reacts to Sunil Grover mimicking him on *The Great Indian Kapil Show***



Photos: Instagram

**A**ctor Sunil Grover, in the latest episode of Kapil Sharma's Netflix show *The Great Indian Kapil Show*, featuring Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday, who had arrived to promote their latest film *Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri* took everyone by surprise when he appeared dressed like Aamir Khan and delivered a spot-on mimicry so seamless that the internet almost believed it was the superstar himself.

While audiences showered him with praise, Aamir Khan has now reacted to Sunil's impersonation. In an interview with Subhash K Jha for Bollywood Hungama, Aamir said, "I won't even call it mimicry. It was so authentic, I felt I was watching myself. I saw a small clip. Now I'm going to watch the whole episode. But what I saw was priceless. I was laughing so much I couldn't breathe!!" "There was no malice in it at all. I must have laughed the loudest," added Khan.

During the episode, Sunil also subtly took a dig at veteran actress and politician Jaya Bachchan. A clip from the latest episode has been doing the rounds on social media, leaving viewers amused. In the viral clip, Sunil is seen posing for paparazzi on the show's set and interacting with them. While praising the photographers, he cheekily remarks, "*Kapde acche pehne hue hai tumhe. Pant acchi hai aaj*," a line that many viewers interpreted as a tongue-in-cheek reference to Jaya's recent controversial comments about paparazzi.

Meanwhile, on *The Great Indian Kapil Show*, Sunil often mimics other celebrities, including Shah Rukh Khan, SS Rajamouli, and Salman Khan.

His perfect mimicry consistently leaves the audience in splits.

## Leonardo questions cinema's future

**Leonardo DiCaprio questions if audiences still visit cinemas, worried streaming platforms may change the future of movie theaters**



**H**ollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio says he is unsure if the audience still has the "same appetite" for cinema halls amid the surge of streamers and wonders if theatres will become as rare as jazz bars and other cultural rarities.

DiCaprio said there is a "huge transition". "It's changing at a lightning speed. We're looking at a huge transition... First, documentaries disappeared from cinemas. Now, dramas only get finite time and people wait to see it on streamers. I don't know. Do people still have the appetite? Or will cinemas become silos - like jazz bars, he said.

"I just hope enough people, who are real visionaries, get opportunities to do unique things in

the future that are seen in the cinema. But that remains to be seen," the *Shutter Island* actor added.

He previously spoke on the same topic in an interview with the entertainment news outlet *Deadline*, where he explained how getting people to theatres has been turning into "more of a challenge".

"This year seems like one of the most lightning-rod moments in cinema history... We're up against it - the future of the cinematic experience - more than ever, I feel. Getting people to come to the theaters seems like more and more of a challenge," DiCaprio said.

DiCaprio's latest work is *One Battle After Another*, which released in September 2025. Directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, the film also featured Sean Penn, Teyana Taylor and Benicio del Toro alongside the actor.

## Alia shares New Year moment

Photos: Instagram\_@aliaabhatt



**B**ollywood couple Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor rang in the New Year with family, giving fans a glimpse into their holiday time.

Alia posted an adorable picture on Instagram on Sunday that quickly caught everyone's attention.

The *Raazi* actress posted a silhouette photo from what appears to be a beach holiday. The picture shows the family standing by the sea, dressed in soft white outfits. Ranbir Kapoor is seen lifting their daughter, Raha, high in the air, while the little one looks at her father with joy. Alia stands close to them, smiling freely and holding a fairy wand as she watches the moment.

The picture soon won hearts online, and fans were quick to react in the comments section. One fan wrote, "Life in a full circle picture-3. (Aww)dorable." Another fan commented, "Awww...beautiful pic."

On the work front, Alia Bhatt will next be seen in the film *Alpha*. As per trade analyst Taran Adarsh, the makers have decided to postpone the release of the film. The move, according to Adarsh, has been made to avoid a clash with Salman Khan's upcoming war film *Battle of Galwan*.

Directed by Shiv Rawail, *Alpha* is the sixth film in the YRF Spy Universe. The franchise includes films like *Ek Tha Tiger*, *Tiger Zinda Hai*, *War*, and *Pathaan*. Along with Alia Bhatt, the film also stars Sharvari and Bobby Deol in key roles.



## Jana Nayagan: Thalapathy Vijay seeks revenge

**T**amil superstar Thalapathy Vijay's film *Jana Nayagan*, one of the most anticipated releases of 2026, is set to be his last outing as an actor, as he has announced his retirement from acting after a 33-year-long career in the film industry.

On Saturday, the makers unveiled the action-filled trailer of *Jana Nayagan*, leaving fans emotional. The 2-minute-and-52-second trailer opens with a tense exchange in which one man questions another about a figure

named Thalapathy Vetri Kondan, introduced as the 'King of criminals,' as he is seen fighting goons.

The story takes a turn when Vetri's daughter, played by Mamitha Baiju, is kidnapped. This pushes Vetri to go on a dangerous rescue mission and face the villain, played by Bobby Deol, as Vijay's character vows revenge.

The trailer showcases Vijay performing high-octane action sequences, including fights with an axe. In the final moments, he looks straight into the camera and declares, "I am coming," giving a fresh twist to his iconic line, "I am waiting."

A still from the *Jana Nayagan*



Rajinikanth and filmmaker Cibi Chakaravarthi

## Cibi Chakaravarthi to direct *Thalaivar 173*

**F**ilmmaker Cibi Chakaravarthi is set to direct Rajinikanth's upcoming film *Thalaivar 173*. Produced by Kamal Haasan and R. Mahendran under the banner of RaajKamal Films International, the film will release around the festival of Pongal in 2027.

Haasan shared the news with a post on his X handle on Saturday. "Celebrations begin #Arambikalama #Thalaivar173 #SuperStarPongal2027," read the caption.

Chakaravarthi penned a lengthy note on his handle and said he is grateful for the opportunity to direct the film. "Once, a small-town boy's big dream was to meet his favourite star

"SUPER STAR" & take a picture with him, which drove his passion towards cinema - and the big dream happened one day. Then he had the biggest dream of directing his Superstar. He came so close, but got missed. Then he continued to believe it would happen one day - and today is that day. #Thalaivar173 Day," he wrote.

"At times, life goes beyond dreams and becomes even bigger, with legendary Ulaganayakan, Padma Shri @ikamalahaasan sir and #Mahendran sir as our producer. Grateful forever @rajinikanth sir, @ikamalahaasan sir & #Mahendran sir - and I promise to put my heart & soul to keep up the trust. Big thanks to @Disney. So happy to be working again with my dearest @anirudhofficial sir. Love you sir," he added.



Photo: Instagram\_@anupamkher

Anupam Kher and Ravi Kishan

## 'Worked together long time back'

**Veteran actor Anupam Kher welcomes Ravi Kishan to the cast of his upcoming film, *Khosla Ka Ghosla 2***

**V**eteran actor Anupam Kher has welcomed actor and MP Ravi Kishan to the cast of his upcoming film *Khosla Ka Ghosla 2* and praised his acting skills and personal qualities.

On Sunday, Anupam Kher posted a video on Instagram. The actor looked happy as he introduced Kishan to the cast and spoke about his long association with him. While welcoming him, Kher described Kishan as a "brilliant actor" and a "great human being."

In his post, Kher wrote, "A BRILLIANT ACTOR AND A GREAT HUMAN BEING: Extremely Happy, Delighted and Joyous to have a very dear friend @ravikishan join the cast of #KhoslaKaGhosla2. We worked together long time back. But this is going to be super special. I admire Ravi as an excellent actor, a hardworking parliamentarian and above all as the PERSON that he is!! Calm, Humble, Compassionate, Helpful, Sincere and someone who LOVES #Bharat passionately! Looking forward to our scenes together! Har Har MAHADEV! Actor #KKG2."



## US V-P's Ohio house windows found broken, suspect nabbed

**Washington:** One person was arrested and a probe was launched following an incident that caused property damage at the Ohio residence of V-P JD Vance, authorities said, CNN reported.

The Vance family was not in Ohio at the time, as per the US Secret Service. Photos from news outlets showed damage to the windows of the residence. A Secret Service spokesperson said the suspect was detained "for causing property damage, including breaking windows on the exterior of a personal residence associated with" Vance.

The incident happened shortly after midnight. "The US Secret Service is coordinating with Cincinnati Police Dept and the US Attorney's Office as charging decisions are reviewed," spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi said.

Officials are probing if the suspect was targeting Vance or his family, an official said. They don't believe the person entered the V-P's home. A White House official said the Vance family had already left the town before the incident happened. "A crazy person tried to break in. We try to protect our kids as much as possible from the realities of this life of public service. In that light, I am skeptical of the news value of plastering images of our home with holes in the windows," said Vance.

**'RUNNING' VENEZUELA | POTUS says won't station troops if new president toes the line**

## Trump warns Delcy of 'big price'

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump in an interview with The Atlantic on Sunday said Venezuela's Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez could "pay a very big price" if she did not do what he thought was right for the South American country.

That contrasted with the Republican president's comments about Delcy on Saturday when he said Secretary of State Marco Rubio had spoken to her and she was willing to do what the US thought was needed to improve the standard of living in Venezuela.

Notably, Delcy criticised Maduro's removal and sought his immediate return.

Trump told the magazine, "if she doesn't do what's right, she is going to pay a very big price, probably bigger than Maduro." The president told the 'New York Post' in an interview the US wouldn't need to station troops in Venezuela if she "does what we want".

Meanwhile, in an Instagram post, Delcy said, "A message from Venezuela to the world, and to the US: Venezuela reaffirms its commitment to peace and peaceful coexistence. Our country aspires to live without external threats, in an environment of respect and international cooperation. We believe global peace is built by first guar-

### HISTORY WILL TELL WHO TRAITORS WERE, SAYS MADURO'S SON

**Caracas:** Nicolas Maduro Guerra, son of deposed

Venezuelan dictator Nicolas Maduro, said history will tell who the traitors are after a US military operation led to the capture of his father and First Lady Cilia Flores, who have been transferred to New York to face trial, local daily El-cooperativo reported. In an audio message circulated on social media, Maduro Guerra warned of possible betrayal within the ruling movement and said history would expose those responsible. "History will tell who the traitors were, history will reveal it. We will see," he said, hinting at an internal conspiracy. Maduro Guerra, a lawmaker from La Guaira state and a member of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), said the party would remain united despite the recent developments. He spoke of the need for "political and military coordination" to respond to what he described as "external aggression".



—Agencies

anteeing peace within each nation. We prioritise moving towards balanced and respectful international relations between the US and Venezuela, and between Venezuela and other countries in the region, premised on sovereign equality and non-interference. These principles guide our diplomacy with the rest of the world."

Despite the US's indication Delcy would be their choice of leader in a post Maduro scenario, she indicated loyalty to Maduro, saying her message of peace and dialogue had also been his message.

"We invite the US government to collaborate with us on

an agenda of cooperation oriented towards shared development within the framework of international law to strengthen lasting community coexistence. President Donald Trump, our peoples and our region deserve peace and dialogue, not war. This has always been President Nicolas Maduro's message, and it is the message of all of Venezuela right now. This is the Venezuela I believe in and have dedicated my life to. I dream of a Venezuela where all good Venezuelans can come together. Venezuela has the right to peace, development, sovereignty and a future," she said.

### Guterres 'deeply concerned'

At the emergency meeting of the UN security council, UN secretary general António Guterres issued a statement that was read out by diplomat Rosemary DiCarlo. "I am deeply concerned about the possible intensification of instability in the country, the potential impact on the region, and the precedent it may set for how relations between and among states are conducted," Guterres said. "The latest developments follow a period of heightened tensions, beginning in mid August, as discussed in this council on two previous occasions. I have consistently stressed on the imperative of full respect by all for international law, including the Charter of the UN, which provides the foundation for the maintenance of international peace and security. I remain deeply concerned rules have not been respected."

**CHINA, RUSSIA SLAM US**

At the UNSC's emergency meet, China condemned the US action. "As a permanent UN member, the US has disregarded the grave concerns of the international community, wantonly trampled upon Venezuela's sovereignty, security and legitimate rights and interests, and seriously violated the principles of sovereign equality. No country

### PRESIDENT'S ARREST KIDNAPPING, RELEASE HIM: DEFENCE MINISTER

**Caracas:** Venezuela's Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino

Lopez strongly condemned the Maduro's arrest, dubbing it a "kidnapping" and demanding his immediate release along with that of First Lady Cilia Flores, reported Elcooperante.

At a press conference, Padrino Lopez said the detention of Maduro amounted to a serious violation of Venezuela's sovereignty and constitutional order. "Yesterday they kidnapped the person whom the Venezuelan people chose as their president, elected for the 2025-2030 term. Maduro is the genuine constitutional leader of all Venezuelans," he said.

### '32 Cuban officers died in operation'

**Havana:** The US operation in Venezuela killed 32 Cuban officers over the weekend, Cuban government said on Sunday in the first official death count provided in the South American nation. The Cuban military and police officers were on a mission the Caribbean country's military was carrying out at the request of Venezuela's government, according to a statement read on Cuban state TV on Sunday night. What the Cubans were working on in the South American nation was unclear, but Cuba is a close ally of Venezuela's government and has sent military and police forces to assist in operations for years. Rumours of the deaths circulated on the island over the weekend. "You know, a lot of Cubans were killed yesterday," US President Trump said aboard Air Force One as he flew on Sunday night from Florida back to Washington. "There was a lot of death on the other side. No death on our side."

can act as the world's police,"

Fu Cong, China's representative to the UN, China called for the US to release Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores from detention. Russian envoy to the UN condemned the US "act of armed aggression" and called for Maduro's release.

"There is no and can be no justification for the crimes cynically perpetrated by the United States in Caracas. We firmly condemn the US act of armed aggression against Venezuela, in breach of all international legal norms," the Russian envoy said.

## Indian woman, 27, found dead in America

**Cops allege ex-BF killed her, fled to India**

**Las Vegas/New York:** A 27-year-old Indian woman, reported missing last week, was found dead and police were looking for her former boyfriend. The cops alleged he killed her and fled to India.

Nikitha Godishala of Ellicott City was reported missing on January 2. Police said she was found deceased with stab wounds in the Columbia, Maryland apartment of her ex-boyfriend Arjun Sharma, 26. An arrest warrant for Sharma on first and second-degree murder charges was issued.

The Indian Embassy in Washington said it was in touch with Godishala's family and extending all possible consular assistance. It was in touch with local authorities.

Authorities said Sharma made the missing person police complaint, and he last saw Godishala on December 31 in his apartment in Maryland.

Police learnt on the same day when the report was filed, Sharma fled the country on a flight to India. The next day, detectives executed a search warrant for his apartment and located Godishala dead. Detectives believed Sharma killed Godishala after 7pm on Dec 31.

—PTI

## Andhra techie, wife killed in US car crash

**Washington:** A Telugu couple from Palakollu in Andhra's West Godavari died in a car crash in the US, while their two kids were wounded, authorities said.

The accident took place in Washington, where software engineer Krishna Kishore and his wife Asha were travelling by road with kids. The couple lost their lives on the spot after their car was involved in a crash.

The couple was living in the US for work. They visited their hometown Palakollu 10 days ago and returned to the US recently. During the return, the family reportedly celebrated the New Year in Dubai. The couple's son and daughter were stable.

WASHINGTON

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's capture by US forces wasn't just a military victory. It was a major security failure that began with his own bodyguards. Multiple intelligence sources confirmed members of Maduro's personal security detail handed him over to American forces. These were elite bodyguards handpicked for their loyalty, Prime News 24 reported.

As explosions were heard across capital Caracas, Venezuelan forces scrambled to respond to attacks on Fort Tuna and La Carlota airport. But a much smaller operation was unfolding elsewhere. A

## Maduro betrayal: Bodyguards who sold prez

team of Delta Force operators, transported by stealth helicopters, landed near Maduro's location.

According to sources, these US commandos just walked in as the outer perimeter guards had been told to stand down, security cameras had been disabled, alarm systems had been deactivated. When the US team reached Maduro's personal quarters, they found only two bodyguards still at their posts, and they immediately surrendered.

The entire extraction took less than 12 minutes from landing to take off. Maduro and his wife were aboard a US

aircraft before Venezuelan military command even understood what was happening.

US operatives working through CIA and Defence Intelligence Agency had been studying Maduro's security apparatus for months and found his bodyguards, despite their elite status, were facing the same economic hardships as ordinary people. US intelligence identified three bodyguards. The first was a senior member of the presidential security team, a man in his late 30s. He had a sick daughter who needed medical treatment unavailable in Venezuela.

The second was younger,

frustrated by the lack of advancement opportunities in a system based entirely on political loyalty rather than merit. The third was a veteran security official who had served under Hugo Chavez and had grown disillusioned with what he saw as Maduro's betrayal of Chavez's vision.

The US offered life-changing sums of money — approximately \$10-20 million per person. More importantly, they offered escape from Venezuela and a future for their families. The first bodyguard was promised treatment for his sick child in a US hospital. The second was offered US citizen-

ship. The Chavez loyalist was told he could live his days in peace, knowing he had helped free Venezuela from tyranny.

To gain their confidence, the US extracted their families first. But the plan required more men. So, the three were asked to identify others. By the time the operation was ready to execute, at least eight members of Maduro's security detail were compromised.

Some were active participants who would facilitate the US insertion. Others simply agreed to look the other way at critical moments. A few were just given instructions to keep them away from their

posts at the crucial time.

There were several false starts when Maduro changed his schedule or location unexpectedly. The breakthrough came when one of the compromised bodyguards was assigned to overnight duty at the safehouse where Maduro would be sleeping. He was able to provide real-time updates on the president's location and the disposition of security forces. He confirmed the number of guards present, their position and critically, who were part of the plan.

When the US team received the final green light, they knew exactly what they were walk-

ing into. They moved through the building, encountering no resistance. When they entered Maduro's bedroom, the president was apparently asleep. There are conflicting reports about Maduro's reaction. Some sources say he immediately understood he had been betrayed and went quietly. Others claim he thought it was a training exercise of his security team. One dramatic account suggests he tried to appeal to his bodyguards' loyalty.

Soon, Maduro and wife were flex cuffed, hooded and carried to the choppers. The team was airborne in minutes. By the time the rest of Maduro's security apparatus realised something was wrong, it was far too late to respond.

## Briefs

### UK to seize phones, SIMs of illegals

Mobile phones and hidden SIM cards can be seized from migrants arriving illegally in the UK on small boats across the English Channel under new powers enforced from Monday. Law enforcement agencies can now seize electronic devices like mobile phones and SIM cards from illegal migrants without needing to arrest them. This is intended to help them gather intelligence to track down and arrest people smugglers.

### Guinea's junta leader prez-elect

Supreme Court in Guinea upheld the poll win of Gen Mamadi Doumbouya, cementing the junta leader's transition to a democratically elected president 4 years after staging a coup in West African nation. Doumbouya won the country's first poll since 2021 coup after polling 86.7% votes, according to the General Directorate of Elections. His victory, which had been predicted by analysts, was confirmed by SC in capital Conakry.

### 3 kids dead in Iran protests

At least three children are reported to have been killed and more than 40 minors arrested after eight days of the ongoing protests across Iran, as human rights groups accuse the regime's security forces of "indiscriminate targeting of civilians".

## Don: Ukraine didn't target Putin house

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE

President Donald Trump on Sunday told reporters US officials have determined Ukraine did not target a residence belonging to Russian President Vladimir Putin in a drone attack last week, disputing Kremlin claims that Trump had initially greeted with deep concern.

Trump said "something happened nearby" Putin's residence, but American officials didn't find the Russian president's residence was targeted. "I don't believe that strike happened," Trump told reporters as he travelled back to Washington on Sunday after spending two weeks at his home in Florida. "We don't believe that happened, now that we've been able to check."

### ZELENSKY REPLACES SECURITY CHIEF

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy replaced the head of Ukraine's security service on Monday, continuing a top-level reshuffle ahead of a trip to Paris where he hoped to finalise agreements with allies on how to ensure that Russia doesn't repeat its invasion if a peace agreement is signed.

Zelenskyy is trying to revamp his administration as the grinding war of attrition with Russia marks its fourth anniversary next month. He is keen to keep up the momentum of US-led peace talks as well as sharpen Ukraine's focus on defence if those efforts collapse.



## 10 guilty of cyberbullying Macron wife: Paris court

PARIS

A Paris court on Monday found 10 people guilty of cyberbullying France's first lady Brigitte Macron. The court convicted all defendants to sentences, ranging from a cyberbullying awareness training to 8-month suspended prison sentences.

The court pointed to "particularly degrading, insulting, and malicious" comments referring to false claims regarding alleged trans identity and alleged pedo criminality targeting Brigitte Macron.

The defendants, eight men and two women aged 41 to 65, are accused of posting "numerous malicious comments" falsely claiming President Emmanuel Macron's wife was born a man and linking the 24-year age gap with her husband to paedophilia. Some posts were viewed tens of thousands of times.

Brigitte Macron did not



attend the two-day trial in October. Speaking on TF1 national television on Sunday, she said she launched legal proceedings to "set an example" in the fight against harassment. Her daughter, Tiphaine Auziere, testified about what she described as the "deterioration" of her mother's life since the online harassment intensified.

"She cannot ignore the horrible things said about her," Auziere told the court. She said the impact has extended to the entire family, including

Macron's grandchildren.

Defendant Delphine Jegousse, 51, who is known as Amandine Roy and describes herself as a medium and an author, is considered to have played a major role in spreading the rumour after she released a four-hour video on her YouTube channel in 2021.

The X account of Aurélien Poirson-Atlan, 41, known as Zoé Sagan on social media, was suspended in 2024 after his name was cited in several judicial investigations.

## Finland's battle against fake news starts at preschool

HELSINKI

The battle against fake news in Finland starts in preschool classrooms.

For decades, the Nordic nation has woven media literacy, including the ability to analyse different kinds of media and recognise disinformation, into its national curriculum for students as young as 3 years old. The coursework is part of a robust anti-misinformation pro-



gramme to make Finns more resistant to propaganda and false claims, especially those crossing over the 1,340-kilometre border with neighbouring Russia.

Now, teachers are tasked with adding artificial intelli-

gence literacy to their curriculum, especially after Russia stepped up its disinformation campaign across Europe following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly 4 years ago. Finland's ascension into Nato in 2023 also provoked Moscow's ire, though Russia has repeatedly denied it interferes in the internal affairs.

"We think having good media literacy skills is a very big civic skill," Kiia Hakala, a pedagogical specialist for the City of Helsinki, said.

## Holocaust survivor Eva Schloss, stepsister of Anne Frank, dies

LONDON

Auschwitz survivor **Eva Schloss**, the stepsister of teenage diarist Anne Frank and a tireless educator about the horrors of the Holocaust, has died. She was 96.

The Anne Frank Trust UK, of which Schloss was honorary president, said she died on Saturday in London, where she lived.

Britain's King Charles III said he was "privileged and proud" to have known Schloss,



who co-founded the charitable trust to help young people challenge prejudice.

"The horrors she endured as a young woman are impossible to comprehend, and yet she devoted the rest of her life to overcoming hatred

and prejudice, promoting kindness, courage, understanding and resilience through her tireless work for the Anne Frank Trust UK and for Holocaust education across the world," the king said.

Born Eva Geiringer in Vienna in 1929, Schloss fled with her family to Amsterdam after Nazi Germany annexed Austria. She became friends with another Jewish girl of the same age, Anne Frank, whose diary would become one of the most famous chronicles of the Holocaust.

## Swiss police identify all 116 hurt in bar fire

**Crans-Montana:** Swiss police said on Monday they had identified all the people injured in the bar fire. They put the total at 116, more than two-thirds still in hospitals.

They are 68 Swiss citizens, 21 French, 10 Italians, 4 Serbs, 2 Poles and 1 each from Australia, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Portugal and Republic of Congo. There were 4 dual nationals: of France and Finland, France and Italy, Switzerland and Belgium, Italy and the Philippines.



## Briefs

MUMBAI

## Pak origin US cricketers denied visa



Four Pakistani-origin cricketers, who were picked to be part of the United States team, have been denied visas to visit India, which now threatens their participation in next month's Twenty20 World Cup, a news report claimed on Tuesday. One of the players told Telecom Asia Sport that he, along with three others, has been denied visas to travel to India for the T20 World Cup, which is being jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka. "Yes, it is true that three Pakistani-origin players are denied an Indian visa, which means we are unable to feature in the Twenty20 World Cup," pacer Ali Khan told (www.telecomasia.net) in a video message. The other three players named in the USA squad are Shayan Jahangir, Mohammad Mohsin, and Ehsan Adil, the report claimed. IANS

DHAKA

## BCB refuses to budge despite ICC reluctance



The ICC on Tuesday "requested" the Bangladesh Cricket Board to reconsider its demand of shifting the country's T20 World Cup matches out of India but the BCB has refused to back down, reiterating its security concerns. In a statement, the BCB said the board's position remains unchanged despite the ICC's reluctance to entertain its request and both parties will continue to "explore possible solutions". BCB has written to the ICC multiple times demanding that its World Cup games be shifted out of India due to security concerns but considering that the schedule for the T20 showpiece beginning Feb 7 is finalised, the world body is unlikely to relent.

PUNE

## ISSO conducts Ignite Football training event



The International Schools Sports Organisation (ISSO) successfully conducted its flagship Ignite Football Training Program from January 9-11, 2026 at Sanjay Ghodawat International

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## WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE | Skipper hammers unbeaten 71 in seven-wicket win after Fulmali's late blitz took Giants to 192

## Harmanpreet leads MI chase against Gujarat

NAVI MUMBAI

Harmanpreet Kaur struck a brilliantly paced half-century to propel Mumbai Indians to a seven-wicket victory over Gujarat Giants chasing a stiff 193 for victory in their Women's Premier League (WPL) match at the DY Patil Stadium, here on Tuesday.

Chasing a tough 193 for a win, Mumbai Indians were in a spot of bother at one stage but skipper Harmanpreet's calming presence and timely knock of 71 off 43 balls with seven fours and two sixes ensured they came away with two points reaching 193/3 in 19.2 overs.

Nicola Carey supported Harmanpreet with a useful 38. harti Fulmali's fireworks in the 20th over powered Gujarat Giants to a very competitive 192/5 in 20 overs as they set Mumbai Indians a chase of 193 in their Women's Premier League match (WPL) at the DY Patil Stadium, here on Tuesday.

Bharti slammed two maximums and two fours as 23 runs came off the Gujarat Giants' last over against Amanjot Kaur as they lifted themselves up after Mumbai Indians had pegged back the scoring rate with wickets at regular intervals.

For Mumbai Indians, Shabnim Ismail, Hayley Matthews, Nicola Carey and Amelia Kerr picked up a wicket apiece.

Earlier, electing to field first after winning the toss, Mumbai Indians copped an early blow when G Kamalini dropped a regulation caught behind opportunity to let off



Mumbai Indians' Nicola Carey (R) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Gujarat Giants' Ashleigh Gardner in Navi Mumbai on Tuesday. PTI

## Scoreboard

**Gujarat Giants:** B Mooney c&b Kerr 33, S Devine c Kamalini b Ismail 8, K Ahuja c Carey b Matthews 35, A Gardner lbw b Carey 20, G Wareham (not out) 43, A Soni (retired out) 11, B Fulmali (not out) 36  
**Extras:** (LB-4, NB-1, W-1) 6 **Total:** 192-5 (In 20 overs) **FoW:** -22, 2-64, 3-97, 4-99, 5-136 **Bowling:** Shabnim Ismail 4-0-25-1, Hayley Matthews 3-0-34-1, Nicola Carey 4-0-36-1, Amelia Kerr 4-0-40-1, Amanjot Kaur 4-0-48-0, Sanskriti Gupta 1-0-5-0

Gujarat Giants' Beth Mooney on the fifth ball of the first over: Mooney made the most of the reprieve slamming two consecutive fours off Hayley Matthews in the second over to get the GG innings going.

Shabnim Ismail was sharp to begin with and struck in the third over of the match to see the back of Sophie Devine getting her snapped up by

Kamalini for eight.

New batter Kanika Ahuja got into the act smashing a four off the last ball of the third over Kanika went ballistic in the fourth over as she took on Matthews and hoisted her for a majestic six over deep mid-wicket. The very next ball she blasted a four to deep mid-wicket's left. She struck another boundary off

**Mumbai Indians:** G Kamalini st Mooney b Renuka 13, H Matthews c Devine b Gautam 22, A Kaur c Gardner b Devine 40, H Kaur (not out) 71, N Carey (not out) 38 **Extras:** (B 4, LB 4, W 1) 9 **Total:** 193-3 (In 19.2 overs) **FoW:** 1-20, 2-37, 3-109 **Bowling:** Renuka Singh 4-0-39-1, Kashvee Gautam 4-0-33-1, Rajeshwari Gayakwad 2-0-22-0, Sophie Devine 3.2-0-29-1, Georgia Wareham 2-0-23-0, Tanuja Kanwar 3-0-29-0, Ashleigh Gardner 1-0-10-0

Shabnim in the fifth over as Mumbai Indians reached 51/1 in five overs. Gujarat had a fantastic powerplay as they completed six overs at 62/1 with Mooney on 32 and Kanika on 20.

However, MI struck to thwart the developing partnership between Mooney and Kanika as Amelia Kerr had the former caught.

## Confident India eye ODI series victory

Hosts may bring in another all-rounder in Nitish Reddy

RAJKOT

Virat Kohli's imperious form has managed to offset mounting injury concerns around some key players and India would hope that the list doesn't get any longer as they close in on sealing the ODI series against New Zealand in the second game here on Wednesday.

India made a winning start defeating New Zealand by four wickets in the lung-opener in Vadodra, but the hosts lost Washington Sundar for the remainder of the series due to a side strain.

The selectors have roped in Delhi's Ayush Badoni but in all likelihood, India would bring in another all-rounder in Nitish Kumar Reddy into the eleven given head coach Gautam Gambhir's preference for multi-skilled players.

On the eve of the first ODI, Rishabh Pant had copped a blow while batting against Indian throw-down staff and was ruled out of the series. His ouster had prompted the selectors to draft in Dhruv Jurel who can be another option for a specialist batter if the team management decides to go that way.

Despite the available options, India's white-ball set up would not want to see more injuries with the T20 World Cup less than a month away. That squad would feature an entirely different batting line-up from the one in the ODIs. But some names are common to both sides and an important one, all-rounder Tilak Varma, is out of at least the first three T20Is against the Kiwis due to a groin injury.



A combo of two pictures shows New Zealand's Glenn Phillips batting left-handed and right-handed during a training session in Rajkot on Tuesday. AP

## Teams :

**India:** Shubman Gill (c), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul (wk), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Ayush Badoni, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Mohammed Siraj, Harshit

**Rana. New Zealand:** Michael Bracewell (c), Devon Conway (wk), Mitchell Hay (wk), Nick Kelly, Henry Nicholls, Will Young, Josh Clarkson, Zak Foulkes, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Adithya Ashok, Kristian Clarke, Kyle Jamieson, Jayden Lennox, Michael Rae.

However, all of these concerns are for later as the ongoing series continues to be about the two veterans, who have served Indian cricket with distinction.

Kohli and Rohit Sharma are clearly enjoying themselves in what is the final leg of a glittering international run. Kohli narrowly missed his 54th ODI ton in the

first ODI but his stroke-filled 91-ball 93 set up India's win.

Skipper Shubman Gill hit a measured half-century and his deputy Shreyas Iyer missed his by one run in the series opener. But a robust batting show heralded by a dazzling start from Rohit Sharma would keep India assured of going full throttle once again. Kohli is riding high on confidence and performing at a different level.

Match starts  
at 1.30 P.M  
Live on Star  
sports

## WPL matches sans spectators

NAVI MUMBAI

The Navi Mumbai Police have informed the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) of their inability to provide police bandobast for the Women's Premier League (WPL) matches scheduled at the DY Patil Stadium on January 15 and 16, citing the upcoming Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation elections. As a result, the matches are likely to be conducted without spectators.

The decision follows the large-scale deployment of police personnel across the city for election-related duties on polling and counting days. Commissioner of Police Milind Barambe said that with the entire force engaged in maintaining law and order during the election process, it would not be possible to spare additional manpower for high-profile cricket matches. The police have formally conveyed this position to the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

Senior officials said allowing spectators at the stadium could lead to

heavy crowds, traffic congestion and potential law-and-order issues. In view of these concerns, the matches are most likely to be played in a closed-door format, with entry restricted to players, match officials and authorised organisers.

The police communication to the BCCI was sent soon after the election dates were announced, making it clear that security cover for the matches could not be ensured on the specified days.

While the decision has disappointed cricket fans, the police have underlined that ensuring a peaceful, transparent and fear-free election process remains the administration's top priority. Authorities have clarified that normal spectator entry at the stadium will resume after the completion of the election exercise.

Meanwhile, UP Warriorz need to sort out their top-order while Delhi Capitals would aim to improve their powerplay bowling as both sides look for their first win in the WPL here on Wednesday.

Capitals have not made an ideal start under Jimimah Rodrigues.

Match starts  
at 7.30 P.M  
Live on Star  
sports

## 'Kohli, Rohit actively involved in planning'

Batting coach Kotak says the senior duo are also involved in preparations for 2027 ODI World Cup

RAJKOT

Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma remain actively involved in India's long-term ODI planning, including preparations for next year's World Cup, batting coach Sitanshu Kotak said on Tuesday.

Kotak said the two batting superstars, who remain at the forefront of India's batting firepower in the 50-overs format, are completely aligned with the team management, including head coach Gautam Gambhir.

"They definitely make plans. Now that they're playing only one format, they want India to win everywhere when they are there," Kotak told the media on the eve of India's second ODI against New Zealand.

"With the amount of experience they have, they can share a lot of ideas with other players, and they do discuss. They discuss with Gautam the ODI format, the matches that we have and our plans for South Africa."

"Most of the time I'm there



India's captain Shubman Gill during a training session ahead of the second ODI in Rajkot on Tuesday. PTI

and if I'm listening, they definitely share the experience and I always see them talking. Obviously, on social media, you see a lot of things which I try to avoid seeing. But (from) what I see, there are a lot of positives," Kotak added.

The equation between Kohli, Rohit and the new coaching setup has been under scrutiny in recent

months, especially after India's struggles in the Test format and the transition that saw both batters step away from red-ball cricket.

Kotak, meanwhile, said India would need a revision of their batting template for ODIs once the T20 World Cup ends in March, keeping in mind the new one-ball rule after the 34th over mark.

last hurrah

## Alyssa to retire from Intl cricket after India series

SYDNEY

Alyssa Healy, one of the finest cricketers to have played for Australia, will retire from the game following the home series against India in March.

The 35-year-old will lead the Australian time one final time in the three ODIs and the one off women's Test in Perth. Healy won't be part of the T20s against India as she will not be around for the T20 World Cup in the UK

later this year.

"It's with mixed emotions that the upcoming India series will be my last for Australia," Healy, one of the most destructive batters in the women's game, said in a statement.

"I'm still passionate about playing for Australia but I've somewhat lost that competitive edge that's kept me driven since the start, so the time feels right to call it a day.

"Knowing I won't be going to the T20 World Cup this

year and the limited preparation time the team has, I won't be part of the T20s against India, but I'm excited to have the opportunity to finish my career and captain the ODI and test side at home against India - one of the biggest series on the calendar for us."

Healy has played an integral role in Australia's domination over the past decade.

Considering she has won eight world titles, six in the T20 format and two in one-day cricket, losing the semi-

nals to eventual winners in the ODI World Cup last year was a disappointing outcome for Healy and her team.

The wicket-keeper batter has represented Australia in 10 Tests, 123 ODIs and 162 T20 Internationals.

She has so far scored 489 Test runs at an average of 30.56, 3563 ODI runs at 35.98 with seven

hundreds and 3054 at 25.45 with one century in T20Is.

"I'll genuinely miss my teammates, singing the team song and walking out to open the batting for Australia. Representing my country has been an incredible honour and I'm grateful for one last series in the green and gold," said Healy.

**HEALY'S CAREER**  
**10 Tests**  
**123 ODIs**  
**162 T20Is**

RAJKOT

New Zealand batter Henry Nicholls on Tuesday said having a limited amount of one-day cricket between global events makes the series such as the ongoing one against India "more important than ever".

While the next 50-over World Cup being still 22 months away, questions on the relevance of the format and context of the ongoing series have resurfaced as focus primarily remains on next month's T20 World Cup.

"Like you say there's not as much one-day cricket between major events, I think that makes these series even more important," Nicholls told the media ahead of New Zealand's training session here at the Niranjan Shah Stadium.

"A few of us have been playing some List-A cricket back home, so we have got a bit of the format under our belt. But it's a format that we enjoy playing so when you have those series now, they are more important than ever



There's not as much one-day cricket between major events, I think that makes these series even more important

**Henry Nicholls**  
New Zealand batter

with limited amount. From a batting point of view, we did a lot of things pretty well and it's a case of us being able to do them for a bit longer. Devon and I (had a) partnership at the top, if one of us is able to bat for an extended period of time," he added.



Australia women's cricket team skipper Alyssa Healy will play his last series against India. AP