

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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

## IRAN CONFLICT | State govts set up helplines, control rooms ; Reassuring families, Union Minister Joshi says no need to panic



PRAYAGRAJ



PULWAMA



SRINAGAR

People from the Muslim community take out a protest march across the nation against the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israel strikes



### HIGHLIGHTS

### KASHMIR PROTESTS:

At least 14 people, including six security personnel, were injured on the second day of protests that erupted in Jammu and Kashmir following the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a joint US-Israeli attack, officials said.

**FUNERAL PRAYER:** Members of the Muslim community held a funeral prayer for Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei at the lawns of the Aligarh Muslim University Students Union compound amid tight security, with speakers urging the Indian government to offer condolences to the cleric's family, instead of remaining silent.

**EVACUATION APPEAL:** BJD president Naveen Patnaik on Monday urged the Centre to take immediate steps for safe evacuation of Odias who were stranded in West Asia due to the disruption of air connectivity amid escalating conflict.

**PROCESSION OPPOSITION:** Leader of the Opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly and senior BJP leader R. Ashoka on Monday said that processions in favour of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei should not be permitted, describing him as a "dictator".

**CANDLELIGHT PROTEST:** Members of the Muslim community has carried out a peaceful candlelight protest rally in Vijayawada, condemning the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a joint US-Israeli military strike.

**FLIGHT SUSPENSIONS:** Major airlines including IndiGo, Akasa Air, Qatar Airways and Emirates, on Monday have suspended or extended suspension of flights to and from Middle Eastern destinations amid ongoing regional tensions, offering passengers full flexibility with waivers and refunds.

**ASTROLOGERS STRANDED:** A group of astrologers from Deeg district in Rajasthan travelled to Dubai on February 28 to attend an astrology conference. They were scheduled to return to India on March 1, but their flights were cancelled due to sudden airspace restrictions.

**EXAM POSTPONEMENT:** Kerala Education Minister V Sivankutty on Monday announced the postponement of the SSLC and Higher Secondary examinations in Gulf centres due to the intensifying conflict in the Middle East.

## Sleepless nights for families awaiting their children's return

NEW DELHI

Kunwar Shakeel broke down in tears as he explained how his daughter, who went to Iran to study medicine, is now stuck in the war-torn country and has no idea when she will be able to return.

"We spoke to her on Monday morning. There was a bomb blast near her college," the 49-year-old told PTI while sobbing on the phone. The daughter of Shakeel, an Old Delhi resident, studies in the

Islamic Azad University in Tehran.

"She is in the sixth semester," Shakeel said, adding that his daughter was supposed to board a plane to India on Tuesday but is now waiting for evacuation.

He said the situation has gotten worse after Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed on Saturday. According to officials, thousands of Indians studying in Iran are currently waiting for evacuation as the situation has turned into a full-scale military conflict.

## 'Prepared to evacuate citizens stuck in Gulf'

NEW DELHI

Amid escalating West Asia tensions, the Centre on Monday said it is in touch with Indian missions in the Gulf region to ensure safe return of stranded Indian nationals as state governments across the country stepped up efforts to assist such residents.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), which met last evening under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has expressed

concern over the safety and security of the large Indian expatriate community in the Gulf nations.

The CCS also directed all concerned departments to take necessary and feasible measures to assist Indian nationals affected by the developments.

On Monday, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said the Centre is fully prepared to bring back Indians stranded in the Gulf region and is in touch with Indian missions abroad to ensure their safety.

In a statement, Joshi said discussions have been held with senior officials of the concerned embassies to facilitate the safe return of those affected by the war situation.

"Whenever Kannadigas and other Indians face distress anywhere in the world, the Central Government has ensured their safe return. Earlier, we brought back those stranded in Ukraine. Wherever Indians are, their safety remains our first priority," he said.

Reassuring anxious families, the minister said

there was no need to panic and that the government is committed to bringing back all Indians safely.

Meanwhile, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to initiate evacuation preparedness, enhance diplomatic outreach and establish an inter-ministerial mechanism to protect Kannadigas and other Indians stuck in the region due to disruption of flight operations to and from West Asia after the US and Israel's attack on Iran.

## Gujarat CM joins 'Vedic Holi' celebration in Ahmedabad

### Highlights environmental message

AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on Monday joined residents in Ahmedabad for Holi celebrations centred on an environmentally conscious "Vedic Holi", offering prayers for the well-being and prosperity of the state's citizens.

The Chief Minister took part in a Holi darshan programme organised in the Memnagar area of the city,

where a ceremonial Vedic Holi fire conveying a message of environmental conservation was lit at Manav Mandir.

He participated in the traditional rituals, performed darshan and circumambulated the ceremonial fire as part of the observances.

Addressing the gathering, Patel said the festival symbolises the victory of truth over falsehood and celebrates unity through colours.

"Holi carries a message of setting aside differences and meeting one another with affection, fostering social harmony. This sacred festival

signifies the triumph of truth over untruth and encourages us to forget animosity and strengthen bonds of goodwill," he said.

He added that the festival of colours should be celebrated in a manner that safeguards the environment.

Referring to the ceremony in Memnagar, he said: "The effort to promote awareness about environmental conservation through a Vedic Holi is commendable."

Following the rituals, the Chief Minister visited the temple at Manav Mandir, where he offered prayers and described the occasion as a blessing.

## PRESIDENT LAUNCHES PINK SAHELI CARDS FOR FREE TRAVEL BY WOMEN, TRANSGENDERS IN DELHI

NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday launched four women centric welfare schemes in Delhi including a "Pink Saheli" card, that would provide free travel on multiple public transport systems in the national capital to women and transgender individuals, and a gas cylinder distribution scheme under which two cylinders would be provided every year to ration card holding families on Holi

and Diwali.

Launching the schemes at an event titled, "Sashakt Nari, Samridh Delhi", which was organised by Delhi Government, Murmu spoke about how "women are excelling in every field, raising the Indian flag on international platforms."

However, she lamented that it was also fact that "women still face violence, economic inequality, social stereotypes, and health-related neglect" and asserted that "the goal of women's empowerment can



President Droupadi Murmu being felicitated by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, in New Delhi

only be achieved by removing these obstacles." "A woman will truly be empowered when she has the ability to

make independent decisions, can live a life with self-respect, and has access to equal opportunities and security. An

empowered woman can change not only her own life but also the direction of society and future generations," India's second woman President said.

On the launch of the schemes in Delhi, the President said "people from every state and region live here and if the women of Delhi are safe, educated, and self-reliant, and provide confident leadership in every sphere of society, it will send a positive message throughout the country."

## Called to cure sick boy, 'ojha' rapes patient's minor sister in Jharkhand

CHAI BASA (JHARKHAND)

A 57-year-old 'ojha' (witch doctor) allegedly raped a minor girl at her house after performing the rituals to cure the victim's brother at a village in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, police said on Monday.

The 'ojha', who had earlier served a jail sentence in a rape case, was arrested during the day under various sections of the BNS and POCSO.

Sub-Divisional Police Officer (Jagannathpur) Rapael Murmu said that the victim's mother called the witch doctor to cure her sick son using black magic at the village under Jagannathpur police station on Sunday.

Ojhas treating illness is common in several pockets of the country.

The SDPO said that after performing the rituals, the ojha had sent the complainant and her sick son to take rounds in a nearby pond and immerse the worshipped materials in it.

The boy's 17-year-old elder sister was alone at home, and the witch doctor forced himself on her. The victim narrated the ordeal when her mother returned home, which led her to register a complaint with the police.

Murmu said the police team formed to probe into the matter arrested the accused on Monday.

The ojha had been in jail in a rape case in 2014 in Jagannathpur, police said.

### COLOURS OF CHANGE

## Vrindavan widows mark Holi at Gopinath Temple



Widows play with flowers petals and colours as part of Holi celebrations, in Vrindavan on Monday

VRINDAVAN

Defying age-old Hindu traditions, hundreds of widowed women gathered at the courtyard of the historic Gopinath Temple in Vrindavan on Monday to celebrate Holi with colours and flowers.

Organised by Sulabh International in recent years, the celebrations have become a meaningful occasion for women who until recently faced social stigma and exclusion. Nitya Pathak, Executive Convenor of Sulabh International, said participation in festivals such as Holi lifts their spirits and gives them hope and confidence to move forward in life. Widowed women from five ashrams in the town took part in the celebrations with enthusiasm.

Standing before Lord Gopinath, the women played Holi with dry colours and flower petals. They sang devotional songs, danced and joyfully splashed colours on one

another in a rare public expression of celebration and solidarity.

According to Pathak, more than 1,000kg of flowers and 700kg of gular were arranged for the event. Over the years, an increasing number of widows have embraced change and stepped forward to participate not only in Holi but also in Diwali and other festivals.

Until a few years ago, such scenes were uncommon. In many parts of Indian society, widows were considered inauspicious and were often barred from participating in festivals and social functions. Many were driven out of their homes and sought refuge in Vrindavan, where they lived in poverty and neglect.

The initiative to organise Holi celebrations for widows began in 2013 under Sulabh International founder Dr Bindseshwar Pathak, following concern expressed by the Supreme Court of India over their plight.

## Man hacks to death parents, 2 others of family over money dispute

BAHRAICH

A man allegedly hacked to death his parents, grandmother and sister following a dispute over money in a village here, police said on Monday.

The incident occurred in Ramgaon hamlet of Basantpur Rudal village in the intervening night of Sunday and Monday.

The accused attacked his elder brother and also hit himself with a brick.

Additional Superintendent of Police (Rural) Durga Prasad Tiwari told reporters that Gurudev lodged a written complaint, stating that he found his younger brother, Nirankar (30), quarrelling with his father over money received from the sale of land and jewellery.

In a fit of rage, the accused allegedly attacked family members with an axe, causing fatal injuries to his parents, grandmother and sister, the officer said.

The deceased have been identified as Badlu Ram (60), his wife Sanju Devi (56), their daughter Parvati (approximately 42) and Sitala (80).

Gurudev said that the accused struck him with the axe with the intent to kill.

During the incident, the accused also struck himself with a brick multiple times, injuring himself.

Acting on the complaint, the police registered a case against Nirankar.

The police took the accused into custody from the spot and admitted him to the District Hospital, Bahraich. He was later referred to Lucknow due to his critical condition.

The bodies were sent for postmortem after inquest proceedings, the police said.



KOLKATA



AGRA



AMRITSAR



MORADABAD

## Bura na maano, Holi hai!

## 10 live turtles rescued in Odisha's Malkangiri

MALKANGIRI (ODISHA)

Odisha forest department officers on Monday rescued 210 live Indian flap shell turtles being allegedly smuggled in a vehicle in Malkangiri district, officials said.

During a search operation, forest personnel intercepted an SUV inside a forest near MV-62 in the district and found the turtles packed in 10 gunny bags, Malkangiri divisional forest officer Sai Karan told reporters.

On noticing forest staff approaching, the driver and other co-accused persons fled the spot, and could not be apprehended till evening, he said. The forest personnel seized the vehicle along with the gunny bags containing the turtles. A wildlife offence case has been registered, and an investigation is currently underway.

### TO PROTECT WILDLIFE

## Night traffic banned on key routes through Pilibhit Tiger Reserve

PILIBHIT (UP)

The Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (PTR) administration has imposed a complete ban on vehicular movement during night hours on major roads passing through core forest areas to ensure wildlife safety and comply with the Supreme Court directives, officials said on Monday.

The order has come into immediate effect. According to an official communication issued by Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Bharat Kumar, the decision has been taken in compliance with the Supreme Court's order dated November 17, 2025, and guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

The court, in clauses 48.7 and 48.8 of its order, made it mandatory to restrict night traffic on national, state and district roads passing through wildlife sanctuaries and tiger reserves.

Under the new directions, vehicular movement will remain completely prohibited from evening to morning on the Pilibhit-Puranpur road passing through the Mala range forest area, the Pilibhit-Madhotanda road, and the Madhotanda-Khatima road falling under the Mala and Mahof ranges of the reserve.

Forest officials clarified that the restriction applies to general traffic and private vehicles. However, ambulances and vehicles engaged in emergency services have been exempted from the ban on humanitarian grounds.

## 7th consecutive rainfall-deficient winter in J&K

SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a seventh consecutive rainfall-deficient winter this year, with a 65 per cent departure from the normal.

The Kishtwar and Shopian districts recorded the alarming deficit this winter at 90 per cent and 82 per cent, respectively.

"Jammu and Kashmir has recorded its seventh straight winter rainfall deficit, with the core winter period December 2025 to February 2026 ending at a 65 per cent departure from the normal," the data gathered by independent forecaster Faizan Arif suggests.

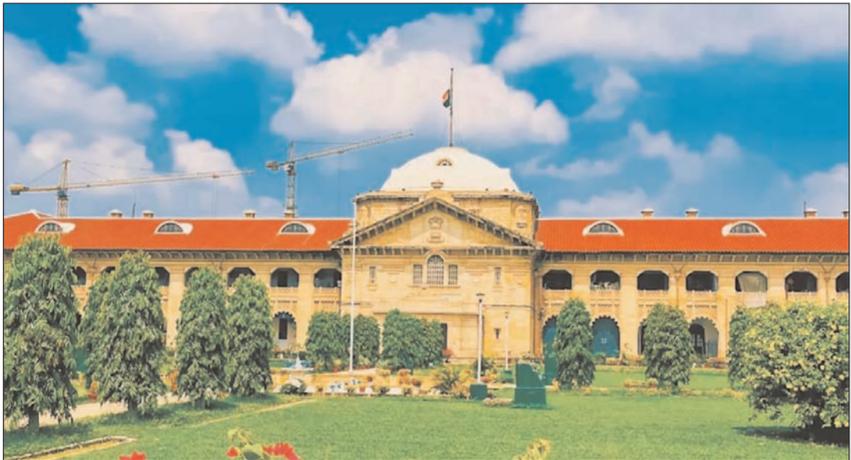
Arif said the region received just 100.6 mm of precipitation against a normal of 284.9 mm during the three months.

The independent forecaster said that December, with a departure of 78 per cent, saw the actual rainfall of 13.0 mm against the normal of 59.4 mm.

January witnessed the actual of 73.4 mm against the normal of 95.1 mm -- a departure of 23 per cent, he said, adding that some Western Disturbance activity in the month prevented a total seasonal collapse.

With a departure of 89 per cent, in February, the actual rainfall was 14.2 mm compared to the normal 130.4 mm. "February turned disastrous. With nearly 90 per cent deficit, it was one of the driest February months in the recent record. This sharp collapse dragged the entire winter seasonal total down to minus 65 per cent," the forecaster said. According to district-wise data, Kishtwar district in the region was the highest rainfall deficit this winter at 90 per cent, followed by Shopian at 82 per cent.

## High Court reprimands UP government officials, Warning officials of punitive action over senior citizen security plan



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** The Allahabad High Court expressed strong displeasure over the failure of the Principal Secretary of the Home Department of the Uttar Pradesh government to file an affidavit in compliance with the court's order. Terming it as "complete contempt" of the court's orders, the court issued a clear warning that officials would face punitive action, even contempt,

for disobeying the orders. The division bench of Justices Atul Shridhar and Siddharth Nandan made this remark when the state government was asked to clarify whether a comprehensive action plan had been formulated to protect the life and property of senior citizens under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007. The Case of 80-Year-Old Gulabkali The order was passed while hearing a

petition filed by an 80-year-old woman, Gulabkali. The petitioner is unwell and lives with her two granddaughters, one of whom is physically disabled. She expressed apprehension that some people were attempting to illegally occupy her ancestral abadi land. The court also asked the Principal Secretary what steps the District Magistrate could take to protect vulnerable senior citizens under the 2007 Act.

## NGT Seeks Response from CPCB on Death of Seven Elephants in Assam Train Accident



Assam

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought responses from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and other authorities regarding the death of seven elephants in a train accident in Assam. Taking suo motu cognizance based on media reports, the tribunal stated that the incident raises serious environmental concerns. The accident occurred on December 20, 2025 near Changjurani village in Hojai district when the Silchar-New Delhi Rajdhani Express collided with a herd of elephants. The impact derailed the train engine and five coaches on the Jamunamukh-Kampur section under the Lumding division. Seven elephants died in the collision, includ-

ing three adults and four calves, while one calf sustained injuries. In its order issued on January 5, the NGT noted that the circumstances of the incident warrant investigation. The tribunal has impleaded the CPCB, the Special Chief Secretary (Environment) of the Assam government, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and the Assam State Pollution Control Board as parties to the case. The matter is listed for the next hearing on January 28 at the NGT Eastern Zonal Bench in Kolkata. Officials have attributed the accident to low visibility due to dense fog. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has directed the Forest Department to conduct a detailed probe into the causes of the collision.

## Annual Sports Festival Concluded at Ismailganj Second Primary School



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

The annual sports festival was celebrated at Ismailganj Second Primary School in Tharwai/Soranv Development Block. Various competitions were held for the children, including a sack race, a jalebi race, a balloon balancing race, a banana peel race, and a leg tie race. Medals were awarded to those who placed first, second, and third in the competitions. Following the games, the children played eco-friendly Holi, spreading the message of love and brotherhood among themselves, while also contributing to the environmental cause. The program concluded with the distribution of sweets to mark the auspicious occasion of Holi.

## Tractor-Tavera car collides head-on, one dead, seven injured

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** On Monday, a tractor and a Tavera car collided head-on near the Sehuda Canal in the Bara police station area. The accident was so severe that one person died on the spot, while seven others were injured. Some of the injured are reported to be in critical condition. According to eyewitnesses, the Tavera car was traveling at high speed toward Prayagraj when it collided head-on with an oncoming tractor. After the collision, both



vehicles ended up on the roadside, damaged. Hearing the sound of the accident, people from nearby areas rushed to the scene and rescued the injured and sent them to the hospital. The Bara police station, upon

receiving information took possession of the body and sent it for post-mortem.

The injured were also admitted to a nearby hospital. Traffic on the road was briefly disrupted due to the acci-

dent, but was restored by removing the vehicles. According to the police, the cause of the accident is being investigated. Initially, high speed and negligence are being considered the reasons for the accident.

## The body of a teacher who went missing a week ago was found in the Yamuna River

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Kaushambi Krishna Babu Verma, a resident of Dharampur Kanaili village in the Sarai Akil police station area, is a government school teacher and is assigned to these two BLO positions. He went to school at 10:00 am on February 25th and never returned. The sudden disappearance of Krishna Babu Verma left his family distraught. After his disappearance, the family searched for him extensively, but he was nowhere to be found. The police station was informed of the incident. A week has passed since the incident. On Monday, the teacher's body was found



in the river near the women's ghat of the Yamuna River. Upon receiving information about the body, the weeping family members also reached the spot. The police have been informed of the incident. Along with the police station, a heavy force including the Additional Superintendent of Police has reached the spot and

is investigating the matter. The police have taken the deceased's body into custody and sent it for post-mortem. How the teacher reached the Yamuna River while on duty is a matter of major investigation. Whether this is an accident or some untoward incident has occurred, it is a matter of major police investigation.

## Four months after the murder, an FIR has been filed against one named and 50 unidentified accused in the petrol pump vandalism case

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** Four months after the murder, police have filed an FIR in the case of vandalism at the petrol pump located at Mundera Toll Plaza. This action was taken following a court order. The FIR names one named and 50 unidentified accused. The incident occurred on October 21st of last year. On October 21st, Roadways contract driver Rawendra Pasi was killed by a mob by hitting him with bricks while he was at the petrol pump to fill petrol.

Following this incident, an angry mob attacked the pump and vandalized it. Police arrested the accused in the murder case and sent them to jail, but no action was taken against the vandalism at the pump. **Employee also attacked** **Petrol pump owner** Devendra Pratap Singh alias Pappu Thakur alleged that about 50 people, including Suraj Kesarwani, a resident of Mundera Bazaar, entered the pump, vandalized it, and also beat up employee Arjun Yadav. The remaining

employees somehow managed to escape with their lives. Despite the complaint, no action was taken. The pump owner says that he filed a complaint at the Dhoomanganj police station on the day of the incident and submitted the CCTV footage to the police. Letters were also written to the Chief Minister and the Director General of Police, but no action was taken. Finally, the owner approached the court. Following the court's order, the Dhoomanganj police registered an FIR and began an investigation.

Chandauli

**Mughalsarai** At around 10 pm night, a Scorpio with West Bengal number collided with four vehicles at Padav intersection located at Jalilpur police post under Kotwali. The Scorpio driver was drunk. During this time, two people were injured after being hit by a Scorpio, while a young man died. Police reached the spot and got the injured admitted to the trauma center. After this the driver and Scorpio were brought to the police station. Police also found liquor bottles from the car. After the incident, angry people vandalized the Scorpio and caught the drunk driver and beat him up, while another youth riding the Scorpio escaped. The police sent the body for post-mortem and started further action. According to the information received, as soon as the Scorpio number WB 02 AU 8586, going from Mughalsarai towards Varanasi, at around 10 pm on Thursday night, had reached near the halt intersec-



tion, the driver lost control of the Scorpio and after hitting a car, auto, e-rickshaw, bicycle etc. parked on the roadside, four pedestrians trampled and collided with the divider. There was an outcry after the incident. Angry people vandalized the Scorpio and caught the driver and beat him up. During this time, another youth riding in Scorpio escaped.

As soon as the information was received, CO PDDU Nagar Arun Kumar Singh, Mughalsarai Kotwali in-charge Inspector Santosh Kumar Singh, Jalilpur police post in-charge Abhishek Shukla reached the spot along with the police team. The police freed the Scorpio driver Harish Yadav, a resident of Varanasi from the clutches of the villagers and took him into cus-

tody, while three seriously injured people were taken to the trauma center where one youth was declared dead by the doctors. The deceased has been identified as Irshad, 20 years old, son of Jamil, resident of Chaurhat. Seriously injured people are being treated in the trauma center. All the youth traveling in the Scorpio are said to be intoxicated. In this regard, CO Arun Kumar Singh said that a youth has died. Scorpio has been brought to the post with the help of Haiwa. Mughalsarai Kotwali in-charge Inspector Santosh Kumar Singh said that one youth has died in this incident and two are currently undergoing treatment in the Trauma Center.

The drunk driver, Harish Yadav, resident of Varanasi, has been arrested and the search is on for the others in the vehicle. The body of the deceased has been sent for post-mortem and action is being taken by registering a case under relevant sections.

# A sense of belonging mixed with the colors of spring: Enthusiasm surges at Holi gatherings with Chokha-Baati

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** Amidst the spring breeze and the fragrance of abir-gulal, the "Chokha-Baati and Holi Milan Celebration" held in Balrampur Housing Colony conveyed a message of intimacy and social harmony. A large number of city residents participated in the event held behind the Bharat Scout Temple on Sunday evening under the joint auspices of Hare Ram Seva Sansthan and Life Vision Foundation. A Fusion of Tradition and TasteThe community feast of hot chokha-baati prepared in the traditional style at the event brought back memories of rural Chaupals. The organizers said that eating together symbolizes social equality and brotherhood. This is not just a



festival of colors, but also a celebration of Indian folk culture and traditional tastes.Social Dialogue Gained a PlatformThe program, led by the Institute's President, Dr. Sanjay Kumar Singh, and Anant Singh (Assistant Professor, CMP Degree College), emphasized the

promotion of social dialogue and cultural awareness. Speakers emphasized that Holi is a festival of cleansing the mind of impurities and adding new colors to relationships.Institute Secretary, Dr. Sanjay Kumar Singh (former Secretary, Higher Education Service Commission,

Prayagraj), explained that the celebration was open to people from all walks of life. He added that Holi's message is to unite humanity, transcending caste, class, and creed.Colors, Dialogue, and Cultural GatheringThe symbolic festival of colors, mutual greetings, cultural dia-

logue, and cordial meetings at the program created a festive atmosphere. The presence of academics, doctors, social workers, and youth from the city made the event memorable.It is noteworthy that Hare Ram Seva Sansthan has been active in social, educational, and cultural

activities for the past several years. The institute has distinguished itself through its support of underprivileged communities and community events. This Holi Milan celebration was also a part of the same series, which further intensified the colours of love, tradition and unity.

## Sanitation workers at Swarup Rani Nehru Hospital go on strike, stalling operations due to non-payment of salaries for three months

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** Angered by the lack of payment before Holi, outsourced sanitation workers at Swarup Rani Nehru (SRN) Hospital halted work on Monday. Disgruntled over the non-payment of nearly three months' wages, the workers protested on the hospital premises, chanting "No pay, no work." The strike affected sanitation in the trauma center, operation theater, and various wards, causing inconvenience to patients and attendants.



Approximately 250 employees reported for duty in the morning shift but did not work. Subsequently, the afternoon

shift was also boycotted. Traffic was disrupted for some time during the protest. Administrative officials and police arrived on the scene and calmed the situation by pacifying the staff.The workers say that approximately 750 sanitation workers have not received their salaries for two to three months. Despite the festival approaching, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet their family needs. Earlier, on February 26th, a strike was also held over payment. At that time, Chief Medical

Superintendent Dr. Neelam Singh had assured that salaries would be released within two days, but the non-payment again fueled anger among the employees.Allegations of Salary and PF DeductionsThe sanitation workers have accused the concerned agencies of salary cuts and under-depositing their Provident Fund (PF) amounts. According to the employees, the A-One agency initially promised a monthly salary of ₹9,700 and a PF of ₹2,300. Later, the Rajdhani Company, which took over the

responsibility, reduced the PF amount to ₹1,000. The employees have demanded that the pending payments be deposited into their accounts soon.The sanitation system at Prayagraj Division's largest government hospital is entirely dependent on outsourced workers. Consequently, the strike has disrupted the sanitation system. The administration has once again assured prompt payment, although the employees have clarified that the protest will continue until their salaries are credited to their accounts.

Dr. Vikrant Appointed Youth President of Labour Party

**Lucknow** The national leadership of the National Labour Party (NLP) has appointed Dr. Vikrant Pratap Singh as the State Youth President of Uttar Pradesh to strengthen the organization. In the official appointment letter issued by National President of the National Labour Party, Neeraj Rai, it was stated that Dr. Vikrant Pratap Singh has consistently demonstrated dedication, active leadership.

## Holi is a joyous festival of color, fun, and brotherhood

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** Holi is not just a festival of colors, but a symbol of the vibrancy of Indian culture, mutual brotherhood, and social harmony. When abir-gulal (colourful colours) fly amidst the joy of Falgun, this festival also conveys the message of washing away the impurities of the mind. The triumph of good over evil and the infusion of new warmth in relationships is the core spirit of Holi.According to mythological beliefs, the burning of Holika symbolizes the triumph of faith and the end of ego. This festival reminds us that no matter how powerful injustice and oppression may appear, truth ultimately prevails. This message becomes even more relevant in the current social landscape,



when bitterness in society, growing animosity on digital media, and mutual distances are causing concern.However, the form of Holi has also changed over time. The use of chemical colors, excessive wastage of water, the tendency to forcibly apply colors, and the increasing prevalence of drug addiction are affecting the dignity of the festival. In many places, riots and road accidents also occur, which question the joy of the festival. In such a situation, it is essential to prioritize

responsibility along with enjoyment.Experts believe that using natural and herbal colors is a better option from an environmental perspective. By conserving water, we can fulfill our responsibility towards future generations. It is also important to ensure that colors are not applied against anyone's wishes. The festival is meaningful only when everyone agrees and participates.Holi is also an occasion for social harmony. This festival gives the message of breaking down the barriers of caste, class, language, and differences. Community gatherings in neighborhoods and villages, cultural programs, and traditional folk songs add to the brilliance of this festival. The need is to maintain this spirit throughout the year.

## Security tightened at Prayagraj Junction for Holi: GRP, along with BDDS team, searched station for suspects

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** In view of the Holi festival, a massive security operation was launched at Prayagraj Junction to ensure passenger safety. On Monday, under the special orders of the Additional Director General of Police (ADG), the GRP, under the direction of the Superintendent of Police, Railway, Prayagraj Division, conducted a thorough search of every corner of the station with a heavy police force. Led by GRP Inspector-in-Charge Aklesh Kumar Singh, the Bomb Disposal Squad (BDDS) and AS Check Team entered the station premises with modern equipment and began checking. During the operation, vehicles and suspicious crowds were checked inside and outside the station. Intensive patrolling was carried out at ticket windows, passenger waiting areas, and all platforms. Police person-



nel in plain clothes were also deployed outside the station.The police team checked passengers' luggage and unattended items with metal detectors. Inspector-in-charge Aklesh Kumar Singh said that the rush on trains increases during Holi, and this 'clean sweep' campaign has been launched to

prevent anti-social elements from taking advantage of this and carrying out any untoward incident.He further said that the safety of passengers is our priority during the festival of Holi. The entire process was peaceful and no suspicious item was recovered during the checking.

Along with the checking, the security forces also conducted an awareness campaign among the passengers. Passengers were advised through loudspeakers not to consume any food or drink offered by any unknown person and to immediately inform the police about any unattended bag or packet.

## Editorial

### Shashi Tharoor has always disliked 'statist Congress'

**Power** is in the words. Language has mystical powers. I enjoy playing with words. Those words are hot. You can be moved to tears by words. You can find humor in words. Moreover, there are few things that can convey the planet and all its inhabitants as vividly and comprehensively as words. During the 2009 austerity drive of the Congress-led UPA administration, Tharoor was embroiled in controversy for his response to a query regarding flying "cattle class" to Kerala. His statement, "Absolutely, in cattle class out of solidarity with all our holy cows!" caused a political storm following his response. Tharoor, an accomplished writer of numerous best-selling books on Indian society and politics, was forced to clarify that he did not want to offend economy class passengers after the Congress party swiftly censured him. After 16 years, Tharoor is now again in trouble for comments he made in an interview. In response to a Malayalam report that he had claimed, "We have many leaders, but many feel that there are no ordinary workers," Tharoor clarified that he had really said, "several workers feel there is an absence of a leader in Kerala's Congress." "You should not think that I have no option to spend my time. I have options," Tharoor added earlier in the interview. I have speeches, books, and invitations to speak all around the globe. Some saw his comments as a covert signal to the highest levels of Congress that he was thinking about other political paths. Amidst the upcoming Assembly elections in the state next year, Tharoor is now facing accusations of "crossing the line" from the top leaders of the Congress's faction-ridden Kerala unit, putting him in the center of a maelstrom. Because of this, Shashi Tharoor has been named this week's ThePrint Newsmaker. Actually, Tharoor's essay praising the new industrial policies of the Left-led Kerala government had already been a hot topic before the interview controversy erupted. Tharoor had stated that, during the course of 18 months last year, Kerala's startup ecosystem was valued at an astounding \$1.7 billion, which is five times higher than the worldwide average for the same time period. While the fact that this change has started happening under an LDF government run by communists is shocking, it is not totally unexpected. "The path to growth and prosperity for their people lies in capitalism, entrepreneurship, and initiative, not in red flags, strikes, and agitations," he said in the post, comparing the Communists in Kerala to their West Bengali counterparts at the turn of the century. While he disagrees that the state's industrial climate has changed generally, Tharoor defended himself by saying that "when something good emerges, even if only in one area, it is petty not to acknowledge it" in response to attacks from Kerala Congress officials over the piece. Tharoor, a former UN diplomat, has had a tumultuous political career with the Congress since his 2009 victory in the Lok Sabha elections from the Thiruvananthapuram constituency. Mostly because he had a habit of saying things that went against the party line. However, he consistently gets himself into problems by more than simply his words. In 2009, as the UPA was implementing its austerity measures, Tharoor and then-External Affairs Minister SM Krishna came under fire from the government for allegedly residing in a five-star hotel in Delhi while their official quarters were still being prepared. Tharoor lost his position in the Manmohan Singh government's council of ministers in 2010 due to the scandal surrounding the sweat equity provided to Sunanda Pushkar, his then-girlfriend and later-wife, by a consortium that owned the Kochi club of the Indian Premier League. His ordination as a junior minister was renewed in 2012. Tharoor was thrust into his gravest professional crisis in January 2014, when Pushkar was discovered dead in a luxurious Delhi hotel room—months prior to the Lok Sabha elections.



### Muslims want waqf reforms too. It's not an issue for political acrimony

**When the** Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 was first tabled in the Lok Sabha on 8 August last year, it triggered fears within the Muslim community, as it was perceived to have been introduced without adequate consultation with stakeholders. After all, the issue of waqfs—Muslim institutions through which property is bequeathed for religious or charitable purposes—is sensitive because it involves socio-religious spaces such as qabristans, masjids, idgahs, and madrasas. As such, the government and Parliament were exhorted to adopt procedures that allayed rather than stoked the fears of

Muslims. In this backdrop, the decision to refer the bill to a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament was welcome. The 31-member committee, drawn from across party lines, received 97,27,772 memoranda overall. There were representations from various ministries and departments—including Minority Affairs, Law and Justice, Railways, Housing and Urban Affairs, Road Transport, and Culture (Archaeological Survey of India)—as well as state waqf boards and experts, ensuring a diversity of opinions. As such, the government and Parliament adopt pro-

cedures that allayed rather than stoked the fears of Muslims. In this backdrop, the decision to refer the bill to a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament was welcome. The 31-member committee, drawn from across party lines, received 97,27,772 memoranda overall. There were representations from various ministries and departments—including Minority Affairs, Law and Justice, Railways, Housing and Urban Affairs, Road Transport, and Culture (Archaeological Survey of India)—as well as state waqf boards and experts, ensuring a diversity of opinions. It is not entirely

correct to state that waqf reforms are being externally foisted. Rather, to a large extent, the demand for waqf reforms has emerged from within the Muslim community also. The Ministry of Minority Affairs received numerous complaints from Muslims on the maladministration of waqf properties, which manifested in voluminous litigations. The ministry's analysis of grievances received from April 2023 found that 148 complaints pertained mostly to encroachments, illegal sales of waqf land, delays in surveys and registration, and complaints against waqf boards and mutawallis.

## Has Trump Abandoned Ukraine In Favour Of Russia?

**Donald Trump** has spent only a month in his second term as the US President. However, he has disrupted the international order, weakened the Western alliance and created a sense of insecurity and uncertainty among its members, surprising even some of his supporters. There has been a paradigm shift in US foreign policy under Trump. He is now closer to Moscow than Washington's traditional allies. He has embraced the Kremlin's narrative on Ukraine and has sidelined US allies. Although senior members of the Trump administration have denied that the US has abandoned Kyiv and ignored its European allies, Trump himself has not made any serious attempts to pacify Ukrainians and Europeans. His closeness to Russia has been on display since he talked for 90 minutes on the phone with Russian leader Vladimir Putin, in which they agreed to start negotiations to end the Ukraine war, which will mark its third anniversary on Monday. Trump did speak to Zelenskyy soon after that call with Putin, but a nervous Ukrainian President warned that excluding his country from the talks would be "very dangerous". Events after that only made Ukrainians feel sidelined. Trump's Vice President, JD Vance, met European leaders in Munich two days later. But his comment that Europe will not be included in the peace talks only helped fuelled the speculation that they were being left out of the future of Ukraine, which is closer to their homes and in which they have invested a lot of money and effort since



the Russian invasion. Vance's meeting with Zelenskyy did not go well either as the Ukrainian leader refused to give access to the country's vast reserves of critical minerals unless he was given security guarantees. That angered Washington. Ending the Russia-Ukraine war was Trump's major campaign promise. But hardly anyone expected him to brazenly take Russia's side and even blame Ukraine for the conflict, which he did. Last Tuesday, a US delegation led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio met the Russian delegation headed by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Saudi Arabia, to discuss peace. Ukraine was not invited. Putin—who had been shunned by the US and its allies since the invasion of Ukraine—was delighted. A frustrated Zelenskyy dismissed the Riyadh talks as worthless. Trump did not like those comments and called the Ukraine President a dictator, even accusing him of starting the war. Zelenskyy said the US President was living in a Russian-made "disinformation space". This infuriating Trump, who does not take kindly to any criticism. He described Zelenskyy as "a modestly successful comedian" who "talked the United

States of America into spending \$350 Billion, to go into a War that couldn't be won, that never had to start, but a War that he, without the U.S. and 'TRUMP,' will never be able to settle." Trump's behaviour towards Zelenskyy is in stark contrast to Biden's, who had backed Ukraine against Russia with all the possible military and financial aid. President Biden travelled to Ukraine many times since the Russian invasion in February 2022 to display his administration's full support. He also promised NATO membership to Ukraine at a future date. Russia was severely punished for invading Ukraine. The US joined hands with its allies to isolate Moscow. Russia faced tough sanctions and its assets in the West were seized. The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant against Putin for alleged war crimes in Ukraine. There were even plans to put Putin and his close allies on Nuremberg-style trials. Until a year ago, Ukraine's leader was talking about even liberating all its territory, including Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, with the help of Western military equipment. Ukraine even succeeded in occupying the

Russian territory of Kursk, which it had thought would be used as a bargaining chip during negotiations with Moscow. But all that now looks like a distant dream. With Trump back in the White House, Ukraine fears that Russia will be allowed to keep all the occupied territory as part of the deal to end the war. Kyiv is now likely to be denied NATO membership. That could be a promise to Russia to end the war. The US under Trump has now even opposed calling Russia an aggressor in a G-7 statement being prepared to mark the third anniversary of the war. The US team removed the phrase from the first draft, which was prepared by Canada, the current holder of the group's presidency. It is not just Ukraine, America's European allies are also now nervous about the intent of Trump. Since the Second World War, they enjoyed the US security umbrella under NATO. But now they are unsure if the US under Trump will honour Article 5 of the NATO, which is triggered when a member state comes under attack. It implies that an attack on one member is an attack on all. There is even fear in Europe that Donald Trump may sign a deal with the Russian leader Vladimir Putin that will lead to the withdrawal of US forces from Baltic states and effectively kill the NATO alliance. That could be similar to the non-aggression treaty signed by the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany on August 23, 1939, sending shockwaves to other European countries and prompting Hitler and Stalin to annex neighbouring countries. It is another matter

that Hitler invaded the Soviet Union two years later, putting an end to the treaty. European members of NATO may call themselves major powers, but they can't match Russia's military might without US support. Even after losing more than a hundred thousand men and lots of military equipment in the Ukraine conflict, Moscow remains a strong power, mainly because of its nuclear arsenal. So Why Has Trump Changed The Narrative? Trump has always been an admirer of strongmen like Putin. Even during his first term, he developed a rapport with him. He also dislikes Zelenskyy, whom he sees as more of a roadblock in ending the Ukraine conflict. As a former businessman, Trump sees things from the perspective of profitable deals. Western sanctions have hit Russia, but American companies have also suffered business losses, running into billions of dollars. He would like to reverse that. And despite Ukraine's resistance, Trump believes Zelenskyy will have to give access to critical minerals in return for any future US support. Some in the Trump administration suggest Kyiv should provide Americans with those minerals in return for the US military and financial aid already received by Ukraine. Trump has blamed European leaders for not doing enough to end the Ukraine war. He has also complained for a long time that Europe has lived off the US for too long and it must pay for its security. Europeans have increased their defence budgets but not enough to survive without US support.

### The Hindutva Pitch of the BJP: Will Bihar Pay Attention This Time?

**Prime Minister** Narendra Modi attacked the opposition, calling members of the party who support "jungle raj" anti-Indian and anti-faith. Furthermore, he said that the state's citizens would hold anybody who insults Maha Kumbh in contempt forever. Political circles were captivated by his attention on Maha Kumbh, which he displayed barely two days before Maha Shivratri, as the event was coming to a close. For what reason did Modi bring up the holy event, which has been going on for almost two months, Was all he was doing was addressing the Opposition's strong criticism of what they saw as poor administration during the world's largest religious gathering, the Maha Kumbh, and the two stampedes that occurred there. Did he want Maha Kumbh to be a part of the National Democratic Alliance's Bihar election platform? It is quite probable that Modi, who had begun the NDA's Bihar election campaign with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, purposefully

brought up the controversy surrounding Maha Kumbh in order to strengthen the Hindu support among the OBC. Many also saw it as an effort to win over religiously inclined female voters. Meanwhile, political scientists claimed Modi didn't really need to mention Maha Kumbh. In contrast to Uttar Pradesh, religious and communal appeals do not have the same impact on elections in Bihar. A transformative governance agenda has traditionally had a greater impact on the state. Rather than a rising embrace of the Hindutva ideology of the BJP, observers pointed out that Bihar was shifting away from the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) led by Lalu Yadav owing to fears of his previous misrule. North Bihar is still firmly under the control of the NDA, and yatras, which were once used to communalize politics, have not been very successful. The Hindu Swabhimani Yatra, which Union Minister Giriraj Singh attempted last year but was unable to launch, is a prime example.

### The trinity that failed women at Maha Kumbh. Holy, unholy, and the algorithm

**Aasavage** irony is unfolding in Uttar Pradesh right now. India's holiest gathering is a hunting ground for faceless remote predators. At the "once in 144 years" Maha Kumbh Mela underway in Prayagraj, where millions congregate to wash away their sins in the Ganga, an unholy alliance of voyeurs, traders, and technology has formed. They're transforming purification into portable entertainment. What's on sale? The privacy and bodily integrity of women devotees. And the price? Anywhere between Rs 800 and Rs 2,000, depending on the quality of violation. Indian women have been failed, yet again, by a new trinity: The holy, the unholy, and the algorithm. Last week, 13 FIRs were lodged against 140 social media accounts for posting objectionable videos of women, including those of female devotees taking a dip at the Kumbh. The bathing videos came to light during a separate investigation by the Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Police into videos sourced from a Rajkot hospital's gynaecology department. The investigation revealed that the three accused—Prajwal Taili, Praj Patil, and Chandraprakash Phoolchand—ran at least 22 Telegram channels where they sold clips of women, recorded and traded without their consent. The three men, a YouTuber from Maharashtra, ran their enterprise under an innocuous name "Megha Demos Group". The channels, with labels like "CCTV Injection Group", "Labor Room Injection Group", and "Ganga River Open Bathing Group", turned these transgressions into a menu of options. "Disturbingly, some content featured covert recordings from hospital labour rooms, medical examinations, and public areas like bus stands, marriage halls, and parlours," cyber crime officers told The

Times of India. This lucrative venture raked in Rs 8 lakh a year. To the credit of UP Police, their social media monitoring team has moved swiftly, and identified 15 more accounts across Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram participating in this ecosystem of exploitation. The state government has now banned cameras at bathing ghats, deploying CRPF and state police personnel to enforce this prohibition. In 2019 too, the Allahabad High Court had banned the publishing of photos and videos of women at the Kumbh Mela: "The court said no pictures of women bathing or taking a holy dip should be shared. It also warned that action would be taken if the order was broken. This rule applies to both print and visual media." This violation and commodification of women's bodies at the Maha Kumbh represents a betrayal across three interconnected spheres. It's not as if Indian women are unfamiliar with such trespasses—that's our daily reality. But the Kumbh videos expose a particularly perverse intersection of faith, trade, and technology. First, there is the sacred: In a space of spiritual liberation, the crowd provides both cover and target for predators. Elaborate systems. At Indian temples and other places of worship prevent photography to protect idols and deities. Those regulations don't extend to the bodies of women who show up at these sites. Then comes the betrayal by the profane, a carefully constructed marketplace where every assault is catalogued, priced, and traded. What's most chilling about the Kumbh videos is the clinical efficiency of their distribution. The "Megha Demos Group" operated with the precision of a tech startup, complete with a freemium business model. Finally, there is the betrayal by technology.

## Medical seat domicile rule of T'gana flawed: SC

Delhi : The

Supreme Court criticized the Telangana government's domicile policy, which requires students to have attended Classes 9-12 in the state to be eligible for state quota medical seats through NEET, saying it was distant from reality. Many students now study in Kota for Class 11 and 12 to get better coaching for medical and engineering entrance exams. Should they be denied admission because they are not Telangana residents? "CJI BR Gavai, Justices K Vinod Chandran and Joyimalya Bagchi asked. "You must have a humane approach." Such students should not be harassed. Students whose parents are from Telangana are entitled for state quota seats regardless of where they finished Class 11 and 12, "CJI warned, "Either



you (the govt) rectify the matter, or we will set it right." Advocate Raghenth Basant told the bench that the domicile bar has created a sensitive situation for kids whose parents were born in Telangana and have lived there.

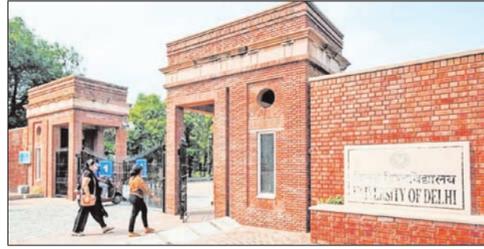
Children of a Kerala resident posted in Telangana for four years who complete Class 9-12 in Telangana are eligible for state quota medical seats. He said youngsters who study outside Telangana despite their parents being natural citizens cannot apply for state quota medical seats.

### Hindu University establishes public policy institute

Delhi: Hindu College at Delhi University has set itself apart from other Indian universities by creating a public policy lab. Officials have stated that the goal is to include real-world policymaking into both undergraduate and graduate programs. With the goal of democratizing and decentralizing the process of knowledge generation, the lab is designed to serve as a hub for policy simulations, applied research, and field-based insights. This will bring

## CEO tells DUSU hopefuls to submit bond and affidavit, no deposit required

Delhi : The DUSU Election Commission has made it clear that all that is needed to run for student union office in the forthcoming elections is an affidavit and a Rs 1 lakh surety bond. Neither the school nor their own bank accounts will require them to deposit this sum. It is sufficient for a candidate to submit an affidavit and a surety bond, stated Chief Election Officer Prof. Raj Kishor Sharma during a news conference. Neither the university nor their account will request the payment



of this sum. He emphasized that the goal of this measure was to increase clarity and simplicity. In addition, the presiding officer, Dr. Rajesh Singh, emphasized the Election Commission's dedication to holding fair and free elections and urged all parties involved to work

together. While outlining the DUSU 2025-26 election program and code of conduct, Sharma made sure to mention that campaigning with hand-made posters is strictly forbidden and can only be done on dedicated "Democracy Walls."

## Assess UV technology in sewage treatment, NGT directs IIT Delhi

Delhi : National Green Tribunal (NGT) asked IIT Delhi to examine the effectiveness of UV technology in sewage treatment and directed the DPCC to take punitive action against 14 STPs, which, as per a report, failed to meet the standards.

A tribunal

bench, headed by NGT chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava, in an order took notice of a report by Delhi Jal Board (DJB).

The report stated that of 37 STPs in the city, seven were yet to be installed with a disinfection system, four had not installed any sys-

tem, while among others, 15 had deployed UV and 11 had chlorination-based disinfection systems to treat bacteria in sewage before discharging the treated water into drains. For those yet to be installed, the process was initiated or tenders awarded.

## Delhi dominates India's top college list

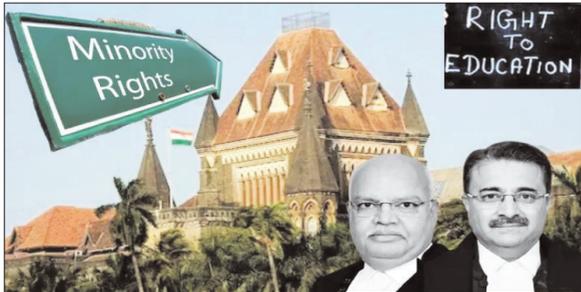
Delhi : Delhi University's Hindu College has topped the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2025 list, followed by Miranda House, Hans Raj, Kirori Mal and St Stephen's, emerging as the top five colleges in the country. Delhi University (DU) also recorded its best-ever performance in the Universities category, rising to fifth position from last year's sixth. It advanced to 12th place in the Research Institutions list and retained the 15th spot overall. Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh called the achievement "a landmark moment", crediting the collective efforts of faculty, students, alumni and staff. Hindu College Principal Anju Srivastava said the recognition reflected the college's focus on holistic education. "We have created an ecosystem where students get opportunities for research, innovation and practical exposure. Under NEP reforms, they are pursuing interests beyond the classroom with flexibility and industry linkages," she told. Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) secured the second spot among universities. Vice Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit said the ranking was a matter of great pride, highlighting JNU's model of "excellence with equity and innovation with inclusion".

## CBSE and NCB to Raise Drug Abuse Awareness

Delhi : Together, the NCB and the Central Board of Secondary Education are working to eliminate drug use from schools and raise public awareness about the dangers of substance misuse. The CBSE board headquarters hosted an agreement signing event. The CBSE announced in an official statement that the two organizations have reached an agreement that will allow them to work together on various projects. These projects will include community outreach, counselling services for students and parents, e-modules on drug prevention, capacity-building workshops for teachers and counsellors, and quarterly awareness programs.

## SC: Why are minority institutions excluded from RTE?

Delhi : The Supreme Court said its 2014 verdict by a five-judge constitution bench that the Right to Education (RTE) Act did not apply to religious and linguistic minority educational institutions "strikes at the heart of good quality universal elementary education, its consequences are far-reaching" and should be reconsidered. A two-judge bench forwarded a bundle of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra appeals on whether minority-run schools required passing the Teacher Eligibility Test to CJI to consider advancing the matter to a larger bench. It claimed exempting minority institutions from the Act would erode inclusion. Minority schools are exempt



from teacher appointment and free education for underprivileged children laws. The SC court noted its 2014 verdict basically divided RTE under Article 21A from collective rights under Article 30(1), which allow minority communities to construct and run educational institutions.

The Pramati Educational

and Cultural Trust (case) exempts minority schools, whether aided or unaided, from the RTE Act using clause (1) of Article 30 of the Constitution, which we disagree was correctly decided. Thus, a revisiting of the ruling seems inevitable "Justice Dipankar Datta, who wrote the bench verdict with Justice Manmohan, stated.

### Companies in the electronics industry are the most welcoming to LGBTQIA+ apprentices.

Delhi : A whopping 71% of businesses in the electronics sector have shown a great desire to hire LGBTQIA+ apprentices, making it one of the most welcoming sectors for this demographic. Overall, 64 percent of Indian companies are welcoming of LGBTQIA+ apprentices, so this is just one more example of a larger trend. The January-March TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship Outlook Report emphasizes this change. The majority of electronics and telecom firms (71%) are eager to hire LGBTQIA+ apprentices.

## Supreme Court asks Centre, NCERT on transgender-inclusive

Delhi : The Supreme Court notified NCERT, the Union government, and six states to respond to a plea to integrate transgender inclusive sex education in school curricula. Chief Justice of India (CJI) Bhushan R Gavai and Justice K Vinod Chandran sent notices to the Centre, NCERT, and Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu on the case brought by 16-year-old Delhi student Kaavya Mukherjee Saha.

Class 12 student from Vasant Valley School in Delhi filed the case, com-



plaining about the lack of transgender-inclusive Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in NCERT and SCERT textbooks. The student wants binding gender sensitisation and transgender-inclusive CSE rules in all schools nationwide. Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, representing Saha,

told the bench that NCERT had recently admitted in a Right to Information (RTI) reply that it had "no information" on integrating CSE into school education, despite a 2024 Supreme Court order. Saha's petition claimed that NCERT and most state councils of educational research and training (SCERTs) have failed to include structured or examinable content on gender identity, gender diversity, and sex and gender despite Sections 2(d) and 13 of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

## Pradhan Mantri Kalyan Yojana relies on NCERT

Delhi : Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan voiced his faith in NCERT's ability to push educational reforms and bring about a paradigm change in teaching and learning, despite the fact that the council has been criticized for its textbook updates. In his support of NCERT's initiatives to implement the reforms proposed in NE, Pradhan compared it to a "Gyan Kumbh" that has had a profound impact on the lives of many Indians. At its 65th Foundation Day, Pradhan emphasized that NCERT needs to take the lead in transforming India's education system by adopting a reform-oriented and tech-driven role. It has come a long way since its start, especially in terms of education's role in nation-building.

He emphasized that



the organization needed to "don a new avatar" that was reform-oriented, tech-driven, and focused on best practices in order to embrace its role as a change leader. With unwavering conviction, Pradhan declared that NCERT will "bring a paradigm shift in teaching and learning and play a key role in actualising the goal of Samridhh Bharat." "Confident that NCERT will continue shaping critical and creative thinking in the 'Amrit Peedhi'," stated the professor.

### DU teachers raise issues of unoccupied reserved seats

Delhi: Teachers from Delhi University brought up issues with professor recruitment in front of a Parliamentary Committee, claiming that the SC/ST populations were marginalized on a systematic level. Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They paid a visit to DU and had in-depth interviews with eighty people, including faculty, stu-

## IIT Madras, IISc B'luru, IIT Bombay top 3 in NIRF 2025

Delhi : The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras has topped the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2025 for the seventh consecutive year, and also emerged the top engineering college in India for the 10th year since the rankings were introduced in 2016. Like last year, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru is ranked second in the overall ranking, and IIT Bombay third. The first non-engineering institution in the Top 10 of the overall ranking is the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi at eighth (seventh last year); the IITs at Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur, and



Roorkee (which swapped places with AIIMS) hold the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh places. Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi) and Banaras Hindu University (Varanasi) have moved up to the ninth and tenth spots, respectively. Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan and minister of state for education Sukanta Majumdar

announced the overall rankings and rankings across 17 categories for higher education institutions (HEIs).

The categories include engineering, management, medicine, university, law, research, and agriculture. There is also a category just for colleges. A total of 14,163 higher education institutions participated in the 10th edition of NIRF Rankings.

## BCCI to hold AGM on Sept 28 to elect president, secretary, other office bearers

Delhi : The Board of Control for Cricket in India will conduct elections for the post of all its office-bearers - president, vice-president, secretary, joint secretary and treasurer, in Mumbai on September 28. In a notice, seen by all the state associations, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia stated, "Notice is hereby given that the 94th Annual General Meeting (hereinafter referred to as "AGM") of the Board of Control for Cricket in India ("BCCI"), which will be held at 11.30 AM on September 28, 2025, at BCCI headquarters at Mumbai, to transact the business as per the agenda provided below." "The minutes of the 93rd Annual General Meeting held on September 29, 2024, the minutes of the Special General Meeting held on January 1, 2025, and the minutes of the Special General Meeting held 2025, are attached herewith. Rest of the agenda papers will follow shortly. You are kindly requested to attend the meeting," Saikia concluded.

## NMC asks medical colleges to deploy PG students in flood-affected areas

Delhi : The National Medical Commission (NMC) has asked all medical colleges across the country to deploy post-graduate medical students in flood-affected areas.

The deployment would be a part of the district residency programme, according to its recent directive. The directive states: "In view of recent floods/disaster-like situations in northern states/UTs, there is an urgent requirement for healthcare professionals as part of the ongoing relief measures.

# 'Om Puri redefined heroism'

Actor Abhishek Banerjee has shared that his cameo appearance in the second season of *Freedom at Midnight* is a tribute to late star Om Puri, whom he says defied the very meaning of what it took to be a hero.

"I have grown up admiring one of the biggest acting legends of India, the Late Om Puri sahab. He was truly a trailblazer and defied the very meaning of what it took to be a hero. When people see his filmography, one thing that is great take away is that he always did roles and films, never evaluated them based on the size of the role," Abhishek told IANS.

In the series, Abhishek essays the role of a rioter driven by vengeance after losing his pregnant wife to communal violence, a journey that ultimately leads him to surrender before Mahatma Gandhi in the series, which is based on the partition of India and Pakistan, and the religious and socio-political dynamics of the era.

The character was also portrayed by Om Puri in the Ben Kingsley-starrer *Gandhi*, which was directed by Richard Attenborough in 1982. "When Nikkhil asked me to do this cameo, I wanted to make sure I showed up. That's because he is the true spirit of the role. It is an homage to Om Puri Sahab's role from *Gandhi*, and just having the opportunity to step into this character was

deeply an honour for me."

Abhishek says that he has "no comparison" to Om Puri's legacy and his craft. "He will and is truly a cinematic icon. But to step into his footsteps, even for this small cameo role, is truly an honor for me. I want to always

remember that roles aren't always about their size; sometimes it's the smallest parts that leave behind the highest impact, and the feedback since the release of *Freedom at Midnight 2* has been just that. I have been getting so many messages and calls, tags on social media appreciating the cameo," concluded Abhishek.



Photo: Instagram @nowitsabhi

Actor Abhishek Banerjee says his *Freedom at Midnight Season 2* cameo is a heartfelt tribute to late acting legend Om Puri

Photo: Instagram @nowitsabhi

# Malaika shares breakup feelings

Bollywood actress admits going through phases of 'anger' after breakup with Arjun Kapoor



their breakup, admitting that she went through phases of anger, upset, and disappointment.

During a chat on The Namrata Zakaria Show, Malaika addressed her breakup and said, "I think anger and hurt exist at a particular phase or time in your life, and I think everybody does. We are humans, we all go through phases of anger and being upset, disappointed. That's just human nature. But as you go along, as time goes on, and the most cliched line is - time heals all."

Bollywood star Malaika Arora, who was earlier in a long-term relationship with actor Arjun Kapoor, began dating him in 2018. However, they parted ways in 2024, shocking everyone.

The couple often faced trolling due to their age gap of nearly 12 years, with Malaika being older than Arjun. Years after their split, the *Chaiyya Chaiyya* star opened up about

Further, Malaika said that despite their breakup, Arjun remains someone very important to her and an integral part of her life. She added that she does not really want to talk too much about her past or what her future may hold, as enough has already been written and shared, almost turning it into a media feeding ground.

She continued that her relationships have always been in the spotlight and have often made headlines. At one point, she recalled saying that her life is much more than just her personal relationships, as they were becoming too much of a centre of attention.

"Unfortunately, people forget that because it doesn't make a headline or copy. I am at that stage of life now, where I don't need to prove anything, but I need to do things that make me happy, and I want people to see that," added Malaika.

Photos: Instagram



# Jahaan - The Last Gift enters global circuit

**J**ahaan - *The Last Gift* has emerged as a notable example of how Waves Bazaar is helping Indian short-form cinema reach international audiences. Directed by Rahul Shetty, the short film was curated under the Top Selects segment at Waves Bazaar, a programme created to highlight select projects for

focused interaction with international festival programmers, curators, and industry delegates.

Through this targeted curation, the film was positioned within a professional industry environment where it could be viewed, discussed, and evaluated for global circulation. Following its showcase, *Jahaan - The Last Gift* went on to secure selections at multiple international film festivals across North America

and Europe, marking its entry into global festival circuits.

The film's journey reflects Waves Bazaar's role as a launchpad rather than merely a screening platform. Exploring themes of environmental crisis and human survival, the short film resonated with global audiences and programmers alike. Its success underscores the growing demand for socially relevant Indian short-form storytelling on international screens.

# John Forte passes away

Grammy-nominated musician and producer

John Forte, who worked closely with the Fugees, has died at the age of 50, Variety reported. Massachusetts' Chilmank Police confirmed to Variety that the police found the musician dead at his home on Tuesday afternoon. The local police chief said there were no signs of foul play and no clear cause of death at the scene. The case is now being looked into by the state



medical examiner. According to Deadline, John Forte was a key member of the Refugee Camp All Stars, a music group active in the 1990s. He worked on several well-known

songs, including Wyclef Jean's *We Trying to Stay Alive* and *Rumble in the Jungle*, which also featured Busta Rhymes and *A Tribe Called Quest*.

# Ranbir, Alia serve couple goals



Bollywood couple was spotted together during a late-night outing in Mumbai's Bandra area



Bollywood couple Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt were spotted together during a late-night outing in Mumbai's Bandra area on Tuesday. The two served major couple goals as they arrived at Gauri Khan's restaurant, Torii, hand in hand.

The actors were spotted greeting paparazzi outside the venue. For the outing, Alia Bhatt opted for a white sequined saree with fine embroidery. The actress paired the saree with a matching blouse and kept her look simple with a sleek bun, a statement choker, and soft makeup.

Ranbir Kapoor made sure to match her style in a black *kurta-pyjama*, layered with an embroidered Nehru jacket. Soon after the two were spotted outside the restaurant, videos and pictures of the couple went viral on the internet.

# Actor Kiefer Sutherland arrested

Kiefer Sutherland arrested after allegedly assaulting ride-hail driver overnight

Actor Kiefer Sutherland was arrested on suspicion of criminal threats early on Monday morning after Los Angeles police say he assaulted a ride-hail driver. Just after midnight, officers responded to a call reporting an assault at an intersection just south of Hollywood Hills.

The Los Angeles Police Department said that they determined Sutherland entered a ride-hail vehicle, physically assaulted the driver and "made criminal threats toward the victim". The driver did not require medical treatment, police said. Sutherland was arrested and released from jail a few hours later on a USD 50,000 bond, according to jail records. His first court appearance is scheduled for February 2.



# Soundous Moufakir eyes big-screen debut

Actress says she is ready to step into bigger cinematic spaces with an upcoming Bollywood project

Moroccan-born actress and model Soundous Moufakir is set to enter a new phase in her career as she prepares for her theatrical debut with a leading Bollywood production house. After gaining early popularity through reality television, the 28-year-old is now

moving towards more substantial roles in mainstream cinema.

Soundous, who represents a growing wave of international talent in Indian entertainment, will be seen in two film projects slated for release in 2026.

These films mark a significant shift from brief appearances to full-fledged roles, signalling her arrival as a serious film actress.

Sharing her excitement, Soundous said she feels ready to take on bigger cinematic opportunities after years of preparation and learning.

Alongside acting, she continues to make her mark in fashion, with her Moroccan-influenced style drawing attention. With several projects lined up, Soundous is steadily building a promising film career.



Views

Briefs

WASHINGTON Trump: Total mess if SC nixes tariffs



President Donald Trump has warned that it would "be a complete mess, and almost impossible for our Country to pay" back the money the US has collected from his sweeping tariffs if the Supreme Court rules he doesn't have the unilateral ability to impose many of them.

WASHINGTON US terror tag on three West Asia outfits

The US has made good on its pledge to label three Middle Eastern branches of the Muslim Brotherhood terrorist organisations, imposing sanctions on them and their members in a decision that could have implications for America's ties with allies Qatar and Turkey.

INSIDE VIEW | People tap Musk's Starlink to skirt internet curbs, describe their hardship and heavy security presence

Call to outside world: Iranians voice despair

Iranians on Tuesday made phone calls abroad for the first time in days after authorities severed communications during a crackdown on nationwide protests, giving a glimpse of life after being cut off from the outside world.

Some of them are still using Elon Musk's Starlink satellite internet service, three people inside the country said, the latest example of Starlink being used to counter internet shutdowns in geopolitical flashpoints.

Witnesses described a heavy security presence in central Tehran, burned-out government buildings, smashed ATMs and few passersby. But people remain concerned about what comes next, including the possibility of strikes after US President Donald Trump said he could possibly use the military to defend peaceful protesters.



Toll 2,000: Iran official

About 2,000 people, including security personnel, have been killed in protests, an Iranian official, who refused to be named, said. The official said that people he called terrorists were behind the deaths.

Leave now: US advisory

The US has urged Americans to "leave Iran now". "Protests across Iran are escalating and may turn violent, resulting in arrests and injuries," the US advisory said, urging Americans to consider moving to Armenia and Turkey.

Trump also has said Iran wants to negotiate with Washington.

"My customers talk about Trump's reaction while wondering if he plans a military strike against the Islamic Republic," said shopkeeper Mahmoud, who gave only his first name out of concerns for his safety. "I don't expect Trump or any other foreign country cares about the interests of Iranians."

Reza, a taxi driver who also gave just his first name, said protests remain on many people's minds. "People — particularly young ones — are hopeless but they talk about continuing the protests," he said.

The witnesses said text messaging still was down and that internet users in Iran could connect to government-approved websites locally but nothing abroad.

Death for protester?

Iran is set to execute its first protester, Erfan Soltani, 26, in connection with the ongoing demonstrations, Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights (IHR) said. Erfan Soltani, 26, was arrested last week in Karaj near Tehran.

Final days, says Merz

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz believes the Iranian government is in its "final days and weeks." "If a regime can only keep itself in power by force, then it's effectively at the end," Merz said in Bengaluru.

Anti-riot police officers, wearing helmets and body armour, carried batons, shields, shotguns and tear gas launchers, according to the witnesses. Police stood watch at major intersections. Nearby, the witnesses saw members of the Revolutionary Guards all-volunteer Basij force, who similarly carried firearms and batons. Security officials in plainclothes were visible in public spaces as well.

Bill to annexe Greenland tabled in US

Washington: Republican Congressman Randy Fine has formally introduced the 'Greenland Annexation and Statehood Act', a legislation aimed at giving the Trump administration a legal authority to pursue annexation and eventual statehood for Greenland.

"Huge News! Today, I am proud to introduce the Greenland Annexation and Statehood Act, a bill that allows the President to find the means necessary to bring Greenland into the Union," Fine said in a post on X on Monday (local time).

He further asserted that America's "adversaries" are trying to establish a foothold in the Arctic, and "we can't let that happen". The Republican Congressman said that US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio have made it clear that Washington "needs to restore American Dominance by acquiring Greenland."

Vance to host Greenland meet

Copenhagen: Denmark's foreign minister said Tuesday that US Vice President JD Vance will host a meeting with him and his Greenlandic counterpart in Washington this week as tensions spiral over the Trump administration's desire for control of Greenland.

The vast Arctic island is a semiautonomous territory of Denmark, a NATO ally of the US.

Tension flares in Minnesota, protests swirl

MINNEAPOLIS

Days of demonstrations against immigration agents left Minnesota tense on Tuesday, a day after federal authorities used tear gas to break up crowds of whistle-blowing activists, and state and local leaders sued to fight the enforcement surge that led to the fatal shooting of a Minneapolis woman.

Confrontations between federal agents and protesters stretched throughout the day and across multiple cities on Monday. Agents fired tear gas in Minneapolis as a crowd gathered around immigration officers questioning a man, while to the northwest in St. Cloud, hundreds of people protested outside a strip of Somali-run businesses after ICE officers arrived.

Later that night, confrontations erupted between protesters and officers guarding the federal building being used as a base for the Twin Cities crackdown.

With the Department of Homeland Security pledging to send more than 2,000 immigration officers into Minnesota in what Immigration and Customs Enforcement has called its largest enforcement operation ever, the state, joined by Minneapolis and St. Paul, sued the Trump administration Monday to try to halt or limit the surge.

100k visas nixed in '25

New York/Washington: The US has revoked over 100,000 visas, including of around 8,000 students, in 2025 as part of its widespread efforts to crackdown on immigration citing criminal activity. "We will continue to deport these thugs to keep America safe," the State Department said in a social media post on Monday.

The suit filed says the Department of Homeland Security is violating the First Amendment and other constitutional protections. It accuses the Republican Trump administration of violating free speech rights by focusing on a progressive state that favours Democrats and welcomes immigrants.

"This is, in essence, a federal invasion of the Twin Cities in Minnesota, and it must stop," state Attorney General Keith Ellison said at a news conference.

Homeland Security says it has made more than 2,000 arrests in the state since December.

The days after Renee Good was shot in the head by an ICE officer while behind the wheel of her SUV have seen dozens of protests.

Global central bank chiefs in 'full solidarity' with Powell

FRANKFURT

Central bankers from around the world said Tuesday they "stand in full solidarity" with US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, after President Donald Trump dramatically escalated his confrontation with the Fed with the Justice

Department investigating and threatening criminal charges.

Powell "has served with integrity, focused on his mandate and an unwavering commitment to the public interest," read the statement signed by nine national central bank heads including European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde

and Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey.

They added that "the independence of central banks is a cornerstone of price, financial and economic stability in the interest of the citizens that we serve. It is therefore critical to preserve that independence, with full respect for the rule of law and democratic accountability."

In another major drone-missile attack, Russia hits Ukraine's power grid, kills 4

Kyiv: Russia launched a second major drone and missile bombardment of Ukraine in four days, officials said on Tuesday, aiming again at the power grid. Russia fired almost 300 drones, 18 ballistic missiles and seven cruise missiles at eight regions overnight, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on social media.

One strike in the northeastern Kharkiv region killed four people at a mail depot, and several hundred thousand households were without power in the Kyiv region, Zelenskyy said. The daytime temperature in the capital was -12 C (around 10 F). The streets were covered with ice, and the city rumbled with the noise from generators. —Agencies

Inexplicable escalation: US

United Nations: The United States has accused Russia of a "dangerous and inexplicable escalation" of its nearly four-year war in Ukraine. US deputy ambassador to the UN Tammy Bruce on Monday singled out Russia's launch of a nuclear-capable Oreshnik ballistic missile last week close to Ukraine's border with Poland, a NATO ally. She told an emergency meeting of the Security Council that the United States deplores "the staggering number of casualties" in the conflict and condemns Russia's intensifying attacks on energy and other infrastructure.

Crossword #1745 grid with clues for Across and Down.

- Across: 1 Feminine pronoun, 4 Ship pole, 8 Leading player, 12 Paar: 1954 Guru Dutt movie, 13 A girl or a maiden, especially in Scotland, 14 \_\_\_ duck: one who cannot cope without help?, 15 Dusk, 17 Way out, 18 Small film role, 19 Unnatural, 20 Be absent or deficient, 22 Wilt, 24 Reversed, 26 Genre you might hear at a nightclub, 27 Dead on arr., 30 Broke the promise of marriage, in a way?, 32 Taking food, 34 The French for 'island', 35 Scam, 37 Japanese-American, 38 Cooking herb, 40 Lhasa \_\_\_: a type of pet furry dog?, 41 Comic fantasy author \_\_\_ Pratchett, 44 Egyptian capital, 46 Verve, 47 Passed away, 50 Thanks \_\_\_! (1,3), 51 Understanding term? (1,3), 52 Gad's son?, 53 20th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, 54 Swelling on eyelid, 55 Father.

YOUR DAY By Vinayak Vishwas Karandikar

- ARIES: A day for spiritual growth and deep reflection. Opportunities for meaningful spending on religious activities, travel, or investments are likely. Positive growth is seen for those in research, astrology, finance, and teaching. Constructive family discussions will strengthen bonds; approach conversations with patience. Take care of your legs and digestive health to maintain vitality. Lucky number: 7; Lucky colour: Yellow.
TAURUS: A day for introspection and heightened intuition. Opportunities to support others through loans, medical treatments, or charitable acts are likely. Success is seen for those in the occult sciences, finance, and consultancy. Harmonious interactions with family are possible when patience is practised. A gentle routine will support calmness and digestive wellness. Lucky number: 9; Lucky colour: Red.
GEMINI: An excellent day to connect with influential people and expand your network. Unexpected gains or beneficial investments may occur. Positive developments are seen for those in marketing, media, education, and business. Deep and meaningful conversations with your partner will strengthen the relationship. Mindful relaxation and stress management will help maintain energy. Lucky number: 5; Lucky colour: Green.
CANCER: A responsible and productive day. Investments in career growth, travel, or legal matters can be beneficial. Positive outcomes are seen for those in the medical field, law, and government jobs. Balancing work and family time will bring harmony. Gentle exercises will support back and digestive health. Lucky number: 8; Lucky colour: Blue.
LEO: A day for philosophical insights and spiritual understanding. Spending on education, travel, or charitable activities will bring fulfillment. Success is seen for those associated with teaching, religious activities, and publishing. Meaningful conversations with loved ones will deepen emotional connections. Stay hydrated and take care of your hips and mobility. Lucky number: 3; Lucky colour: Yellow.
VIRGO: A day of positive transformation and opportunities. Thoughtful spending will ensure financial stability. Growth is seen for professionals in psychology, research, and auditing. Family dynamics may evolve positively with understanding. Rest and mindfulness will support sleep and nerve health. Lucky number: 6; Lucky colour: White.

SUDOKU - 635

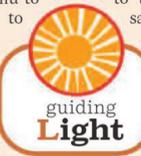
Sudoku grid with numbers 5, 7, 8, 4, 1, 6, 6, 7, 8, 2, 9, 5, 2, 1, 3, 8, 4, 8, 3, 5, 1, 4, 1, 2, 7, 1, 6, 3, 7, 3, 8, 5, 1, 4, 9, 2, 7, 8, 4, 1, 9, 6, 1, 7, 8, 4, 8, 1, 9, 1, 3, 9, 5, 8, 2, 7, 4, 6.

WHAT TO DO: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only one correct solution.

MAKARA SANKRANTI

Dr S Ainavolu

Sankranti means transition or the movement of the Sun from one rashi, or constellation, into the other. There are twelve rashis according to astrology, and hence twelve Sankrantis happen in the year. The occurrence of this is around the middle of the English calendar months. Thus, from the middle of January to December, we have twelve Sankranti festivals. However, given the importance of the Sun's transit from Dhanu to Makara (Sagittarius to Capricorn), the Makara Sankranti is celebrated as a major festival in the middle of every January. The completion of the crop cycle and fulfilment of the efforts of previous months makes this another occasion to celebrate. A good harvesting outcome facilitates the celebration. For those who follow the solar returning calendar, the month transit happens around Sankranti. For instance, the Dhanurmasam ends with Makara Sankranti. As Sun's transit is associated with the festival, the Sun assumes importance. Sun worship happens, and the flowers and fruits associated with the Sun occupy primary place. As the winter is at its peak, heat-producing food items are offered as prasad. Thus, sesame, or til, and jaggery, or gud, assume importance. People exchange sweets made of sesame and jaggery, wishing one speaks in sweeter tones. Makara Sankranti is a multi-day festival. The first day, or the purvadin, is the celebration of the arrival of new agricultural output. To remind us of the reality of the mixed bag called life, on the Bhogi day, a specific combinational vegetable curry is prepared, which is specific to this day. Also, sweets and savoury items made with new rice and other things are eaten on this day. The Sun is worshipped on the main day of Sankranti. Those who give gratitude-guided offerings to their ancestors do the "tarpana" on this day. The Sankranti festival's third day is again filled with gratitude. As agriculture was highly dependent on animals, farmers do animal puja. It is sort of a "Thanksgiving Day" aimed at these silent stakeholders of the agricultural process. The festivities end with the cleaning up of fields and preparing and planning for the next crop. And the sustainable cycle repeats. Dr. S. Ainavolu is a Mumbai-based teacher of Management and Tradition.



TAROT MESSAGE FOR THE DAY MAGICIAN

A day to use your mindset and skills to change the situation you are facing. You will feel inspired; don't let your past hold you back. Do proper research and then go ahead. Avoid manipulation and stay on the right path. You will read or practice the law of attraction. You will counsel others. Tip for the day: Focus on the image and visualize your dreams becoming a reality, and say, "With divine grace, so be it." Lots of divine miracles your way, Sheetal Sapan Mhatre.



## WC Diaries

## Super 8 Points Tally

GROUP I	Team	P	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
SA (Q)	3	3	0	0	6	2.259	
IND (Q)	3	2	1	0	4	0.106	
WI (E)	3	1	2	0	2	0.993	
ZIM (E)	3	0	3	0	0	-3.415	

GROUP II	Team	P	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
ENG (Q)	3	3	0	0	6	1.096	
NZ (Q)	3	1	1	1	3	1.390	
PAK (E)	3	1	1	1	3	-0.123	
SL (E)	3	0	3	0	0	-1.950	

\*\* Top two teams from each group will reach semifinals

## NEW DELHI

## SA, NZ meet in T20 semis for first time

South Africa and New Zealand head into the semi-finals of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 following impressive yet contrasting campaigns and gear up to face each other on Wednesday at Eden Gardens in Kolkata. South Africa are heading into the semifinals on the back of a flawless campaign, having remained unbeaten through the group stage and Super Eights. The Proteas topped their Super Eight group with commanding performances that underlined both their batting depth and bowling discipline.

## KARACHI

## PCB mulls financial penalties on players

Livid with the Pakistan team's early elimination from the T20 World Cup, the country's cricket board is contemplating financial penalties on the players for their below-par show.

## NEW DELHI

## Zim sign off with warm gesture

Instead of heading back to the dressing room at the end of a gutsy but gruelling T20 World Cup campaign, Zimbabwe's exhausted cricketers sprinted towards a corner of the spectators' stands to thank half a dozen supporters who they consider



family. The supporters belong to the Castle Corner, a fan group that travels to cheer the Zimbabwe team. Inspirational skipper Sikandar Raza was not part of the group that acknowledged the support from the loyal fans who secured last minute funding to travel to India. For the Super 8 leg of the tournament after witnessing the team's unbeaten campaign in Sri Lanka.

## 'Sanju, what else? Why didn't it work? So I did some soul-searching'

KOLKATA

India opener Sanju Samson shut down his phone and social media accounts to ensure that he did not lose self-belief during a lean patch that ended with a match-winning knock in the do-or-die T20 World Cup game against the West Indies here.

Samson smashed a 50-ball 97, dotted with 12 fours and four sixes, to steer the side home in a steep chase of 196 in the must-win Super Eight game here on Sunday.

The 31-year-old was brought back to the opening slot following India's heavy loss to South Africa in the Super Eight



opener, to break the left-handed monotony of the defending champions' struggling top-order.

"Shot selection was some-

thing I kept working on. I did not want to change too much because I knew I had performed with the same setup, so I kept believing in myself,

switched off my phone, switched off social media and listened to my own self," Samson said on Star Sports after India's five-wicket win here on Sunday.

"I am very happy it happened in a very special game." Samson was, in fact, a lone warrior last night with some support from skipper Suryakumar Yadav (18) and Tilak Varma (27).

"It was a bit of a difficult chase. Looking at our batting power, I felt that chasing 190-odd at Eden Gardens, when dew comes in, gets a bit easier, but losing wickets at regular intervals made it challenging," the wicket-keeper-batter acknowledged.

"To be honest, that's where my experience and my role played a big part. I got a good start, but when the wickets kept falling, I felt I needed to finish the game and take it till the last moment.

"Normally you feel like doing it, but it doesn't happen all the time, so I am very grateful it happened in this game...when you are chasing a score like this in a pressure game, you take different options and play more boundaries rather than looking at risk-taking options," he added.

Speaking on his run of underwhelming scores prior to last night, including the home series against New Zealand, Samson elaborated

on the changes he made to his technique.

"Our human nature is that we often start from a negative thought like, 'Can I do it? I don't think I can.' When I have that thought, I try to alter it with a very positive one. When I had a series like New Zealand where I wanted to perform and be part of the World Cup team, things did not work out well, but luckily I got a 10-day gap," he said.

"I did not play any games and was not in the side. I kept thinking, 'Sanju, what else? Why didn't it work? What else should I do?' So I did some soul-searching. I worked on my base, how I set myself up, and came back to it.

"A lot of people had suggestions and I saw a lot of valid points, but at the same time I felt, 'Sanju, you have scored three international hundreds with the same setup,'" he added.

Asked what the Kolkata knock meant for him, Samson said he feels lucky to live a dream that he has nurtured since childhood.

"More than a hundred cricketers in India dream about a day like this. I dared to dream. A young guy from Trivandrum, Kerala, dreaming about playing for the country and winning a game in such a crucial match. I dared to dream and it happened," he said.

## UNQUESTIONABLE TALENT | The hallmark of Samson's innings was the pace at which he scored the runs, feels coach Gambhir

## Gambhir's mic, Samson's magic light up Kolkata

KOLKATA

The Sanju Samson experience has long been Indian cricket's most beautiful frustration, a carousel of what-ifs and if-onlys. But in the must-win Super 8 match at Eden Gardens, Samson pulled off one of the greatest chases in T20 World Cup history. It was Virat Kohli-esque. His 97 not out off 50 balls to dismantle the West Indies was not just about the runs; it was about the timing. It was the Kolkata Special for the Kerala batter, a knock that finally ended the wait for a career-defining World Cup moment. Yet, as clinical as Samson was with the bat, the post-match press conference belonged to Gautam Gambhir.

After a self-imposed seven-game exile from the media in this T20 World Cup, the head coach returned to the microphone with the same sharp, short-back-and-sides precision that defined his own batting.

Gambhir began by addressing why his long-term 'Project Sanju' was sidelined at the start of the tournament. To the public, Samson was dropped. To Gambhir, he was a weapon being preserved.

Samson lost his place in the side after a poor run in a bilateral series against New Zealand in January.



However, the star opener returned before India's game against Zimbabwe in Chennai. The loss to South Africa exposed a structural imbalance in India's top order, with three left-handers in Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan and Tilak Varma. Samson's return restored symmetry. Left, right, left.

"I have conversations with everyone. The most important thing is the guys who are part of the squad are world-class players, and that's why they're representing the country. We always knew the talent that Sanju had. He has three T20 hundreds. Not many

people have that," he said.

"He had a tough series against New Zealand. Sometimes it's important to give him a break as well because you want to get the guy out of that pressure situation. We always knew that whenever we needed him in a World Cup game, he would deliver.

"Against Zimbabwe, he delivered. We got the start we wanted in the first three overs. Today again, from where he left against Zimbabwe, he showcased his talent. This is what we expect from Sanju more consistently."

When asked about Samson's footwork and acceleration, Gambhir char-

acteristically pivoted away from spectacle. He refused to frame it as an explosion. Instead, he reframed it as control. Mastery without visible force.

Samson hit 12 boundaries and four sixes and remained unbeaten on 97 as India chased 196 in 19.2 overs to seal their place in the semi-finals.

Gambhir recognised the anatomy of the innings instantly. He understood its restraint, its pacing, its refusal to panic. Few understand the architecture of a World Cup chase better than him. After all, he had constructed India's most defining one himself: a match-shaping 97 in the 2011 World

## Ganguly backs Samson as white-ball regular

Kolkata: Former captain Sourav Ganguly on Monday backed Sanju Samson to feature consistently in India's white-ball squads and expressed surprise at the criticism about the swash-buckling keeper-batter in the run-up to the T20 World Cup.

Samson smashed an unbeaten 97 off 50 balls to anchor India's 196-run chase in what was a virtual quarterfinal against the West Indies here on Sunday.

Terming it an outstanding knock, Ganguly said: "He's a very good player. He should consistently play for India in white-ball cricket -- 100 per cent.

Cup final that turned pressure into permanence.

"I actually thought he never accelerated the innings. It was just very normal cricketing shots. I never saw him muscling the ball," Gambhir said.

## I take blame as captain: Hope after WI exit from T20 World Cup

KOLKATA

Taking responsibility for the West Indies' elimination from the T20 World Cup, skipper Shai Hope said he should have batted faster at the top to post a more challenging target for India in their must-win Super Eight game in Kolkata.

Defending champions India chased down a fairly stiff 196-run target to knock the former winners out of the tournament at the Eden Gardens on Sunday.

The visitors appeared at least 20 runs short as Hope ate up 33 balls for his 32, striking at just over 96, including 17 dot balls that probably cost them heavily in a high-scoring contest.

"Yes, I'll take the blame. I should have batted a lot faster - if that's what you want me to say," said Hope in the post-match media interaction without dodging any tough question, here on Sunday.

"When you're leading, you want to put your hand up and set the tone at the top. It didn't happen for me today. I just didn't get going today," he conceded.

"But in situations like this, when you're struggling, everyone struggles. But I don't think I was batting badly." India had the perfect plan to tighten the marauding Windies after Suryakumar Yadav opted to



bowl. He went in with Arshdeep Singh, Hardik Pandya and Axar Patel in the powerplay and they did their job, keeping Hope quiet early.

It was then that mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy, held back deliberately for the middle phase, bowled him with a delivery that skidded through to rattle the stumps.

Though opener Roston Chase's acceleration and the late flourish from Rovman Powell and Jason Holder lifted West Indies to 195/4, the total felt under-par on a good Eden surface with dew aiding the chase.

Hope, however, said the shortfall of runs was not for lack of intent.

"It was a bit of both. I hit a few fielders and they bowled well. As much as you'd love to hit every ball for six, it doesn't happen. It's just that I was hitting the fielders and then trying to play the situation a bit more.

## India experience to aid NZ: Mitchell

KOLKATA

New Zealand don't make things bigger than they are, said Daryl Mitchell on Monday, adding that the Kiwis will rely on their recent experience of playing in India for the T20 World Cup semifinal.

New Zealand will take on the last edition's runners-up South Africa in the first semifinal to be played at the Eden Gardens here on Wednesday, and Mitchell said the Kiwis have complete clarity over how they want to operate.

"We're pretty clear how we want to operate as Black Caps and that's both on and off the field. We don't make things bigger than what they are, but we're also very excited to be in this position and know how lucky we are to be here in a semifinal," Mitchell told New Zealand Cricket.

"Just looking forward to getting stuck into the contest, trying to win little moments is something that we



constantly speak about and hopefully that means we're heading off to a final in a few days' time," Mitchell said.

New Zealand have been in India since the start of the year having played a three-match ODI and a five-match T20I series across various venues in the build-up to the showpiece.

Mitchell said New Zealand will look to bank on that experience.

"We've spent a bit of time here in India in the last two months and I guess we know what conditions we'll be coming up with," said

Mitchell as the Kiwis returned from Sri Lanka after playing a few games in the island nation.

"It'll be different to what we've experienced in the last fortnight in Sri Lanka. But also I think guys will trust the preparation that we've had over the last few months and just looking forward to getting stuck in."

"I would say the Sri Lankan surfaces were a lot slower and a lot lower and got it quite difficult towards the back end of innings." New Zealand had earlier lost their group stage clash to South Africa by seven wickets.

"They've been one of the best teams in the competition for a reason and they are where they are, so we're really excited to take them on. Even here in Kolkata in the semifinal of the World Cup." "Both teams are doing everything they can to try and move on to the next stage. For me, it's just going to be really cool to get into a full crowd at Eden Gardens. It's always pretty special," Mitchell added.

## Bumrah wins 'Impact Player of the Match'

NEW DELHI

India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah was adjudged the 'Impact Player of the Match' after a decisive spell helped India maintain the West Indies to a chaseable target before Sanju Samson's unbeaten 97 helped the defending champions secure a crucial victory in their T20 World Cup clash on Sunday at Eden Gardens in Kolkata.

Bumrah returned figures of 2/36 from his four overs. While the numbers may not fully reflect his influence, the timing of his breakthroughs proved pivotal. In the 12th over of the innings, with the West Indies looking to accelerate, Bumrah struck twice, removing the dangerous Shimron Hetmyer and Roston Chase, to derail the Caribbean side's momentum and tilt the contest firmly in



India's favour.

Presenting the medal, India's fielding coach T Dilip lauded the team's collective intensity while singling out Bumrah for his composure in decisive phases.

"Brilliant stuff, brilliant effort,

well done. We're a gun team and today we showed with our intent what it means to be that. That's what the play was today. Today's game reminds me of my favourite quote: 'The strength of the team is each individual, and the

strength of each individual is the team." Today we represented that through care and belief everytime we did that. Outstanding efforts. The impact player goes to someone who owns the big moments most of the times with his calm face and deadly execution. He's none other than Jasprit Bumrah," he said while presenting the medal to the pacer.

Bumrah, in turn, credited his teammates for holding their nerve during the chase and ensuring India crossed the line without panic, as he said, "Thank you so much. Special mention to Dube as well, the two fours that he hit didn't let the pressure come into our team. So yeah, special mention to him. Tilak also played a great knock, not taking away anything from him but yes, come the big day we're off to get together and hopefully do well in Mumbai. Cheers."

## offgrid

## No handshake policy doesn't look good if you're looking at it from outside'

triumph in India last year. The diminutive batter, who has never shied away from speaking on social issues, also strongly advocated for equal opportunities for all in his country and stressed on the sport's power to unite.

"Yeah it (no handshake policy) doesn't look good right if you're looking at it from the outside. It doesn't look good for the game of cricket, at the end of the day it's a gentleman's game, that's what we've grown up with, a certain behaviour that is expected of us..." he said.

"...but like I said that is from the outside. I am not not versed with the politics

between India and Pakistan so I can't speak to that point of view but I think as a spectator who's just looking at it as it is without the full context, it doesn't hold well for the game of cricket," added the 35-year-old.

**Landmark WTC win fuels belief of T20 WC squad**  
South Africa's Test series win in India after 25 years came after the drought ending ICC WTC title at Lord's in June. The achievements in the last 12 months have helped the Proteas' shed the long-standing chokers' tag. Aiden Markram, Kagiso Rabada, Marco Jansen, Lungi Ngidi, Tristan Stubbs - they were all part of the



## Global phenomena behind India's spin struggles

South Africa spinners Simon Harmer and Keshav Maharaj out-bowled their Indian counterparts in the Test series last year. That was the red-ball format but Indian batters have found it challenging against the slower bowlers even in white ball cricket including the ongoing T20 showpiece at home. Bavuma feels the "attack first" option against the spinners in the modern game has taken precedence over the classical defence. "In the modern game, the attacking part of the game has been over-emphasized... I mean Test cricket is

victorious WTC campaign and they are in India too on a mission.

South Africa are the team to beat in the ongoing T20 World Cup and have emerged as hot favourites for the title after the heart-

breaking loss to India in the 2024 edition's final in Barbados.

"...the confidence, the belief that we've done it before, we've gotten over the line there's guys who were there at the WTC final who

are here within the T20 side. The experience of this T20 team from the 2024 World Cup, the hurt that would have come with not being able to go over the line that would have definitely been part of their motivation to make sure that things go their way this time.

"All the ingredients are there for the guys to go all the way. The fact that the guys are undefeated in the World Cup speaks volumes and they've really played good cricket from a batting point of view, from a bowling point of view, the guys have really been on top," Bavuma said ahead of the semifinal against NZ on March 4.

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