

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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

Briefs

DANTEWADA

63 Naxals surrender in Chhattisgarh

As many as 63 Naxals, 36 of them carrying a collective bounty of over Rs 1.19 crore, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Friday, a senior police official said. The cadres, including 18 women, turned themselves in before senior police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officials here under 'Poona Margem' (from rehabilitation to social reintegration) initiative. Dantewada Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai said.

LUCKNOW

Leyland launches EV factory

Ashok Leyland on Friday deepened its electric mobility play with the launch of its integrated electric vehicle manufacturing plant in Lucknow, giving Uttar Pradesh its first dedicated electric bus factory and adding a key node to the company's expanding green mobility network. The facility, located in Sarojini Nagar, was inaugurated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh along with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Heavy Industries Minister HD Kumaraswamy. In its initial phase, the Lucknow plant has an annual capacity of 2,500 vehicles, which will be scaled up to 5,000 units in subsequent phases.

-Biswajeet Banerjee

DEHRADUN

Bhandari murder: CM for CBI probe

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Friday recommended a CBI inquiry into the 2022 murder of 19-year-old resort receptionist Ankita Bhandari, and said that the state government's intention is completely clear that no fact or evidence will be overlooked. Dhami announced that during a recent meeting with Ankita's father, Virendra Singh Bhandari, and mother, Soni Devi, met him and handed him a letter demanding an enquiry by CBI into the case under the supervision of a Supreme Court judge.

Power Research Inst official held

The CBI on Friday arrested in Bengaluru Central Power Research Institute Joint Director Rajaram Mohan Rao Chennu in an alleged bribery case of Rs 9.5 lakh, officials said. During searches at his residence, CBI seized cash worth over Rs. 3.59 crore, foreign currency worth over Rs 4 lakh. It is alleged that Chennu was indulging in corrupt activities and receiving bribes for issuing favourable test reports in respect of the electrical equipment produced by a private company named Sudhir Group of Companies.

UPPING THE ANTE | Day after ED raids, Bengal CM leads mega rally in Kolkata while her party lawmakers protest in Delhi

Mamata hits the streets

KOLKATA

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday hit the streets protesting against Enforcement Directorate (ED)'s raid at I-PAC head Prateek Jain's residence and office.

Addressing the media after walking from Jadavpur 8 B bus stand to Hazra more, Mamata said that she did nothing wrong.

"I did nothing wrong on Thursday. I had got the news and rang Prateek. He didn't take the call so I visited his residence and took away my party's documents and the central agency was planning to steal them. My party is my everything. If I cannot save my party, how can I fight for the common people. I need a platform," said Mamata.

Taking potshots at Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Mamata said that she has proof that the proceeds of the coal pilferage scam goes to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders in Delhi.

"I have every document saved in pen drives. I haven't made anything public as I love my country. If I make them public, it will create huge chaos across the world," further stated the West Bengal Chief Minister.

Meanwhile, several TMC MPs were detained while staging a protest outside the Home Ministry's office here on Friday against alleged misuse of probe agencies by the Centre.



Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee leads a protest march accompanied by party leaders against the Enforcement Directorate's searches linked to political consultancy firm I-PAC, in Kolkata, on Friday

Courtroom crowded, no HC hearing

The hearing at Calcutta High Court on the high-profile case on the issue of the ED's simultaneous raid and search operations at the office of the I-PAC at Salt Lake and at the residence of its co-founder Pratik Jain in central Kolkata could not happen on Friday because of excessive crowd within the courtroom. The next date of the hearing before the single-judge bench of Justice Suvra Ghosh has been scheduled for January 14.

Key role in Sabarimala gold heist? Probe team arrests the chief priest

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

information suggesting that it was the Tantri who brought Unnikrishnan Potty to Sabarimala and enabled his continued presence and standing. Employees attached to Sabarimala have provided statements asserting that Potty's influence within the temple establishment stemmed from the Tantri's backing. These testimonies, investigators said, pointed to an internal facilitation rather than an isolated act by the prime accused.

Investigators said the arrest followed statements and material indicating that the Tantri played a pivotal role in facilitating the entry and influence of the prime accused, Unnikrishnan Potty, within the Sabarimala temple system. The SIT, operating under judicial supervision, has been examining the chain of access and authority that enabled the alleged offence and the movement of gold linked to the shrine.

According to officials familiar with the probe, the investigation team gathered

information suggesting that it was the Tantri who brought Unnikrishnan Potty to Sabarimala and enabled his continued presence and standing. Employees attached to Sabarimala have provided statements asserting that Potty's influence within the temple establishment stemmed from the Tantri's backing. These testimonies, investigators said, pointed to an internal facilitation rather than an isolated act by the prime accused.

The SIT has also concluded that the Tantri paved the way for Potty to function as a sponsor, a role that allegedly helped the latter gain legitimacy and access. The arrest adds a new dimension to the case because of the Tantri's formal association with the temple administration. Officials said Rajeevvaru draws a salary from the Travancore Devaswom Board, bringing him within the ambit of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Non-veg food banned around Ram temple

AYODHYA

informed about the decision and warned of strict action in case of violations.

The decision has triggered a fresh debate in Ayodhya, with sections of people welcoming the move while others have opposed it. Those against the order argue that what a person eats should be a matter of individual choice, while supporters say the ban is necessary to maintain the religious and cultural sanctity of the temple town.

Hotel owners, guest houses, home stays and online food delivery companies have been formally

What is Didi trying to hide, questions BJP

NEW DELHI

material. Prasad said the CM's conduct was "irresponsible and unconstitutional" and noted that "what happened in Bengal has never happened before in independent India; that a sitting CM threatened ED officials, snatched papers and walked out of there."

The BJP leader further argued that "this raid was neither at Mamata Banerjee's home, nor at her office, nor at the TMC office, nor at the home of any TMC leader or minister... This raid was on a private consultancy firm where complaints of money laundering worth crores of rupees had been received."

Addressing a press conference, former Union Law Minister and senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad slammed Banerjee for reaching the I-PAC office when the raid was on and taking away some

"In such a situation," he said, "Mamata Banerjee goes there, her police officers go there, they threaten the ED officials."



freeze mode

A man walks past icicles hanging from a structure amid heavy frost and snow cover during a cold wave in the valley, in Anantnag district, Jammu and Kashmir, on Friday - PTI

DKS made Assam poll in-charge

BENGALURU

In a silent move, the Congress high command has hinted at postponement of handling the leadership tussle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar, by assigning the latter to oversee forthcoming general elections to Assam Assembly.

Since the five state elections, including Assam, are scheduled to be held in April, the leadership change will not be possible before that period.

DK Shivakumar, who was waiting for the leadership change before Sankranti, which falls on January 14, has to wait for three more months before initiating any activity. Even after that, the party decision would depend on

Shaksgam Valley is ours: MEA sends out message to China

NEW DELHI

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal made it clear that India did not recognise the infrastructure projects being carried out by China in Shaksgam Valley, as it regards that area as Indian territory.

"The Shaksgam Valley is Indian territory. We have never recognised the so-called China-Pakistan boundary agreement that happened in 1963. We have consistently maintained that the agreement is illegal and invalid," he said.

Jaiswal added, "We do not recognise the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) either, which passes through Indian territory that is under the forcible and illegal occupation of Pakistan."

The MEA spokesperson stated that India had conveyed its objections to China. "We have consistently protested with the Chinese side against attempts to alter the ground reality in Shaksgam

Valley. We further reserve the right to take necessary measures to safeguard our interests."

Jaiswal's reaction came after media reports indicated that China is actively building a long road in the Shaksgam area, located north of Siachen.

The MEA spokesperson also confirmed that India was closely following developments in South America, he said. "We don't have a very big community there. We have a small community of around 50 people in Venezuela, and we have around 650 people in Colombia. Our embassies are in close touch with them."

The MEA spokesperson also responded to a question of increased attacks on the minority community in Bangladesh. "We continue to witness a disturbing pattern of recurring attacks on minorities as well as their homes and business establishments by extremists in Bangladesh. Such communal incidents need to be dealt with swiftly and firmly."

Do your work, NYC mayor told



MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated that New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani should "focus on his own responsibilities" rather than "express his personal prejudices." The remarks were made in the context of a tweet shared by Umar Khalid's friend Banjojotsma Lahiri. In the brief handwritten message addressed to Khalid, Mamdani wrote, "Dear Umar, I think of your words on bitterness often and the importance of not letting it consume one's self. We are all thinking of you."

Rahul alleges corruption, says BJP is 'Bhrashtha Janata Party'

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday lashed out at the BJP for allegedly spreading "corruption, abuse of power and the poison of arrogance" across the country through its "double-engine

governments" and said the party's abbreviation actually stood for "Bhrashtha Janata Party".

In a long post on "X", Gandhi vented his emotions on a variety of issues which he claimed demonstrated the BJP's politics. "In their system, the lives of the

poor, helpless, labourers, and middle class are mere statistics, and in the name of 'development', an extortion racket is running," he charged.

He also raised the issue of the brutal murder of Ankita Bhandari in BJP-ruled Uttarakhand, saying it has "shaken the entire nation".

Cong terms Centre lifting curbs on Chinese firms 'calibrated capitulation'

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday claimed that the Centre was now proposing to lift five-year-old curbs on Chinese companies bidding for Indian government contracts and termed the move "calibrated capitulation", saying it comes just around eight months after China gave full military backing to Pakistan during Operation Sindo.

Raising the issue, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said for its actions during Operation Sindo, China was even described by Deputy Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Rahul R Singh as one of India's "adversaries".

From the beginning, Shivakumar depended on the party high command, especially Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi to keep up the promise and stand by the power sharing agreement.

Terming India's change of stance as "humiliating kowtowing", Ramesh said this has happened even as Indian troops are denied access to traditional patrolling areas. China maintains its heavy military presence in eastern Ladakh, continues to provoke on Arunachal Pradesh, and builds the Medog dam on the Brahmaputra.

The Congress leader added that the move to allow Chinese companies to bid for Indian government contracts followed earlier decisions that allowed their firms to invest in India's electronics

14 killed, 33 injured as bus falls into Himachal gorge

NAHAN (HP)



Fourteen people were killed and over 33 injured after a private bus fell into a 500-foot deep gorge in Himachal Pradesh's Sirmaur district on Friday afternoon, officials said.

The accident occurred when the bus en route from Shimla to Kupri via Rajgarh veered off the road and plunged into the gorge and landed upside down near Haripurh village, around

95 kilometres from the district headquarters, Nahan.

The seating capacity of the private bus was 39, and the bus was overloaded, they said.

Sangrah Sub-divisional Magistrate (SDM) Sunil Kayath, who is at the spot supervising the rescue operation, said the rescue operation is going on war footing and the injured were being rushed to nearby Sangrah and Dadahu hospitals.

Expressing grief over the accident, Chief Minister Sukhu Singh Sukhu, in a statement issued here, directed district authorities to provide all possible aid to next of kin of those killed in the accident and ensure best medical care to injured. Union health Minister JP Nadda, Leader of the Opposition in Himachal Assembly Jai Ram Thakur and state BJP chief Rajiv Bindal, Shimla BJP MP Suresh Kashyap and Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri also expressed grief on the tragedy.



Tiger shifted to Mukundra from Ranthambore

Jaipur: To increase the tiger population in Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve in Kota, the forest department of Rajasthan successfully translocated tiger T-2408 from Ranthambore on Friday. The relocation was carried out after following all protocols. With this, the number of tigers in Mukundra has reached six. Deputy Conservator of Forest (DCF), Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, Manas Singh said the forest department had been tracking the four-year-old tiger for several days. -Manish Godha

Mobility banned in all Corbett zone safaris

Registered tour guides, gypsy drivers, naturalists and even staff of hotels and lodges located in the core zone will also be barred from carrying mobile phones. Mishra said strict penal action will be taken against those violating the rule. Wildlife experts and nature guides have long raised concerns over the safety and ecological risks posed by unrestricted mobile phone use inside the reserve. They say

DEHRADUN

Tourists visiting Corbett Tiger Reserve will no longer be allowed to carry mobile phones during jungle safaris in any tourism zone of the park. The decision has been taken to comply with a Supreme Court order directing authorities to minimise human interference in natural wildlife habitats. However, visitors will be per-

Chief Minister Yogi's visit to Prayagraj today

He will take a dip in the Sangam, attend a gathering of saints, and review development projects

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will be on a one-day visit to Prayagraj today.

According to the scheduled program, the Chief Minister will arrive in Prayagraj at 10:20 AM. He will participate in bathing and worship at the Sangam and attend a gathering of saints. After arriving in Prayagraj, the Chief Minister will go directly to the Sangam and perform bathing and worship. Following this, he will visit the camp of Shri Jagadguru Mahamandaleshwar Santoshdas alias Satua Baba, where he will participate in the 726th birth anniversary celebrations



of Shri Jagadguru Ramanandacharya Bhagwan. Review meeting at ICCC at 2:05 PM, the Chief Minister will reach the ICCC auditorium and hold a review meeting on development projects and administrative matters. After the meeting, he will also interact with his colleagues and officials.

Inspection of the Law University

During his visit, the Chief Minister will visit

the Law University at 4:00 PM and gather information about its facilities and academic activities. Departure for Lucknow. After the completion of the scheduled programs, the Chief Minister will depart from Prayagraj for Lucknow. The administration has completed all preparations for the Chief Minister's visit, and extensive security arrangements have been made.

STATE

Uttar Pradesh Has Turned Its Potential into Reality: CM Yogi



Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said that Uttar Pradesh has successfully transformed its vast potential into concrete achievements, marking a decisive shift from the situation before 2017. Speaking at the inauguration of Ashok Leyland electric vehicle manufacturing plant, alongside Defence Minister and Lucknow MP Rajnath Singh, the Chief Minister said the state has moved from unrest to celebration due to strong governance and policy reforms. CM Yogi said the new EV plant reflects growing investor confidence and aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of

industrial growth with environmental sustainability. The facility, which will expand its annual capacity from 2500 to 5000 units, will generate large-scale employment and strengthen the state electric vehicle ecosystem.

Highlighting infrastructure and economic growth, the Chief Minister said Uttar Pradesh now leads in expressways, metro connectivity, rail networks, electronics manufacturing and ease of doing business. He added that the state contributes 9.5 percent to India's GDP and is on track to become a \$1 trillion economy by 2029-30, driven by decisive governance, investor-friendly policies and rapid industrial expansion.

G Ramji Scheme to Provide 125 Days of Guaranteed Employment

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. Uttar Pradesh's Water Resources Minister and Minister in charge of Prayagraj district, Swatantra Dev Singh, described the 'G Ramji Scheme' as a significant step in the development of rural India. Speaking at a press conference on the Developed India-G Ram Ji public awareness campaign in Prayagraj on Friday, the Water Resources Minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed India by 2047 will only be realized through the holistic development of villages. The Modi government is not just a government that talks about laborers and farmers, but one that places their hard work, their sweat, and their self-respect at the center of its policies. This act does not consider the laborer merely a worker; it considers them a nation-builder. The Water Resources Minister reiterated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed India by 2047 will only be realized through the overall development of villages. He described MNREGA as a hotbed of fake job cards, fraudulent payments, and irregularities for years. The BJP government, addressing these shortcomings, has passed the 'G Ramji Scheme' bill through the cabinet, under which villagers will get the right to 125 days of guaranteed employment. Earlier, this limit was only 100 days. He clarified that only unskilled work was carried out under MNREGA, which led to the possibility of fraudulent payments. Several investigations revealed fake job cards and fake beneficiaries. Additionally, irregularities worth Rs. 290 crore involving 10.91 lakh cases were uncovered.

Weekly Payments

The Water Resources Minister said that now there will be no need to wait 15 days for wages. Now, the value of the laborer's hard work will be paid weekly. It will be deposited directly into their bank account on time and with complete transparency. Provision has also been made for a work break during the crucial 60 days of sowing and harvesting. This will ensure that farmers have access to laborers on time and that agricultural activities never stop.

Bail Granted to Father of Company Director Accused of Fraud: FIR Registered in Shahpur, Gorakhpur, Court Provides Relief

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court has granted conditional bail to Jagjivan Chauhan, the father of a director of a company accused of fraud. The order was passed by a bench of Justice Arun Kumar Singh Deshwal. An FIR was registered at Shahpur police station in Gorakhpur, alleg-

ing offenses under Sections 319(2), 318(4), and 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita against the company.

The company was accused of luring investors with the promise of a 7% annual interest rate and then using the invested money to purchase properties for the directors. The accused filed a bail application. It was

argued that the petitioner is neither a director nor an employee of the company. He was implicated solely because he is the father of Sunil Singh, a director of the company, and occasionally visited the company premises. He has no criminal record and has been in jail since September 17, 2025. The court granted bail.

National Labour Party will not compromise on the respect of Guru Sahib- Neeraj

Lucknow

National President of the National Labour Party Neeraj Rai strongly condemned the wrong and objectionable remarks made by Aam Aadmi Party leader Atishi in the Delhi Assembly regarding Guru Sahib. He



said that such insensitive and insulting language not only hurts the sentiments of the Sikh community but also harms the religious unity of the country. Guru Sahib is not just a religious scripture for us, but a symbol of humanity, equality and brotherhood. The National Labour Party will not tolerate any kind of inappropriate language or remarks about him. We strongly demand that the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) take cognizance of this serious matter and issue an immediate legal notice against the concerned leader so that no one dares to play with religious sentiments from a sacred platform like the Parliament in the future.

The National Labour Party clarifies that it will not compromise on the respect of Guru Sahib and stands shoulder to shoulder with the Sikh community.

Waterlogging Disrupts Daily Life in Tisauri Village, Residents Appeal to SDM for Permanent Solution

Etah

The persistent problem of waterlogging in Tisauri village of the Aliganj area has severely disrupted normal life, causing widespread hardship for residents. Dirty stagnant water accumulated in village lanes has not only hampered movement but has also heightened the risk of infectious diseases, triggering growing concern among villagers. Fed up with the long-standing issue, villagers jointly submitted a memorandum to Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Aliganj, Jagmohan Gupta, seeking an immediate and permanent solution. Residents informed the administration that the lane near the village primary school remains waterlogged throughout the year due to the absence of a proper drainage system. Wastewater from nearby houses collects in the lane, making it extremely difficult for people to pass through. School children are the worst affected, as they have to use the same lane daily to reach school. Several children have reportedly slipped and sustained injuries.

The situation becomes even more alarming as wastewater from Primary School Tisauri flows through the school premises, creating unhygienic conditions and posing serious health risks to students. Villagers alleged that despite repeated complaints to the village head Sushma Devi



and village head representative Rajbhan, no concrete steps were taken and only assurances were given. Complaints were also lodged multiple times on the IGRS Portal and the matter was raised before the SDM and the Block Development Officer, but no lasting solution has been implemented so far. According to residents, although officials visited the site once in the past, the inspection remained merely a formality with no action taken for drain cleaning or construction.

This has led to increasing resentment among villagers against the administration. The villagers have demanded the construction of a permanent covered drain connecting the village to a pond located about 200 meters away, which would ensure smooth disposal of wastewater and permanently eliminate waterlogging. They

believe this step would significantly improve sanitation and public health in the village. Prominent villagers including Deshraj, Usha Devi Valmiki, Rajveer, Sauran Singh, Advocate Arjun Dubey, Shivam, Sohram Singh, Sanjeev Kumar, Hemant, Udayveer and others reiterated their concerns before the SDM. Deshraj said that water remains stagnant near the primary school at all times, making it difficult for children to attend school safely. Usha Devi Valmiki highlighted the foul smell and mosquito menace caused by stagnant water, endangering children and elderly residents. Rajveer added that during the rainy season the lane turns into a pond, causing maximum inconvenience to pedestrians and schoolchildren. Sauran Singh warned that if the issue is not resolved soon, villagers may be forced to launch a protest. Advocate Arjun Dubey termed the situation a result of administrative negligence, calling it extremely serious that wastewater passes through a school campus. He emphasized that constructing a drain up to the pond is the only practical solution. Responding to the matter, SDM Aliganj Jagmohan Gupta stated that based on the complaint received, necessary instructions have been issued to the Block Development Officer and the problem will be resolved at the earliest.

Monthly Review Meeting and Training Workshop of AHT and SJPU Held in Etah



Under the directions of Senior Superintendent of Police Etah Shyam Narayan Singh and the able supervision of Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Yogendra Singh a monthly review meeting and training workshop of the Anti Human Trafficking (AHT) Unit and the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) was organized on Friday at the auditorium of the Police Lines. The programme was chaired by Circle Officer Sadar Sankaldeep Kushwaha. During the meeting, interaction was held with Child Welfare Police Officers from various Police stations and other concerned staff members.

from various police stations. Detailed discussions were conducted on social evils such as child labour, substance abuse, child marriage and child begging and necessary guidelines were issued for their effective prevention. Special emphasis was laid on conducting public awareness campaigns to curb these practices at the grassroots level. As part of the workshop, all present officers and staff were administered an oath to actively work towards the prevention of child labour, child begging, substance abuse and child marriage with the objective

Magh Mela: A Captivating Confluence of Folk, Classical, and Devotional Music at Kala Sangam

The program began with a performance by the famous sitar player Rajesh Shah and his team from Varanasi



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. On Thursday, at the Kala Sangam cultural program organized by the Culture Department of Uttar Pradesh as part of the Magh Mela, the audience had the opportunity to witness a wonderful blend of folk songs, dance-dramas, and classical music. Held at the Ganga Pandal in Sector-3 Parade Ground, the soulful performances by renowned artists captivated the audience. The program began with a performance by the famous sitar player Rajesh Shah and his team from Varanasi. They presented a sitar recital based on the Raga Yaman in medium and fast tempos. Following this, the atmosphere became devotional with the melodious tunes of compositions like "Payo Ji Maine Ram Ratan Dhan



"Payo" and "Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye." Next, the renowned classical singer Shivani Shukla from Varanasi

presented a short Khyal in Raga Kalavati in Madhya Teen Taal. She enthralled the audience with devotional



songs such as "Rama Rama Ratte," "Chal Chali Guiyan Ganga," and "Bhajan Kar Ramwa Ram Ram

Raghurai." The renowned folk artist Swati Srivastava and her team from Lucknow presented a captivating dance

based on Badhwa folk songs. Their performances on "Papanashini Hey Gange," "Jug-Jug Jiyo Sulallanwa Ho," and "Holiya Mein Ude Re Gulal" were highly appreciated by the audience. Meanwhile, the famous Bhojpuri folk singer Anubha Rai and her team from Ballia immersed the audience in a sea of emotions with their renditions of songs like "Amwa Amwa Ki Jhumein Dariya," "Kahe Le Aila Nathiya Udhur Balma," "Ware Balamwa Se Na Agle," and "Ganga Maiyya Dheere Baha." At the conclusion of the program, all the artists and their associates were honored with shawls and certificates by Nodal Officer Subhash Chandra Yadav, Ghulam Sarwar, Regional Tourism Officer Aparajita, and District President of Sanskar Bharati, Sushil Khare.

ASHA Workers Protest, Submit Memorandum to CM, Strike Continues Since December 15, Demanding Permanent Status and Negotiations

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. On Friday, hundreds of ASHA workers protested to press for their pending demands. Following a statewide call by the Uttar Pradesh ASHA Workers Union (AICCTU), ASHA workers marched from Balsan Chowk to the Divisional Commissioner's office and submitted a memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister to the Divisional Commissioner. During the protest, slogans such as "Strike continuing since December 15, Yogi government should hold talks" were raised. AICCTU State Secretary Anil Verma said that ASHA workers



across the state have been on an indefinite strike since December 15. He said that on December

23, the government had assured them that their demands would be considered and negotiations

would be held, but no concrete steps have been taken so far. Verma also alleged that, on the

contrary, there are reports of ASHA workers being intimidated, threatened, and harassed. Prayagraj Divisional President Rekha Maurya termed a statement by the Deputy Chief Minister as objectionable, saying that it has angered ASHA workers and working women in the state.

AICCTU District Secretary Devanand said that ASHA and Sangini workers have not been paid their pending incentive amounts since 2019. Despite their contributions to campaigns like Ayushman Bharat, Golden Card, and ABHA ID, approximately Rs. 225 crore in payments are still outstanding. Through the memorandum, the

ASHA workers presented 15 demands. These include payment of pending dues, implementation of minimum wage, granting government employee status to ASHA and ASHA Sangini workers, EPF-ESI, gratuity, Rs. 10 lakh health insurance, and Rs. 50 lakh life insurance. In addition, they demanded better working conditions, an honorarium of Rs. 21,000 for ASHA workers and Rs. 28,000 for ASHA Sangini workers, and travel allowance or a scooter. Leaders of AISA, RYA, and CPI (ML) also extended their support to the protest. Hundreds of ASHA workers from all districts of the division participated in the protest.

KDC Deputy Principal Honored for Efficient Conduct of Examinations

Braihach
Professor Dr. Muhammad Usman, the Deputy Principal of Kisan Post Graduate College, an autonomous institution, was honored for efficiently conducting examinations at the college for the past two decades. Dr. Usman has been successfully handling the responsibility of conducting examinations not only at his own college but also at other colleges for nearly twenty years

Two Wanted Accused Arrested in Handia, Stolen Battery, Inverter, Motorcycle, and Cash Recovered

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The Sarai Mamrej police of Prayagraj Commissionerate have arrested two wanted accused. The accused have been identified as Mohd. Latif son of Nanhe alias Mohd. Yaqub and Mohd. Yasin son of Mohd. Raza. Both are residents of Chhatauna village (Katra), Sarai Mamrej police station area. The arrests were made on January 9, 2026, within the police station limits. Police recovered Rs. 1,860 in cash, a battery, an inverter, a weighing scale, and a motorcycle without a number plate from the possession of the accused. These two accused were wanted in cases number 06/2026 and 09/2026, registered under sections 331(4)/305(a) of the Indian Penal Code, at Sarai Mamrej police station. According to the police, the arrested accused broke into a grocery store in Katra Chhatauna and stole Rs. 4,500 and other items. They also broke into the Panchayat Bhawan in Katehari and stole a battery, an inverter, and a weighing scale. Based on the arrests and recoveries, sections 317(2)(2)(30) of the Indian Penal Code have been added to both cases, and further legal action is being taken as per the rules. The arrest team included Sub-Inspector Amarendra Singh, Sub-Inspector Manish Pandey, Constable Sandeep Yadav, Constable Ashish Yadav, and Constable Ramashray Yadav.

Criminal Case Stayed in Police Custody Death Case: High Court Seeks Response from Complainant and State Government

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court has stayed the criminal proceedings against Hemant Soni alias Chintu of Sipri Bazaar police station area in Jhansi, which were underway in the court of the Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) of Jhansi, and has sought a response from the complainant and the state government on the petition. This order was passed by a single-judge bench of Justice S.K. Pachauri after hearing the petitioner's advocate. The petitioner stated that he had complained to the Director General of Police (DGP) on September 26, 2021, regarding a death in police custody at the police station. Angered by this, the police officers, in collusion with the complainant Ravindra Kushwaha, registered a false FIR against the petitioner for an incident that had occurred five months earlier. The court took cognizance of the police report and issued a summons to the petitioner. The case proceedings have been challenged in the petition on the grounds that the police, in a conspiracy, filed a false complaint against the petitioner. The court considered the issue debatable and issued a notice to the complainant, seeking a response.

Two arrested for spreading misinformation on social media, tarnishing the sanctity of the Magh Mela

Police maintain a close watch on cybercrime and the spread of misinformation on social media

Action will be taken against those spreading misinformation on social media

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: The police are keeping a close watch on cybercrime and the spread of misinformation and rumors on social media. The Magh Mela 2026 is underway in a grand manner, with devotees arriving for a holy dip at the Sangam and considering themselves blessed. The police administration is working diligently to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the ongoing Magh Mela 2026, ensuring a peaceful event. The police are fully committed to their duties for the upcoming Makar Sankranti, Basant Panchami, and other main bathing festi-



vals. Police teams have been deployed at all key points within the police station areas connected to the Mela grounds. The police are determined to prevent any tarnishing of the image of the ongoing Magh Mela 2026, and strict action will be taken against anyone spreading misinformation on social media or through any other means. A similar case was reported on Friday, where two individ-

uals, Pradeep Kumar, son of Suresh Chandra Sahu, 25 years old, from Tilokhara Sikandara village, Baharia police station, and Chandan Kumar, son of Jai Prakash Sharma, 26 years old, from Muraut, Kishanpur Ratwara police station, Madhepura district, Bihar, were arrested by the Cyber Crime Police Station for spreading misinformation on social media and tarnishing the sanctity of the

Magh Mela 2026. One Apple and one Android mobile phone were recovered from their possession. Both accused were arrested, and further legal action is being taken.

It was revealed that both accused were doing this to gain fame, earn money, and increase their views/followers. The police's prompt action led to the arrest of both individuals.

India should do more than just watch US-China chip war

The outgoing Joe Biden administration has been unusually active in recent weeks, making significant decisions with long-term implications. These include lifting certain restrictions on Ukraine and imposing stricter trade measures on China. The structural effects of these moves will become evident in 2025 and beyond. As recently as early December, the administration delivered its third major blow to China's semiconductor industry. This effort seeks to curtail China's ability to access and produce advanced chips that could support artificial intelligence for military purposes or pose risks to the United States' national security. For India, these developments are not merely a geopolitical spectacle but hold direct strategic relevance. Beyond observing this unfolding competition, New Delhi has an opportunity to assess its role in helping the US build resilience in semiconductor production and supply chains amid the intensifying "chip war." The US has maintained dominance in the semiconductor industry since Silicon Valley pioneered the technology. Over time, however, East Asian nations such as Taiwan and Japan emerged as key manufacturing hubs, incentivised by government subsidies. As Chris Miller highlights in his book *Chip Wars: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology*, this evolution allowed the US to establish critical business and strategic alliances in a region vulnerable to Russian influence during the Cold War. In the current Cold War-style rivalry between the US and China, these alliances remain crucial in countering Beijing's ambitions for a unipolar Asia. China, while not a leader in manufacturing advanced semiconductors, holds a commanding position in the production and supply of critical rare earth minerals, accounting for 70 per cent of global output. These minerals are essential for creating integrated circuits used in chips for civilian and military purposes. In response to US export restrictions, China has banned exports of key minerals such as gallium, germanium, and antimony, while tightening control over graphite, further complicating global supply chains. These minerals are essential components in making integrated circuits of chips, for both civilian and military applications. Despite its dominance in rare earth mining, China's position is not unassailable. First, the US is the second-largest producer of rare earth minerals globally. Second, China relies on US technology to process these minerals into complex semiconductors with game-changing capabilities. However, the Biden administration's efforts aim to prevent China from independently developing technology to control other parts of the semiconductor supply chain. While the Trump 1.0 administration adopted a hawkish stance on China, the Biden administration has taken robust measures to restrict Beijing's access to semiconductor technology. What plays in the US' favour is that China depends on foreign hardware and expertise to enhance its chip production capabilities. Indeed, this shows a fragile balance of dependencies. No conversation on chips can be complete without Taiwan. Taipei remains central to the global semiconductor industry, with its dominant chipmaker TSMC supplying a significant share of the world's semiconductors. The island's President has described this dominance as a "silicon shield," offering a degree of protection against China, which claims sovereignty over Taiwan. However, from the US perspective, Taiwan's role also creates vulnerability to supply chain disruptions, particularly as cross-strait tensions rise. To mitigate this risk, the Biden administration passed the CHIPS and Science Act in 2022, pledging nearly \$53 billion to boost US semiconductor manufacturing. While this move raised concerns in Taiwan about reduced American commitment to its defence, TSMC quickly responded by investing \$40

Hindus Hounded In Their Own Country

Sambhal, in western Uttar Pradesh, hit the headlines in late November when a court-order ASI survey of the early 16th century Babri Masjid in the township ran into trouble with the local Muslim populace, leading to a volatile situation. Protestors rained stones upon the police, leaving around two dozen personnel injured. Five Muslim youths, including a minor, were killed, allegedly in police firing on protesters, a charge that police vehemently denied. The autopsy discounted the culpability of police as the ammunition recovered from the bodies of victims was not used by the UP Police. The police have made a counter-claim of recovering empty cartridges of Pakistani origin from the spot. They claim that a day before the survey was scheduled to begin, Zia-ur-Rehman Barq, MP, Sambhal visited the mosque and delivered a provocative speech. An FIR registered by the police names him in addition to Sohail Mahmood, the son of local MLA Iqbal Mahmood, for inciting the mob through social media posts. An anti-encroachment drive was launched by the administration. This led to interesting revelations since then, that have shifted the discourse from early 16th century to late 20th century events. These revelations are equally suggestive. The local Hindus, who are a minority in the township, insist that the mosque was built by the Mughal invader Babur in 1526 by demolishing a temple of Lord Vishnu, originally erected by Prithviraj Chauhan in the 12th century. This belief appears deeply ingrained, though H.R. Nevill,



ICS, in the district gazetteer (1911), discounts the idea, arguing that Sikander Lodi, a known iconoclast, would not have allowed a Hindu shrine to occupy the loftiest site in his temporary capital (Moradabad: A Gazetteer, p. 147). While acknowledging that Babur visited Sambhal, Nevill attributes the construction of the mosque to his general, Hindu Beg, to which Babur set up an inscription. However, the revised Gazetteer of Moradabad (1968), written by Esha Basanti Joshi, IAS (Retd), presents a different view. She states that the town of Sambhal (originally perhaps Sambhalpura) stands on a series of scattered mounds, each said to mark the site of some ancient building or settlement. The highest of these mounds is known as the Kot (fort) and indicates the ruined site of the old fort of Sambhal, which was built before the advent of Muslims in the area.

The only building left standing on the site was once a Hari Mandir (a temple of Vishnu) but was later converted into a mosque (Gazetteer of India: Uttar Pradesh – Moradabad, p. 26). She bases her account on the description of A. Fuhrer in *Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the North-*

Western Provinces and Oudh (1891). Joshi informs us that Babur visited Sambhal on 2 October 1527 and stayed there for two days. Earlier, he had sent his general, Hindu Beg, to subjugate the Afghan governor of Sambhal, Qasim Sambhal, who was subsequently defeated (Gazetteer of India: Uttar Pradesh – Moradabad, p. 42). A recent WhatsApp wisecrack cuts through the Gordian knot of this debate, asking why Muslims would oppose an ASI survey unless there is something to hide from the public eye. Following the violence in Sambhal and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vow that no miscreant involved would be spared, the police and local administration sprang into action. A manhunt was launched to apprehend the culprits, while simultaneous drives against encroachment and electricity pilferage were undertaken. These efforts unexpectedly revealed two temples in Muslim-majority areas that had been closed for decades. The first discovery was a Shiva/Hanuman temple in Khaguri Sari, adjoining the Deepa Sarai locality. The temple had reportedly been closed for the past 46 years. This struck a chord in the collective memory of Sambhal, as it had been abandoned following the riots of March

1978, after which the Hindus vacated the locality. Bulldozers clearing encroachments near the temple uncovered three mutilated deity images from an adjacent well. Shortly thereafter, a closed Radha-Krishna temple was discovered in the Sarai Tareen locality. At the time of writing, a third temple, referred to as the Banke Bihari Temple, has come to light in Laxmanganj, Chandausi, within Sambhal district. It appears that the Hindu community withdrew from Laxmanganj as the Muslim population grew, leaving the temple abandoned. Meanwhile, in a related development, a neglected temple of Siddheshwar Mahadev was reopened in the Madanpura area of Varanasi. The temple was founded by Ajay Sharma, President of the Sanatan Raksha Dal. Although the temple's closure was reportedly not due to any dispute, it had fallen into disuse as Hindus withdrew from the area, which experienced a significant growth in the Muslim population. In almost all these temples, with help from the administration, daily rituals and bhajans have started. However, the long-term challenge remains sustaining these activities, given the demographic shifts that had initially alienated the Hindu community from these areas. Critics often accuse the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement, which culminated in the demolition of the abandoned Babri Mosque in Ayodhya (1992), of being catastrophic for communal peace and harmony in India. This raises the question: why did Hindus feel compelled to migrate from mixed localities

in Sambhal following the 1978 riots? What exactly transpired in Sambhal on 29 March 1978? According to the statement made by S.D. Patil, the then Minister of State for Home Affairs, in the Rajya Sabha on 23 November 1978 (unstarred question no. 301), Sambhal experienced severe communal disturbances on 29 March 1978. The unrest apparently began when some members of the Muslim community objected to Holi titles conferred by the student union of the local college upon two Muslim girls. This led to violent clashes accompanied by widespread looting and arson. Police had to resort to firing in three locations to control the mob. As per the minister, 17 people lost their lives, 33 were injured, and the estimated loss was around Rs 25 lakhs.

It might be noted, provided the minister's description is authentic, that the violence was not provoked by the sprinkling of colours or water on any unwilling individual during Holi. Instead, it was sparked by a cultural act performed by the student union of the local college. Holi, after all, is a cultural festival; it is not even Vande Mataram, which used to rule former Sambhal MP Shafiqur Rahman Barq so much that he walked out of Lok Sabha when the House was dissolved on May 8, 2013. B. Rajeshwari, in *Communal Riots in India: A Chronology 1947-2003*, notes that the Sambhal riots of 1978 were attributed to a bootlegging rivalry between Hindus and Muslims, with the latter allegedly seeking to dispossess Hindus of their property (p. 8).

Why are BJP leaders not giving preference to RSS chief on temple-mosque dispute?

Recently in the winter session of Parliament, Aam Aadmi Party leader and MP Sanjay Singh had told BJP leaders that your boys will do business with Qatari Muslims, will do business with Dubai Sheikhs, and here you will talk about violence against Muslims. If we have to have darshan, we go to Kashi, we go to Ujjain to have darshan of Mahakal, we go to Ayodhya to have darshan of Lord Ram, but if they have to have darshan of God, they go to the mosque. They are running Bharat Khodo Yojana in the country. Earlier, Sarsanghchalak i.e. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had also targeted the BJP governments' method of finding temples in mosques and clearly said in Pune that a new issue is being raised every day. Temples cannot be found under every mosque. Ram temple was a matter of faith. You cannot raise a new controversy every day. The RSS chief said that some people want to become leaders by raising new issues. This has become a means of leadership, it has become a shortcut. Majority and minority are all equal.

Everyone is equal and everyone has got fundamental rights to pursue their religion. Even before this, in the year 2022, the Sangh chief had said why to see Shivling in a mosque every day? There may be some centers of faith, but there cannot be a fight on every issue. Recently on December 12, the Supreme Court also ordered the lower courts that survey or any other effective order will not be passed in the existing cases. In pending cases, the courts will not pass any effective interim or final order till further notice. The Supreme Court had said that no new case will be heard, the courts will not register a new case. Survey will not be ordered. Actually, this order of the Supreme Court came after the violence in Sambhal over finding a temple in the mosque. The way the government staff in Sambhal started searching for the temple in the mosque and in the houses of Muslims, it is clear that the BJP governments are using the temple-mosque dispute to gain political advantage. And in Uttar Pradesh.

For the fundamentalist, secular is dirtiest of dirty words: Rushdie on The Satanic Verses fatwa

To stand in this house is to be reminded of what is most beautiful about religious faith: its ability to give solace and to inspire, its aspiration to these great and lovely heights, in which strength and delicacy are so perfectly conjoined. In addition, to be asked to speak here on this day, the fourth anniversary of the notorious fatwa of the late Imam Khomeini, is a particular honour. When I was an undergraduate at this college, between 1965 and 1968, the years of flower-power and student power, I would have found the notion of delivering an address in King's Chapel pretty far-out, as we used to say; and yet, such are the journeys of one's life that here I stand. I am grateful to the Chapel and the college for extending this invitation, which I take as a gesture of solidarity and support, support not merely for one individual but, much more importantly, for the high moral principles of human rights and human freedoms that the Khomeini edict seeks so brutally to attack. For just as King's Chapel may be taken as a symbol of what is best about religion, so the fatwa has become a symbol of what is worst. It feels all the more appropriate to be speaking here because it was while in my final year of reading history at Cambridge that I came across the story of the so-called satanic verses or temptation of the Prophet Muhammad, and of his rejection of that temptation. That year, I had chosen as one of my special subjects a paper on Muhammad, the rise of Islam, and the caliphate. So few students chose this option that the lectures were cancelled. The other students switched to different special subjects. However, I was anxious to continue, and Arthur Hibbert, one of the King's history dons, agreed to supervise me. So as it happened I was, I think, the only student in

Cambridge who took the paper. The next year, I'm told, it was not offered again. This is the kind of thing that almost leads one to believe in the workings of a hidden hand. The story of the 'satanic verses' can be found, among other places, in the canonical writings of the classical writer al-Tabari. He tells us that on one occasion the Prophet was given verses which seemed to accept the divinity of the three most popular pagan goddesses of Mecca, thus compromising Islam's rigid monotheism. Later he rejected these verses as being a trick of the devil saying that Satan had appeared to him in the guise of the Archangel Gabriel and spoken 'satanic verses.' Historians have long speculated about this incident, wondering if perhaps the nascent religion had been offered a sort of deal by the pagan authorities of the city, which was flirted with and then refused. I felt the story humanized the Prophet, and, therefore made him more accessible, more easily comprehensible to a modern reader, for whom the presence of doubt in a human mind, and human imperfections in a great man's personality, can only make that mind, that personality, more attractive. Indeed, according to the traditions of the Prophet, even the Archangel Gabriel was understanding about the incident, assuring him that such things had befallen all the prophets, and that he need not worry about what had happened. It seems that the Archangel Gabriel, and the God in whose name he spoke, was rather more tolerant than some of those who presently affect to speak in the name of God. Khomeini's fatwa itself may be seen as a set of modern satanic verses. In the fatwa, once again, evil takes on the guise of virtue; and the faithful are deceived. It's important to remember what the fatwa is.

India's GST system is now a mess. Those who designed it also are confused

Last Saturday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chaired a press conference following the conclusion of the 55th GST Council meeting. Through it, she inadvertently created a new term—'popcorn taxation'—and lakhs of memes. While this may seem like a trivialisation of GST, it actually lays bare how the system has now rebounded on its initial promise of bringing ease of doing business in the country. The Finance Minister's four-minute explanation on the taxation of popcorn highlighted how complex the sys-

tem has become. It shouldn't take anybody that much time to explain the applicable tax rates on a single product. Since then, GST has been ridiculed, derided, lamented about, and generally panned by laypeople and even former government officials who worked on its implementation. That is why India's Goods and Services Tax is ThePrint's Newsmaker of the Week. So, what is the issue behind GST on popcorn? You see, as per the taxman, depending on your taste preferences, popcorn can either be a namkeen (salty) or a

mithai (sweet) — forget that those two terms have never been used by anyone to refer to popcorn. Ready-to-eat popcorn, salted and spiced for taste, and sold loosely attracts a GST rate of 5 per cent. That same popcorn, if packaged and labelled, attracts a rate of 12 per cent. One wonders what happens if the vendor tears open the packet and sells loose popcorn to the customer. Perhaps the universe will explode, who knows? Things get even trickier when you talk about caramel popcorn. Those who prefer this

flavour will have to shell out 18 per cent GST, regardless of whether it is packaged or sold loose. Then some head to the movie hall and ask for salted and caramel popcorn mixed together. What happens to them? Over the week, one particular meme stood out among the lot. It was a picture of salted caramel popcorn packets with questions along the lines of: "What now, taxman?" What now, indeed. Most of the memes were at Sitharaman's expense, but she's just the face of the decisions.

When Hindu society is organized, the country progresses on the path of development—Prabhat



Ghazipur

A seven-day primary education camp of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was organized at Aral English School in the Bhadaura area of the district. The training camp was conducted for participants aged 15 to 60 years. It started on January 2nd and continued until January 9th. The chief guest at the closing ceremony, District Pracharak Prabhat, addressed the gathering and said that by providing training to the youth, who are the torchbearers of Indian culture, they

are playing a crucial role in organizing a civilized society and building a strong nation. Through the youth of the children and young adults' groups in the RSS branches, a large section of society is being organized, eradicating social evils and initiating new social change. This will enable the formation of a strong and well-organized Hindu society in the future and the creation of a self-reliant India as a strong nation.

He further stated that whenever Hindu society has been organized, the coun-

try has progressed on the path of development. Speaking about the centenary year of the Sangh, he shed light on topics such as the five pledges, family enlightenment, social harmony, Swadeshi (indigenous goods), environment, and civic duties. On this occasion, trainees, teachers and camp officials from across the district, including Jharkhand, District Karyavah Amit, Camp Karyavah Vipin, Co-Camp Karyavah Akash and heads of various departments Kundan, Manoj, Lav, Sandeep and others were present.

Lucknow

Inspired by MP Rajnath Singh, the Mamta Charitable Trust, dedicated to helping the poor and helpless, continues its ongoing program of distributing tricycles, assistive devices for the disabled and blankets in the capital. In this series, a camp for distributing assistive devices and blankets was organized on Friday in Gwari, Gomti Nagar. The camp was inaugurated by the chief guest, Provincial Propagandist Kaushal. He said that the Mamta Trust will complete 100 campaigns in the centenary year of the RSS. Mamta is a leading organization that has stood by the needy 24/7, whether it was providing rations during times of crisis, distributing sanitizers, masks and COVID kits throughout Lucknow, helping poor students or providing blood to patients admitted to

Mamta Trust to Complete 100

Campaigns in the Centenary Year: Provincial Propagandis



hospitals. BJP State General Secretary Sanjay Rai said that the Mamta Trust is working to wipe away the tears of the poor. Other organizations should learn from them. Thousands of beneficiaries benefited from the distribution of tricycles, assistive devices, crutches, canes, spectacles and blankets at the camp. The Trust founder president and BJP Awadh Regional Vice President Rajiv Mishra said that the Mamta Trust resolution is to complete 101 campaigns, embodying the principle of "service to humanity is service to God." We will always dedicate all our strength to alleviating their suffering, bringing happiness into their lives and making their lives dignified. We receive immense cooperation and support from the people of society in this work and all this is possible only because of the hard work, dedication and indomitable efforts of our volunteer workers.

On this occasion, Councillor Ramkrishna Yadav, Trust patron Rajesh Shukla, Treasurer Gaurav Pandey, Vice Presidents Jitesh Srivastava and Rajesh Mishra, Shashikant Shukla and many other dignitaries and local citizens were present.

DISHA Committee Meeting Held Under the Chairmanship of Union Minister Prof. S.P Singh Baghel

Etah

A key meeting of the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) Etah was held on Friday at the Collectorate Auditorium under the chairmanship of Union Minister of State (Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Panchayati Raj, Government of India) and Member of Parliament from Agra Prof. S.P Singh Baghel. Member of Parliament from Etah Devesh Shakya and a representative of the Farrukhabad MP were also present. During the meeting, a detailed department-wise review was conducted of vari-



ous development-oriented and beneficiary-centric schemes being implemented by the Central and State Governments in the district. The Union Minister sought updates on the progress of major schemes including

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural/Urban), Swachh Bharat Mission, Jal Jeevan Mission, National Rural Livelihood Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, Ayushman Bharat—Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana,

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, National Livestock Mission, fisheries-related schemes, BSNL, Railways and other flagship programmes. Prof. Baghel directed officials to ensure that all schemes are implemented with quality, transparency and within stipulated timelines and that benefits reach 100 percent of eligible beneficiaries. For schemes where progress was found unsatisfactory, he instructed officials to prepare a clear action plan and take immediate corrective measures. Public representatives raised issues and suggestions related to roads, electricity, drinking

water, health, education, animal husbandry and rural livelihoods. Necessary directions were issued to the concerned departmental officers for prompt resolution. The Minister reiterated that the objective of both the Central and State Governments is to translate the vision of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" into reality. Special discussion was held on the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, which the Minister described as highly beneficial for the general public. He also called for connecting more farmers to the PM-KUSUM Solar Pump Scheme and directed agricultural officials to ensure wide

publicity of these initiatives. The Chief Veterinary Officer was instructed to pay special attention to issues related to stray cattle and to link livestock farmers with departmental schemes. Emphasising the creation of Ayushman Cards for eligible senior citizens above 70 years of age, the Minister directed that no eligible person should be deprived of the scheme. ASHA and Anganwadi workers were instructed to identify eligible beneficiaries by conducting village-level outreach. He also stressed timely disbursement of benefits under the National Old Age Pension Scheme and the Family Benefit Scheme.

A campaign was launched to ban entry into jewellery shops wearing masks, helmets, hijabs and burqas



Varanasi

In view of the continuous criminal incidents due to the steep rise in the prices of gold and silver, as per the instructions of the top leadership of the Uttar Pradesh Goldsmith Association, on Friday, under the leadership of District President Kamal

Kumar Singh and General Secretary Kishore Seth, a campaign was launched in Sarafa Bazar Govindpura, Resham Katra and stickers were pasted on the shops. It was written on the sticker, "It is prohibited to enter the shop wearing mask, helmet, burqa and hijab." During this time, all the business-

men seemed to completely agree with this decision and praised it a lot. During this time, mainly District President Kamal Kumar Singh, District General Secretary Kishore Kumar Seth, Anil Seth, Shyam Seth, Yogi Manoj Anand, Mohan Verma, Vishnu Seth, Manish, Raju, Rohit Verma etc. were present.

Brahraich

Principal Secretary, Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Ranveer Prasad, along with Chief Development Officer Mukesh Chandra and Deputy Commissioner MNREGA, Ravi Shankar Pandey, inspected the MNREGA playground and park constructed in Banjaria Gram Panchayat under Balha development block. Balha BDO Aparna informed that the playground and park have a badminton court, volleyball court, jogging track, yoga area, separate toilets for children, benches for seating and all the equipment for an open gym. Lush green trees have been planted all around the park and attractive paintings have been done on the walls.



Women and children regularly participate in games and come for walks in the park.

During the inspection, the Principal Secretary praised the park and said that it should be considered a model playground/park and similar facilities should be constructed in other development blocks. The Chief Development Officer instructed that cameras be installed in the park and synthetic mats be laid in the badminton court. The Principal

Secretary and the Chief Development Officer distributed biscuits and toffees to the children playing in the park to encourage them. During the inspection, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Nanpara Monalisa Johari, other officers and employees, the village head and villagers were present. Earlier, the Principal Secretary also reviewed the site identified for the displaced families of Bharthapur in Semraha Gram Panchayat, the Annapurna Bhavan and

other equipment were being operated using the energy generated from the biogas plant. Also, the castration of older male animals and the distribution of blankets to 14 caretakers were carried out during the inspection. The District Magistrate said that special attention should be paid to ensuring that the displaced families do not face any inconvenience, in accordance with the government guidelines. It is noteworthy that on the first day of his two-day visit to the district, the Principal Secretary, late in the evening, also inspected the Chief Minister Composite School (Pre-Primary to Class 12) under construction at a cost of Rs. 17.43 lakh in Tejapur development block.

PH.D. SCHOLARS OF AFFILIATED COLLEGES OF BHU TO ALSO GET MONTHLY FELLOWSHIP OF RS.800

Varanasi

In a positive institutional development reflecting commitment to supporting students in their pursuit of academic and research excellence, the affiliated colleges of Banaras Hindu University have decided to provide a monthly fellowship of Rs. 8000 to their Ph.D. scholars. The decision by the management committees of four affiliated colleges — Arya Mahila PG College, Vasant Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Vasanta College for Women and DAV PG College — will help students strive towards their academic growth. The fellowship will benefit all those scholars who are not receiving any other financial assistance, such as JRF, RGNF etc. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Ajit Kumar Chaturvedi congratulated the affiliated colleges and expressed happiness that the long-standing demand of research scholars has been fulfilled by the management committees of all four affiliated colleges. A meeting on the issue of fellowship was chaired by the Vice-Chancellor on January 3, 2026. The meeting was attended by the principals of the four affiliated colleges. The decision to provide fellowship to Ph.D. scholars at affiliated colleges would improve the research ecosystem in the colleges.

Principal Secretary inspects MNREGA playground and park in Banjaria Gram Panchayat

A visually stunning film but fails to take us in trance

FILM REVIEW

TITLE: *The Raja Saab*

DIRECTOR: Maruthi

CAST: Prabhas, Sanjay Dutt, Zarina Wahab, Malavika Mohanan, Nidhi Agerwal

WHERE: In theatres near you

RATING: ★★

M

After around 2 years, Prabhas is back on the big screens with Maruthi's directorial, *The Raja Saab*. It is a Telugu film dubbed and released in various languages, including Hindi. We watched the movie in Hindi. So, is it worth your time and money? Read on to know that...

The Raja Saab revolves around Raju (Prabhas), who is staying in a village with his grandmother Ganga Devi (Zarina Wahab). Ganga is suffering from Alzheimer and she only remembers her husband, who left her many years ago. For the sake of his grandmother, Raju decides to find his grandfather, Kanak Raju (Sanjay Dutt), and he comes to know that he is in Hyderabad. The movie shifts to Hyderabad,



and a lot of secrets are unveiled.

The film is written and directed by Maruthi, and the basic storyline of the film is fantastic. On paper, *The Raja Saab* would be an amazing movie, but Maruthi fails to convert it into a good film.

The Raja Saab is set against the backdrop of topics like black magic and hypnotism, which are very interesting. But the weak screenplay and narration are the villains here.

The first half of the movie is strictly average. It drags because of unnecessary action sequences. There's one action sequence featuring Malavika Mohanan, but when goons catch her, Prabhas tells her, 'Mere aate hie tujhe side ho lena tha'. Like really!!! Also,

an important movement like MeToo has been used as a joke in the film. Before the interval, the movie picks up, and even the interval point is very interesting.

The second half starts on an impressive note. But after a few minutes, it fails to keep us engaged. There are two songs added in the second half, which were clearly not required. The climax has some interesting moments, but it drags a lot. Clearly, the runtime of the film could have been shortened by 30 minutes. Visually, *The Raja Saab* is a stunning film. The cinematography done by Karthik Palani is excellent. Also, the VFX is outstanding. But, just a visually good-looking film can't make you sit for those 189 minutes.

Actors' performances

Prabhas is good in his role and gets some scenes to shine. His stylish avatar will surely impress his fans. But *The Raja Saab* belongs to Zarina Wahab and Sanjay Dutt. Both veteran actors have done a wonderful job in the film. Wahab's performance in the climax is the highlight of the film.

Malavika Mohanan and Nidhi Agerwal are good in their respective roles, but Riddhi Kumar is hardly there for 10 mins in the whole film. Boman Irani, in his extended cameo, leaves a strong mark.

Music

Thaman S' background score is just perfect for the film's theme. But, songs don't leave a mark. Also, *Nache Nache* recreated version looks messy on the big screens.

Overall, *The Raja Saab* had the potential to be a fantastic cinematic experience, but the weak screenplay and narration make this film a below-average watch. The makers promoted it as a horror-comedy, and while there are a couple of jump scares, there's not even one scene that will make you laugh out loud.

P.S. After delivering such a below-average film, the makers have announced a sequel titled *Raja Saab 2: Circus 1935*.

Laalo releases nationwide in Hindi

After a successful theatrical run in Gujarat, *Laalo - Krishna Sada Sahaayate* has released nationwide in Hindi on Friday. The film had earlier crossed Rs 100 crore at the box office in its Gujarati version. The story follows a rickshaw-

A still from *Laalo - Krishna Sada Sahaayate*

driver who finds himself trapped in a farmhouse and is forced to confront his past. During this phase, he experiences visions of Lord Krishna, who guides him on a journey of self-discovery and emotional healing.

Written and directed by Ankit Sakhya, the film presents a simple and heartfelt narrative centred on faith, innocence, and the belief that Lord Krishna is always present to guide and protect.

Four Indian films, including *Kantara: Chapter 1* and *Tanvi The Great*, enter Academy's eligibility list for Oscars 2026 Best Picture

Four Indian films eye Oscars 2026

nounced on January 22.

Besides Rishabh Shetty's *Kantara* and Anupam Kher's directorial, the other two Indian productions are multilingual animated film *Mahavat Narsimha* and Tamil title *Tourist Family* by first-time filmmaker Abishan Jeevirth. Radhika Apte-starrer *Sister Midnight*, a Hindi language UK-India co-production, has also made it to the list.

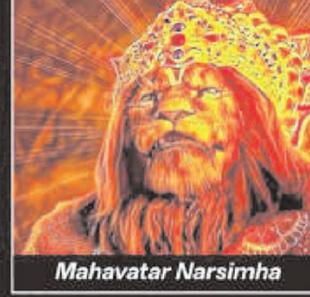
In all, 317 feature films are eligible for the 98th Academy Awards, the Academy said. Of these, 201 meet the additional eligibility requirements required for consideration in the Best Picture category.

Inclusion in the reminder list does not guarantee a nomination. Films must still undergo the Academy's voting process.

Four Indian titles, including Kannada blockbuster *Kantara: A Legend - Chapter 1* and the Hindi film *Tanvi The Great*, are among the 201 feature films eligible to compete for the Best Picture award at Oscars 2026, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has announced.

The Academy on Thursday released the "Reminder List of Productions Eligible for the 98th Academy Awards".

The list of films that satisfy the eligibility criteria for consideration in the general categories, including Best Picture, is the step before the nominations that will be an-

*Tourist Family**Mahavat Narsimha*

driver who finds himself trapped in a farmhouse and is forced to confront his past. During this phase, he experiences visions of Lord Krishna, who guides him on a journey of self-discovery and emotional healing.

*Tanvi The Great**Kantara-1*

OTT REVIEW

TITLE: *Freedom At Midnight 2*

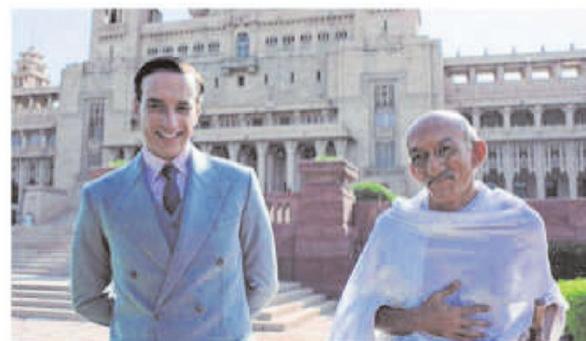
DIRECTORS: Nikkhil Advani

CAST: Sidhant Gupta, Chirag Vohra, Rajendra Chawla, Arif Zakaria

WHERE: SonyLiv

RATING: ★★★

Nikkhil Advani sheds light on the partition you didn't know about



countries. While he may be vilified in the opinion of many, raising questions such as how could someone like him be chosen for a role which he had no qualification for, the series also sheds light on what his journey was like. Not only did he return the remuneration offered to him as his conscience could not allow him to take money for something which caused so much pain to millions, but he also would frequently vomit during work as the task at hand was so bloody and the price people were paying for it was enormous. As one of the characters says, 'Is desh ko batwarei ki batu bari rakam chukani paregi.'

Actors' performances

Produced by Emmay Entertainment (Monisha Advani & Madhu Bhojwani) in association with StudioNext, the show is helmed by Nikkhil Advani as the showrunner and director, with a compelling narrative crafted by Abhimanandan Gupta, Adwitiya Karen Das, Gundeep Kaur, Divya Nidhi Sharma, Revanta Sarab-

super series Black Warrant, Anurag Thakur. And the fact that Abhishek Banerjee has been roped in as one of the rioters during the Calcutta killings is definitely a power move for the series. What I without a doubt found the most endearing was when the pre-partition members of the armed forces are told to choose which country they would want to go to, the Sikh soldier who chooses India feels betrayed by his best friend, Muslim, who chooses Pakistan. The touching part is when his friend tells him that not only would he come to meet him every year, but he might be going to Pakistan, however, he is taking his friend with him in his heart.

Sidhant Gupta is a more convincing Nehru when compared to part 1. Arif Zakaria is successful in showing us Jinnah's elitist, selfish mindset, while Ira Dubey as Fatima Jinnah is spot on, just like in Part 1. Rajesh Kumar shows us as how Liaquat Ali Khan was constantly bullied by Jinnah and his sister, and while there are several other actors I would want to name, the fact of the matter is that the history of partition along with the numerous characters in this series cannot be fitted into merely one article.

We are shown the chilling backstory of Madan Lal Pahwa, the man who detonated a bomb during an attempt to assassinate Mahatma Gandhi, just 10 days before the Mahatma was assassinated by Nathuram Godse. That role is played by none other than one of the shining OTT stars of 2025



Photo: Instagram @hrithikroshan

Hrithik turns 52!

Hrithik celebrates birthday today, fitness journey inspires fans across the globe

Hollywood actor Hrithik Roshan may have turned 52 years old today, but his physique still resembles a sculpture carved out of stone. His recent Instagram post about his diet gave fans a glimpse into his eating habits. This led many to speculate that it could be a precursor to a *Krrish 4* announcement, as once again, Hrithik's physique could put even a superhero in a state of awe.

However, earlier last year, he had shared personal, handwritten notes to himself from 27 years ago, written while preparing for his debut film *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai*. The notes reflected his nervousness and determination to overcome challenges such as his stammer and physical limitations. To conclude, here is one of the lines he wrote regarding his stammer: "Speech – talk without being conscious at all of stuttering... It doesn't happen anymore! It's all in the mind!"

Here's wishing you a happy birthday, Hrithik!

Crocodile madness in theatres

Prabhas fans carry toy crocodiles during *The Raja Saab* screenings



Telugu actor Prabhas' fans are known for going all out during their favourite star's film releases, and this time was no different. As *The Raja Saab* hit theaters on Friday, fans

brought crocodiles to the film's screening, raising some concerns. The stunt was inspired by a scene in the film's trailer, which shows Prabhas' character throwing a crocodile during a fight. In viral videos on social media, fans were seen holding the crocodiles above their heads and running into the halls, leaving some audience members

shocked. However, the crocodiles were not real animals but dummies. A fact check by Grok set the record straight. "The video is real, capturing Prabhas fans in a theater holding toy crocodiles as a fun nod to a movie scene where he fights one. It's not live animals—just enthusiastic fan props for *The Raja Saab* release."

Pakistan flash floods: Over 320 dead in torrential downpours



Rescue efforts are proving difficult

Rescue efforts are proving difficult. Nearly 2,000 personnel have been deployed, but landslides, washed-out bridges and broken link routes have slowed relief work. "Heavy rainfall, landslides and washed-out roads are severely hampering rescue."

Workers are forced to walk long distances

"In some areas, workers are forced to walk long distances to reach disaster sites. They are trying to evacuate survivors, but very few people are relocating due to the deaths of their relatives or loved ones being trapped in the debris."

to continue with greater intensity over the next fortnight, as per PTI. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa saw the hardest hit, with 327 deaths confirmed so far. The Buner district alone has

reported more than 200 fatalities, making it the worst-affected area. At least 137 people have been injured across the province as houses collapsed and raging torrents swept away.

"Many more people may still be trapped under the debris"

"Many more people may still be trapped under the debris, which local residents cannot clear manually," he said. The Pakistan Army's Corps of Engineers Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team has also launched operations in Buner, Shangla and Swat. Using advanced equipment, they are working to recover those trapped under rubble while also repairing damaged roads and bridges. Local villagers have joined the effort, combing through debris with their bare hands.

Funerals were being held across devastated villages, as survivors struggled to search through the ruins by hands.

Afghanistan's water push: Kabul seeks control of rivers



Fragile ties

□ **Taliban's canal projects raise alarms as neighbours fear flow cuts**

stressed Central Asian states. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, backed by Kazakhstan, have raised alarms that the project could further shrink the Aral Sea and destabilise the region's water-sharing arrangements, which date back to the Soviet era. Water governance specialist Mohd Faizee cautioned

and was quoted by AFP as saying, "No matter how friendly the tone is now, at some point there will be consequences for Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan when the canal starts operating." Project manager Sayed Zabihullah was cited by AFP as saying that the Amu Darya has "an abundance of water."

Stability

□ **Tibet's 60th anniversary as an autonomous region, emphasizing stability**

Lhasa: Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa on Wednesday and made his rare and second visit as China's leader, marking the 60th anniversary of Tibet's establishment as an autonomous region.

During his visit, Xi emphasised the importance of stability, stating, "To govern, stabilise and develop Tibet, the first thing is

to maintain political stability, social stability, ethnic unity and religious harmony," according to Reuters citing state media reports. Xi last visited Tibet in July 2021, where he encouraged residents to "follow the party." This visit was widely interpreted by external observers as a demonstration of the Communist Party's assurance in

maintaining order in a region with a long-standing history of resistance against Chinese rule.

Established in 1965 by the ruling Communist Party, the Tibet Autonomous Region was intended to grant local ethnic minority groups, including Tibetans, greater influence over policy matters and religious freedoms.

Chants & boos disrupt JD Vance's national guard lunch

Carolina: Vice President JD Vance's lunch event with national guard troops at Union Station on Wednesday was disrupted by a wave of protests, as demonstrators voiced opposition to the Trump administration's security deployment in the capital. Vance, joined by defence secretary Pete

Hegseth and White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller, met National Guard members - many from red states such as South Carolina, Ohio, and Mississippi - at a Shake Shack inside the station. The visit was intended as a gesture of appreciation for troops deployed to patrol Washington, DC.

Electric shocks, gang rapes & more...



What happens inside Myanmar's detention centers?

Civil War

□ **Army overthrew Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government, sparking a civil war**

al report on Tuesday, covering the 12 months to 30 June. The country has been in turmoil since February 2021, ever since the army overthrew Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government, sparking a civil war. As peaceful protests were crushed

with lethal force, those opposing military rule took up arms. Since then, conflict has engulfed large parts of Myanmar. The investigative team, as quoted by AP, said that it had

made progress in identifying security personnel involved in detention operations, as well as "perpetrators who have summarily executed captured combatants or civilians

accused of being informers." These perpetrators included members of the security forces, affiliated militias and opposition armed groups.

Washington: "Anti-American activity will be an overwhelmingly negative factor in any discretionary analysis," according to a recent policy announcement by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the country's immigration agency. In other words, if you want a visa of any kind - be it a stu-

dent visa, or a work visa; or wish to apply for a green card or US citizenship - the outcome of your applica-

Analysis

□ **"Immigration benefits—including to live and work in the United States**

dent visa, or a work visa; or wish to apply for a green card or US citizenship - the outcome of your applica-

Vladimir Putin paid cash to refuel planes, says Rubio; sanctions block banking access

Sanctions

□ **He added that despite their severity, these sanctions have not altered the direction of the war in Ukraine.**

□ **Responding to calls for stronger action, Rubio argued that imposing new sanctions**



Alaska: Russian President Vladimir Putin's delegation had to pay in cash for jet fuel, when he visited Alaska on August 15, for a high-stakes meeting with US President Donald Trump, US secretary of state Marco Rubio said, citing ongoing US banking sanctions against Moscow.

"When the Russians landed in Alaska, they were there to refuel. They had to offer to pay in cash to refuel their aeroplanes because they can't use our banking system," Rubio told NBC News. The Russian delegation was in Alaska for around five hours as part of a high-level summit with President Trump. While Trump confirmed that no ceasefire deal was reached, reports indicate Russia had

tabled an offer, with Trump encouraging Ukraine to consider it. However, no formal agreement emerged from the nearly three-hour meeting.

On the broader sanctions debate, Rubio defended the current measures, stating, "every single sanction that was in place on the day he took over remains and the impact of all those sanctions remains."

He added that despite their severity, these sanctions have not altered the direction of the war in Ukraine. Responding to calls for stronger action, Rubio argued that imposing new sanctions could derail diplomatic engagement. "The minute we

take those steps, there is no one left in the world to go talk to the Russians and try to get them to the table to reach a peace agreement," he said. The summit also saw Trump meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders to discuss long-term security guarantees. Zelenskyy reiterated his openness to direct talks with Putin but rejected any proposal involving territorial concessions. Rubio acknowledged the limitations of economic penalties in forcing an outcome: "There is no evidence that more sanctions... would have an immediate effect, because sanctions take months and sometimes years to bite."

Man sets fire, smashes desks at Milan airport

Delays, evacuation follow

Unfolding

□ **Meanwhile at Malpensa Airport, Milan Italy. Usual suspect is apprehended**



and several flight disruptions. The clip, shared by one user on X, was captioned: "Meanwhile at Malpensa Airport, Milan Italy. Usual suspect is apprehended." A viral video circulating on social media shows an incident unfolding at Milan's Malpensa Airport on Wednesday, with a man being restrained by multiple individuals inside the smoke-filled terminal. The man was apprehended after reportedly damaging check-in desks with a hammer and setting fire to part of Terminal One, causing sections of the terminal to be evacuated

Want a visa, or a green card? It's vital to have pro-American ideologies states USCIS

Americanism and supporting the enforcement of rigorous screening and vetting measures to the fullest extent possible," said USCIS spokesman Matthew Tragesser.

"Immigration benefits—including to live and work in the United States—remain a privilege, not a right," he added.

Papua shook by 6.3 magnitude quake, no tsunami

Papua: A 6.5-magnitude earthquake rattled Indonesia's eastern Papua region on Tuesday, causing tremors throughout the area. The quake's epicenter was located approximately 193 kilometers northwest of Abepura. Fortunately, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center confirmed that the earthquake did not pose a tsunami threat to the region.

Indonesia earthquake: Papua shook by 6.3 magnitude quake, no tsunami threat. A 6.3-magnitude earth-

quake shook Indonesia's eastern Papua region on Tuesday, sending tremors through the area. The US Geological Survey said the quake struck at about 5:24pm local time (0824 GMT), with its epicentre located roughly 193 kilometres northwest of the town of Abepura in Papua. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center confirmed there was no danger of a tsunami following the quake. This is a developing story.

Briefs

VADODARA

Kohli, Rohit in good touch at net session



Senior batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma looked in good touch as India went through a rigorous training session here on Friday, ahead of their three-match ODI series against New Zealand. The ODI series starting here on Sunday will be followed by a long T20 season, which includes a five-match series against the Kiwis, the T20 World Cup and then the Indian Premier League. Both Kohli and Rohit spent nearly one-and-a-half hours against Indian pacers, spinners and throw down specialists after playing two matches each in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Having struck 77 and 131 in the two matches of the premier domestic competition, Kohli went hard against the Indian spinners and pacers alike. Some variable bounce against the throw down specialists in one of the nets did challenge Kohli.

NEW DELHI
Need to streamline A tours: Saikia



The BCCI top brass on Friday took stock of the operations at its Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru besides touching on streamlining India U-19 and India A tours going forward, board secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI. Key technical posts are lying vacant in CoE which became fully operational in April last year. The positions include the head of education and head of sports science. The meeting in Mumbai was also attended by BCCI president Mithun Manhas, vice-president Rajeev Shukla and head of cricket at CoE VVS Laxman. "We are hosting matches in the three grounds there (including VJT). We also talked about how the A tours need to be scheduled going forward," Saikia said.

AHMEDABAD
Ahmedabad to become sports hub



Indian Olympic Association president Dr PT Usha on Friday expressed satisfaction about the

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE | Mandhana-led side beats defending champions Mumbai Indians by three wickets after Sajana helped MI set chase of 155

RCB's De Klerk pulls of a heist

NAVI MUMBAI

Nadine De Klerk produced an absolute blinder of an innings to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat for Royal Challengers Bengaluru stunning Mumbai Indians by three wickets in their WPL opener, at the DY Patil Stadium, here on Friday.

Needing 18 runs off the last over, De Klerk slammed two massive sixes and two fours off Nat Sciver-Brunt to end up with 63 off 44 balls and pulling off a heist for RCB as they finished at 157/7 in 20 overs, chasing 155.

Earlier, Sajana Sajeevan's game-changing innings of 45 ensured the MI set RCB a competitive chase of 155.

Sajana's innings of 45 came off 25 balls and comprised seven fours and a six at a strike rate of 180 which gave MI the much-needed momentum towards the end of their innings.

Nicola Carey (40) and G Kamalini (32) also chipped in with handy knocks as MI finished at a healthy 154/6 in 20 overs.

Nadine De Klerk was the pick of the RCB bowlers with impressive figures of 4/26 at an economy of 6.50. Lauren Bell and Shreyanka Patil too bowled well with a wicket apiece.

Earlier, Lauren Bell opened the bowling for the Royal Challengers Bengaluru and did an excellent job with a maiden over.

The over also included a leg before shout against Mumbai Indians' opener Amelia Kerr.

Linsey Smith bowled the second over and G Kamalini got into the act straightaway with a boundary to extra cover's left. She then plucked two runs off the next ball to get RCB underway and



Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Nadine de Klerk makes an appeal during a WPL T20 match against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in Navi Mumbai on Friday. PTI

Nadine De Klerk scored 63 in 44 balls including 20 in last four balls to star in RCB's dramatic win over Mumbai Indians.

slammed another four off the last ball of the over.

Arundhati Reddy was introduced into the attack by Smriti Mandhana for RCB in the fourth over after Linsey proved to be a tad expensive.

However, at 15 for no loss after four overs, RCB had kept a maiden over.

The over also included a leg before shout against Mumbai Indians' opener Amelia Kerr.

Linsey Smith bowled the second over and G Kamalini got into the act straightaway with a boundary to extra cover's left. She then plucked two runs off the next ball to get RCB underway and

after five overs. However, Kamalini kept up her momentum as she unleashed a four off Smith on the first ball of the last powerplay over.

She repeated the same on the third ball of the over as MI's run-rate gained some momentum and went past five. New batter Nat Sciver-Brunt ensured Smith had a horrendous time smashing a four off the last ball of the sixth over as MI wrapped up powerplay at 34/1.

Just when it seemed Mumbai Indians were getting their batting straps together, Nadine de Klerk delivered a body blow. Sciver-Brunt was

stumped by an alert Richa Ghosh off De Klerk as RCB slipped to 35/2.

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur came into the middle with a lot of work to do along with an in-form Kamalini.

Harmanpreet found her release shot off the 10th ball that she faced and cracked a four off Bell. MI's fifty came in the ninth over with Bell turning a little erratic down the legside. The first six of the MI innings came when Harmanpreet hoisted Shreyanka Patil in the 10th over inside out.

Kamalini's gritty innings eventually came to an end when she was castled by Shreyanka for a well-made 30. MI were 63/3 at the halfway mark with a score of 145 looking like a good one from that stage if they score at eight

Scoreboard

Mumbai Indians: A Kerr c Reddy b Bell 4, G Kamalini b Patil 32, Nat Sciver-Brunt st Ghosh b de Klerk 4, H Kaur c Ghosh b de Klerk 20, N Carey c Hemalatha b de Klerk 40, S Sajana c Mandhana b de Klerk 45, A Kaur (not out) 0, P Khemnar (not out) 0
Extras: (LB-1, W-8) 9
Total: 154-6 (In 20 overs)
FW: 1-21, 2-35, 3-63, 4-67, 5-149, 6-154.

Bowling: Lauren Bell 4-14-1, Linsey Smith 2-0-23-0, Arundhati Reddy 4-0-37-0, Nadine de Klerk 4-0-26-4, Shreyanka Patil 4-0-32-1, Radha Yadav 2-0-21-0.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: G Harris c Ismail b Nat Sciver-Brunt 25, S Mandhana c Khemnar b Ismail 18, D Hemalatha lbw b AB Kaur 7, R Ghosh c Carey b Kerr 6, R Yadav b Kerr 1, N de Klerk (not out) 63, N de Klerk not out 7, A Reddy c Kerr b Carey 20, S Patil b Carey 1, P Rawat (not out) 8
Extras: (B-5, W-3) 8
Total: 157-7 (In 20 overs)
FW: 1-40, 2-47, 3-62, 4-63, 5-65, 6-117, 7-121
Bowling: Nat Sciver-Brunt 4-0-47-1, Shabnim Ismail 4-0-26-1, Nicola Carey 4-0-35-2, Amanjot Kaur 3-0-18-1, Amelia Kerr 4-0-13-2, Saika Ishaque 1-0-13-0

an over. The biggest setback for Mumbai came off the last ball of the 10th over when Harmanpreet nicked one behind the wicket as Ghosh made no mistake.

At 67/4 in 11 overs, Mumbai Indians were in a fair bit of trouble and Sajana came to rescue.

Warriorz, Giants eye early momentum

Delhi Capitals start their campaign against Mumbai Indians

class spin, experienced new ball operators, and proven death specialists.

Gujarat Giants, on the other hand, arrive with renewed confidence after reaching the playoffs the last time following two underwhelming seasons. Led by Ashleigh Gardner, the Giants boast of a formidable overseas core but lack a front-line Indian batter.

Behind the stumps and at the top will be Beth Mooney, while Sophie Devine returns to the WPL fold after missing the 2025 season.

The pace attack looks well-rounded with Renuka Singh Thakur leading it, supported by Kim Garth and Kashvee Gautam. Spin options are plentiful in Gardner, Georgia Wareham, Rajeshwari Gayakwad and Tanu Kanwar.

Three-time finalists Delhi Capitals will meet defending champions Mumbai Indians in the second clash on Saturday. Capitals is led by new skipper Jemimah Rodrigues while MI have experienced Harmanpreet at the helm.



WPL fever

Painting of the women players of Mumbai Indians are seen on a residential building at Sion to support them in TATA Women's Premier League (WPL) – Salman Ansari

Vaishnavi's future in sports was clear to her astrologer father

The 20-year-old left-arm spinner from Gwalior made her India debut against Sri Lanka in T20Is last month



India's Vaishnavi Sharma made her T20I debut against Sri Lanka Women in last month. PTI

It was written in the stars, or so believed her father.

Long before Vaishnavi Sharma picked up a cricket ball, she says her future as a sportsperson was known to her astrologer father, Narendra Sharma. The 20-year-old left-arm spinner from Gwalior made her India debut in the T20 International format just last year in a home series against Sri Lanka.

"When I was four years old, my journey in sports began. As you all know, my father is an astrologer. He looked at my horoscope and said that I should either go into sports or into the medical field," Vaishnavi told PTI Videos.

"After that, it was a question of where my own interest was. After some time, he understood that my interest was in sports. When I was seven, I started playing more seriously, like going for evening practice sessions.

"And when I was 11-12 years old, I played my first Under-16 match for Madhya Pradesh. It

wasn't under the BCCI then, but that's where my journey really started," she recalled.

In the five-match series against Sri Lanka, she finished as the joint-highest wicket-taker for India with five scalps. The youngster says she has been certain about cricket from the very first day.

Young told the media here at the Baroda Cricket Association Stadium.

"(But) when you're playing for your country, there should always be those two things (passion and motivation). It is a slightly different format from Test and T20 cricket, and these days you probably play a little bit less as well."

"But you've got to remember, there's still two ICC world events - the Champions Trophy and the World Cup - which has had

Malaysia Open: Sindhu enters semis, Sat-Chi exit

KUALA LUMPUR

Two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu advanced to the semifinals of Malaysia Open after her opponent Akane Yamaguchi of Japan retired due to injury, while India's ace men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty bowed out of the Super 1000 badminton tournament in the quarterfinals here on Friday.

Pitted against third-seed Yamaguchi in the quarterfinals, Sindhu took the opening game 21-11 before the three-time world champion from Japan, who was wearing a knee brace, decided to pull out of the match. The win took world No. 18 Sindhu's head-to-head record to 15-12 against Yamaguchi.

Sindhu will face second seed Wang Zhiyi of China in the semifinals of the tournament from Japan, who was wearing a knee brace, decided to pull out of the match. The win took world No. 18 Sindhu's head-to-head record to 15-12 against Yamaguchi.

Men's doubles pair of Satwik and Chirag lost to lower-ranked Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Fikri of Indonesia 21-12, 21-23 in the quarterfinals in 47 minutes.

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