

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

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

Briefs

NEW DELHI

Modi invites Brazil's Lula to India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Thursday and asserted that close cooperation was vital for advancing the shared interests of the Global South. Modi received a call from the Brazilian president, and the two leaders underscored the importance of reformed multilateralism in addressing shared challenges. Modi also said he was looking forward to welcoming the Brazilian president to India soon. "Our close cooperation is vital for advancing the shared interests of the Global South. I look forward to welcoming him to India soon," he added.

KOLKATA

Mamata pens a book on agony of SIR

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee on Thursday inaugurated the 49th Kolkata International book fair. Speaking at the inauguration, the West Bengal Chief Minister said that she had penned a book of poems on agony faced by people due to SIR. "My 162nd book, a compilation of 26 poems on the agony faced by people due to the SIR will come out in this fair," said Mamata.

NEW DELHI

India mission in Croatia vandalised

India on Thursday condemned an incident of trespassing and vandalism at its embassy in Croatia by some Khalistani elements and demanded action against the perpetrators. The incident in the European nation took place days before the India-EU summit in New Delhi.

CHENNAI

Vijay's party gets 'whistle' poll symbol

Tamil cinema star Vijay's political party, TVK, has been allotted 'whistle' as its symbol, drawing cheers from the top actor who dubbed it as a "victory sign" that was reflective of the common man and his aspirations. The 50-year-old Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) founder said that with the allocation of the symbol, his party's first chapter of its successful journey has begun.

Andhra mulls Australia-style social media ban for U-16s

MUMBAI

The Andhra Pradesh government is considering a ban on social media use for children under the age of 16, inspired by Australia's recent restrictions aimed at protecting minors online.

Speaking on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, state IT Minister Nara Lokesh told Bloomberg News that the state was closely studying Australia's approach. "As a state, we are studying Australia's under-16

HOUSE ON FIRE | Gehlot refuses to read out the state-prepared speech, finishes his address in 3 lines; Centre's puppet, says CM

Guv-govt standoff in K'taka escalates

BENGALURU

In a high drama in Karnataka Assembly, Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Thursday refused to read the state-prepared address to a joint session of the state legislature and concluded his customary speech in just three lines, evoking a sharp reaction from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who accused him of being a "puppet" of the Centre.

This is the third governor vs government face-off in two days in three non-BJP-ruled southern states, the others being Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The Governor began the speech by greeting the Chief Minister, Assembly Speaker UT Khader, Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti, Leaders of the Opposition, ministers, and members.

"I extend a warm welcome to all of you to the joint



Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot and others arrive to attend the joint session of the Karnataka legislature, at Vidhana Soudha, in Bengaluru on Thursday

session of the State legislature. I am extremely pleased to address one more joint session of the Karnataka legislature. My government is firmly committed to doubling the pace of the state's economic, social, and physical development. Jai Hind. Jai Karnataka," he said in Hindi, before walking out.

The Treasury Benches, including ministers such as HK Patil (Law and Parliamentary Affairs), stood up and requested Gehlot to complete the speech. As the Governor proceeded towards the exit door, some ruling legislators, including MLC BK Hariprasad, tried to gherao him by shouting slogans.

CM: Might approach SC

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday strongly criticised Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot for refusing to deliver the customary address to the Assembly, calling the move a "violation of the Constitution" and stating that the government is examining whether to approach the Supreme Court over the matter.

They were removed by the security staff. The legislators then shouted 'shame shame' and "Dhikkara-Dhikkara", Rajyapalarige Dhikkara" (Reproof to the Governor) in Kannada.

While seemingly defending the Governor, BJP members shouted "Bharat Mata ki Jai".

Top Maoist with ₹1 cr bounty among 15 killed in Jharkhand

RANCHI

As many as 15 Maoists, including top leader Anal Da who was carrying a bounty of Rs 1 crore on his head, were killed in a fierce encounter with security forces in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district on Thursday.

Police said that nearly 1,500 personnel of the CRPF's CoBRA unit had been engaged in the anti-Naxal

operation in Saranda forest's Kumdi under Kiriburu police station limits.

"We have recovered the bodies of 15 Maoists, including their top leader Patiram Majhi alias Anal Da. A huge cache of arms and ammunition has also been recovered. The encounter, which began at 6 am, is still on," a statement from the police headquarters here said.

The anti-Maoist operation has been going on in the Saranda forest since Tuesday,

but the exchange of fire began on Thursday morning, it added.

Inspector General of Police (Operations) Michael Raj S said that the operation was launched after the police received intelligence inputs about the presence of Anal Da, along with his squad, in Saranda forest. A resident of Pirtand in Giridih district, Anal Da had been active since 1987.

Police have been searching for him for years.

JAMMU

In a major relief for the 50 students affected by the revocation of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence, the Jammu and Kashmir Board of Professional Entrance Examinations has set January 24 as the fresh date for their counselling to adjust them in seven government-run colleges across the Union Territory.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the govern-

ment has resolved the college allocation issue for the selected MBBS candidates of the medical college.

"With BOPEE now issuing the counselling schedule, the selected candidates can move ahead with their studies," the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said on X.

According to a notification issued by the controller of examinations of the BOPEE, Prof Gurvinder Raj Verma, the 50 supernumerary seats shall be distributed strictly based on the NEET-UG merit of the can-

Relief for 50 Jammu medical college students CM Omar says issue resolved as fresh counselling scheduled for Jan 24



didates concerned and their preferences among the seven newly established government medical colleges.

The notification said eight students would be allotted seats in GMC Anantnag and seven each in GMC Baramulla, Doda, Handwara, Kathua,

Rajouri and Udhampur.

"Pursuant to Health and Medical Education Department communication of January 21, it is hereby notified that the concerned candidates who were provisionally allotted seats in different rounds of counselling by the Board for admission to the MBBS course in SMVDIME, Katra... the Board shall conduct the physical round of counselling to accommodate the students to GMC within J-K against the supernumerary seats so created," it said.

Noida techie death: Two more builders arrested

NOIDA

The Noida police on Thursday arrested two more builders in connection with the death of a software engineer who drowned after his car plunged into a waterlogged trench near a construction site in Sector 150 here, officials said.

"The arrested accused have been identified as Ravi Bansal, a resident of Faridabad, and Sachin Karnwal, a resident of Ghaziabad," a police official told PTI.

The official said both the arrested persons are associ-

ated with real estate developer Lotus Greens, although their exact designation in the company could not be confirmed immediately.

Police said the arrests were made by the Knowledge Park police station team.

"It is noteworthy that on the intervening night of Jan 16 and 17, a car driver, Yuvraj Mehta (27), died after drowning in a waterlogged plot due to alleged negligence on the part of the builder and its associates at a construction site of Lotus Greens," the police said in a statement on Thursday.



MUMBAI

The first 'Made in India' C-295 military aircraft is expected to roll out of a factory before September, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday (January 21, 2026) as he underlined New Delhi's commitment to build resilient manufacturing capabilities.

In his remarks at a meeting with Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albarez, Jaishankar asserted that the world must display "zero tolerance" towards terrorism. "The world order is clearly

undergoing a profound change. It is more imperative than ever before for nations to collaborate on shared challenges," he said.

The External Affairs Minister also thanked Spain for its support for deeper India-EU ties across different domains and welcomed the European nation for joining India-backed Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

Six workers killed in blast at Chhattisgarh steel plant

BALODABAZAR (CHHATTISGARH)

At least six workers were killed and five others injured in a blast at a steel plant in Chhattisgarh's Balodabazar-Bhatapara district on Thursday, officials said.

The incident occurred at the Real Ispat and Power Ltd in Bakulahi village in the Bhatapara rural area, District Collector Deepak Soni said.

As per preliminary information, the explosion took place in the Dust Settling Chamber (DSC) of the unit



A view of the site following an explosion at an iron plant in Balodabazar, Chhattisgarh, on Thursday

and hot dust fell on the workers, causing them serious burns. Six workers died on the spot while five others sustained serious burns, he said.

After being alerted, police and senior administrative officials rushed to the spot and initiated relief and rescue operations.

UAE pardons 900 Indians

MUMBAI

Within three days of the UAE President's short but significant two-hour visit to New Delhi, diplomacy has begun yielding results in Abu Dhabi. The Indian Embassy has received a list of more than 900 Indian nationals set to walk free from prisons across the UAE, following a sweeping humanitarian pardon ordered by President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The decision, announced in late November 2025 ahead of

the UAE's 54th National Day — Eid Al Etihad, celebrated annually on December 2 — marks one of the largest such clemency exercises involving Indian prisoners in recent years.

Mass pardons during major national and religious occasions are a long-standing tradition in the UAE, rooted in the values of forgiveness and second chances. This year's initiative, however, stands out not just for its scale, but for the extraordinary relief measures accompanying it.

In a rare and significant humanitarian gesture, the

UAE leadership has also undertaken to clear the financial penalties imposed on the released prisoners. Fines and compensation linked to their convictions will be paid by the authorities — a move expected to lift crushing financial burdens off families and smooth the inmates' reintegration into society.

Officials familiar with the decision said the intent was clear: freedom should not come shackled with debt. By wiping out outstanding penalties, the UAE hopes the released prisoners can rebuild their lives with dignity.

S Korean woman alleges sexual harassment by airport staffer

BENGALURU

Based on a complaint from a South Korean national who alleged sexual harassment by an airport staffer on the pretext of routine frisking at the Kempegowda International Airport in Karnataka's Bengaluru, the KIAL Airport police has arrested and registered a case against the accused.

The airport staffer has been arrested for allegedly sexually harassing the foreign national who had arrived at the air-

port to travel to South Korea on January 19, KIAL Airport police station officials said on Wednesday.

An airport staffer has been arrested for sexually harassing a foreign woman who had come to the airport to travel to Korea. During the ticket inspection, the staffer said that a beeping sound was coming from the woman's bag and asked her to be checked separately. He took the woman to the men's toilet. There, he touched her inappropriately under the pretext of inspection," the police said.

12 B'deshis rescued after vessel sinks

Kolkata: 12 Bangladeshi sailors were rescued after cargo vessel identified as 'MV Tamjid and Nasir' sank in Muriganga River at Gangasagar. Police said the incident took place on Wednesday late evening and after police got information that the cargo vessel sank in the middle of the Muriganga river in Kachuberia in south 24 parganas, they immediately reached the spot and had rescued all 12 sailors on board.

Panchayat blesses pati, patni aur patni, divides time

RAMPUR

In a case that sounds straight out of a scriptwriter's notebook, a village panchayat in Uttar Pradesh's Rampur district has delivered a verdict that left locals amused, astonished and busy retelling the story. Instead of dividing land or property, the panchayat divided a living,

breathing husband.

The unusual episode unfolded in Naglia Aqil village under Azim Nagar police station area, where a man found himself caught between two wives. One marriage was arranged, the other a love match. Both women asserted full rights over him and refused to back down, turning the household into a daily wrestling

ring of arguments.

Residents say the fights became so routine that neighbours no longer needed television for evening entertainment. As tempers rose, both wives marched into Azim Nagar police station with the husband in tow, each demanding custody. The police, faced with a problem not found in any rulebook, decided the matter was best left

to the village elders. A panchayat was convened and after lengthy deliberations that reportedly rivalled a courtroom drama, the elders announced a formula that left the gathering stunned and then smiling. The husband, they ruled, would be shared by the week.

As per the decision, he will stay with the first wife on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,

and with the second wife on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Sunday, the panchayat declared, will be his "freedom day," when he is free to live wherever he pleases and presumably recover from the rest of the week.

The agreement was put on paper and signed by the man his wives, giving official status to what many villagers are already calling the most creative time-

table in recent memory.

The ruling has since become the hottest topic in tea shops and street corners in the area. While all three have returned home in accordance with the panchayat order, locals are still shaking their heads and laughing over a question that refuses to go away: can domestic peace really come with a weekly roster?



Rural Media Workshop in Meja, Deliberations on 'Developed India – G Ram Ji Law'



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj (Meja). A rural media workshop, 'Vartalap Programme,' was organized on Thursday at Pandit Kripashankar Tiwari College in Meja tehsil by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) Lucknow. Discussions were held on the 'Developed India – G Ram Ji Law' enacted by Parliament and the central government's welfare schemes. A large number of local journalists participated in the program. The chief guest, former Vice-Chancellor of Banaras Hindu

University, Prof. Girish Chandra Tripathi, said that this law is based on the concept of service, good governance, and prosperity and is a significant step towards making rural India self-reliant. He informed that under this law, there is a provision for guaranteeing 125 days of employment per year to eligible rural families. Dilip Kumar Shukla, Director of PIB and Central Bureau of Communication, Uttar Pradesh, said that the objective of the 'Developed India – G Ram Ji Law' is to strengthen rural liveli-

hoods and ensure that the benefits of the schemes reach the last person. He informed that a five-day exhibition and seminar on the same subject will be organized from January 24 to 28, 2026. Former Deputy Director of Education Ashok Nath Tiwari, Chairman of the Child Welfare Committee Dr. Akhilesh Mishra, and Deputy Regional Manager of Bank of Baroda Anoop Shukla also shared their views at the program. The speakers said that the dream of a developed India will only be realized when villages are empowered and self-reliant.

Second Day of the Parasailing Adventure Camp Successfully Concluded

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Tharwai / Under the direction of NCC Group Headquarters Prayagraj, the five-day parasailing adventure activity camp organized by 17 UP Battalion NCC, Prayagraj, from January 21st to January 25th, 2026, at the Air Force area, Phaphamau Padila airstrip, successfully completed its second day in accordance with pre-determined standards and complete safety protocols. Colonel Praveen Kumar S, Commanding Officer of 6 UP Girls Battalion NCC, Prayagraj, graced the occasion with his presence during the inspection of the second day of this adventure camp.

Colonel Praveen Kumar S himself took a flight in a parasailing balloon, encouraging the cadets and infusing new energy into the cadets and NCC staff with his inspiring and motivational address. In his address, Colonel Praveen Kumar S high-



ly praised Lieutenant Colonel Arvind Singh, the Administrative Officer of 17 UP Battalion NCC, Prayagraj, for the efficient leadership, robust planning, and excellent management of this five-day special parasailing adventure activity camp and extended his best wishes for the safe and successful completion of the camp. On the second day of the camp, cadets from 15 UP Battalion, 16 UP Battalion, and 17 UP Battalion NCC, Prayagraj, actively participated, demonstrating courage, discipline, and self-confidence. The contribution of Subedar Omkar Singh, Subedar Sundar Singh, Naib Subedar Harinder Singh Yadav, Hariram, BHM

Sanjay Sharma from 17 UP Battalion NCC, Prayagraj, and BHM Nilesh Sahu from 6 UP Girls Battalion for medical assistance, in the successful organization of this five-day parasailing adventure camp, was highly commendable. In addition, the cooperation of Chief Instructor Shashi Kumar Yadav and his trained team from Chitrakoot Paragliding Adventure organization in safely and effectively conducting the parasailing adventure activity was noteworthy. This adventure camp is proving to be an important initiative in strengthening courage, leadership skills, self-reliance, and a sense of national service among the cadets.

SP listens to Public grievances at Public Hearing

Fatehpur: A Public hearing Program was organized by Superintendent of Police Anoop Kumar Singh at the police office on Wednesday. During the Public hearing, the problems of complainants from various areas of the district were heard attentively and necessary instructions were given to the concerned officers and station house officers for the qualitative, impartial, and timely resolution of each case. The SP of Fatehpur took detailed information on complaints including land disputes, family disputes, assault, fraud and harassment of women during the public hearing. He instructed the officers to ensure the swift resolution of every complaint received under the legal process, so that the victims do not have to repeatedly visit the offices. The Superintendent of Police clearly stated that resolving the problems of the public is the top priority of the Police.

Employment Fair to be held at CRPF Group Center Prayagraj on January 24

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. An employment fair will be organized at the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Group Center, Prayagraj, on January 24, 2026, under the Prime Minister's ambitious employment scheme. This information was given by Deputy Inspector General of Police, Group Center CRPF Prayagraj, Dheeraj Kumar. He said that the employment fair will start at 9 am. During the event, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually present appointment letters to the newly selected candidates through video conferencing. The objective of the event is to provide employment opportunities to the youth and increase their participation in government services.

Major Action in 12 Hours: Two Notorious Criminals Apprehended in Zamania Police Encounter

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Ghazipur. The Zamania police station in the district has achieved a major success by arresting two notorious criminals involved in robbery and snatching incidents within just 12 hours in a police encounter. During the encounter, one criminal was injured by a gunshot and has been sent to the Zamania Community Health Center for treatment. Police recovered two illegal pistols, cartridges, and Rs. 15,000 in cash from the criminals. According to the



police, as part of the ongoing campaign against criminals, on Wednesday, the Station House Officer of Zamania, along with his team, was patrolling the area. During this time, they received information from an informant that criminals involved in robbery and snatching were present in the police station area, planning another crime, between Tajpur and Chitawanpatti. Upon receiving the information, the police team cordoned off the area and attempted to apprehend the criminals. Seeing themselves surrounded near

the canal intersection on the Bhaidpur to Lahuwar road, the criminals opened fire on the police team with the intention of killing them. The police retaliated with controlled firing in self-defense, in which Arman Qureshi, son of Saddiq Qureshi, a resident of Pathan Toli, Zamania town, Zamania police station, Ghazipur, sustained gunshot wounds to both his legs. He fell to the ground injured, while the other criminal was apprehended by the police.

The injured criminal was immediately sent to the Zamania Community

Health Center for treatment, keeping in mind humanitarian considerations. Police recovered two illegal pistols (.315 bore), two spent cartridges, one live cartridge, and Rs. 15,000 in cash from the scene.

A case has been registered under the relevant sections regarding the police encounter and the recovery of the items, and legal action is being taken. The encounter team included Station House Officer Ramsajan Nagar and his team, and Sub-Inspector Brijeshwar Yadav and his team.

Public Hearing on SIR Mapping under the Voter Revision Mega Campaign



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Soraon. A public hearing was organized under the Voter Revision Mega Campaign, chaired by Block Education Officer Soraon, Suman Mishra, regarding SIR (Special Intensive Revision) mapping. During the hearing, complaints were heard from the public regarding the re-inclusion of names removed from the voter list, corrections

to names and addresses, and other issues. Villagers and voters attended and presented their problems. Block Education Officer Suman Mishra informed those present that the objective of the SIR campaign is to prepare an accurate and error-free voter list so that no eligible voter is deprived of their right to vote. She said that voters whose names have been removed from the list can apply with the necessary documents

so that their names can be re-added in a timely manner. The concerned staff were instructed to promptly resolve the applications received and include the names of eligible voters in the list.

The public was also appealed to review the voter list and report any errors immediately.

The resolution of people's problems through the public hearing brought satisfaction to the voters.

A Unique Confluence of Justice, Dignity, and Unity, Grand Oath-Taking Ceremony of the Central Bar Association

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

(Ghazipur). The Mohammadabad Munsif Court complex in the district witnessed a historic moment when the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected office-bearers of the Central Bar Association was held with great grandeur, dignity, and discipline. This ceremony, imbued with judicial decorum, lawyer unity, and a spirit of service, became a symbol of new consciousness, new resolve, and a new direction for the legal community. The dignified presence of judicial officers, administrative representatives, and prominent members of society added to the grandeur of the event. The chief guest of the ceremony was the Honorable Dharmendra Kumar Pandey (District Judge, Ghazipur). His mere presence reflected a profound sense of justice, discipline, and moral values throughout the entire premises. The dignified presence of special guests,



including the Honorable Shakti Singh (Additional District Judge, Ghazipur), the Honorable Nutan Dwivedi (Chief Judicial Magistrate, Ghazipur), the Honorable Ranjit Kumar Jaiswal, the Honorable Manoj Kumar Yadav, the Honorable Hazik Hussain Ansari, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Dr. Harshita Tiwari, Circle Officer Sudhakar Pandey, and social worker Virendra Rai, elevated the ceremony to a special level. The chief guest, the Honorable District Judge, administered the oath of office and secrecy to the newly elected office-bearers of the Central Bar Association. The moments

of the oath-taking were extremely emotional and inspiring. A sense of responsibility was clearly visible on the faces of the lawyers, and an unwavering resolve towards the service of justice shone in their eyes. Those who took the oath included President Dayashankar Dubey, General Secretary Dhananjay Rai, Senior Vice Presidents Hariram Singh Yadav and Govind Narayan Sinha, Junior Vice Presidents Prabhas Pandey and Manish Kumar Rai, Joint Secretary Anand Pradhan, and Treasurer Awadh Bihari Yadav. In his inspiring and guiding address, the chief guest said,



"Lawyers are the soul of the justice system. Their responsibility is not only to resolve cases but also to become the strong voice of truth, justice, and the weaker sections of society." He urged the advocates to uphold the dignity of the court, ensure fair and speedy justice for the litigants, and remain ever vigilant towards their social responsibilities. Other guests also extended their heartfelt wishes to the newly formed executive committee and expressed hope that the Central Bar Association would play a significant role in protecting the interests of the advocates and in making the

judicial system more robust, transparent, and people-friendly. The program was efficiently and effectively conducted by Krishnanand Rai, while the ceremony was presided over by Awadh Bihari Yadav. Finally, the chairman of the assembly expressed his gratitude to all the esteemed guests, judicial officers, and fellow advocates. This grand ceremony, conducted in an atmosphere of harmony, discipline, and inspiration, will remain memorable for a long time as a symbol of a new beginning, renewed energy, and unwavering commitment to the service of justice for the legal community.

Mahatma Gandhi, the Great Prophet: Swami Shri Yogi Satyam

Paramahansa Yogananda wonderfully propagated Kriya Yoga in the West, calling Mahatma Gandhi a divine messenger. Spread the message of Sanatana Dharma and Kriya Yoga for 32 years.



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. In the Kriya Yoga practice and meditation camp being held under the guidance of Kriya Yoga Guru Swami Shri Yogi Satyam Ji Maharaj at the Kriya Yoga camp in the

Magh Mela area on Thursday, the Kriya Yoga Guru, during his class, spoke about the propagation efforts of Paramahansa Yogananda Ji. He said that the immortal saint Mahavatar Babaji sent Paramahansa Yogananda to receive formal

training from Jnana Avatar Swami Yukteshwar Giri Ji to propagate and teach Kriya Yoga (Sanatana Dharma) in the West. Paramahansa Yogananda presented the captivating message of Kriya Yoga at the Second Parliament of Religions



held in Boston, USA, and thereafter formally propagated the teachings of Sanatana Dharma in the West for 32 years. Paramahansa Yogananda attained Mahasamadhi on March 7, 1952, at a special program at the Biltmore Hotel

in California.

Ambassadors from 50 countries and disciples were present on this occasion. He addressed Mahatma Gandhi as a divine messenger and a great prophet. Yogananda clearly stated that all nations should

solve their national problems by following the path of Mahatma Gandhi. His teachings not only propagated Sanatana Dharma and Kriya Yoga in the West but also strengthened spiritual consciousness globally.

Blanket Distribution for the Needy by Meja Urja Nigam

Meja

Under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, Meja Urja Nigam distributed approximately 1,200 blankets to needy people in nearby areas to protect them from the winter cold. The distribution was carried out in the villages of Salaiya Khurd, Salaiya Kala, and Mai Kala in Meja Tehsil of Prayagraj district, Uttar Pradesh. The initiative aimed to provide support particularly to the elderly, persons



with disabilities, women, and other underprivileged



sections of society. Meja Urja Nigam continues to

make meaningful contributions in the fields of social welfare, education, healthcare, and community development. Local residents appreciated this humanitarian initiative and expressed their gratitude to Meja Urja Nigam. The event was attended by Shri Vivek Chandra, HoHR, Shri Manoj Kumar Verma, DGM, HR, members of the CSR team, Shri. Devishankar Yadav (Village Head – Salaiya Kala), Shri Suresh Yadav (Village Head – Salaiya

District Road Safety Committee Meeting Concludes Etah

Under the directions of District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh, a meeting of the District Road Safety Committee was held at the Collectorate Auditorium, chaired by Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Satyaprakash. During the meeting, a detailed review of various activities and public awareness programs conducted

Bhajan evening held at the divisional-level Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition in Prayagraj, singer Indal Singh performed



Prayagraj. On Tuesday, a cultural evening was organized at the divisional-level Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition, held at Parade Ground, Triveni Road, by the Uttar Pradesh Khadi and Village Industries Board on the occasion of Magh Mela 2026. During the event, singer Indal Singh and his group presented devotional songs, which attracted a large number of people. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Local for Local' campaign was cited as the basis for the success of indigenous products at the exhibition. A total of 210 stalls have been set up for Khadi institutions

and village industries units at this exhibition. Khadi institutions from the state and other states like Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand are also selling their products—including Khadi, silk, poly Khadi, cotton and woolen garments, and other apparel. So far, the sales of Khadi and village industry products at the exhibition have reached Rs 95 lakh. Jawaharlal, District/Regional Village Industries Officer, Senior Auditor Rakesh Mohan Gupta, and other officials were present at the event.

Swami Avimukteshwaranand retaliates against the fair administration's notice, calls the allegations baseless

Objects to the palanquin being called a carriage, cites a 2500-year-old tradition, Accuses police of violating the dignity of the Shankaracharya and assaulting his followers, Claims the palanquin was dragged and paraded, Says he was ridiculed, Alleges an attempt to throw the palanquin into the river, calls it an act of 'attempted murder'

Prayagraj. In response to the notice issued regarding alleged rule violations in the Magh Mela area on the day of Mauni Amavasya, Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati has sent a written reply to the second notice from the Prayagraj Mela Authority. In his reply, he has completely rejected the administration's allegations and presented the entire incident in the context of religious dignity and tradition. Swami Avimukteshwaranand clarified that the means of transport which the administration is calling a carriage was actually a palanquin, not a vehicle. He said that traveling in a palanquin is an integral part of the Sanatan tradition and this tradition has been continuing for approximately 2500 years since the time of Adi Shankaracharya. A palanquin does not have



wheels, so calling it a vehicle or a carriage is contrary to the facts. In his reply, he leveled serious allegations against the administration and the police, saying that the officials violated the dignity of the Shankaracharya. His followers were assaulted, and the palanquin was dragged by police personnel, treating them like criminals. He also alleged that throughout the

incident, the situation was created like a parade and exhibition to ridicule him. Swami Avimukteshwaranand also stated in his reply that the palanquin was deliberately taken and placed in a location where there was a high probability of it falling into the river. He termed this an act of attempted murder. He says that all this was done in a

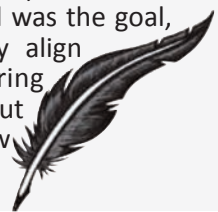
planned manner to hurt religious sentiments and humiliate him. It is noteworthy that earlier, the Mela administration had issued a notice to Swami Avimukteshwaranand, accusing him of breaking through an emergency pontoon bridge and crossing barriers to enter the crowded Sangam area on Mauni Amavasya day, despite vehicles being prohibited in the area. The notice stated that his actions could have led to a stampede and loss of life, and warned of the cancellation of land and facilities allocated to him, along with a permanent ban. Now, after Swami Avimukteshwaranand's response, the entire matter has become even more sensitive. It is expected that the Mela administration will review his response before taking further action.

Editorial

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

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

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



Kashmiris need to be treated like other Indians

Late one night in 1978, in a nation illuminated by the end of the Emergency, police dragged Ghulam Nabi Patel out of his home in Srinagar's Batamaloo, and into the city's Central Jail. Leviathan still cast a long shadow in this corner of the republic, it became clear. The head of the Kashmir Motor Drivers Association, it later emerged, had campaigned for the Janata Party in the just-concluded elections. This action enraged then-Prime Minister Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah enough to make the trade union leader the first victim of Kashmir's just-legislated preventive detention law, the Public Safety Act. The High Court ordered Ghulam Nabi's release, but that wasn't quite the end of the story. In 2018, the elderly politician, battling cancer and on a trip home to arrange his daughter's wedding, was shot dead by terrorists. This time, the parties he'd served for decades — the Congress and the People's Democratic Party — denied their association with him, so they would not have to condemn the assassins. A last bit of the story remains. In 2020, Ghulam Nabi's children were served notice by the government, ordering them to vacate the premises they were provided to protect them from terrorist attack. This week, the Supreme Court is scheduled to resume hearing petitions seeking the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, an issue it elided over after 32 paragraphs of elegant prose, in return for a promise from the Solicitor General. The decision to hear the issue is an important one, but it also evades a critical issue. The demotion of Kashmir to a Union territory



isn't the only issue that needs to be discussed, as India moves forward to reimagine its constitutional relationship with the once-was-a-state. Kashmir has never been, in any sense of the world, allowed to be a normal state, with normal politicians and normal citizens. The state might have been the first to get rural radio sets, scholar Navnita Chadha Behera notes, but authorities were careful to disable their tuners with wire, so as to ensure only Radio Kashmir could be heard. There were elections to a constituent Assembly in 1951, true, but politician Syed Mir Qasim observed notices posted on walls, ordering people not to discuss politics. Thus, Kashmir was bound to the republic with terror and blood, not ideas or culture. For this, the long jihad Pakistan unleashed against Kashmir in 1947-1948, and has since continued without interruption, must be held responsible. Like many other regions in

India, from the adivasi heartlands in central India to parts of the Northeast, democracy has struggled to grow in exceptionally harsh conditions. All blame, though, does not lie across the Line of Control. Elections that served to undermine democracy, the state-enabled subversion of the political system through corruption, the use of coercion unconstrained by law: All these, the story of Ghulam Nabi Patel should remind us, were Indian inventions. Today, the challenge isn't just to restore statehood in Kashmir. The task Indians need to embrace is to build a state that is Indian, an unremarkable part of our republic. Eighty years ago, Prime Minister Abdullah had promised that a utopia would be built from the ruins of Partition and war. The Naya Kashmir manifesto — which, Andrew Whitehead reminds us, liberally helped itself to text from the 1936 constitution of the Soviet Union — held out promises to redis-

tribute feudal landholdings to the peasants, to uphold the rights of women, and introduce universal access to healthcare and education. The communist couple Freda Houlston and her husband Baba Pyare Lal Bedi wrote the manifesto with Abdullah's encouragement, though it is unclear if his commitment to communism was ever serious. To the great Kashmiri poet Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor, it seemed Abdullah was leading the region out of the darkness: “The ranges of the mountains shall yield gold,” he gushed, “Pearls shall emerge out of the Wular lake.” Less than five years after Independence, though, the poet had encountered disillusionment. The reality of ‘New Kashmir’, it turned out, was one-party authoritarianism, electoral malpractice, and communalism. “Freedom being of heavenly birth, can't move from door to door,” he avidly wrote, “You'll find her camping in the homes of a

chosen few alone.” How did this come about? The story has something to do with bad luck, scholar Aijaz Ashraf Wani has written, in an excellent survey of the roots of misadministration in Kashmir. Two successive bad harvests, in 1949-1950 and 1950-1951, created enormous rural discontent. Forced levies of crops from farmers, imposed in a desperate effort to stave off famine, sharpened the resentment, while shortages of food in the cities grew to alarming levels. The National Conference succeeded in dominating the Constituent Assembly, winning all 75 seats in the 1951 elections. This was only possible, though, because 45 out of 49 candidates of the Hindu-nationalist Praja Parishad party were barred from contesting, mainly on frivolous technical grounds, Behera has observed. The media was muzzled, and opponents were intimidated and imprisoned. Less than five years later, though, the relationship between Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Abdullah had begun to break down. The Praja Parishad, denied electoral space, started a mass movement seeking the full integration of Kashmir into India. Abdullah, in a 10 April 1952 speech in RS Pura, suggested it was becoming impossible to “convince the Muslims of Kashmir that India does not intend to swallow them up.” The threat of war with Pakistan was alive, Nehru could not countenance this rebellion. “I am afraid Kashmir is heading in an adverse direction,” Nehru warned in a 28 June 1953 letter. The new regime of Prime Minister Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad.

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

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

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

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

The deadly flash floods and landslides in Uttarkashi on 5 August, in which 16 people were killed, highlight the problems of illegal riverbank constructions and inadequate warning systems. Videos of submerged villages, ravaging floods sweeping up buildings and cars in their tide, and stranded people have become an almost annual occurrence now in the Himalayan region. Dharali's floods struck in the absence of any weather warning, and authorities are still confused about the actual cause. While the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority called it a cloudburst, the India Meteorological Department could not confirm it with the available data. Uttarkashi district recorded 12.7 cm of rain in 8 hours on 5 August; it is still lower than districts such as Haridwar and Dehradun, which got 15-30 cm of rain on the same day. In a state that sees frequent cloudbursts and floods during the monsoon, and has been explicitly marked as a ‘high vulnerability zone’ for landslides by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the damage from the Dharali floods is not merely nature's fault. The blame also rests squarely on building norms, mass road construction and mining projects, and other anthropogenic activities that have exacerbated Uttarakhand's fragility.

The floods should be another wake-up call for the IMD and the NDMA to buck up and ensure the safety of people and ecology in the Himalayas. Dharali is a small hamlet 2,680 metres above sea level, situated 18 km from Gangotri, and is a common stopover for tourists and pilgrims going to one of the Char Dham of Uttarakhand. It is dotted with hotels, restaurants, and homes built precariously close to the banks of the Kheerganga River that runs through the village. On Tuesday afternoon, a barrage of water descended upon the village and damaged houses, roads,

and the one bridge connecting Dharali and Hershil, another area affected by the landslide. Satellite images from ISRO now show that deposits of mud and sediments from the floods cover all of the village. Alongside civilian settlements, an Army camp near Hershil too was impacted by the floods, although the number of people missing there hasn't been reported. The IMD had issued warnings of heavy to extremely heavy rainfall in all of Uttarakhand, including the Uttarkashi district, from 1 August onwards. But compared to other districts, Uttarkashi's rainfall during this monsoon was still pretty low. From 1 to 5 August, Uttarkashi's recorded rainfall was 6 per cent lower than the average rainfall it gets during this period. Over the monsoon season so far this year in the state, Uttarkashi has recorded 7 per cent lower rainfall than average. If there was indeed a cloudburst—100 mm of rain falling in one hour in a small area—then the IMD is not aware of it. The closest Automatic Weather System (AWS) station that could record this cloudburst is 7 km from Dharali, and it did not catch a cloudburst. But experts say that even without a cloudburst, the possibility of heavy rainfall.

causing this disaster is not unfounded. Dharali's location and slope explain it. “The ‘cloudburst’ may have happened much higher at 12,000 ft above sea level, and Dharali is at 8,000 ft. Even this slope of 4,000 ft makes a huge difference to the intensity of the water flow,” Mahesh Palawat, vice president of meteorology and climate change at SkyMet Weather, told.

“The canal is very narrow, and a lot of trees and mud could have been uprooted and swept along with the water.” If extremely heavy rainfall can cause such damage without a rare event like a cloudburst, it should leave the system working toward India's disaster preparedness thinking.

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

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

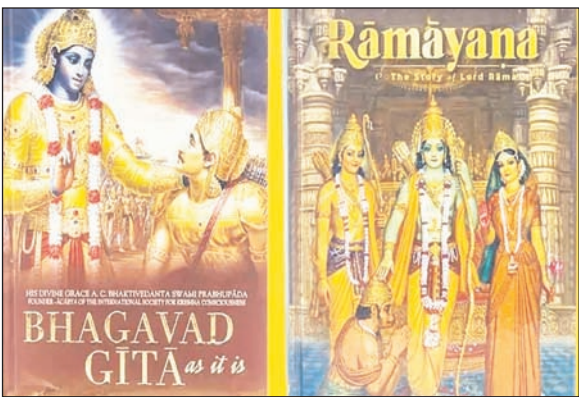
is to mobilise resources for economic development and that is exactly what the banks in our country have been doing. They have been working to attract deposits from those who have funds to spare on [a] long or short term basis. They have been making loans for industrial as well as agricultural expansion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

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

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

Modern science is connected to early Indian discoveries in NCERT books

Delhi : Indian scientific knowledge and discoveries are featured in sections of the new National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) science textbook for Class 8, from the ideas of ancient philosopher Acharya Kanad's "Parmanu" (atoms) to the methods of water bowl astronomy developed by mathematician Bhaskara II. Ayurvedic medication compositions include natural solvents like water and oils, the old practice of variolation was used to battle smallpox before modern vaccines, and alloys like "Kamsya" (a copper and tin alloy) are mentioned as well. Parts of the book headed "Ever heard of?" and "Our scientific heritage" draw connections between contemporary scientific ideas and findings made by ancient Indians. The seeks to pique students' curiosity by providing interesting information and insights from ancient Indian writings, while the latter provides



305K students compete for 71K DU spots

Delhi: Delhi University (DU) began its preference change window for the 2025-26 academic session under the Common Seat Allocation System, intensifying the competition for 71,642 undergraduate seats with over 305,000 applicants. After simulated ranks are released, the window will stay open . According to university data, 38,795 applicants chose Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC) as their first college choice this year. Hindu College, Hansraj College, St. Stephen's College, and Miranda House follow. Based on CUET scores and preferences, the simulated ranks allow students to adjust their course and college selections before the initial allocation list, which will be announced July 19. 239,890 of 305,357 CSAS portal users selected colleges and programs. Three are transgender, 127,284 (53.06%) are female, and 112,603 (46.93%) are male. The orphan quota has 221 female and 291 male applications, while 7,243 students have expressed interest in the single girl child quota.

details on organiza- tions and individuals.

A Third of the Total Fees Will Go Towards Reevaluating Legal Papers

Delhi Students in the Faculty of Law at Delhi University are protesting the introduction of a new re-evaluation facility, and not because of the facility itself but because of how much it would cost. DU's re-evaluation price for LLB students is Rs 2,000 per answer sheet, which is equivalent to one-third of the faculty's yearly tuition fee and twice the fee for other disciplines. Previously, the only alternative accessible to law students was to have their marks re-totaled; re-evaluation of answer sheets was not an option. Professional courses, like



law, do not currently have access to re-evaluation facilities, but DU announced plans to expand them in November of last year. Many were disappointed by the recently approved pricing, despite the fact that the move was well-received initially. The application fee is too high for the majority of law students, according to a fifth-semester stu-

dent who asked to remain anonymous, adding that this is the first time that LLB students have the option to apply for re-evaluation. "With a total annual fee of just about Rs 6,000, how can students be asked to pay Rs 2,000 for each paper?" Many will be discouraged from accessing a fundamental academic entitlement because of this.

RIL makes record profit amid oil decline, sets clean energy outlook

Delhi : India's most valuable company, Reliance Industries Ltd., surpassed predictions to register a strong increase in revenue and profit for the April-June quarter, driven by better telecoms and retail profitability despite crude-based difficulties. Profits from its Asian

Paints disposal also boosted the bottom line. According to an investor presentation, Reliance's new energy business's production plants—which will drive its growth over the next decade—are being commissioned quickly. The new energy business would create solar mod-

ules, generate clean electricity from them, use electrons to run data centres, and make hydrogen, ammonia, and aviation fuel. Reliance did not provide timescales. Reliance Industries' oil-to-chemicals (O2C) business's operating profit fell in the first quarter.

Premji pledges 2,250 crore for college education of girls



Delhi: Azim Premji Foundation has com-mitted to giving 2,250 crore over three years to help more girls com-plete their college education, making it the country's largest direct benefit transfer scheme by a not-for-profit private entity. Under the initiative, a girl who has completed her standard X and XII from a government school can apply for the Azim Premji schol-arship. Billionaire and philanthropist Azim Premji's eponymous founda-tion, Azim Premji Foundation, would give 30,000 a year to up to 250,000 girl students. This translates to ₹750 crore a year, which, over a three-year degree program, would total 2,250 crore.

"The basic purpose of this is to allow girl children to complete their higher education," said. Anurag Behar, chief executive officer of Azim Premji Foundation. "If a girl has completed 10th and 12th from a government school and is admitted to a bona fide college, the child is eli-gible to get 30,000 every year for the duration of her course." Beginning in September, a girl who starts college and has received the Azim Premji scholarship will receive ₹90,000 over a three-year degree program.

Japanese 'no-match' artificial blood could put an end to shortages

Delhi: There is no need to worry about infection, blood group compatibility, or expiration for months. Artificial blood, created by Japanese researchers, could revolutionize emergency response worldwide, particularly in situations involving large casualties or procedures in remote areas, and put an end to the worldwide blood shortage. The idea originated with Nara Medical University's Professor Hiromi Sakai and his colleagues, who are currently testing robust, virus-free synthetic red blood cells in human clinical trials. This innovation might be ready for practical application by 2030 if all goes as planned. Lack of education, inadequate facilities, and an



ongoing scarcity of donors have contributed to India's severe blood shortage. Therefore, in this kind of situation, the concept of a blood substitute might be absolutely game-changing. The absence of white blood cells and platelets makes it an incomplete substitute for human blood. On the other hand, it

may transport oxygen, which is absolutely necessary in an emergency. Made from donated blood that would have otherwise gone to waste, these artificial cells are stable at ambient temperature, look just like genuine blood, and imitate the body's natural red blood cells.

Irish education minister invites Indians for education, research

NEW DELHI: James Lawless, Ireland's Education Minister, on Monday said his country is "very welcoming" for students and has a supportive post-study employment visa arrangement. "Ireland is a very welcoming country. We have a very cosmopolitan culture. We have many nationalities now in Ireland, and many people have made their home, including many, many Indians," the Irish minister said, when asked whether his government is considering any changes in post-study work or immigration policies to retain skilled talents.

IT-Delhi rose 255 places to 171st globally, according to 2025 QS

Delhi: Among Indian universities for sustainability, IIT-Delhi rose 255 places to 171st globally, according to 2025 QS Rankings released. The QS Sustainability Rankings include 78 Indian universities, with nine of the top 10 improving and 21 new institutions entering. Two IITs—Delhi and Kanpur—are in the world's top 100 for environmental impact. With 177 and 67 rank improvements, each became fourth and fifth in India. Bangalore's IISc is among the world's top 50 environmental education schools. The



University of Delhi is the only Indian university to drop from 220 to 299, yet it still ranks sixth. DU leads India in Knowledge Exchange at 121 internationally. At seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth places are IISc, Vellore Institute of Technology, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, and Anna

University. Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University ranks 951-960. It is a leader in sustainable education and research, ranking 35th in India and 288th in Asia. "The rankings show that Indian universities are forging ahead with their sustainability initiatives."

SRCC, Hindu and BCom (Hons) top preferences at DU

Delhi: The University of Delhi has got an o v e r w h e l m i n g response to its undergraduate admissions this year, with Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC) emerging as the most sought-after college and BCom (Hons) as the most preferred course among applicants. CULTU According to the data released by the university on Tuesday, DU has received over 3.05 lakh registrations through the Common Seat Allocation System (CSAS), of which 2.39 lakh candidates have successfully submitted their college and programme preferences for admission to 71,642 undergraduate seats in 69 colleges and various departments. SRCC alone received 38,795 first-preference applications, followed by Hindu College with 31,901, Hansraj



IITTA urged the board of governors to expunge show-cause notices

Delhi: The IIT Kharagpur Teachers' Association (IITTA) urged the institute's board of governors to expunge show-cause notices issued to 86 faculty members, restore their administrative positions, and protect the association's office bearers from arbitrary or retaliatory actions amid the faculty-administration dispute. In September, the IIT Kharagpur teachers' association accused director Virendra Kumar Tewari of "nepotism" and "arbitrary faculty recruitment" in a letter to the Union Ministry of Education, sparking a confrontation. They wanted an academically qualified, inclusive governance-experienced successor. When the administration sent show-cause notices to IITTA office bearers and disciplined them for not answering within seven days.

College (15,902), St and Miranda House Stephen's (12,413), (11,403).

An individual contested the exclusion of a tennis match from the Hindu College sports quota admissions

Delhi: A junior national-level tennis player has taken Hindu College of Delhi University to court, claiming that the university should have included tennis in its list of sports accessible for admission under the sports mandate. Aditi Rawat challenged the college's decision to exclude lawn tennis from the sports available for admission under the sports quota for the upcoming academic year, and on Monday, Justice Vikas Mahajan sought the college's and DU's stance on the matter. The petition describes Rawat as "a distinguished Lawn Tennis athlete and gold medalist at the CBSE Nationals" who is contesting what is described as "the arbitrary denial of admission" to Hindu College under the Sports Quota



Samsung may make India a US hub amid rising tariffs

Delhi: Samsung may move some smartphone production from Vietnam if US tariffs drop in India. The world's largest smartphone maker would follow Apple in making India a top US smartphone manufacturing base. Samsung manufactures in various countries. Due to heightened US uncertainty, we are ready for several possibilities.

(Lawn Tennis) category. It states that DU's administration disregarded the 5% supernumerary sports quota that is mandated by the Common Seat

Allocation System (CSAS) Policy 2025-26. The appeal, submitted by counsel Jeetender Gupta, states that "Hindu College failed.

The AICTE has formed an expert group

Delhi: The formation of an expert committee by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is a major development in the field of technical education in India. The committee's mandate is to help various academic programs, not limited to computer science degrees, incorporate AI and applied AI. Leading AI professionals from IITs and NITs are part of the committee, which is chaired by Anand Deshpande, managing director of Persistent Systems. The goal of the move is to encourage the lateral expansion of AI in several streams, including BBA, BCA, electrical engineering, and others. "We are forming a committee to introduce AI laterally across all programs, especially Applied AI," stated AICTE Chairman Prof. TG Sitharam. "The goal is to integrate AI and related courses into all academic programs so that students from all walks of life can learn the basics of AI and data analytics."

A professor from IIT Delhi to head up IIM Lucknow

Delhi: The directorship of the Indian Institute of Management in Lucknow is anticipated to be assumed by a professor from the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi (IIT-D). (Department of IIM-L). The esteemed management school will likely be led by an IIT professor for the first time. Though the official announcement has not been made yet, it has been learned that the nomination of Prof. MP Gupta has been approved by the board of governors of IIM-L. "The chairman, board of governors, IIM, Lucknow, Shri N Chandrasekaran, vide his letter dated , , has informed that the BoG. has appointed Prof Manmohan Prasad Gupta

SHRIYA revisits Fan debut with SRK

Actress revisits 2016, celebrates Hindi debut with SRK's *Fan*, theatre, Mediterranean memories and cherished moments with family, co-stars

Actress Shriya Pilgaonkar felt nostalgic as she hopped onto the 2016 throwback viral trend, revisiting a year she describes as "a leap of faith" as it marked her debut in Hindi cinema with the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer *Fan*.

Taking to Instagram, Shriya recalled 2016 as the year of her Hindi film debut with Shah Rukh Khan-starrer *Fan*, a milestone that marked the beginning of new dreams. She also shared memories of taking her beloved Ajoba on a Mediterranean cruise and spending time doing theatre.

She added: "Came across a few special memories...the

year of my Hindi film debut with *Fan*, taking my Ajoba on a Mediterranean cruise, did a lot of theatre and quietly found the courage to take a leap of faith as dreams slowly started taking shape. A seeker then and a seeker now."

Talking about *Fan*, an action thriller directed by Manoj Sharma, it stars Shah Rukh Khan in a dual role as Aryan Khanna, a film star, and his obsessive fan and lookalike, Gaurav Chandra. Gaurav beats up a rival actor to appease Aryan, but is instead punished by his idol; heartbroken, the fan plans revenge.

The film also stars Walruscha De Sousa, Sayani Gupta, Yogendra Tikku, Taher Shabbir, Parveen Kaur and Indraneel Bhatta-charya to name a few. Shriya will next be seen in *Haiwaan* by director of the film Priyadarshan.



FAN-FAVOURITE CHARACTERS SET TO RETURN

From cult favourites to iconic leads, these beloved Bollywood characters are set to return, bringing nostalgia, intrigue and excitement

Some characters don't fade when the credits roll — they linger. They live on through dialogues that turn into punchlines, scenes that become memes, and performances that quietly embed themselves in pop culture. Years later, the announcement of their return doesn't just spark curiosity; it triggers nostalgia, anticipation, and an emotional reconnect. As actors step back into roles that once defined a phase in Hindi cinema, the excitement lies not just in the films themselves, but in revisiting characters audiences have long held close. Here are a few fan-favourite characters making a much-awaited comeback.



Akshay Kumar as Rajeev (Welcome to the Jungle)

Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar's return to the *Welcome to the Jungle* franchise is driven by familiarity and sheer comic comfort. Known for his effortless timing and ability to thrive in chaos-fuelled comedies, Akshay has been central to the franchise's enduring repeat value. *Welcome to the Jungle* taps directly into that nostalgia, with audiences eager to see him back in a space where his humour and screen presence feel instinctive. The film leans into his strengths, banking on crowd-pleasing banter, situational madness, and the comforting promise of laughs that feel both familiar and reliably entertaining.



Rani Mukerji as Shivani Shivaji Roy (Mardaani 3)

Few cop characters in recent Hindi cinema have made an impact quite like Shivani Shivaji Roy. Rani's portrayal combines authority with empathy, strength with moral clarity — making the character formidable yet deeply human. With *Mardaani 3*, audiences are eager to see Shivani return to a narrative space that consistently champions courage, accountability, and resistance against systemic injustice. The franchise's grounded storytelling and hard-hitting themes have built trust with viewers, who expect the third instalment to further deepen Shivani's resolve while confronting darker, more complex realities of crime and power.

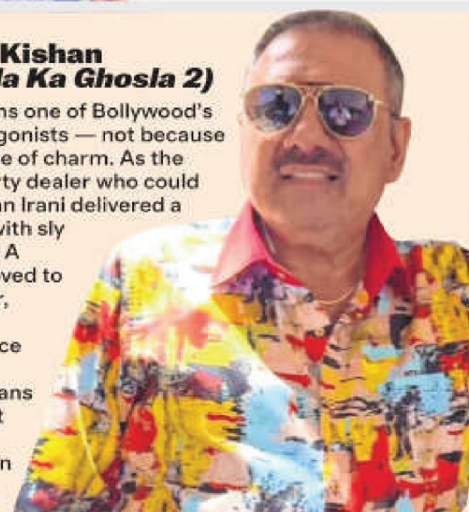


Ajay Devgn as Vijay Salgaonkar (Drishyam 3)

Vijay Salgaonkar proved that restraint can be riveting. Ajay Devgn's quiet, calculated performance turned an ordinary man into one of the most compelling minds in thriller cinema. Always ten steps ahead and never revealing more than necessary, Vijay's silence became his biggest weapon. As *Drishyam 3* approaches, the intrigue around his next move is stronger than ever — because with Vijay, nothing is ever as it seems.

Boman Irani as Kishan Khurana (Khosla Ka Ghosla 2)

Kishan Khurana remains one of Bollywood's most memorable antagonists — not because of menace, but because of charm. As the smooth-talking property dealer who could con with a smile, Boman Irani delivered a performance layered with sly humour and sharp wit. A character audiences loved to hate, Kishan's swagger, quotable lines, and unapologetic confidence turned him into a cult figure. His return has fans curious about how that same cunning energy translates years later, in a changed world.



Adil Hussain joins Lakadbaggha 2

Actor Adil Hussain, known for his roles in films such as *Love Sonia* and *English Vinglish*, is set to feature in *Lakadbaggha 2: The Monkey Business*. The upcoming film is a sequel to actor Anshuman Jha's 2023 film *Lakadbaggha*. Jha is returning for the second part, which will also feature Riddhi Dogra and Eksha Kerung. It is directed by Sanjay Shetty.

Hussain will replace Milind Soman, who was previously attached to the film, according to a press release. The actor said he is grateful to be a part of the film. "Watching *Lakadbaggha* was so inspiring. It felt like someone was finally making a film that stood up for the rights of animals — something we haven't seen in decades, perhaps since *Haathi Mere Saathi* in the seventies. I also had the good fortune of working with Anshuman Jha, both under his direction and as a co-actor," he said in a statement. "The martial arts training and ac-

tion sequences were challenging, but Anshuman has been incredibly supportive and generous throughout the process," he added. The first film in the franchise was an action vigilante film revolving around Arjun (Jha), a martial arts master who moonlights as a saviour of animals.



11-year-old founder wins grant

Amazon MX Player's entrepreneurial reality show *Bharat Ke Super Founders* witnessed a stand-out moment as 11-year-old Athvik Amith Kumar received an ₹11 lakh grant for his startup, ZoZo Connect. The young founder pitched an NFC-based digital networking platform that replaces traditional paper visiting cards. Athvik impressed the investment panel with his clarity, confidence, and understanding of the product's potential. While the tycoons did not proceed with an equity deal, they praised his vision and commitment. Nitish Mittersain awarded the grant to support Athvik's journey, with mentors also offering guidance.



GENELIA flaunts her Gunmaaster G9 look

Actor Genelia Deshmukh is currently busy shooting for *Gunmaaster G9*, which also stars Emraan Hashmi and Aparshakti Khurana. On Thursday, Genelia took to Instagram and shared a picture from the sets, giving a glimpse of her character's look.

She flaunted her side profile with a coloured fringe hairstyle, looking quite cool and stylish. "New Beginning. #GunmaasterG9" she captioned the post. The action-packed film titled *Gunmaaster G9* is expected to be released this year.

Last year in July, the makers dropped a gripping announcement teaser which caught fans' attention

in no time. In a post shared on Instagram, a mysterious hand was seen pulling a gun from a bucket of milk, while Emraan's voice was heard in a dramatic tone: "Mujhe mach mach kiya, chalega. Galti se family ko touch kiya toh yaad rakhna, dhandhe se doodh waala hun, banda barood-wala hun." ("You messed with me-fine. But if you mess with my family by mistake, remember this: I may be in the milk business, but I'm a man who deals with gunpowder.")



Photos: Instagram @geneliad

Photos: Instagram



Welcoming NY

Auckland was the 1st major city to ring in 2026 with a downtown fireworks display launched from NZ's tallest structure, Sky Tower, followed by a defiant celebration in Australia in the aftermath of its worst mass shooting.

Mamdani's wearing

Zohran Mamdani will become mayor of New York City as the clock ticks over into 2026 — but the celebrations are set to last through New Year's Day. The Democrat's team is planning separate swearing-ins on Thursday — a small, private one with his family in an old subway station around midnight, followed by a large event in the afternoon that will include a public block party outside City Hall. As a new mayor's term begins with the new year, it has been customary for the incoming leaders to hold two events.

Thailand frees 18 PoWs

Thailand on Wednesday released 18 Cambodian prisoners of war held for 5 months, fulfilling the terms of a ceasefire agreement the two countries signed to end bitter fighting along their border. The release was stipulated in the ceasefire pact signed on Saturday by the defence ministers of the countries.

Peru train crash kills 1

A train driver has died and at least 40 people have been injured in a head-on rail collision near Peru's most popular tourist attraction Machu Picchu. Two trains collided on the single track leading to the ancient Inca town on Tuesday. The US embassy in Peru said its citizens were injured, while the UK Foreign Office said it was "supporting a number of British nationals involved".

Travel ban on US nationals

Mali and Burkina Faso said late on Tuesday they would ban US citizens from entering their countries in retaliation for President Trump's decision to ban Malian and Burkinabe citizens from entering the US. The announcements were made in statements by the foreign ministers of the West African countries.

US freezes care funds

President Donald Trump's administration announced it was freezing child care funds to Minnesota after a series of fraud schemes in recent years. Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services Jim O'Neill said on X the step is in response to "blatant fraud that appears to be rampant in Minnesota and in the US."

Eurostar snag fixed

Channel Tunnel's operator said trains through the undersea link between continental Europe and the UK were running again on Wednesday after a day of travel chaos caused by a power malfunction. Eurostar, which runs passenger trains through the tunnel, said its services were operating again but warned "knock on impacts" following the disruptions on Tuesday could still cause delays and cancellations.

Iran appoints cent bank gov

Iran named Abdolnasser Hemmati, a former economics minister, as new governor to central bank after the former one quit following a record currency fall against the US dollar.

CATASTROPHIC SITUATION | Tel Aviv says organisations fail to meet 'stringent requirements'; 10 nations warn of suffering

Israel to ban dozens of aid agencies from Gaza

TEL AVIV

Israel has announced it will stop dozens of aid organisations working in Gaza within 36 hours for failing to meet stringent new requirements to hand over personal details of Palestinian and international staff deployed in the devastated territory, "The Guardian" reported.

The list of groups hit by the ban include some of the world's best known humanitarian organisations such as ActionAid, International Rescue Committee and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

Tuesday's announcement by the ministry of diaspora affairs comes amid recent fierce storms, which destroyed thousands of tents in Gaza, exacerbating an already acute humanitarian crisis.

Foreign ministers of 10 nations expressed "serious concerns" about a "renewed deterioration of the humanitarian situation" in the devastated territory, saying the situation was "catastrophic".



A Palestinian boy collects water from a tank amid the rubble of destroyed buildings in Gaza City.

"As winter draws in, civilians in Gaza are facing appalling conditions with heavy rainfall and temperatures dropping," the ministers of Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland said in a joint statement released by the UK's Foreign Office.

The statement added, "1.3 million people still require urgent shelter support. More than half of health facilities are

only partially functional and face shortages of essential medical equipment and supplies. The total collapse of sanitation infrastructure has left 740,000 people vulnerable to toxic flooding."

The ministers called for the UN and its partners to continue their work in Gaza, and for the lifting of "unreasonable [Israeli] restrictions on imports considered to have a dual use". Hundreds of items have been blocked by Israel from



The target of 4,200 trucks per week, including an allocation of 250 UN trucks per day, should be a floor not a ceiling. The targets should be lifted so we can be sure the vital supplies are getting in at the vast scale needed.

A statement

entering Gaza on the basis they may be used by Hamas to rebuild tunnels or for military purposes. The items include vitally needed medical and shelter equipment.

The ministers called for the opening of crossings to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, saying corridors for moving goods remained closed or severely restricted for humanitarian aid, including Rafah, the biggest entry point that leads directly to Egypt. "Bureaucratic customs processes and extensive screenings are causing delays, while commercial cargo is being allowed in freely," the statement said.



Granddaughter of JFK no more

Tatiana Schlossberg, the granddaughter of former US President John F. Kennedy, has died at 35. Her family announced her death in a social media post shared by the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation, writing: "Our beautiful Tatiana passed away this morning. She will always be in our hearts."

In November, Schlossberg, a climate journalist, announced her diagnosis of an aggressive form of cancer. She said in an essay she had been given less than a year to live.

Schlossberg was the daughter of designer Edwin Schlossberg and diplomat Caroline Kennedy, and is survived by her husband George Moran and their children, Edwin, 3, and Josephine, 1.

In a 'New Yorker' article 'A Battle With My Blood' last month, Schlossberg revealed she had been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia in May 2024, after giving birth to her second child.

2026: FAST FORWARD

The year is packed with major global events

POLITICS

- Thailand general election (**Feb 8**)
- Bangladesh general election (**Feb 12**)
- Nepal general election (**March 5**)
- Hungary parliamentary election (**April 12**)
- Colombia presidential election (**May 31**)
- Ethiopia general election (**June 1**)
- Armenia parliamentary elections (**June 7**)
- Sweden general election (**Sept 13**)
- Brazil presidential election (**Oct 4**)
- Israel Knesset election (**Oct 27**)
- US midterm elections (**Nov 3**)

MUSIC

- Madonna to release sequel to Confessions On A Dancefloor.
- BTS to launch new album & tour after military service.
- Lana Del Rey to launch Stove, a country/Southern Gothic project.
- Robbie Williams to release Britpop album on Feb 6.

SPACE

- Nasa's Artemis II mission, likely in February, will take four astronauts on a 10-day voyage around the moon.
- Chinese astronauts on board Chang'e 7 will study the moon's south pole.
- SpaceX set to debut a new version of its Starship megarocket.
- Boeing's Starliner spacecraft is scheduled for an uncrewed test flight to ISS.



Release of Avengers: Doomsday, Spider-Man: Brand New Day, Toy Story 5, and The Hunger Games: Sunrise on the Reaping

Marilyn Monroe's 100th: Centennial celebrations.

Hadi murder suspect in Dubai

Dhaka: In the Bangladeshi student leader Osman Hadi's murder case, prime accused Faisal Karim Masud has denied any role, claiming he was in Dubai, contradicting Bangladesh police's allegations about his presence in India, reports said. In a viral video (veracity was not verified), Masud said he did not kill Hadi, claiming a radical political group was involved.

Masud accepted he went to Hadi's office before the shooting but insisted his relations with Inqilab Moncho spokesperson was business related. The video has sparked fresh debate and uncertainty over what really happened.

"I am Faisal Karim Masud. I want to state I am not involved in the murder of Hadi in any

way. This case is completely false and based on a fabricated conspiracy," Masud said. "Because of this false implication, I was forced to flee the country and come to Dubai. I came here with great difficulty, though I held a valid 5-year Dubai visa," he added.

He claimed his family was being falsely implicated and is being severely harassed and tortured, despite being completely innocent. "They have no involvement whatsoever. This kind of inhumane treatment of my family is unjust and unacceptable. I strongly protest against it," he said.

About ties with Hadi, Masud said, "Yes, I did go to Hadi's office. I am a businessman; I own an IT firm. I was previously employed at ministry

of finance. I went to meet Hadi about a job. He promised to arrange it and asked for an advance payment."

"Accordingly, I gave him 500,000 taka. He asked me to donate to his programmes, and I provided funds whenever he requested. Last Friday, I gave him money for one of his programmes," he added.

Masud accused Jamaat of Hadi's murder, saying, the student leader was "a product of Jamaat" and he was killed by "Jamaati elements". "This incident is the work of Jamaat. Neither I nor my younger brother was on that motorcycle, and we have been deliberately framed. My family is suffering unjustly. This level of harassment is disturbing and unacceptable." —**Agencies**

France to ban social media for U-15s

PARIS

The French government on Wednesday said it would ban social media for children Under-15. If the bill is passed, France would be one of the first democracies to do so.

The bill, scheduled to be presented in Parliament in January, and, if passed, to be enforced in September 2026, is a two-fold initiative. The law will ban social media sites from serving anyone under 15, in addition to enforcing the long-standing prohibition on mobile phone usage in high schools. The proposal follows Australia's decision to prevent its young citizens from accessing social networking sites, which has stirred a controversy over the use of social media and its impact on mental health.

According to **President Emmanuel Macron** and his cabinet, the law is intended to ensure "appropriate



measures are put in place to protect youngsters from inappropriate content, bullying, and sleep disturbances that have become distressingly frequent in adolescents."

There is increasing evidence, over the past decade, of the consequences of excessive social media exposure on the health and well-being of adolescents and also adults. There is mounting research evidence in Europe, the US, Australia, and Asia of increasing levels of teenagers suf-

fering from anxiety, body image disturbances and self-harm.

The implementation of the ban is not going to be easy. According to teachers' unions, the use of phones, although banned in middle schools, is not implemented consistently. High schools are expected to be more problematic, since students are older and independent.

"We do not have the human and technical capacity to implement it," said Jean-Rémi Girard, head of National Union of High School, Middle School, Primary Schools, and Higher Education (SNALC). Whether the policy is right is no longer the question, the challenge is to make it practical.

Notably, under-16s in Australia were banned from using major social media sites, including TikTok, X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and Threads on December 10. The ban is the first of its kind and was being watched closely by other countries.

UKRAINIAN UAV ATTACK ON PUTIN'S RESIDENCE

Russia releases video proof

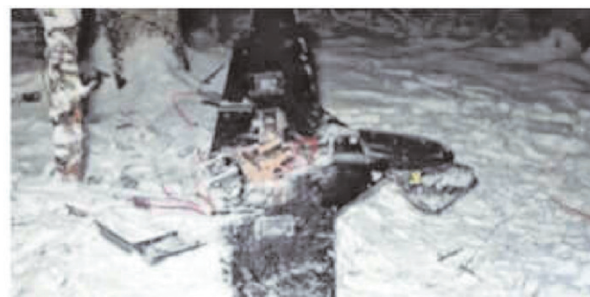
MOSCOW

Russia on Wednesday published video proof of its claims, showing a downed drone it said was launched by Ukraine at President Vladimir Putin's residence in the north-west.

The video, released by Russia's defence ministry, shows the damaged drone lying in snow. It described the incident as a "targeted, carefully planned" attack that had been "carried out in stages".

Officials said the UAV was part of a mass drone launch aimed at Putin's residence. They claimed the home was not damaged, and Putin's whereabouts at the time were not revealed.

Moscow called the alleged drone attack a "terrorist act" and a "personal attack" on Putin. In response, Russia said



it would harden its stance in peace talks concerning the Ukraine war. The US-based Institute for the Study of War expressed scepticism over Russia's claims, saying there was no supporting footage or evidence associated with deep strikes from Ukrainian forces to back up the assertion Putin's house had been targeted.

RUSSIAN DRONES BLAST ODESA, INJURE 6, INCLUDING CHILDREN Russian drones blasted apart-

ment buildings and the power grid in Ukraine's Odesa in an overnight attack that injured six people, including a toddler and two kids, officials said.

Four apartment buildings were damaged, according to regional military administration head Oleh Kiper.

Power company DTEK said two of its energy facilities suffered significant damage.

The company said 10 substations that distribute electricity in Odesa were damaged in December alone.

NY speech: Xi vows to reunify China & Taiwan

Beijing: Chinese President **Xi Jinping** in his New Year address on Wednesday said Taiwan's reunification with China is "unstoppable" while projecting the country's growing defence advances, and highlighted the construction of the world's largest dam over Brahmaputra river.

Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait share a bond of blood and kinship, Xi said in his 2026 New Year message.

"The reunification of our motherland, a trend of the times, is unstoppable," Xi said amid stepped up high-powered drills by the Chinese military in the last three days around the self-governing island, which China claims as part of its mainland. This is the sixth time since 2022 that China held intensified military drills using the latest air force jets, aircraft carriers, missiles and drones practising the capture of Taiwan.



Xi, 72, the longest-serving leader of the People's Republic of China sought to project Beijing's economic, defence and tech advancements. "Construction of hydropower project at the lower reaches of Yarlung Zangbo (Brahmaputra river) began," he said.

China began the construction of \$170 billion dam over Brahmaputra in ecologically fragile Tibet, near the Indian border in Arunachal, which evoked concerns of flooding in India and Bangladesh. Xi spoke of the commissioning of China's first aircraft carrier equipped with an electromagnetic catapult system.

Jailed Lai's teeth rotting, fingernails falling off: Daughter

The daughter of **Jimmy Lai**, the pro-democracy tycoon jailed in Hong Kong, has expressed concerns about her father's deteriorating health in prison, saying his fingernails "sometimes fall off" and his teeth are rotting.

Lai, 78, has been detained since December 2020 and faces life in prison. Earlier this month he was convicted of colluding with foreign forces under the city's controversial national security law.

Hong Kong and Chinese authorities have denied that Lai has been mistreated in prison, saying he is in "good health". The BBC has seen a letter written by Lai's family urging UK PM Keir Starmer call for Lai's release when he meets Chinese President Xi Jinping next month.

His daughter Claire Lai, who's in exile in London, said she fears she "may never see



him again". "Of course I worry that my father is going to be a martyr, and I don't want him to be a martyr. But I would not be here today. I would not be speaking out if I didn't think this was his best chance of reuniting with our family."

"He is diabetic, he has heart issues which he never had in the past. He has fingernails that turn purplish grey and sometimes fall off. He has teeth that are rotting. He has back and waist pains. Some days it's painful for him to stand. Sometimes he can't stand. And some days he can't even get out of bed," she said.

Isiah Whitlock Jr, 'The Wire' and 'Veep' actor, dies at 71

Isiah Whitlock Jr., known for his memorable acting roles on 'The Wire' and 'Veep', has died at the age of 71, according to his manager. "It is with tremendous sadness I share the passing of my dear friend and client Isiah Whitlock Jr.," manager Brian Liebman wrote on Instagram.

Whitlock, who also featured in 'Goodfellas' and 'The Chappelle Show', was a long-time collaborator with director Spike Lee, who also shared a heartfelt tribute to him.

"Today I learned of the passing of my dear beloved brother Isiah Whitlock. God bless," Lee wrote, alongside a photo of the two men shaking hands. "If you knew him — you loved him. A brilliant actor and even better person," Liebman wrote.

In statements to Hollywood news outlets, he added Whitlock passed away in New York after a short illness.



Briefs

BENGALURU

Poonawalla to make strong bid for RCB



The ownership transfer process of Royal Challengers Bengaluru gained momentum on Thursday as **Adar Poonawalla** said he will be tabling a "strong and competitive" bid for the IPL team. "Over the next few months, will be putting in a STRONG and COMPETITIVE bid for RCB, one of the best teams in the IPL," Poonawalla, Chief Executive Officer of Pune-based vaccine-maker Serum Institute of India, wrote on his official 'X' handle.

HYDERABAD

Sarfaraz, Lad tons power Mumbai



Sarfaraz Khan and **Siddhesh Lad** compiled superlative hundreds to power table-toppers Mumbai to a commanding 332 for 4 on day one of their Ranji Trophy match against Hyderabad, here on Thursday. Sarfaraz notched up his 17th first-class hundred and his first of the 2025-26 Ranji season, scoring 142 not out off 164 balls. Lad scored 104, while putting on 249 runs for the fourth wicket after Mumbai was asked to bat first. Rohit Rayudu trapped Lad in front in the 86th over.

NEW DELHI

Tendulkar pays tribute to retired Saina



Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar on Thursday paid glowing tribute to former badminton world number one **Saina Nehwal**, saying her career was a testament to how greatness is built over time and that her legacy extended far beyond medals. Saina, who has been out of action for the last two years due to a chronic knee condition, confirmed her retirement from competitive badminton earlier this week, saying her body could no longer cope with the physical demands of elite sport. The 35-year-old from Hyderabad last played a

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Mob. 9415235084, 95653330002ND T20I | Red hot India aim to make it 2-0 against New Zealand
Focus on Samson, Kishan

RAIPUR

Sanju Samson would look to hit his straps in a much-needed settled role at the top of the order, while Ishan Kishan would be better served to make the limited opportunities count in the second T20 international between India and New Zealand here on Friday.

In and out of the playing eleven for no fault of his own, Samson is now certain to get an extended run ahead of next month's T20 World Cup.

Falling to a soft dismissal in the series opener, Samson would be determined to display his wide range of shots that have helped him rack up three hundreds in the shortest format.

Another batter who needs to repay the faith of the team management is Kishan, a surprise inclusion in the World Cup squad and played ahead of Shreyas Iyer in Nagpur on Wednesday night.

The southpaw looked good in his brief stay before being caught at cover. With batting till eight, most Indians players bat in top gear trying to hit every ball out of the park. Kishan would continue with that fearless approach and can only hope that it pays off.

Focus has been on captain Suryakumar Yadav's form ahead of the ICC event and even though he could not make a major contribution, the 32 off 22 balls would have lifted his confidence by a few notches.

Despite the individual areas of improvement emerging from an emphatic win in the first T20, the performance as a team sent ominous signals to rivals ahead of the World Cup where India go in as defending champions.

If India are to become the first team to defend the T20 World Cup title, Abhishek



India's Sanju Samson plays a shot during the first T20I against New Zealand in Nagpur on Wednesday. PTI

Sharma must continue to breathe fire at the top of the order like he did on Wednesday night.

The left-hander seems to be in the form of his life and someone who has a shown a rare ability to hit most balls out of the ground.

In the lower-order, Rinku Singh coming back into the team and firing instantly was another big positive for India.

Even in the absence of Kuldeep Yadav, the bowling department looks well rounded.

If Arshdeep Singh and Hardik Pandya keep taking wickets in powerplay, Jasprit Bumrah can be used for three overs post the powerplay, giving the side an additional weapon in the middle overs.

Largely due to the massive total, India were able to

Squads:

India: Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (wk), Ishan Kishan, Shreyas Iyer, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Varun Chakravathy, Rinku Singh, Arshdeep Singh, Ravi Bishnoi, Harshit Rana.

New Zealand: Mitchell Santner (captain), Devon Conway, Bevon Jacobs, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Tim Robinson, Jimmy Neesham, Ish Sodhi, Zak Foulkes, Mark Chapman, Michael Bracewell, Rachin Ravindra, Kyle Jamieson, Matt Henry, Jacob Duffy.

negate the dew factor in Nagpur.

"The way we batted, even after when we were put under pressure in the powerplay, we were 25-2, and then we took the game till the 15th over, and then we never stopped, all the batters I think played their role really well and I think that was a big plus point," said Suryakumar after the win.

Dew is expected here as well and no total would be safe as South Africa showed last month, chasing down 359 rather comfortably against the hosts in an ODI game.

New Zealand know they were not up to the mark on the bowling front and being a side which learns and adapts quickly, the Black Caps would be backing themselves to level the series.

They would be slightly worried about Devon Conway's recent mode of dismissals, caught in the slip cordon off away moving balls.

In and out Rinku Singh revels in finisher's role

The UP batter's couple of sixes and fours in last over gave India a much-needed cushion in dewy conditions

RAIPUR

Rinku Singh doesn't take long to make an impact in the death overs even if his outings in India colours are months apart.

After hitting the Asia Cup-winning four off the only ball he faced in the tournament back in September, Rinku mostly warmed the bench in the T20 series in Australia. He did not get to bat in the one game he was a part of.

That night in Brisbane on November 8 happened to be his latest India appearance until he made a roaring return on Wednesday night with a match-tilting 44 not out off 20 balls.

His couple of sixes and fours in the 20th over off part-timer Daryl Mitchell gave India a much-needed cushion in dewy conditions with 238 for seven proving to be way out of reach for the Black Caps. Earlier, with Shubman Gill firm at the top of the order, it had become difficult to accommodate Rinku in the playing eleven.

Now with Gill out of the side, the management can give wicket-keeper Sanju Samson an extended run as an opener, creating more room for Rinku to be the finisher in the lower-order alongside Hardik Pandya.

What is remarkable is Rinku's ability to get going from ball one especially against the fast bowlers.

"We are all aware of Hardik's exceptional finishing abilities. (Shivam) Dube is not a finisher, he is a spin enforcer. Now with Sanju Samson locked at the top of the order and with Ishan Kishan back as the wicket-keeper batter, what is left?



India's Rinku Singh (R) at practice before the first T20I against New Zealand in Nagpur on Wednesday. PTI

Don't want to bother about things I can't control: Arshdeep

PTI
NAGPUR

Arshdeep Singh has an uncanny ability to find humour where there is little to smile about, expressing himself without hard feelings or rubbing powerful people the wrong way.

Having been in and out of the Indian team since Gautam Gambhir took over as head coach, the feisty left-arm pacer was asked if the constant chopping and changing affected him.

"Jaise main team se in and out hota hoon uska advantage bhi hai. Mera ball bhi in and out jaata hai (Being in and out of the team has its own set of advantages. Like I am in and out of the team, my ball is also coming in and going out). So I am

enjoying that," Arshdeep said with a smile, reminding one and all that non-selection hasn't affected his ability to swing the ball both ways even one bit.

Arshdeep has often been sacrificed for team combination in recent months. On a more serious note, the 26-year-old underlined his professional approach towards selection and readiness.

"My job is to remain ready and whenever team wants me to bowl in any format with new or old ball, I can give my best. My aim is to enjoy the journey, remain in present and focus on the controllable. What is not in my control (selection), I shouldn't be bothered about it," he said.

Arshdeep said he likes to different match conditions.

"You need a finisher with Hardik in the death overs. Who can do it better than Rinku? He has great numbers

and pedigree," India spin great R Ashwin said on his 'YouTube' channel after Rinku was named in the WC squad.

Bangladesh refuse to budge on T20WC

We won't play in India but still hopeful of justice from ICC: Nazrul

DHAKA

A defiant Bangladesh on Thursday refused to send its national cricket team for next month's T20 World Cup in India after the ICC rejected its demand for a change of venue, effectively paving the way for Scotland to take the country's place.

Bangladesh had been served an ultimatum by the world body on Wednesday to either agree to travel to India or risk being replaced as there was no credible threat to the safety of their players, officials or fans there.

The country was given time till Thursday to make its decision. Scotland is next in line based on team rankings for the tournament starting February 7.

However, taking a hard-line position Bangladesh's sports advisor Asif Nazrul, after a meeting with national team players, announced that the ICC's assessment was not acceptable to them.

"While our cricketers have worked hard to qualify for the World Cup, the security risk



regarding playing in India remains unchanged. This concern is not based on abstract analysis..." Nazrul said in a press conference while declaring that the country won't play in India.

"...we are not convinced that they can ensure the safety of our entire team, journalists, and spectators.

"We are not giving up hope yet; our team is ready. We expect the ICC to provide justice by considering our genuine security risks and allowing us to play in Sri Lanka," he added.

Bangladesh are due to play four games in India.

Dnyandeep clinches maiden title

Panvel school's coach Abdul Khan delivers the riches in Giles Shield without fixed salary

MUMBAI

Dnyandeep Seva Mandal Primary and Secondary School won their maiden Giles Shield title after beating Swami Vivekanand International SSC by four wickets in the final on Thursday. The school near Panvel announced its arrival in the MSSA Dream Sports Inter-School Cricket with empathic performance at the Brabourne Stadium, Cricket Club of India, on Thursday.

After scoring 276 in the first innings and conceding a 54-run lead, SVIS started the day precariously placed at 58/5. Still, overnight not out batter Shauryakant Upadhyaya (33) went on to top score with 94 and take Swami Vivekanand to 178/8 in 40 overs and give their bowlers something to bowl. Skipper Kartik Chhajer, who made 90 in the first innings, remained unbeaten on 58 in the second innings and was later adjudged Best All-rounder of the tournament.

Chasing 125 in 40 overs, Dnyandeep stuttered a bit and lost six wickets but romped home with 6.3 overs to spare. They made 128 for 6 in 34.3



overs. Atharva Kalel top-scored with 56. Daiwat Kawali, who took three wickets in the first innings for the Borivali School, followed with four wickets in the second innings.

Dnyandeep skipper Anup Yadav was declared man of the match for his hundred and five-wicket haul, while Neil Naik won the Best batter of the 124th edition of the prestigious tournament. Rizvi's Abdullah Khatri won the best bowler award.

Dnyandeep pulled off a heist in only their second year at this level. The School with little history in cricket two years ago has one title, one runners-up in the Giles Shield,

and two semifinal finishes in the Harris Shield.

The school found a capable coach in Abdul Khan, who was looking for a challenging role. He had a great CV, being the former cricket coach of Anjuman-I-Islam Allana English School and running Future Star Cricket Academy in Panvel, which has produced many junior Mumbai players.

"I approached the Dnyandeep management as the school was close to my academy in Panvel. They didn't have much cricket set up, but they showed faith in me. I worked voluntarily without any salary initially. But later, as I coached the team to the Giles Shield finals and

Harris Shield semifinals last season, in my first year. I started getting perks and other benefits," said Khan after Dnyandeep won their maiden Giles Shield title at the Brabourne stadium on Thursday.

The road wasn't easy for Khan, and he had to assemble players from his academy and the surrounding areas to make a school team. "I was running an academy in Panvel and had produced many junior cricketers who played for Mumbai at some level. I brought some players from my academy to the school, and initially, it was difficult, but with the support of the school management, we got

Brief Score

Swami Vivekanand: 276 all out in 79.2 overs (Kartik Chhajer 90, Prajwal Taware 82, Shauryakant Upadhyaya 48; Anup Yadav 5/76, Atharva Kalel 4/66) & 178-8 in 40 overs (Shauryakant Upadhyaya 94, Kartik Chhajer 58*) 2x4s, lost to **Dnyandeep Seva Mandal:** 330-5 in 80 overs (Anup Yadav 126*, Anuj Chaudhary 102, Atharva Kalel 50, Neil Naik 38; Daiwat Kawali 3/81) & 128-6 in 34.5 overs (Atharva Kalel 56; Daiwat Kawali 4/66) by 4 wkts.

things in place, and after getting results, everyone started to believe in us. We used to train mostly in our academy ground," he added.

However, SVIS experienced coach Dinesh Lad wasn't impressed with Dnyandeep's title win and reiterated that they had fielded a few overage players. "We will file a formal protest against four players," said Lad after the match.

Australian Open

Djokovic one away from 400 Grand Slam match wins

MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic and Stan Wawrinka made it a day for the ages at the Australian Open.

Djokovic improved to 399 wins in Grand Slam matches with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Francesco Maestrelli on Thursday, making the 38-year-old, 24-time major winner just one shy of becoming the first player ever to 400.

He's aiming to win an

unprecedented 25th Grand Slam title. And if he does, he'll beat Ken Rosewall's record (aged 37 in 1972) as the oldest man in the Open era to win a major singles championship.

The Rosewall name was prominent on Day 5 at Melbourne Park, where he was among the invited VIPs.

Wawrinka makes history Wawrinka, at 40 years, 310 days, became the first man over 40 to reach the third round of a major since

Rosewall in 1978. It took a 4 1/2-hour 4-6, 6-3, 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (3) comeback victory over 21-year-old qualifier Arthur Gea. That's the longest match of the 2026 tournament so far. Wawrinka, who is retiring at the end of the year, will next face No. 9 Taylor Fritz.

Before then, he told the crowd at John Cain Arena: "I think I'll pick up a beer. I deserve one!"

His was one of three high-profile matches that finished around the same time, with

Jannik Sinner continuing his bid for an Australian Open three-peat after beating James Duckworth 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena.

The defining feature of Naomi Osaka's first two rounds quickly moved from fashion to friction when her 6-3, 4-6, 6-2 win over Sorana Cirstea ended in tension.

Iga Swiatek beat Marie Bouzkova 6-2, 6-3 and later said she's been trying to take lessons from Djokovic's attitude to sustained success and longevity.

Keys to success

Defending champion Madison Keys was down a double break in the second set before rallying to beat Ashlyn Krueger 6-1, 7-5 and advancing to a third-round match against former No. 1 Karolina Pliskova.

Melbourne is where Keys made her Grand Slam breakthrough 12 months ago and since her return people have been asking her how confident she is about retaining the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup.



Novak Djokovic of Serbia reacts after defeating Francesco Maestrelli of Italy on Thursday. AP