

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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

## Briefs

RANCHI

### Soren arrives in Zurich to attend WEF

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren arrived in Zurich, Switzerland, on Thursday to participate in the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos, where he will showcase investment opportunities in the state on a global platform. He is accompanied by an official state delegation, which will travel from Zurich to Davos a day later. The World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos is one of the most influential global platforms where governments, industry leaders, financial institutions, multilateral agencies, and civil society come together to shape the direction of the world economy. It is a forum where ideas translate into partnerships, and where policy, capital, innovation, and development priorities converge. For a state like Jharkhand, participation at WEF represents a decisive step into this global conversation.

PATNA

### Nitish to start statewide Yatra today

Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar will embark on his next Yatra from Bettiah in West Champaran district in north Bihar on Friday, marking his 17th such march and 15th in his capacity as CM. Nitish's Yatra, named 'Samridhhi Yatra' in a chilling winter shows his priority to tone up the administrative machinery further to meet people's expectations after his party, JD (U), along with allies registered a landslide victory in the last assembly election.

CHANDIGARH

### 4 nabbed with 40 kg heroin in Amritsar

Punjab police on Thursday claimed to have busted a narcotic smuggling module with the huge recovery of 40 kg heroin and arrested four of its operatives. DGP, Punjab, Gaurav Yadav said the accused have been identified as Narinder Singh, Suraj, Jacob Masih and Ajay Kumar, all residents of Moga.

## COMMONWEALTH MEET | Modi says India has put to rest doubts whether democracy would survive amid diversity in the country

# Indian democracy is delivering for all: PM

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said "India has proved that democratic institutions and democratic processes provide stability, speed, and scale" and that his government has been working for "every individual without discrimination".

Addressing the "28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Lok Sabhas of Commonwealth Countries" in Parliament, Modi asserted that "in India, democracy means last mile delivery" and that "democracy delivers". He also stressed on how technology has contributed in a big way to making the country "the world's fastest-growing major economy".

"Today, India's UPI is the largest digital payment system in the world. India is the largest vaccine producer in the world. India is the second-largest steel producer. India has the third-largest startup ecosystem. India is the third-largest aviation market. India has the fourth-largest rail net-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and others during the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Commonwealth Countries (CSPOC), at the Parliament House Complex in New Delhi on Thursday

work. India has the third-largest metro rail network. India is the largest milk producer. India is the second-largest rice producer," he said.

Noting that this was the fourth time that the Conference of Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers is being held in India, Modi said its theme of "Effective Delivery of Parliamentary Democracy" is significant since in the case of India too when it became Independent, "there were

doubts expressed about whether democracy could survive in such diversity."

But, he said, "India turned this diversity into the strength of its democracy."

The PM said "democracy delivers in India" because the government has "prioritized their aspirations" and "to ensure that no obstacle comes in their way, we have democratized everything -- from processes to technology." In this regard, he cited the example of how during the COVID pan-

dem, India faced immense challenges but still supplied medicines and vaccines to more than 150 countries.

The PM also noted that in a parliamentary democracy, the Speaker plays a crucial role but does not get to speak much. "Their job is listening to others speak, and ensuring everybody gets a chance. One common thing about speakers is their patience. They handle even noisy and over-enthusiastic members with a smile," he remarked.

BENGALURU

It all started with Hulimavu police in Bengaluru South freezing a bank account, following a complaint by a person who had lost Rs 3 crore in a fake investment online investment App. The account holder went to the bank to inquire why his account was blocked.

The police grew suspicious as the person holding the account was not capable of even handling money in lakhs and the investigation began. Within a couple of days, they laid their hands on a 22-year-old college dropout Mohammed Uzaif and his mother Sabana Abdul Bari, who were handling more than 2,500 such mule accounts and moved hundreds of crores of rupees to Dubai-based kingpin through these accounts.

Bengaluru city police commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh said that the police had stopped another Rs 240 crore money being transferred to Dubai-based kingpin Prem Taneja, who was arrested earlier in connection with an IPL betting case in 2013.

While the police are exploring legal ways of bringing Prem Taneja to India, they have also arrested nine more persons from North India.

## B'luru cops bust Dubai-based cyber crooks, save ₹240 crore

Those arrested have been identified as Ankit Kumar Singh (32), Akash Jaiswal (29) from Uttar Pradesh, Ajit Kumar Yadav (29) from Bihar, Abhishek Singh Rathore (22), Vishwaraj Singh Shekhawat (28), Kushal Singh Chauhan (26), Pradeep Singh Tanwar (30), Pitambaro Singh (30),



Ajay Kumar (30) from Rajasthan and Sathyam Kumar Pandey (27) from Jharkhand.

The police realised the magnitude of the scam only during the searches, when they stumbled upon 242 debit cards, 58 mobile phones, 33 cheque books, 21 passbooks, a digital payment ring and records related to cryptocurrency transactions. The police realised that all the arrested were working for Prem Taneja.

These operators used to frequent government hospitals and maternity wards, where poor and labour class people would be admitted. The two would offer them Rs 2000 to Rs 5000 and make them open a bank account. After opening the account,

the two used to collect debit cards, cheque books, passbooks and the SIM cards used for opening the account, along with their KYC details. These accounts would be sent to their contact in Delhi, who would use these accounts as mule accounts for the fraudulent transactions.

Prem Taneja had floated two gaming and investment websites and created mobile Apps for them. Swamiji.com was a gaming App and Neo Systems was an investment App. He used to lure people by offering higher profits for their investments. In the beginning, he used to double their small investments. When the investor grew greedy and started investing more money, the account would go silent. The entire money would be transferred to the App's account through these mule accounts and there would be little chance for police tracking these accounts or account holders.

While Mohammed alone was sourcing, maintaining and controlling nearly 4,200 such accounts, the company had hired a number of people all over the country who were handling close to 9,000 accounts with transactions worth Rs 240 crore. This is linked to at least 864 cyber crimes across the country.

## 16 Indian ship crew detained in Iran, families appeal to Modi

NEW DELHI

After 16 Indian crew members of the vessel MT Valiant Roar were taken into custody by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the family of Third Engineer Ketan Mehta has appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for rescuing their son.

The MT Valiant Roar was intercepted by IRGC on December 8, 2025, in the international waters near Dibba Port, UAE. The Iranian authorities have accused the vessel of smuggling 6,000 MT of fuel.

Meanwhile, India is making preparations to evacuate Indians from Iran in view of the precarious situation there as the US has not ruled out any military action against Tehran over its crackdown on nationwide protests.

India on Wednesday asked all its nationals residing in Iran to leave by available means and avoid any travel to the country.

## Punjab CM appears before Akal Takht over viral video

Mann, summoned for allegedly displaying 'anti-Sikh mentality' in the clip, says the video was doctored

CHANDIGARH

Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday appeared before the acting Jathedar Kuldeep Singh Gargaj at the Akal Takht secretariat in the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar after being summoned by the Akal Takht, the highest temporal seat of Sikhs, for his alleged disrespectful remarks on Sikh institutions, in a viral video.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting with the acting Jathedar Kuldeep Singh Gargaj, Mann held that the video was completely doctored and take a decision accordingly. Mann said that he would abide by the verdict pronounced by the Sikh clergy.

He said that it was a conspiracy by his political rivals to create a conflict between him and the Akal Takht. Mann further held that while he submitted his clarification to the Akal Takht acting Jathedar



Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann offers prayers before he appeared at the Akal Takht Secretariat in Amritsar

Gargaj and Takht Damdama Sahib Jathedar Baba Tek Singh Dhanaula, they told him they would go through his clarification and take a decision accordingly.

Mann said that he would abide by the verdict pronounced by the Sikh clergy. It may be recalled that Jathedar Gargaj had summoned Mann last week for his alleged remarks on the gurdwara donation box (guru ki

golak) and also allegedly showing "anti-Sikh mentality" by his alleged derogatory remarks.

Stating that the chief minister's remarks reflected the arrogance of power, the acting Jathedar Gargaj also said that since Mann is a "patit" (a Sikh who cuts his hair), he could not be presented before the Sri Akal Takht and therefore summoned to appear before the Akal Takht secretariat.

## Two teenage sports trainees found hanging in Kerala hostel

KOLLAM (KERALA)

Two teenage girl athletes, both trainees staying at a SAI hostel, were found dead in one of their rooms on Thursday in an apparent suicide pact, the police said.

The deceased were identified as Sandra A (18) of Chaliyam Kozhikode district and Vyshnavi V (15) of Muthakkal Thiruvananthapuram district.

According to police, Sandra was an athletics trainee studying in Plus Two, while Vyshnavi was a kabaddi player and a Class 10 student.

The incident came to light around 5 AM when fellow hostel inmates noticed that the duo had not reported for the morning training session.

When repeated knocks on the door went unanswered, hostel authorities broke open the door and found both girls hanging from ceiling fans in the room, police said.



The 78th Army Day Parade in Jaipur on Thursday created history as the annual marquee event moved outside a cantonment area for the first time

## Jaipur hosts grand parade to mark 78th Army Day

JAIPUR

In a bid to take the army closer to common men, a grand parade to mark the 78th Army Day was held in Jaipur on Thursday. Organised on a three-kilometer stretch of Mahal Road in Jagatpura, the parade showcased the valour, discipline and advanced military capabilities of the Indian Army.

Led by Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra recipi-

ents in army vehicles, smartly-turned-out contingents marched past the saluting dais, displaying their bravery and professional excellence.

Army Chief Upendra Divedi extended his greetings to everyone on Army Day and said that the prestigious event reflects the deep connection between the armed forces and the public. The Army Day celebration in Jaipur is an effort to bring the army closer to the citizens.

# Mahatma Gandhi Marg – Lower Sangam Junction to Become a Center of Spiritual Consciousness

## Sanatan Tradition to be Awakened Through "Kriya Yoga – Sanatan Dharma" Mahayagna Practice

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** A grand confluence of spiritual energy is being witnessed daily at the historic Mahatma Gandhi Marg and Lower Sangam Junction in the Jhansi area. Through the practice of the "Kriya Yoga – Sanatan Dharma" Mahayagna within its spiritual aura, a resolution has been made to spread the invaluable Kriya Yoga and Sanatan Dharma Yagna tradition of Sanatan culture to every person. Under this Kriya Yoga Sanatan Dharma Mahayagna, collective practice of Kriya Yoga meditation, Vedic chanting, and Yagna rituals is being conducted. The objective of the event is not limited to religious propagation, but also to promote mental peace and healthy positive consciousness in society.



According to Kriya Yoga founder Swami Shri Yogi Satyam Ji Maharaj, the current time is the 326th year of the ascending Dwapara Yuga. During the conversation, Swamiji also said that Kriya Yoga Sanatan Dharma is the only mantra that can create an atmosphere of peace throughout the world. For those countries that are liv-

ing in tension and conflict due to mutual jealousy, Kriya Yoga Sanatan Dharma can be a path to peace. Swamiji also stated that amidst increasing stress, unrest, and materialism, this Mahayagna is a powerful spiritual initiative towards balancing life through the practice of Kriya Yoga. Citizens from all walks of life, including youth,



and women, and seekers, as well as foreign seekers, have started arriving to participate in this Kriya Yoga Sanatan Dharma Mahayagna. Foreign seekers from some countries have already reached the Kriya Yoga Ashram.

The program is also being live-streamed daily on YouTube, with a large number of seekers from India and abroad participating.

This event is completely free of charge, and there is an atmosphere of special enthusiasm among the city residents regarding this grand event. Devotees believe that this Kriya Yoga Sanatan Dharma Mahayagna will not only bring positive changes in individual lives but will also strengthen spiritual unity and cultural consciousness in society.

## BJP accuses Mamata of anarchy, hampering ED

NEW DELHI

After the Supreme Court paused the FIRs registered against the Enforcement Directorate officers by the state police following their January 8 raid on political consultancy firm I-PAC, the Bharatiya Janata Party on Thursday criticised the Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal of igniting the "spark of anarchy" and spreading "jungle raj" in the state.

At a press conference at BJP headquarters, party spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said the apex court ruling was a "big jolt" to Banerjee who had personally halted the raid and taken away some pieces of evidence from the site.

"It has proved what jungle

raj looks like... the state government is to aid and assist an investigative agency, but Mamata Banerjee took away the files. It (SC order) is a slap in the face to the CM who thinks she is above the law. SC has put a stay on FIRs filed by West Bengal against ED officials..." said Bhatia.

The BJP leader also asked Banerjee to reveal what she was hiding and feared. "Why are you hiding so much? Is there a fear that you are suppressing?" he remarked.

An advocate by profession, Bhatia said the Supreme Court has made strong observations on the prevailing situation in West Bengal by commenting that, "This case raises big and serious questions, and if they are not answered, it could lead to anarchy in the country."



## Gunfire in Land Dispute in Kachhar, Youth Injured, Bombs Thrown to Spread Panic

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** On Tuesday, land mafia members opened fire over a land dispute in the Mau Kachhar area, adjacent to Beli Kachhar, under the Cantt police station area. During the incident, a young man named Saddam was shot. The bullet hit his leg, and he has been admitted to SRN Hospital for treatment. According to doctors, his condition is currently stable. During the incident, the accused also threw bombs to spread panic in the area, causing chaos in the surrounding area. Upon receiving the information, the police reached the spot and cordoned off the entire area to begin an investigation. According to police sources, the injured youth also has a criminal history.



Preliminary investigations suggest that this incident may be the result of an old land dispute. Several Teams Formed, Details to be Revealed Soon. SP City Manish Shandilya said that the injured youth has been admitted to SRN Hospital and his condition is out of danger. He said that evidence has been collected from the crime scene and

a thorough investigation of the entire incident is underway. Several police teams have been formed to arrest the accused. The SP City claimed that the entire case will be solved soon and the accused will be arrested. Additional police forces have been deployed in the area since the incident to deal with any untoward situation.

## Bhandara (Community Feast) Organized at Girinar Baba's Camp on Makar Sankranti Bathing Festival

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj**

On Thursday, a Bhandara (community feast) was organized on Samudra Koop Marg by the Shri Shri 1008 Shri Swami Girinar Baba Ashram, located on Samudra Koop Marg in Sector Number 4, on the occasion of the Makar Sankranti bathing festival. A large number of devotees partook of the prasad (blessed food) at the Bhandara. This event was organized by Shri Bhairav Ji Brahmachari Maharaj, Chhote Baba, a disciple of the late Shri Shri 1008 Girinar Baba, on behalf of his ashram. A large number of devotees received the prasad. Bhairav Ji Baba Chhote Maharaj captivated everyone with his devotional discourse. He said that if you have been born as a human being, then chanting the name of Rama is essential. This name of Rama will help you cross the ocean of worldly existence. He also urged the devotees to chant the name of Rama. The devotees were deeply moved upon hearing the dis-



course on Rama from the lips of Chhote Brahmachari Maharaj. When the topic of Rama's exile came up, Chhote Baba Brahmachari Maharaj said that Lord Rama was about to become king, but Mother Kaikeyi asked King Dasharatha for a boon that would send Rama into exile. Now King Dasharatha was in a dilemma, but Lord Rama, to uphold his father's promise, left the throne and went into

exile. Giving an example from the changing environment of the modern era, he said that today, if someone is about to ascend the throne and their father tells them to do something else, they will not obey. But in the Treta Yuga, Lord Rama, to fulfill his father's promise, renounced the throne and went to the forest. One should be such a renunciate. That is why Lord Rama is called Purushottam, meaning the best among men.

## 10 heaters presented to SP Abhimanyu Manglik by Dr. Ratnesh Pandey and Cisco Director Ashutosh Tiwari



**Bhadohi.** In the office of Superintendent of Police, Dr. Ratnesh Pandey, Managing Director of Jaypee Hospital and Ashutosh Tiwari, Director of Cisco, in view of the commendable work being done continuously by the police and in view of the security and law and order in the district, a total of 10 heaters were lovingly gifted to Superintendent of Police Abhimanyu Manglik for the police work. Appreciated. All these heaters were distributed to all the 10 police stations of the district by Superintendent of Police Abhimanyu Manglik. The purpose of this heater distribution was to keep our police brothers in police stations safe from the cold. This is not only a social responsibility but also a moral duty. Jaypee Hospital will continue to play a leading role in similar public service works in the times to come. In which now Cisco will also play an important role as their ally.

## Councilor Ghulam Hussain Sanjari came to meet Haji Shakeel Khan who returned from Umrah, congratulated him

**Bhadohi**

Ashique Rasool, who returned from Umrah Sharif, is arriving to meet Sana Public School Manager Haji Shakeel Khan, where he is being showered with the dates of Madina and Abe Zamzam. On Tuesday, senior councilor of Municipal Council Bhadohi Ghulam Hussain Sanjari and former councilor Saheb Alam Sanjari reached the residence of Haji Shakeel Khan where Dr. Sanjari hugged Khan and congratulated him. At the same time Khan made councilor Ghulam Hussain Sanjari and Saheb Alam Sanjari drink Madina dates and Abe Zamzam. In this meeting, Haji Shakeel Khan told the guests about the air filled with the fragrance of Madinah Turrausul and that the streets of Madinah are unique. Haji Saheb



burst into tears while telling about Mehrabe Membre, Riazul Janna, Safa Marwa, Mudjalfa, Mana Ki Wadi, Maidan Arafat. People eyes became teary-eyed after listening to the sweet words of Aka Mustafa Jaane Rahmat S., who was resting in Gumbde Khazra from his very happy birthday. Whoever came to meet Haji Sahib, he would talk about the city of Nabi-e-Mokarma (peace be upon him) and his heart would melt. Said that it is true that we left the streets of Madina and came here, but our hearts and

minds are wandering in the streets of Madina. Aashikane Mustafa, carrying the fragrance of Madina, was narrating something in such a way that Barisha has returned after taking bath in Taharat. Your eyes will not look here and there for the rest of your life. Zikr Husne Taiba right is not paid. Otherwise people will drink the solution to their eyes. Said to see them eye to eye in life. My skillful eyes turned out to be filled with so much anger that my eyes became tears as I said this. The people of the city of the

Prophet Sallallahu Alaihe Wasallam were getting refreshed by the aroma of the Jamal and the ashes of the ashes of the guest. His eyes saw the golden lattice of Khazra's domes, Riyazul Janna, Jannatulbakiya, Jabale Wahd Gare Heera, Gare Sur, Masjid Kuba, Maqame Ibrahim, getting the kiss of Aswad and getting the honor of visiting the house of God, people were looking at his eyes and lips with the eyes of love Mustafa Sa. Told that the scene of Madina and the Tawaf of Kaaba are visible in my eyes. I remember offering Namaz in Masjid Nabawi. While saying this, tears welled up in my eyes. However, people kept getting drenched in the Ajwa Dates and Abe Zamzam and kept feeling happy after hearing about the city of Mustafa Jaane Rahmat Sallallahu Alaihe Wasallam.

## Lohri Celebrated with Bonfire and Festive Spirit at Axis Public School, Phaphoond

**Phaphoond**

Lohri festival was celebrated with great enthusiasm and traditional fervour at Axis Public School, located in the town of Phaphoond. Students, teachers and respected parents collectively participated in the celebrations, sharing moments of joy and togetherness. Extending his warm greetings on the occasion, School Director Deepak congratulated everyone on the festival of Lohri and described it as a symbol of happiness and prosperity. He emphasized that such festivals should be celebrated with joy and unity by all Indians. On the occasion, the Lohri bonfire was cere-



monially lit and blessings were bestowed upon the children. Students presented lively Bhangra and Gidda dance performances in front of the bonfire, adding vibrant colours to the celebration. The participants also performed the traditional circumambulation of the Lohri fire and danced together, while the rhythmic beats of Bhangra music echoed across the school cam-

pus, creating a festive atmosphere. On the auspicious occasion of Lohri, Principal Gurmeet Singh Sodhi, Ankit Awasthi, along with the entire teaching staff, extended heartfelt greetings and best wishes to all. The celebration not only highlighted cultural traditions but also fostered a spirit of unity, joy and cultural pride among students and the school community.

## GAIL DAV Family of Dibiyapur Organises Service Programme at Old Age Home

**Dibiyapur**

On the occasion of 'Ved Week', the GAIL DAV family organised an inspiring social service programme at the 'Madhav Happy Old Age Home' located in Aane Pur, Auraiya. During the visit, members of the school family spent quality time with the elderly residents, entertained them and presented essential utility items, reflecting the spirit of service, compassion and human values enshrined in the Vedas. Under the guidance of school Principal Priyanka Gaur, teachers visited the old age home with the objective of inculcating a sense of service and empathy among students and staff, while translating Vedic life values into practical action. It is noteworthy that the school has consistently strengthened its social commitment by organising similar service-



oriented visits in the past as well. During the programme, teachers interacted warmly with the elderly, listened to their life experiences and imbibed valuable lessons drawn from their wisdom. Cultural presentations, including songs and dance performances by students, added joy and warmth to the atmosphere, filling the premises with cheer and a sense of belonging. A key highlight of the initiative was the enthusiastic participation of students from all classes. The students collectively gathered food items and other essential

materials, which were subsequently donated to the old age home. This act of service was not merely a ceremonial gesture but symbolised a continuing moral tradition upheld by the school. Through this initiative, the GAIL DAV family conveyed a strong message that senior citizens are a priceless asset to society and deserve respect, sensitivity and compassion. Such sustained efforts by the school aim to guide students beyond academic learning towards embracing social responsibility and enduring human values.

## Wife Gets Husband Killed with Lover in Auraiya, SP Abhishek Bharti Reveals Shocking Case

**Auraiya**

A sensational murder case has come to light in Auraiya district, where a woman allegedly conspired with her lover and his friend to murder her husband. The case was disclosed by Superintendent of Police Abhishek Bharti after a joint operation by Bela police, SOG and the surveillance team led to the arrest of three accused. The incident came to notice on Sunday, January 11, when Bela police received information about a body lying near the canal embankment between villages Kursi and Bochpur. Police rushed to the spot and identified the deceased as Shailendra Singh Pal, a resident of village Kursi and son of late Ausan Singh Pal. Senior officers inspected the scene, the forensic team collected evidence and the body was sent for post-mortem examination. On the complaint of the deceased uncle, Man Singh Pal, a case was registered at Bela police station. SP Abhishek Bharti stated at the district headquarters in Kakore that special teams were constituted for the early detection of the case. On January 13, acting on a tip-off, a joint team of Bela police, SOG and surveillance arrested



Avneesh Pal and Rinku Katheria during checking at the Bela-Tirwa Road border barrier. A Hero Splendor Plus motorcycle used in the crime was recovered from their possession. During interrogation, on the basis of the accused's disclosure, police recovered the muffled used in the murder from bushes near the Bochpur turn at the Bela-Tirwa border. Further questioning revealed the involvement of the deceased wife, Archana, in the conspiracy. Police said that Avneesh Pal confessed that Shailendra was his relative and that he had an illicit relationship with Shailendra's wife, Archana. Shailendra strongly opposed this relationship. Archana also admitted that she wanted to live with Avneesh, which led the three accused to plan Shailendra's murder. As per the plan, on January 10, Shailendra was called to the

Patna canal bridge, where he was made to consume alcohol and later strangled with a muffer. Shailendra was employed in a private factory in Kanpur. Archana had told family members that he had left home on Saturday for work. After the murder, Archana reportedly sat near the body and pretended to cry loudly to divert suspicion. However, her act did not withstand police investigation. CCTV footage from nearby areas showed the accused taking Shailendra on a motorcycle. Identification by informers and surveillance data further confirmed the presence of the accused and Archana at the crime scene. The arresting team included Bela Station House Officer Gangadas Gautam and his team, along with In-Charge Surveillance Cell and SOG Sub-Inspector Samit Chaudhary and their respective teams.

## GEM Follow-up Winter Session Workshop Concludes with Dignity at NTPC Auraiya

**Auraiya**

The weekly workshop of the GEM Follow-up Winter Session, organized under the Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM) at NTPC Auraiya, concluded on January 11, 2026, at the Community Centre of the project township in a dignified and cheerful atmosphere. The programme was conducted as part of NTPC Auraiya Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Notably, the follow-up winter session commenced on January 5, 2026 with the objective of reinforcing the knowledge and skills previously imparted to 40 girls during the summer session held in May-June 2025. During the workshop, experienced faculty members from Hero Mind Mine guided the participants through various activities related to art, craft, creative expression, confidence building, and essential life skills. The valedictory ceremony was graced by the presence of Shubhashish Guha, Project Head, NTPC Auraiya, Manjari Guha, President, Jagriti Mahila Mandal, senior executives, departmental heads, members of Jagriti Mahila Mandal, faculty members from Hero Mind Mine, participating girls and their parents. The programme began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries, followed by vibrant cultural performances presented by the girls, which captivated the audience and reflected their confidence and talent. An exhibition showcasing various art and craft items created by the participants during the workshop was also organized on the occasion. The exhibition was enthusiastically visited by the chief guest Shubhashish Guha, Manjari Guha and other dignitaries, who highly appreciated the creativity, imagination and artistic skills demonstrated by the girls. In his inspirational address, Shubhashish Guha described the GEM programme as a powerful initiative towards the holistic development of girls and encouraged them to move forward with self-reliance, confidence, and a positive outlook. During the programme, all 40 participating girls were also presented with 'Indian Art Kits' to continuously encourage and nurture their creative abilities. The event concluded with a vote of thanks. The entire programme was smoothly and successfully coordinated by Suchitra, Executive (CSR-Human Resources Cadre).



# A massive surge of faith at Sangam on Makar Sankranti, Over one crore devotees took a dip



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** On Makar Sankranti, the second major bathing festival of the Magh Mela, the Sangam banks were submerged in a massive surge of faith. The auspicious bathing, which began on Wednesday night due to the rare conjunction of Shatila Ekadashi and Makar Sankranti, continued uninterrupted until late Thursday night. According to the administration, by 8 PM, more than 1.03 crore devotees had taken a holy dip in the Sangam. Despite the biting cold and chill from the early morning hours, the enthusiasm of the devotees remained at its peak. Chants of "Har Har Gange" and "Jai Maa Ganga" echoed at Sangam and all the surrounding ghats. As soon as the sun came out at 9 AM, the entire fair area and all the roads leading to Sangam were filled with devotees.

**Faith spread across the ghats, hymns and devotional songs resonated**

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A flood of devotees thronged the ghats spread over an area of about 12,000 square feet on the Triveni banks. Devotees carrying bundles on their heads and bags in their hands were continuously seen moving along Lal Sadak, Kali Sadak, Triveni, Akshayavat Marg, and the roads leading to Sangam. Songs and hymns praising the glory of Goddess Ganga resonated at the Sangam Nose with the sunrise. After bathing, the devotees performed milk ablation of Goddess Ganga and donated khichdi, sesame seeds, clothes, and money to priests, the poor, and the disabled. There was also a large crowd of people applying sandalwood paste, tilak, and sacred ash near the ghats. A large number of devotees visited the camps of sadhus and saints to seek their blessings.

**Unprecedented security arrangements**

Strict security arrangements were made in the fair area and at the



Sangam Nose. Continuous surveillance was being carried out with drone cameras.



Additional Police Commissioner, Mela Officer, and SP Mela were themselves present on the spot, reviewing the arrangements. The fair administration had estimated that one to one and a half crore devotees would take a dip on Makar Sankranti, a figure that has already been surpassed. A total of 24 bathing ghats have been constructed for the convenience of the devotees. Due to changes in the river's course, some ghats and routes have also been partially modified.

**High-Tech Traffic Control and Response Plan Implemented**

A modern traffic control room has been established in the fair area, implementing a high-tech response plan. No one was allowed to stop or sleep on the bathing ghats and routes to prevent stampedes. All officers have been instructed to remain in constant contact via wireless sets. Even before Makar Sankranti on Wednesday, more than 75 lakh devotees had already taken a dip in the Sangam.

**Thousands of Personnel, Multiple Agencies Deployed** According to Police Commissioner Jogendra Kumar, extensive arrangements have been made for the security of the devotees. 12 companies of PAC, seven companies of Flood Relief PAC, two teams of NDRF, SDRF, Anti-Mines and ATS teams, six teams of BDDS, ten teams of AS Check, six companies of RAF, and 20 four-wheelers and 25 two-wheelers of UP 112 have been deployed. In addition, one SP, eight ASPs, 17 COs, 6,169 sub-inspectors and constables, along with 1,000 newly recruited constables, have been deployed. Divisional Commissioner Soumya Agarwal has given instructions for swift action on the ghats and routes according to the river's water level. DM Manish Verma has instructed the water police to maintain complete vigilance. According to SP Mela Neeraj Kumar Pandey, devotees are being directed to the ghats closest to their arrival routes for bathing.

## A Wave of Devotion Sweeps Through Tapovan Ashram on Makar Sankranti

**Bhajan Singer Surya Prakash Dubey Creates a Spiritual Atmosphere at the Conclusion of the Shastra Chandi Mahayagya**

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** On the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti, on January 14th, an extraordinary confluence of devotion and faith was witnessed at the Tapovan Ashram in the Magh Mela area after the conclusion of the Shastra Chandi Mahayagya. Renowned bha-



Jan singer Surya Prakash Dubey, who had come from

Mumbai, captivated the audience with his rendition of the

glories of Prayag, filling the entire atmosphere with devotion. During the bhajan evening, Surya Prakash Dubey presented popular bhajans such as "Prayag Nagari Base Sangam Ke Teere" and "Jahan Triveni Sangam Hai Chalo Ghum Ke Aate Hain," along with hymns praising the Twelve Madhavas and a Hanuman Vandana. His melodious voice and heartfelt performance deeply moved the listeners. Radhe-Radhe Group Creates a Special Atmosphere of Devotion. The performance

by Surya Prakash Dubey and his Radhe-Radhe Group made the program even more impactful. Amidst the waves of devotional music, the Tapovan Ashram premises resonated with chants and applause late into the evening.

Several dignitaries from the city were present at the event. The Mayor, MLAs, MPs, MLCs, and other distinguished guests thoroughly enjoyed the bhajan evening and appreciated the artists' performance. "I will worship

Prayag until my last breath," Bhajan singer Surya Prakash Dubey, who has also served as a brand ambassador for the Mahakumbh in the past, said that the glory of Prayag and its spiritual energy are unparalleled. "I will continue to worship Prayag throughout the world until my last breath," he said emotionally. At the end of the program, the organizer, Acharya Hari Krishna Shukla, expressed his gratitude to all the guests, artists, and devotees.

**Dr. Vikrant Appointed Youth President of Labour Party**

**Lucknow**

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

## Merchant Navy Crew Member Dies on Ship in Malaysia, Body Arrives After 12-Day Formal Process



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Utraon.** Mohammad Ikram alias Sonu (22), a resident of Kahra village in the Utraon police station area of Prayagraj, who worked in the Merchant Navy, passed away while on duty in Malaysia. According to reports, he died on January 3, 2026, after suddenly falling ill while working on the ship. After a lengthy formal process, his body was brought back to the village on January 15, 12 days later. Upon the arrival of the body, thousands of people from the village and surrounding areas gathered to pay their last respects. A wave of grief swept through the entire region. The deceased was unmarried.

ried. His father, Mohammad Ayub Qureshi, is a buffalo trader. Mohammad Ikram was the fifth of eight siblings, with three brothers and four sisters. His elder brother, Salman, also works in the Merchant Navy. His mother, Sahin Begum, and sisters are inconsolable. Family members described him as extremely hard-working, simple, and kind-hearted. It was reported that Mohammad Ikram was on his second assignment with the Merchant Navy. His untimely death has caused deep sorrow not only to his family but to the entire village. Every eye is filled with tears, and people are praying for the peace of the departed soul.

## Meera Hospital wins the MS Sai Prajapati Technical Services Open Cashmoney Cricket Tournament 2026

**A healthy mind develops in a healthy body. Chief Guest: ACP Tharwai Arun Parashar**

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

On Thursday, a T-20 cricket match was held at the Dev Sports Cricket Ground from January 5th, concluding with the final match on January 15th. ACP Tharwai Arun Parashar was the chief guest at the final match, and Yagya Singh, Deputy Commandant of the RAF 101st Battalion, Shantipuram, Phaphamau, was the special guest. The chief guests were honored with bouquets and robes, and mementos and souvenirs were presented as gifts. Afterward, the ACP and Deputy Commandant introduced the two teams that reached the final. ACP Tharwai Arun Parashar, who arrived as the chief guest, stated that players are leading in every field, be it education or sports, and are proudly bringing honor to their parents, region, and country. He emphasized that if you want to achieve something in life, change your methods, not your intentions.

Hard work and true dedication are essential to achieving your goals. Speaking to all



the players, he emphasized that a healthy mind develops in a healthy body, and sports enhance physical and mental abilities. The special guest also emphasized that cricket is also a game in which players are advancing and proudly bringing honor to the country by achieving high positions. Chief coordinator Ramchandra Prajapati expressed his gratitude to all the guests. The final match of the MS Sai Prajapati Technical Services Open Cashmoney Cricket

Tournament 2026, being played at the Dev Sports Cricket Ground, was played between Meera Hospital and PMS Sports Club. PMS Sports Cricket Club won the toss and decided to field and Meera's team came to bat and was all out after scoring 186 runs in 19.1 overs in the stipulated 20 overs. Chasing the target, PMS Sports team was all out after scoring only 73 runs in 11.1 overs. Man of the match of this match was given to Misham Abbas, best batsman to Saurabh

Pratap Singh and best bowler to Kunal Mishra.

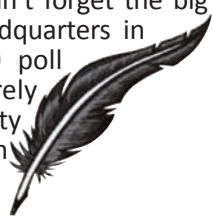
Trophy and Rs. 50000 to the winning team and Rs. 25000 to the runner up. MS Sai Prajapati Technical Services owner Anil Prajapati, RTR Finance Service owner Ravi Tiwari (Rudraksh) tournament organizer Ramchandra Prajapati gave this award to the players. Along with Premchand Prajapati, Dr. Mahesh Chandra Prajapati, Gyan Singh Prajapati, Neeraj Pandey, Abhishek Shukla, Rammurti Prajapati, Rajkumar Patel, Santosh Yadav, Divyansh Dubey, Prabhakant Dwivedi, Subedar Bharatiya Gohari Councilor Surendra Mohan Prajapati, Vivek Yadav, Vishal Kumar, Aniket Dwivedi, Sunil Kumar Prajapati, Mandal President Rajiv Prajapati, Vikas Yadav, Rajesh Yadav, Rupa Devi Prajapati, Vandana Devi Prajapati, Manju Prajapati, Brijesh Pandey, soldier Sanjay Pandey, soldier Chandrashekar Prajapati, Sanjay Prajapati, Shrikant Prajapati, Satyanarayan Prajapati etc. were present in large numbers.

## Editorial

### Op Sindoor setting the tone for Bihar polls

In October 2016, addressing the national council of the Janata Dal (United), Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar slammed the Bharatiya Janata Party for ‘politicising’ the surgical strike. The entire nation stands with you [Narendra Modi] as you are the Prime Minister, but what about those BJP leaders who have repeatedly used the strike to play politics?” Kumar said. A couple of months earlier, as the BJP was organising Tiranga Yatras ahead of the 70th Independence Day, Kumar had taken a dig at it. Those who “never recognised the tricolour as national flag”, he said, were taking out Tiranga Yatras. Much water has flowed under the Gandhi Setu since then. As the BJP took out Tiranga Yatras across Bihar for 10 days to celebrate Operation Sindoor’s success, Kumar watched them silently—and warily, perhaps. The operation has brought springs to BJP leaders’ feet. The 2024 Lok Sabha poll blow is a thing of the past. PM Modi has started taking his own name again—Modi’s cool mind and the hot sindoor in his veins, Modi’s chest, et al. It was in his first public rally after the Pahalgam terror attack in Bihar’s Madhubani, when PM Modi had vowed to punish the perpetrators “beyond their imagination”. The vow fulfilled, he will be back in Bihar on 29 and 30 May. The BJP’s preparations for Modi’s roadshow in Patna are in full swing. People standing on both sides of the road would be showering flower petals on him. That’s how a victor is welcomed. How will Operation Sindoor impact the Bihar elections? Let’s first look at where the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) stood before the strikes on Pakistan’s terror infrastructure and military installations. DesignBoxed, a political digital campaign management company, conducted a survey in Bihar last month. I got access to its report, which has great news for the NDA: Overall, the DesignBoxed survey indicated a clear edge for the NDA. Mind you, it was conducted before Operation Sindoor. Nitish Kumar’s principal challenger, Tejashwi Yadav, also has some positive takeaways from the survey. If elections were to be held tomorrow, 46.7 per cent of respondents said they would vote for the NDA, against 35.6 percent who favour the INDIAN bloc, with 13.8 percent ‘undecided’. If Tejashwi were to swing the ‘undecided’, the game would be on. For 43.8 percent respondents, unemployment and migration are the most important issues in the upcoming elections—Tejashwi’s key plank in 2020. What would make him even happier is the survey finding that 63.76 per cent people want the current government to be replaced. This sounds incongruous, as a majority of respondents were satisfied with Kumar’s performance. Those involved in the DesignBoxed survey, however, claim that it’s no surprise. One of them told me: “You come across many respondents who are ok with Nitish Kumar but still want his government changed. It’s vice versa, too. It’s a lot to do with people’s castes becoming the main determinant.” Kumar has been the chief minister since 2005, except for a short interlude of nine months in 2014-15. The yearning for change is understandable. How much of it can Tejashwi exploit? Can he beat the caste arithmetic that seems to be in the NDA’s favour today? We will find out in November. Union home minister and the BJP’s chief strategist Amit Shah once told journalists: “People in Bihar are so political. They sit at tea stalls and read the entire newspaper—from the first to the last page.”

Five months is obviously a long time for such political people to change their mind. But it’s not just Tejashwi that CM Kumar would be worried about. The BJP says that the next election will be fought under his leadership, but it’s evasive on the question of Kumar becoming the CM again if the NDA wins. Kumar wouldn’t forget the big celebrations at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi after the 2020 poll results. The NDA had barely managed to cross the majority mark, securing 125 seats in the 243-member Assembly.



## PMFBY is failing. It has the same flaws of earlier schemes

India’s farmers steward the country’s food security, yet they live in chronic distress and policy indifference. Though their contribution is crucial, they continue to be vulnerable and voiceless. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar who comes from a farming family, has repeatedly expressed discontent by consistently bringing up farmers’ grievances into the public limelight, stressing that “it is the government’s foremost responsibility to take care of the farmers”. Agriculture, despite accounting for only 18.2 per cent of India’s GDP, remains the primary source of livelihood for nearly 42.3 per cent of the population. However, over the last decade, India has witnessed a significant decadal drop in agricultural employment, underlining the sector’s declining viability. Agrarian distress is now endemic, driven by crop failures, falling prices, and a broken promise of security through insurance. As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2015 data, 80 per cent of suicides among farmers were due to debt and bankruptcy. The crisis has also exhibited a steady trend upward, with more than 1,12,000 people who work in the agricultural sector having died by suicide over the last ten years, according to NCRB data released in December 2023. The figures indicate that no fewer than one farmer died by suicide every hour in India. A 2018 survey conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) found that over 50 per cent of farm households in India had debt. Launched in 2016, the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) assured crop



insurance and restored farmers’ confidence. On paper, it addressed many of the earlier shortcomings. But a closer look reveals that this ambitious insurance service ends up replicating several flaws of earlier schemes. It not only falls short of meeting the expectations of the farming community but alienates the very people it was meant to safeguard. A fundamental flaw resides in the impenetrable, convoluted, and overly technical process of settling claims. The use of satellite imaging and averaging data across vast units has created a mechanism highly disconnected from ground realities. Importantly, satellite inspections are limited in scope: they can only identify the presence or absence of crops. They cannot, and do not, determine the health or yield capacity of the crop, nor can they tell one type of crop from another. This technological weakness, when used as the basis for compensation, results in miscalculations that cost real livelihoods. A farmer who suffers heavy losses due to pest damage or loss of nutrients might be deprived of compensation just because their crops appear green from above. Even more appalling is the inherent inequity of the existing model. While farmers pay premiums on an

individual level, compensation is calculated by generalised averaging within village clusters or vaguely defined large patches aggregating both large and small landholdings without any equity-based method in delineating the units. This results in discriminatory denials of claims—most importantly, for those experiencing localised or complete loss of crops. The ongoing application of area-based measurement models exacerbates these issues. Localised weather conditions like a flash flood in a corner of a village can destroy a small farmer’s crop, while that of his neighbour remains intact. However, both are measured using the same parameter. It is deeply unfair that individual agony and suffering are erased by collective statistics. The programme also does not cover those most at risk: tenant farmers, sharecroppers, female cultivators, and non-loanee farmers. These are systematically and indirectly excluded by land title requirements, archaic tenancy laws, and bureaucratic obstacles such as Aadhaar-linked bank accounts. Women who increasingly become the main cultivators because of male migration are not accounted for in this system through absence of

formal landholding. These omissions are not accidental; they are manifestations of a design that does not see the true face of Indian agriculture in the present day. On-ground realities expose serious flaws in crop insurance delivery. Forced enrollment, delayed or denied claims, and faulty surveys have left farmers uncompensated and in debt. In Tamil Nadu’s Mayiladuthurai district, a mere 68 villages among 277 were covered in the 2024 crop insurance settlements—and compensation was paid in just 16 of them. Similar cases were found in other districts too. D Arogyam, a 55-year-old Tamil Nadu farmer who was not a loanee, was compelled by officials to sign up for PMFBY. Despite paying his premiums on time, he got no claims for two successive years of crop failure due to drought, pushing him into debt. S. Velu, a loanee cultivator from Sivagangai near Kiliyur, availed Rs 70,000 for his 15-acre field. Even though he was in the surveyed and insured area, he faced claim settlement problems as liabilities piled up. In Thoothukudi, farmers demonstrated against one-sided compensation. Villages that were affected by floods were not considered, while those with equal damage were compensated. Farmers accused the faulty surveys and demanded accountability. In Haryana, as reported by Down to Earth, Ramesh Lal from Sonipat was forced to pay a premium under threat of losing his interest subsidy on a loan, even though he never consented to the insurance coverage. When his crop failed, no claim was paid due to “tech-

nical issues” with the policy documentation he was never shown. In Rajasthan, many farmers lost their claims because the State Bank of India delayed crediting their premiums. Consequently, they went into the subsequent cropping season without anticipated reimbursement. Even when the Centre and states subsidise 80–85 percent of premium charges, private insurance companies consistently make profits while farmers do not gain much. Claims get delayed, disputed, or rejected, even as companies collect risk-free premiums. Meanwhile, crop-cutting experiments are done by inadequate manning, delayed rolling out, and poor-quality control, and the technological solutions like drones and AI-based analytics remain underutilised due to infrastructural gaps and lack of field-level training. Most alarmingly, a 2022 CAG report says that only 37 per cent of farmers surveyed had any real awareness of PMFBY’s benefits, premium structures, or claim processes. On-ground realities expose serious flaws in crop insurance delivery. Forced enrollment, delayed or denied claims, and faulty surveys have left farmers uncompensated and in debt. In Tamil Nadu’s Mayiladuthurai district, a mere 68 villages among 277 were covered in the 2024 crop insurance settlements—and compensation was paid in just 16 of them. Similar cases were found in other districts too. D Arogyam, a 55-year-old Tamil Nadu farmer who was not a loanee, was compelled by officials to sign up for PMFBY.

### Threats to India are not over. Why it must build fortress-like defences

The Sindhudurg Fort, located on an islet in the Arabian Sea near Maharashtra’s Malvan town, is one of the most significant sea forts. It was built between 1664-1667 by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the founder of the Maratha Empire, for the purpose of strategic maritime defense and protection against foreign naval threats. The fort was central to Shivaji’s plan to build a strong navy and protect the Konkan coastline, and marked the beginning of India’s maritime defense strategy. In a similar vein, having demonstrated its military prowess in Operation Sindoor, India should now transform itself into Sindoor Durg, an impenetrable fortress, safe from multi-domain threats emanating from land, sea, air or cyberspace. It will also mark the beginning of India’s new doctrine against terrorism, as outlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the nation earlier this month—“Terror and trade cannot go together, water and blood cannot flow together”. The

military strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan under Operation Sindoor have only been paused. Pakistan, still smarting from the costs imposed on it, both reputational and on its military, will be thirsting for revenge. The brief skirmish has only served as a distraction for Pakistan from its domestic issues, especially its dire internal economic conditions, and has predictably united the country, even if temporarily, against a traditional foe. Buoyed by the grant of the IMF bailout, and by promoting Asim Munir to the rank of Field Marshal, Pakistan’s politico-military leadership hopes to retain their tenuous hold on power. Since another misadventure cannot be ruled out, we have to guard against even more varied and audacious threats.

The first purpose of a fort is to provide for its own security and that of its inhabitants. India has demonstrated quite forcibly its capability to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

### India must look beyond Bangladesh

The political turmoil in Bangladesh has made it more urgent for India to complete the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, or KMTTP, which links Mizoram to Kolkata via Sittwe port in Myanmar. If fully operationalised, ideally with a rail link to Sittwe Port, it could offer a more resilient corridor for movement of goods to the Northeast, while also opening up longer-term trade possibilities with Southeast Asia. India’s role as the pivot in South Asia extends beyond dominant power to that of a regional integrator. Intra-regional development is primarily a function of mutual friendship, interdependent trade, economic ties, and joint ventures. The goal may be to advance national interest, but the net effect is regional prosperity, which acts as a force multiplier for India’s own development. South and Southeast Asian countries, joined together through bilateral and multilateral frameworks like the BBIN and BIMSTEC, have therefore started looking beyond the region—in line with India’s Act East Policy. Apart from economic commitments, physical connectivity—especially in infrastructure and energy—has assumed unparalleled significance. Railways, high-

ways, civil aviation, and inland waterways are now crossing borders for mutual growth and development. The East South Asia region is on the cusp of unprecedented intra-regional physical connectivity. It is the only way forward for the 21st century. For instance, Nepal and Bhutan, both landlocked nations, have gained access to Indian markets and ports. Newer cross-border rail links have been operationalised between India and Bangladesh, and several projects to connect Bhutan and Myanmar were put in place during the last 10 years. India-Bangladesh bilateral relations, in particular, had never been this strong and comprehensive—until last year. On 5 August 2024, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned following a massive uprising. An interim government headed by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has since been formed. This civil strife in Bangladesh has come with ripple effects. It’s brought with it a certain straining of relations, causing collateral damage to trade and commerce. There have also been instances of cross border movements and joint project developments coming to halt. Existing trade corridors have been impacted

and ongoing rail/road projects to provide shorter transit corridors across Bangladesh to and from India’s Northeastern states are on hold. It’s time now to look at alternative possibilities for northeastern states in addition to the Siliguri corridor. The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project requires revisiting and a fresh reassessment. During his visit to China in late March, Bangladesh’s Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus made remarks that were considered provocative, to say the least. “The seven states of India, the eastern part of India, are called seven sisters....”

They are a landlocked country, landlocked region of India. They have no way to reach out to the ocean,” he said. “We are the only guardian of the ocean for all this region.” Shortly thereafter, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the BIMSTEC conference in Thailand. He met Yunus on the sidelines and reiterated his support for a democratic, progressive, and inclusive Bangladesh, according to a Ministry of External Affairs release. He also underlined India’s desire to forge a constructive relationship with Bangladesh. More importantly,

### AIADMK led the way on caste census

In the intricate fabric of Indian democracy, few questions strike at the heart of equality and representation like that of caste. The recent announcement by the Union government to conduct a comprehensive caste census is a landmark moment—one that promises to reshape the contours of social justice policy in India. As the Leader of the Opposition in Tamil Nadu, I welcome this move with conviction and pride, for it affirms a demand the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam first articulated with clarity and foresight. This moment did not emerge overnight. The call for a caste-based census, now

accepted at the national level, has its roots in the firm ideological soil of Tamil Nadu’s social justice movement. And in that journey, it was the AIADMK, under the visionary leadership of Puratchi Thalaivi Amma J. Jayalalithaa, that laid the foundation for genuine representational equity. As early as 2021, during my tenure as chief minister, our government was among the first to demand a fresh caste census. We argued vociferously that welfare policies cannot be built on outdated data from 1931. We recognised then, as we follow now, that progress requires not just empathy but evidence. Tamil Nadu has long stood as a bea-

con of affirmative action, with its unique 69 per cent reservation policy. That achievement was not accidental but was made possible by AIADMK’s political resolve and constitutional acumen. When the Supreme Court’s Indra Sawhney (Mandal) judgment in 1992 imposed a 50 per cent cap on reservations, the very framework of Tamil Nadu’s policy was threatened. But Amma Jayalalithaa rose to the challenge. In 1993, she convened a special assembly session, passed a unanimous resolution, and led an all-party delegation to Delhi. Her persistent persuasion ensured the Tamil Nadu Reservation Act was placed in

the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution, protecting it from judicial review. That was not just governance; it was transformative leadership. Our 2021 demand for a caste census was not political posturing. It was a reflection of AIADMK’s long-standing understanding of Tamil Nadu’s evolving social realities. We recognised the urgent need to reassess the representation and well-being of Backward Classes (BC), Most Backward Classes (MBC), Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in education, employment, and welfare. This demand, when initially raised, was met with silence from the ruling DMK.

## India wants Rs 3 lakh cr in defense manufacturing

**Delhi:** The government wants to produce Rs 3 lakh crore in defence by 2029, strengthening India's standing as a global powerhouse. Now, 65% of defense equipment is made locally, up from 65-70% import dependency. According to the Ministry of Defence, 16 DPSUs, over 430 licensed enterprises, and 16,000 MSMEs boost indigenous production capabilities. "The private sector contributes 21% to total defence production, fostering innovation and efficiency," it said. The government wants to expand defence exports to Rs 50,000 crore by 2029, strengthening India's position as a global manufacturing hub and supporting economic growth. Defence exports rose 32.5% to Rs 21,083 crore in FY 2023-24 from Rs 15,920 crore in FY 2022-23. Indian defence exports increased 21 times from Rs 4,312 crore in



2004-14 to Rs 88,319 crore in 2014-24, demonstrating its growing involvement in the global security sector. India exports defense equipment to over 100 nations, with the US, France, and Armenia buying most in 2023-24. In 2024-25, the Ministry of Defence signed a record 193 contracts worth Rs 2,09,050 crore, nearly doubling the previous record. These include 177 contracts, 92% awarded to the domestic industry for Rs 1,68,922 crore, 81% of the overall contract value. This emphasis on indigenous manufacture supports defence production self-reliance.

### Centre will borrow 8L cr, 54% of the objective

The government plans to borrow Rs 8 lakh crore, 54% of its Rs 14.8 lakh crore FY26 borrowing, in the first half. It didn't front-load the borrowing program to avoid raising rates while the RBI pumped record liquidity into the system. Since the market reported little demand for 30-year and longer bonds, the government announced it would borrow less in FY26. Thus, front-loading of the borrowing program has been avoided due to government (fiscal consolidation without compromising quality of expenditure).

## Kotak highlights the risk in the lending business strategy

**Delhi:** Veteran banker Uday Kotak has expressed worries about the banks business model, pointing out the shrinking gap between deposit and lending rates, ahead of an anticipated rate decrease by the RBI, despite the fact that liquidity is still limited. According to Kotak, leading banks are increasing one-year wholesale deposits by about 8%, which, when accounting for CRR, SLR, deposit insurance, and priority sector lending requirements (but not operational costs), results in a marginal deposit cost of more than 9%. The system as a whole has restrained



growth in low-cost retail deposits (CASA non-wholesale). However, banks are offering home loans at a variable rate of 8.5%. Take out a loan at 8.5% and borrow at 9%, Spread is negative by 0.5%. Additionally, repo rates are probably going to decline. Kotak warned that if the tight deposit situation continues, it may make it difficult for banks to maintain their

business model and asked how they would handle credit and operational expenses. The majority of banks are required to connect their retail floating rate loans to the repo rate. The remarks coincided with a sharp decline in bond yields as investors awaited the RBI's next liquidity injection before its monetary policy committee's decision.

## Bank loan growth drops for eighth straight month in February, RBI data reveals

**Delhi:** Central bank statistics revealed that personal and credit card loans fell for the eighth straight month in February due to Reserve Bank of India tougher policies. Last month, banks' credit rose 12% year-over-year, slower than 16.6% a year earlier,

excluding HDFC Bank's merger. Housing Development Finance Corp, Loans rose 11% in February, compared to 20.5% a year earlier, including the merger. In January, loan growth fell to 12.5% excluding the merger and 11.4% including it. Retail

demand for unsecured loans drove strong loan growth for several years in the banking sector. However, in late 2023, the RBI tightened capital requirements for personal, credit card, and non-banking finance company loans. in its Mumbai headquarters.

## Cabinet approves electronic component program

**Delhi:** The Union Cabinet approved a six-year Rs 22,919 crore incentive program for electronic component manufacture. The initiative seeks to increase India's domestic value addition and global value chain participation. The Indian Express originally revealed that the government was developing the system, its costs, and its details. The government wants at least 91,600 direct jobs from the scheme and has tied participating firms' annual payments to job creation. Rs 4.56 lakh crore in production and Rs 59,350 crore in investment are envisaged from the scheme. The government wants to target display modules, sub assembly camera modules,



printed circuit board assemblies, lithium cell enclosures, resistors, capacitors, and ferrites.

These are utilized in cell-phones, laptops, microwave ovens, refrigerators, and toasters. "This scheme will reduce component imports. We must

abandon import substitution and promote exports. After mass production, viability follows. Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said electronics production is \$120 billion and hopes to reach \$500 billion in the next years.

### Gautam Adani is India's Biggest Wealth Gainer

**Delhi:** According to the 'Hurun Global Rich List 2025', Gautam Adani, Adani Group Chairman, is India's greatest wealth gainer, increasing his net worth by approximately Rs 1 lakh crore. The ranking showed Adani's fortune rising 13%. Second-richest Indian on the global list, his total is Rs 8.4 lakh crore. Meanwhile, Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani fell off of the top 10 richest list. However, he leads Asia. The Hurun list ranks India third in billionaires. Tesla-SpaceX CEO Elon Musk tops Hurun Global Rich List 2025. India has 284 billionaires, 13 more than previous year.

## Airtel prepaid 5,985 crore spectrum dues but stock remains unchanged

**Delhi:** Bharti Airtel Ltd. shares closed flat after the company and its subsidiary Bharti Hexacom Ltd. prepaid Rs 5,985 crore to the Department of Telecom, fully prepaying the 8.65% high-cost interest liabilities for the 2024 auctions. Airtel subsidiary Network i2i Ltd. voluntarily called and redeemed \$1 billion in Perpetual Notes. BSE Bharti Airtel shares down 0.04% to Rs 1,733. Large cap stock has gained 8.58 percent this year and 42.51% in a year. The market cap of Bharti



Airtel decreased to Rs 9.88 lakh billion. On BSE, 1.11 lakh shares traded for Rs 19.33 crore. Bharti Airtel stock has a one-year beta of 1, indicating average volatility. Technically, Bharti Airtel's RSI is 64.3, indicating it's neither overbought or oversold. The recent payment means Airtel has prepaid Rs 25,981 crore of

high-cost spectrum commitments for the 2025 fiscal year and Rs 66,665 crores overall. The average cumulative liability prepaid interest rate was 9.74%. Airtel had entirely prepaid liabilities with 10%, 9.75%, and 9.3% interest rates. Prepayments were made 7 years before average residual maturities. Airtel prepaid Rs 116,405 crores of scheduled instalments that would have been due on their various dates over the obligations' original lifespan. Airtel's cost of debt on spectrum liabilities.

## The Reserve Bank of India will increase the price for using an ATM from Rs 21 to Rs 23

**Delhi:** News broke from India's central bank. There will be a cost of Rs 23 per transaction for clients using ATM banking services from May 1, 2025. The previous amount was Rs 21 for each transaction. The central bank announced that customers will still be able to use their own bank's ATMs for five free transactions per month, regardless of whether they are financial or not. There are three ATMs in major cities and five in smaller towns where they can use their card for free transactions. According to ET, a two rupee hike to the ATM interchange fee for cash withdrawals has been authorized by the Reserve Bank of India and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). The revised fees were



### Greater Noida Authority board authorizes Rs 5,600 crore land acquisition, important projects

**Delhi:** The Greater Noida Authority's 138th Board meeting approved a Rs 5,600 crore budget for 2025-26. Manoj Kumar Singh, Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary and Authority Chairman, chaired the meeting. Budget priorities include land acquisition, development, and construction. The approved budget allocates Rs 1,400 crore for land acquisition and Rs 1,973 crore for development.

announced to member banks by NPCI and are scheduled to be implemented on May 1, 2025. An increase of Rs 19 for domestic finan-

cial transactions and Rs 7 for non-financial transactions has been agreed by the National Financial Switch Steering Committee.

## Income Tax wants Rs 2,209 crore from Yes Bank

**Delhi:** Union Minister of State for Power Yesso Naik urged state power companies to become more profitable. AI and digital technologies and cost-reflective pricing are crucial for electricity sector financial stability, the Minister said. These steps will help utilities



become financially stable, he said. He also suggested India's Ujwal DISCOM Assurance

Yojana (UDAY) for DISCOM financial turnaround and rehabilitation. The Energy Ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, top officials from the Central and State governments, State Power Utilities, PFC Ltd., and

REC Ltd. attended the conference. Special invitee TATA Power Distribution, Odisha, shared their best practices and journey to prosperous DISCOMS. Member States actively engaged and presented State DISCOM overviews. They give DISCOMS good

## 1 in 5 Indians with over Rs 5 crore worth plans to relocate overseas

**Delhi:** One in five ultra-rich Indians with a net worth over Rs 25 crore plans to settle abroad for investment opportunities, tax advantages, and greater global connectivity, according to a Kotak Mahindra Bank private banking survey. The first two quarters of 2024-25 survey interviewed 150 ultra-high networth people (UHNIs) and private bankers in 12 cities. EY ordered and validated the findings with industry. For this report, those worth over Rs 25 crore were canvassed.



However, Kotak's private banking division targets individuals worth over Rs 300 crore. Many UHNIs buy abroad property for migration and permanent residency. "Ultra-HNIs are diversifying their portfolios and embracing domestic and global assets, setting the stage for a sig-

nificant increase. Alternative assets and equities are becoming more popular in domestic and international markets. Nearly a third of India's Ultra-HNIs own worldwide assets. With two in three ultra-HNIs planning structured wealth transition, succession planning is crucial.

### JB Chemicals' promoter KKR will sell 10% of the company for 2,6k crore rupees

**Delhi:** In a series of block agreements, the promoter of JB Chemicals — Tatu Investment Holdings, a subsidiary of global private equity giant KKR — is selling around 1.6 crore shares, or 10.2% of the firm, for approximately Rs 2,575 crore (\$300 million). According to the deal's term sheet, the minimum price at which the shares can be sold is Rs 1,625—a 5%

reduction to JB Chem's closing price of Rs 1,709 on Wednesday on the NSE. Shareholding reports on the BSE indicate that as of December 31, 2024, KKR owned 53.7% of the pharmaceutical company situated in the city. Midway through 2020, at a share price of Rs 745, the PE giant had taken over the pharmaceutical manufacturer.

# Kylie gets emotional as BF Timothée thanks her

American media personality Kylie Jenner and actor Timothée Chalamet have finally confirmed their relationship, which began in 2023

American media personality and businesswoman Kylie Jenner and actor Timothée Chalamet have finally confirmed their relationship. Despite several public outings and cosy displays of PDA, the two had never commented on their relationship status until now.

On Saturday, January 4, Timothée won the Best Actor award for Marty Supreme at The Critics Choice Awards 2026, which was held at the Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, California, and his speech melted hearts as he gave a sweet shout-out to his ladylove, who was cheering for him from the audience.

After accepting the award, Timothée said, "I don't know if I'll be up here again, so give me a second..." He went on to thank his team members and the cast, and concluded his speech with a heartfelt nod to Jenner. "And lastly, I'll just say, thank you to my partner of three years. Thank you for our foundation," Chalamet said.

For the first time ever, the actor publicly declared his love for Kylie, saying, "I love you. I couldn't do this without you." The Kylie Cosmetics founder appeared visibly overwhelmed with emotion upon hearing her boyfriend's speech. Later, cameras captured Jenner mouthing "I love you" in a sweet response to his heartfelt words.

Timothée's speech appears to con-



Timothée Chalamet

firm that the pair indeed began dating in 2023.

In January 2023, reports stated that at Paris Fashion Week during the Jean Paul Gaultier show, the couple was seen enjoying each other's company. They were later spotted sharing a public kiss at Beyoncé's Renaissance World Tour.



Kylie Jenner



## Pak women dance to Dhurandhar item song

A video from a Pakistani wedding has gone viral, showing two women dancing to Ranveer Singh's *Dhurandhar* item song *Shararat*, which had Ayesha Khan and Krystle Dsouza

The buzz around *Dhurandhar* is no longer limited to Indian cinemas, as the hype surrounding Ranveer Singh's film has clearly crossed borders. A viral video circulating on social media shows a choreographed dance to the film's title track, not from India, but from a wedding in Pakistan.

In the clip, two women are seen dancing to the hit item song *Shararat*, featuring Ayesha Khan and Krystle Dsouza. The performance has quickly grabbed attention online.

In the video shared on X by an user @rose\_k01 shows two women dressed in shararas, similar to Ayesha and Krystle's looks in the song,



were seen performing in front of wedding guests, moving in perfect sync and recreating the same dance steps, including the hooksteps featured in the track.

Soon after the video went viral on social media, netizens reacted, with several also criticising the women for performing to a Bollywood track despite ongoing tensions between the two

countries.

A user commented, "They cannot do without Bollywood." Another user joked, "Pakistan literally crossed 1.8 million pirated downloads of *Dhurandhar*. Ban nahi hota toh *Dhurandhar* would have easily crossed 1800 crores by now." Another added, "Well done, this song is made for a great dance. Music is a language of universe."

## First-look poster of Dil Diya – A Naked Truth revealed

*Dil Diya – A Naked Truth* has formally stepped into the spotlight with the release of its title and first-look poster, marking the first public move for the upcoming feature



The reveal, carried out by Spirit director Sandeep Reddy Vanga, has sparked early interest across industry circles, setting the stage for the film's rollout. Produced by Poorna Naidu under the Sreeyas Chitra – A Poorna Naidu Production banner and written and directed by K. Kranthi Madhav, the film positions itself as a contemporary drama rooted in emotional conflict and personal relationships.

For K. Kranthi Madhav, *Dil Diya – A Naked Truth* continues a body of work defined by emotional sensitivity and narrative restraint. Over the years, he has earned recognition for telling stories that engage deeply with human vulnerability rather than surface-level drama. Films such as *Onamalu*, *Malli Malli Idi Rani Roju*, and *World Famous Lover* reflected his interest in love, moral dilemmas, emotional breakdown, and inner conflict. With *Dil Diya – A Naked Truth*, he returns to similar emotional terrain, this time

**The film stars Chaitanya Rao Madadi, Ira, Sakhee, and Jessy in the lead roles**

contemporary lens shaped by obsession, failure, intimacy, and self-worth.

The film stars Chaitanya Rao Madadi, Ira, Sakhee, and Jessy in the lead roles, supported by Mani Chandana, Pramodini, and Veera Shankar in key supporting parts. The casting reflects the film's grounded narrative approach, favouring performances that feel organic and lived-in. Rather than leaning on heightened drama, the storytelling allows emotion to emerge naturally through character interaction and consequence.

The first-look poster offers a restrained but telling glimpse into the film's emotional world. Minimal in design and free from visual excess, the imagery hints at vulnerability, contradiction, and inner turbulence. Instead of spelling out its themes, the poster suggests

driven by personal truth. This visual language aligns closely with Kranthi Madhav's filmmaking sensibility, where emotional clarity and honesty take precedence over stylised spectacle.

Produced by Poorna Naidu with Srikanth V serving as co-producer, *Dil Diya – A Naked Truth* is backed by a strong and experienced technical team. P.G. Vinda handles cinematography, expected to bring an intimate yet cinematic visual texture. Music is composed by Phani Kalyan, while editing is by Ra-Sha (Ravi - Shashank). Chinna oversee the production design, Dhani Aalay handles publicity designs, Star Circle manages digital marketing, and publicity is led by S.K. Naidu along with Phani Kandukuri (Beyond Media).

Positioned as a youthful love story with emotional depth, *Dil Diya – A Naked Truth* aims to present an honest and unfiltered portrayal of modern relationships. Moving beyond idealised romance, the film engages directly with emotional complexity and personal consequence, seeking to redefine intimacy within contemporary Telugu Cin-

## Of cons, frauds & financial scams

Here are five titles that shine a light on the dark world of financial scams

From small-town cyber frauds to billion-dollar corporate deception, financial scams often thrive in plain sight - masked by ambition, influence, and credibility. Over the years, we have seen many such stories being brought to the screen, unpacking how these schemes are built, who they benefit, and the moment when the illusion finally cracks. Equal parts cautionary and compulsive, these narratives reveal that when money, power, and ego collide, the fallout is rarely small.



### THE TINDER SWINDLER

This true-crime documentary chronicles a modern conman who used dating apps to emotionally manipulate women into funding his extravagant lifestyle. By blending romance with deception, the film highlights how financial scams have evolved in the digital age - where trust is built quickly and exploited just as fast.

All these titles are available to watch on Netflix



### MADOFF: THE MONSTER OF WALL STREET

This docuseries chronicles the rise and fall of Bernie Madoff, the architect of the largest Ponzi scheme in history. Once a trusted Wall Street insider, Madoff siphoned off billions by promising consistent returns and paying old investors with new money. The series exposes how reputation, blind trust, and regulatory failures allowed the scam to run unchecked for decades.



### JAMTARA- SABKA NUMBER AYEGA

Set in a quiet town in Jharkhand, *Jamtara* exposes the mechanics of organised phishing scams run by young men who turn cold calls into quick cash. What begins as a grassroots hustle soon expands into a dangerous ecosystem involving politicians, middlemen, and rival gangs. The series captures how cyber fraud became scalable, sophisticated, and deeply entrenched in everyday life.



### INVENTING ANNA

Inspired by real events, *Inventing Anna* follows Anna Delvey, who infiltrated New York's elite circles by posing as a wealthy German heiress. Stylish and unsettling, the series shows how confidence, social access, and perception can be leveraged into financial fraud - raising questions about who gets believed, and why.

## Briefs

## Don repeats Indo-Pak war stopped claim

Claiming again he solved the conflict between India and Pakistan, US President Donald Trump has said "no one in history is more deserving than him" of the Nobel Peace Prize, as he criticised former President Barack Obama for getting the honour even though he "didn't do anything". "Look whether people like Trump or don't like Trump, I settled eight wars, big ones. Some going on for 36 years, 32 years, 31 years, 28 years, 25 years, some just getting ready to start like India and Pakistan, where already eight jets were shot out of the air," Trump said.

## Cannot be shared: Nobel Committee

Days after Nobel Laureate and Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado vowed to share her Nobel Peace Prize with US President Trump, the Norwegian Nobel Committee clarified the coveted award cannot be "shared, revoked or transferred" to another person. "A Nobel Prize can neither be revoked, shared, nor transferred to others. Once the announcement has been made, the decision stands for all time," the Nobel Committee said.

## Six killed in Mississippi, suspect held

Authorities say a person was in custody on Saturday after six people were killed in a series of related shootings in Mississippi. Clay County Sheriff Eddie Scott said in a Facebook post "multiple innocent lives" were lost "due to violence" in the town of West Point, near the Alabama border. The sheriff told WTVA 6 people were killed in 3 locations. A suspect was in custody and there was no threat to the community, the sheriff wrote on Facebook.

## Porn content? Indonesia blocks Grok

Indonesia temporarily blocked Elon Musk's Grok chatbot on Saturday due to the risk of AI-generated pornographic content, becoming the first country to deny access to the AI tool. The move comes after governments, researchers and regulators from Europe to Asia have condemned and some have opened inquiries into sexualised content on the app.

## Russian oil depot hit by Kyiv drone

A Ukrainian drone strike sparked a fire at an oil depot in Russia's southern Volgograd region, officials said on Saturday, after Russia launched a powerful hypersonic missile along with drones and other weapons that disrupted Kyiv's power supply and heating. There were no reports of casualties, Volgograd Gov Andrei Bocharov was quoted as saying in a Telegram post.

## Fighting resumes in Aleppo after ceasefire collapses

**Aleppo:** Fighting resumed in Syria's Aleppo after Kurdish militias rejected the government's order to abandon their positions late on Friday. Syrian forces, in response, targeted the Sheikh Maqoud and Ashrafieh neighbourhoods, which have remained under the control of Kurdish militias since the early days of the civil war that broke out in the country in 2011. Syrian defence ministry, while announcing a ceasefire on Friday, had called on

## OIL GIANTS MEET | Trump vows total safety, urges execs to invest billions; Exxon says Venezuela currently 'uninvestable'

## Don: Repair Venezuela's rotting energy industry

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump met executives from the oil giants at the White House on Friday to discuss Venezuela, saying he wants them to invest \$100 billion in the country to vastly expand its production. "American companies will have the opportunity to rebuild Venezuela's rotting energy infrastructure and eventually increase oil production to levels never, ever seen before," Trump said.

He was flanked by top executives from Exxon Mobil, ConocoPhillips, Chevron and others. "We are going to be making the decision as to which oil companies are going to go in. One of the things the US gets out of this will be even lower energy prices," the Republican president said.

Companies including Chevron, Vitol and Trafigura are competing for US licences to market Venezuela's existing crude oil, but oil majors are hesitant to commit to big, longer-term investments due to high costs and political instability. CEO Darren



One thing I think everyone has to know is if we didn't do this (capturing Maduro and reviving oil industry), China or Russia would have done it.

China can buy oil only from US markets.  
Donald Trump, US President

Woods said Exxon sees Venezuela as currently "uninvestable" and needs to see significant changes to return there.

"We have had our assets seized there twice, and so you can imagine to reenter a third time would require significant changes," he said. "You have total safety. You are dealing with us directly and not dealing with Venezuela at all. We don't want you to deal with Venezuela," Trump said.

Exxon and ConocoPhillips departed Venezuela nearly 20

years ago after their assets were nationalised.

Chevron Vice Chairman Mark Nelson said the company is committed to investments in Venezuela. Chevron is the only US oil major still operating in the country.

"You know, these are not babies," Trump said of the oil industry executives. "These are people that drill oil in pretty rough places. I can say a couple of those places make Venezuela look like a picnic." Other companies repre-

sented at the meeting include Halliburton, Valero, Marathon, Shell, Singapore-based Trafigura, Italy-based Eni and Spain-based Repsol.

After the meeting, Energy Secretary Chris Wright told reporters the firms showed "tremendous interest," adding, Chevron made a specific pledge. Trump said the discussions with oil firms are aimed at securing commitments. "We have to get them to invest and then we have to get their money back as quickly as we can," Trump said.

Woods said apart from security guarantee Exxon needed durable investment protections introduced and the Venezuela's hydrocarbons law needed to be reformed.

Chevron Vice Chairman Mark Nelson highlighted the company's 100-year history in Venezuela and its current status as the only American oil major operating there.

Meanwhile, pusing 1-year, 10% cap on credit card interest, Trump wrote on Truth Social: "We'll no longer let Americans be ripped off by credit card companies charging interest rates of 20-30%."

## NICARAGUA NABS US 'SUPPORTERS'

Authorities in Nicaragua have arrested at least 60 people for reportedly celebrating or expressing support for the capture of Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro, a human rights watchdog group and local media outlets said.

Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega and wife vice president Rosario Murillo are staunch allies of Maduro, reported 'The Guardian'. Since the capture of Maduro, "at least 60 arbitrary arrests" have occurred over alleged support for the operation, the NGO Blue and White Monitoring, which compiles reports of rights violations in Nicaragua, said, adding, 49 people remained in detention on Friday "without information about legal status" while 9 people have been released and 3 were temporarily detained. "This new wave of repression is carried out without a judicial order and is based solely on expressions of opinion: comments on social media, private celebrations, or not repeating official propaganda," the group said.

## CUBA PREPS FOR AFTERSHOCKS

**Havana:** As US seizures of Venezuela-linked oil tankers surge, concerns grow in Cuba about whether the island's government and economy will survive. Experts warn a sudden halt in Venezuelan oil shipments to Cuba could lead to widespread social unrest and mass migration. "I'd be lying if I told you I don't want to leave the country," said 16-year-old Cuban student Amanda Gómez. "We are all thinking about leaving, from the youngest to the oldest." Long before the January 3 attack, severe blackouts were sidelining life in Cuba, where people endured long lines at gas stations and supermarkets amid the island's worst economic crisis in decades. The lack of Venezuelan oil could push Cuba over the brink, experts say.

"This will take an already dire situation to new extremes," said Michael Galant, senior research and outreach associate at the Centre for Economic and Policy Research in Washington. "This is what a collapsing economy looks like."

## Another ICE case clip brings fresh scrutiny

MINNEAPOLIS

A Minnesota prosecutor called on the public to share with investigators any recordings and evidence connected to the fatal shooting of **Renee Good** as a new video emerged showing the final moments of her encounter with an immigration agent.

The Minneapolis killing and a separate shooting in Portland, Oregon, a day later by Border Patrol have set off protests in multiple cities and denunciations of immigration enforcement tactics by the US government. The reaction to the shooting has been focused on witness cellphone video. A new, 47-second video published online by a Minnesota-based conservative news site, Alpha News, and reposted on social media by DHS shows the shooting from the perspective of ICE officer Jonathan Ross, who fired the shots.

Sirens blaring in the background, he approaches and circles Good's vehicle in the middle of the road while filming on his cellphone. At the same time, Good's wife was recording the encounter and can be seen walking around and approaching the officer. A series of exchanges occurred: "That's fine, I'm not mad at you," Good says as the officer passes by her door. She has one hand on the steering



wheel and the other outside the open driver side window.

"US citizen, former f---ing veteran," says her wife, standing outside the passenger side of the SUV holding up her phone. "You wanna come at us, you wanna come at us, I say go get yourself some lunch big boy." Other officers are approaching the driver's side of the car at about the same time and one says: "Get out of the car, get out of the f---ing car."

Ross is now at the front driver side of the vehicle. Good reverses briefly, then turns the steering wheel toward the passenger side as she drives ahead and Ross opens fire. The camera becomes unsteady and points towards the sky and then returns to the street view showing Good's SUV careening away. "F---ing b---," someone at the scene says. A crashing sound is heard as Good's vehicle smashes into others parked on the street.

Meanwhile, Renee's wife said the couple had stopped to support their neighbours on the day of the shooting and described the mother of three as leaving a legacy of kindness. "We had whistles. They had guns," **Becca Good** said.

DHAKA

As violence against minorities continues to mount across Bangladesh, another Hindu man died after consuming poison over a debt of 500 Bangladeshi Taka in Dirai upazila of Sunamganj district, local media reported.

The deceased, **Joy Mohapatra**, 19, died on Friday morning while undergoing treatment at MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital in Sylhet. Citing the deceased's cousin, Ayan Das, Bangladeshi Bengali media outlet Sylhet View 24 reported Joy had purchased a mobile phone for 5,500 Taka from grocery shopkeeper Amirul Islam. He



paid 2,000 Taka cash and agreed to pay the balance in weekly installments of 500 Taka. Although he made the payments regularly, the final installment was delayed.

It is alleged Joy went to Amirul Islam's shop on Thursday to pay the installment but was beaten up, humiliated and had his mobile phone seized.

Ayan said Joy admitted to consuming poison on Thursday evening. He was

## Pakistan, United States begin joint anti-terrorism military exercises

**Karachi/Islamabad:** Pakistan and the US are holding 2-week-long joint anti-terrorism exercises at a counter terrorism centre in the Punjab province, it was announced on Saturday.

The 13th Pakistan-US bilateral joint exercise, 'Inspired Gambit-2026', began on Friday, the military's media wing said.

The manoeuvres are taking place at the National Counter Terrorism Centre in Pabbi town of the Kharian district, the Inter-Services Public Relations said.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Navy successfully test-fired a surface-to-air missile during an exercise in the North Arabian Sea. It live-fired the LY-80 (N) surface-to-air missile from the vertical launching system at extended range, showing "operational readiness and combat preparedness", a release said. Further, the Pakistan army said Iraq has expressed "keen interest" in JF-17 Thunder fighter jets and Mushshak training aircraft. —PTI

## Dutch couple's marriage annulled as ChatGPT vows fail legal test

AMSTERDAM

A Dutch couple had their marriage annulled after the person officiating used a ChatGPT-generated speech intended to be playful but failed to meet legal requirements, as per a court ruling, 'Reuters' reported.

The couple from the city of Zwolle, whose names were redacted from the January 5 decision under Dutch privacy

rules, argued they had intended to marry regardless of whether the right wording was used when they took their vows. According to the decision, the person officiating their ceremony last April 19 asked if they would "continue supporting each other, teasing each other and embracing each other, even when life gets difficult".

The pair said "I do" and the officiant declared them "not only husband and wife, but

above all a team, a crazy couple, each other's love and home base".

But the judge found they had not actually sworn to fulfil their marriage duties — something that is required under Dutch law. "The court understands that the date in the marriage deed is important to the man and woman, but cannot ignore what the law says." It ordered the marriage removed from the Zwolle city registry.

## 'Protesters enemies of God'

Iranian regime warns of death penalty in crackdown

DUBAI

Protests in Iran neared the two-week mark on Saturday, and the Islamic Republic's government acknowledged the demonstrations despite an intensifying crackdown and as the nation remains cut off from the world. An internet blackout imposed by the authorities was also ongoing.

With the internet down in Iran and phone lines cut off, gauging the demonstrations from abroad has grown more difficult. But the death toll in the protests has grown to at least 65 people killed and over 2,300 others detained, according to the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency.

Iranian state TV is reporting on security force casualties while portraying control over the nation.

Iran escalated its threats against demonstrators, with the country's attorney general warning that anyone taking part in protests will be considered an "enemy of God", a death-penalty charge.

The comments by Iran's attorney general Mohammad Movahedi Azad were reported by Iranian state TV.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has signalled a coming clampdown, despite US warnings.

"The US supports the brave people of Iran," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on X on Saturday. The State Department separately warned: "Do not play games with President Trump. When he says he will do something, he means it."

## TV SPLIT-SCREEN

Saturday marks the start of the work week in Iran, but many schools and universities reportedly held online classes, Iranian state TV reported.

State TV played a driving, martial orchestral arrangement from the 'Epic of Khorramshahr' by Iranian



So Iran's in big trouble. It looks to me the people are taking over certain cities that nobody thought were really possible just a few weeks ago. I have made the statement very strongly if they start killing people like they have in the past, we will get involved. We will be hitting them very hard where it hurts.

Donald Trump, US President

composer Majid Entezami, while showing pro-government demonstrations. The song, aired repeatedly during the 12-day war launched by Israel, honours Iran's 1982 liberation of the city of Khorramshahr during the Iran-Iraq war. It has been used in videos of protesting women cutting away their hair to protest the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini as well.

"Field reports indicate that peace prevailed in most cities of the country at night," a state TV anchor reported.

"After a number of armed terrorists attacked public places and set fire to people's private property last night, there was no news of any gathering or chaos in Tehran and most provinces last night."

That was directly contradicted by an online video that showed demonstrations in Tehran's Saadat Abad, with

what appeared to be thousands on the street. "Death to Khamenei!" a man chanted.

The semiofficial Fars news agency, believed to be close to Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and one of the few media outlets able to publish to the outside world, released surveillance camera footage of what it said came from demonstrations in Isfahan. In it, a protester appeared to fire a long gun, while others set fires and threw gasoline bombs at what appeared to be a government compound.

Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, who called for protests on Thursday and Friday, asked demonstrators to take to streets on Saturday and Sunday with Iran's old lion-and-sun flag, used during the time of the shah.

Pahlavi claimed he was preparing to return to Iran.

Meanwhile, the Institute for the Study of War, a policy research organisation, on Saturday said it recorded 116 protests in at least 100 cities across all 31 provinces since 3.30pm on January 8. As per the report, Iran saw 20 huge protests, ones that have a turnout of over 1,000 people.

Meanwhile, Australia, Canada and the EU in a joint statement condemned the killing of the anti-government protesters, asking the regime to end the use of lethal force.

## Blow as judge blocks Trump's polls order

**Washington:** A federal judge has blocked US President Donald Trump's administration from enforcing most of his executive order on elections against the vote-by-mail states Washington and Oregon, in the latest blow to Trump's efforts to require documentary proof of citizenship to vote and to require that all ballots be received by Election Day.

US District Judge John H Chun in Seattle found that those requirements exceeded the president's authority, following similar rulings in a Massachusetts case brought by 19 states and in a Washington case by Democratic and civil rights groups.

"Today's ruling is a huge vic-

tory for voters in Washington and Oregon, and for the rule of law," Washington Attorney General Nick Brown said.

## 'US GOVT CAN'T BLOCK CHILD CARE MONEY'

A federal judge ruled Trump administration cannot block federal money for child care subsidies and other programmes aimed at supporting needy children and their families from flowing to 5 Democratic-led states for now.

California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota and New York argued a policy announced to freeze funds for three grant programmes is having an immediate impact on them and creating "operational chaos".

## Priti calls for UK intervention to protect Hindus in Bangladesh

**London/Dhaka:** UK Shadow Foreign Secretary **Priti Patel** has called on the British government to intervene in the "increase in violence" in Bangladesh that has involved murders of Hindus and use its influence to bring about stability in the country.

The British Indian Opposition Conservative MP posted her letter to Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper on social media on Friday, which also calls upon the Labour Party government to make a statement on the issue in the House of Commons.

"The situation in Bangladesh is very concerning. Religious freedoms should be protected and the murders of Hindus and persecution taking place are wrong and must stop," said Patel.

"The UK government must use its influence and convening powers to work to bring about stability in Bangladesh and a future where religious freedoms are protected and Hindus as safe," she said.

In her letter to Cooper, the shadow minister points to reports of at least six Hindus being killed within an 18-day



period in recent weeks.

"This level of persecution and violence is unacceptable. Given the increase in violence, can you advise what steps have been taken over the last year to monitor and make representations?" she said.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has condemned a "disturbing pattern" of recurring attacks on minorities in Bangladesh.

"We continue to witness a disturbing pattern of recurring attacks on minorities as well as their homes and businesses by extremists. Such communal incidents need to be dealt with swiftly and firmly," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"We have observed a troubling tendency to attribute such incidents to personal rivalries, political differences,

or extraneous reasons. Such disregard only emboldens the perpetrators, and deepens the sense of fear and insecurity among minorities," he said.

## B'DESH MUST NOT RETURN TO PRE-AUG 5 PERIOD: RAHMAN

Newly-appointed BNP chairman Tarique Rahman on Saturday said there is "no reason" for Bangladesh to return to the political conditions that existed before the toppling of Sheikh Hasina's regime on August 5, 2024.

Weeks ahead of Feb 12 general elections, Rahman claimed his Bangladesh Nationalist Party would lead the country "in the right direction if it comes to power".

Rahman, 60, has emerged as a leading contender for the post of the prime minister.

The Standing Committee of the BNP approved Rahman's appointment as the chairman of the party in a meeting on Friday, days after the demise of his mother, party chairperson and three-time prime minister Khaleda Zia on December 30 after a prolonged illness.

## Briefs

PUNE

## Pune Grand Tour from Jan 19-23



Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni was on Thursday named ambassador of the Bajaj Pune Grand Tour, a first-ever UCI 2.2 category multi-stage road race cycling event in the country, to be held here from January 19 to 23. The five-day Continental Road Cycling Race for Men will wind through a 437km route across the Deccan Plateau and Sahyadri Range, featuring sharp bends and challenging elevations. The event has attracted 171 riders from 29 teams across 35 countries.

BULAWAYO

## India cruise past USA in U-19 WC



India Under-19 began their World Cup campaign on a positive note with a clinical six-wicket victory over USA Under-19 in Bulawayo on Thursday. After winning the toss, India opted to bowl first and produced a disciplined bowling performance to bundle out USA for 107 in 35.2 overs. Chasing a revised target of 96, India suffered early setbacks. Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was dismissed for 2, followed soon by Vedant Trivedi, who also managed 2 runs. Both wickets were taken by Ritvik Appidi.

KOLKATA

## Gill will return 'better and stronger'



Shubman Gill's omission from India's T20 World Cup squad is merely "one of the hiccups" that occur in every elite sportsperson's career and the India Test and ODI skipper will return a "better, stronger" cricketer, Gujarat Titans chief operating officer Colonel Arvinder Singh said on Thursday. Gill, who was vice-captain of the T20i side, was the most high-profile absentee when the national selectors named a 15-member squad for the global showpiece in India and Sri Lanka starting February 7.

## Harleen stars as UP Warriorz outplay RCB

Deol's unbeaten 70 helped UP chase 162 comfortably to win

NAVI MUMBAI

Harleen Deol slammed a fine half-century as the UP Warriorz beat Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) by seven wickets in the Women's Premier League (WPL) match at the DY Patil Stadium, here on Thursday.

Chasing 162 for a win, UP Warriorz were in a bit of a

78/3 in 13 overs. While Sciver-Brunt hit nine fours and a six in her knock, where she toyed with fields and timed the ball beautifully, Carey hit five quickfire boundaries.

UP Warriorz, meanwhile, will rue their inability to contain the late onslaught after maintaining control through the middle overs. The chase now rests on their batters to overhaul a target that looked



bother at 45/2 but Harleen in the company of Phoebe Litchfield (25) and later Chloe Tryon (27) powered them home at 162/3 in 18.1 overs.

Earlier, on return to the playing eleven, Nat Sciver-Brunt smashed 65 off 43 balls while Nicola Carey remained unbeaten on 32 off 20 deliveries as defending champions Mumbai Indians recovered from a slow start to post 161/5 against UP Warriorz in their Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026 clash at the Dr. DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai on Thursday.

Mumbai Indians (MI) flexed their batting depth in a brutal final seven overs, fetching them 83 runs after finding themselves at a precarious

unlikely when they had MI in trouble at the end of 13 overs.

MI's innings had a stuttering start as Amanjot Kaur, promoted to open the batting in the absence of Hayley Matthews, and G. Kamalini struggled to get going against UPW's new-ball attack, leaving MI with their lowest Power-play score of the season - 32/0.

In a bid to up the ante, Amanjot went for a slog-sweep, but holed out to deep mid-wicket off Deepti Sharma, while Kamalini holed out to long-off against Sophie Ecclestone.

Captain Harmanpreet Kaur provided brief resistance with an 11-ball 16 before falling to a spectacular catch by Chloe Tryon off Asha Sobhana Joy.

IND-NZ | India asst coach says T20 WC is still a long way away

## Doeschate's focus still on winning ODI series

RAJKOT

India assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate says the next month's T20 World Cup is still a "long way" to go and the team's immediate focus on the ongoing ODI series against New Zealand, which is tied 1-1 after the visitors won the second match here.

The defending champions India will co-host the 20-team T20 World Cup starting on February 7, while they are in the middle of a high intensity ODI series with the series-decider slated in Indore on Sunday.

"There's a real chance that you're so focused on the World Cup that you think, 'oh, these three games this week just comes and goes' and we don't learn anything and we don't put our best foot (forward), or we don't put our best performances out there," he said after India lost the second ODI by seven wickets.

"Strategy (wise), I can't see anything that we've had to skirt around in terms of prepping for the (T20) World Cup. We are fully focused on this series. Every series is important. Individually for these players, there's a lot at stake." "The World Cup is still a long way away, but (it's about) building from series to series and getting in good habits, so (we are) trying to manage both and put the excitement of the T20 World Cup just on the back burners for another few more days," ten Doeschate added.

But he underlined the need to "protect" the players who are part of the T20 World Cup.

"We're very cautious or conscious about not doing that. But at the same time, you do want to protect the guys

who are going to play in the T20 World Cup and you are thinking about it." The Indian squad has been hit by a string of injuries that has sidelined T20 World Cup-bound Tilak Varma, Rishabh Pant and Washington Sundar.

Ten Doeschate said there shouldn't have been a situation of Indian players not being able to perform given the two set-ups have different players.

"You've got to be able to apply yourself to both situations. Particularly with the two sets of personnel that we have, they're very different so there's no real excuse for not focusing on this," he said.

A depleted New Zealand side romped home with seven wickets and more than two overs to spare in the second ODI here, a game in which Indian spinners were once again out-bowled by the visitors.

The loss threw the spotlight back on the two Test series defeats at home to the same opponent in 2024-25 and South Africa earlier this season.



Strategy (wise), I can't see anything that we've had to skirt around in terms of prepping for the (T20) World Cup. We are fully focused on this series.

**Ryan ten Doeschate**  
India assistant coach

## BCB removes Najmul from key post after players revolt

DHAKA

The Bangladesh Cricket Board was forced to sack its finance committee chairman Najmul Islam on Thursday after senior players of the national team revolted against him for making derogatory comments against them.

Despite the removal of Najmul from a key BCB post, two matches of Bangladesh Premier League scheduled on the day were postponed.

The players taking part in the BPL were unified in their demand for immediate removal of Najmul as BCB director. Under player and public pressure, BCB removed Najmul as chairman of the board's finance committee but he remains a BCB director.

"...Following a review of recent developments and in the best interest of the organisation, the BCB President has decided to release Mr. Najmul Islam from his responsibilities as Chairman of the Finance Committee with immediate effect," said the BCB in a statement.

"Until further notice, the BCB President will assume the role of Acting Chairman of the Finance Committee. The BCB reiterates that the interests of the cricketers remain its highest priority."

"The Board remains fully committed to upholding the honour and dignity of all players under its jurisdiction...BCB hopes that all cricketers will continue to display the highest standards of professionalism and dedication to the betterment of Bangladesh cricket during what is a challenging period for the game..."...and will do their utmost to ensure continued participation in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL)."

## Gujarat Giants seek revival against in-form RCB

RCB have grown in strength with every outing

NAVI MUMBAI

Hoping to arrest their recent slide, Gujarat Giants have a tough task at hand when they take on table-toppers Royal Challengers Bengaluru in their Women's Premier League clash here on Friday.

After briefly leading the six-team standings, Giants have slipped to third following their defeat to Mumbai Indians on Tuesday, while former champions RCB have surged to the top with back-to-back wins.

RCB, on the other hand, have grown in strength with every outing, the latest being a commanding chase of 144 against UP Warriorz in under 13 overs.

The biggest positive for them was skipper Smriti Mandhana's return to form after she was dismissed for 18 in the season-opener against Mumbai Indians.

Mandhana anchored the chase with her trademark elegance and calm, while her opening partner Grace Harris was at her explosive best.

Gujarat will need to find a



Match starts at 7.30 P.M  
Live on Star Sports

## Teams

## Gujarat Giants:

Ashleigh Gardner (c), Beth Mooney, Sophie Devine, Renuka Singh Thakur, Bharti Fulmali, Titas Sadhu, Kashee Gautam, Kanika Ahuja, Tanuja Kanwer, Georgia Wareham, Anushka Sharma, Happy Kumari, Kim Garth, Yastika Bhatia, Shivani Singh, Danni Wyatt-Hodge, Rajeshwari Gayakwad

and Ayushi Soni.

## Royal Challengers Bengaluru:

Smriti Mandhana (c), Richa Ghosh, Shreyanka Patil, Georgia Voll, Nadine de Klerk, Radha Yadav, Lauren Bell, Linsey Smith, Prema Rawat, Arundhati Reddy, Pooja Vastrakar, Grace Harris, Gautami Naik, Prathyusha Kumar, D. Hemalatha and Sayali Satghare.

way to contain RCB's formidable batting line-up, which also features the in-form

Nadine de Klerk and the destructive Richa Ghosh, as they look to recover.

## VHT: Punjab to take on Saurashtra in semifinals

Victory against Mumbai has spurred Punjab ahead of the last-4 clash

BENGALURU

Punjab will head into the Vijay Hazare Trophy semifinal against Saurashtra here on Friday brimming with confidence after surviving a nail-biting one-run victory over domestic powerhouse Mumbai in their final group match.

That thrilling win has set the tone for the rest of their campaign as was evident in the manner in which Punjab demolished Madhya Pradesh in the quarterfinal. Now, a young and determined Saurashtra side stands in their way.

With charismatic India opener Abhishek Sharma unlikely to feature, wicket-keeper-batter Prabhsimran Singh is expected to lead the side, having already steered Punjab to a commanding 183-run triumph over Madhya Pradesh, underpinned by a colossal 345-run total.

Harnoor Singh, Prabhsimran Singh, Anmolpreet Singh, and Nehal Wadhwa all struck impres-



sive half-centuries to turn the contest decisively in Punjab's favour, and a similar batting performance could prove pivotal in steering them towards the final.

The bowling, spearheaded by right-arm pacer Gurnoor Brar, played a crucial role in skittling the opposition for a meagre total, wrapping up the innings with nearly 19 overs to spare.

As Punjab chase their maiden Vijay Hazare Trophy title, they will rely on skipper Prabhsimran's experience, having

been one of the team's leading run-scorers with four half-centuries, including his most recent effort in Tuesday's quarterfinal against Madhya Pradesh.

With a deep batting lineup and a roster of destructive hitters, including Harnoor Singh, Anmolpreet Singh, Naman Poonia, Nehal Wadhwa, and Ramandeep Singh, Punjab have the firepower to go all the way. Their bowling attack also looks well-rounded, featuring Gurnoor Brar, who sharpened his skills as a

## Teams

**Saurashtra:** Ruchit Ahir, Parth Bhut, Yuvraj Chudasama, Harvik Desai, Sammar Gajjar, Ansh Gosai, Vishvaraj Jadeja, Dharmendrasinh Jadeja, Chirag Jani, Jay Gohil, Hiten Kanbi, Pranav Karia, Hetvik Kotak, Prerak Mankad, Ankur Panwar, Parswaraj Rana, Chetan Sakariya, Tarang Gohel.

**Punjab:** Abhishek Sharma, Anmolpreet Singh, Salil Arora, Arshdeep Singh, Sukhdeep Singh Bajwa, Gaurav Chaudhary, Gurnoor Brar, Harnoor Singh, Harpreet Brar, Jashanpreet Singh, Krish Bhagat, Naman Dhir, Prabhsimran Singh, Ramandeep Singh, Uday Saharan, Sanvir Singh, Raghu Sharma, Shubman Gill.

net bowler for Mumbai Indians before being drafted as a replacement for Punjab Kings in IPL 2023.

## Vijay Hazare Trophy

## Mokhade's hundred carries Vidarbha into VHT final

BENGALURU

The unflappable Aman Mokhade struck his fifth hundred of this season's Vijay Hazare Trophy, powering Vidarbha to a smooth six-wicket victory over defending champions Karnataka and to the tournament's final here on Thursday.

Mokhade (131, 122 balls) and R Samarth (76 not out, 69b) were the lead actors in Vidarbha's 284 for four in

out, which was built around fifties from Karun Nair and KL Shriji.

Pacer Darshan Nalkande (5/48) helped Vidarbha stymie Karnataka's progress in the backend, and they will face the winner of the second semifinal between Punjab and Saurashtra in the title round on Sunday.

Vidarbha had never beaten Karnataka in the country's premier 50-over domestic competition and they chose the perfect occa-

Mokhade played an important role in it with a stoic knock.

After losing his opening partner Atharva Taide early in the chase, Mokhade braved confident Karnataka bowlers, a tight situation and cramps towards the end of his innings to bring up a hundred in 101 balls.

He was involved in two significant partnerships - a 99-run second wicket alliance with impressive Dhruv Shorev (47) and then milked

with Samarth, who turned it on his old team with an array of sparkling shots.

That pacer Vysakh Vijaykumar had to go out of the field due to concussion after the 20th over hindered the Karnataka bowling in the middle overs.

Vysakh had pinged on his helmet in the last over of Karnataka's innings by pacer Yash Thakur, as Manvath Kumar came in as concussion substitute.

Mokhade reached his

off pacer Vidyadhar Patil and celebrated the moment with gusto.

The 24-year-old right-hander eventually played a tired-looking swipe off Patil to be caught by Devdutt Padikkal inside the circle.

But by then he had put the match well beyond Karnataka's grasp.

Earlier, Karnataka produced a batting effort of many highs and lows to reach a total that was just enough and competitive at

