

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

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

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

The government does not want me to meet Putin: Rahul Gandhi

New Delhi

Rahul Gandhi, the opposition leader, targeted the central government in the Lok Sabha during his visit to Parliament regarding Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India. He said, "The central government does not want me to meet with foreign visi-



tors. Modi and the Ministry of External

Affairs do not follow this rule. This is their

insecurity." Rahul said, "We have relationships

with everyone. The Leader of the Opposition provides a different perspective. We also represent India. This is not just the government's responsibility. Generally, it is the tradition that anyone who comes from abroad meets the Leader of the Opposition. This is their policy, and they always do so."

the case during the governments of Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh. This has been a tradition, but nowadays, when foreign guests or I travel abroad, the central government advises them not to meet the Leader of the Opposition. This is their policy, and they always do so."

The friendship between India and Russia has stood the test of time

New Delhi

Russian President Vladimir Putin received a warm welcome upon landing in India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally received him at the airport. PM Modi has since given his first reaction. He wrote on Twitter, "I am delighted to welcome my friend, President Putin, to Delhi. I look forward to our meetings this evening and tomorrow. The friendship between India and Russia has stood the test of time; it has greatly benefited our people." What are the expectations from this meeting?

Defense and Security Cooperation:

Discussions may include existing defense equipment deals, upgrades, maintenance agreements, and deeper technology-sharing arrangements.

Energy and Oil



Cooperation: Given India's demand and global energy volatility, discussions are expected to focus on long-term oil supply, pricing frameworks, and energy security.

Trade and Economic Partnership: Expanding bilateral trade beyond traditional sectors, exploring new areas such as manufacturing, technology, agriculture, and perhaps even trade-facilitation frameworks.

Civil Nuclear and Strategic Technology Cooperation: Collaboration on nuclear energy projects and, perhaps, future

strategic-technology cooperation within a larger strategic partnership.

Global Diplomacy and Geopolitical Dialogue: Beyond bilateral issues – exchanging views on regional and global issues to establish a common position and address growing international pressure. From the BrahMos missile upgrade to the oil deal...

What will India gain from President Putin's two-day visit? Russian President Vladimir Putin has arrived in India for a two-day visit. He is in

Several major deals are expected to be signed

Several major deals are expected to be signed between India and Russia during his visit. Seven of Putin's ministers are accompanying him to Delhi: Defense Minister Andrei Belousov, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov, Agriculture Minister Oksana Yakovlev, Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov, Health Minister Mikhail Murashko, Internal Affairs Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev, and Transport Minister Vitaly Savelyev.

New Delhi to mark the 25th anniversary of the strategic partnership between India and Russia. During his visit, Putin will participate in the 23rd bilateral summit. He will hold a one-on-one meeting with Modi and will also meet President Murmu.



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath lighting a lamp and sending off the Akhand Jyoti Rath at the inauguration of the foundation ceremony of Maharana Pratap Parishad in Gorakhpur district and feeding grains to the peacock in the cowshed.

India and Canada discuss roadmap for negotiating trade deal

New Delhi

Discussed the framework, objectives, and modalities for launching negotiations on the proposed free trade agreement. The Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Canada's International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu on Wednesday discussed the framework, objectives, and modalities

for launching negotiations on the proposed free trade agreement. The two sides recently agreed to resume negotiations on the agreement, officially called the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). It aims to increase bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030. The Union Commerce and Industry Minister, in a statement released on X-Post.

CM Rekha inaugurated the mist spray system, said- pollution control is the top priority

New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta inaugurated a new mist spray system for dust control at ITO on Thursday. She inspected the site and received detailed information from officials on its operation, effectiveness, and progress in reducing dust in the area. She stated that pollution control in Delhi is the government's top priority. Regarding pollution management, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta



stated that the government's comprehensive campaign for cleanliness, dust control, and waste management is continuing unabated in Delhi. She said that the government is working on a mission mode on all fronts to control

pollution. A high-level committee comprising senior officials and experts from IITs and the environment is being formed, which will continuously work to control pollution. The Chief Minister has directed all depart-

Five Naxalites killed in encounter on Bijapur, two soldiers martyred

Jagdalpur

An encounter has been going on since morning between Naxalites and police in the forests of Keshkutul in the Bhairamgarh area, bordering Dantewada and Bijapur. Soldiers have killed five Maoists in the encounter. Two DRG soldiers have been martyred in the encounter, while another soldier is injured and has been sent to the hospital for treatment. A major search operation is underway in the forest, and the number of Naxalites killed may increase. It is reported that a team left Dantewada.

India of 2047 will be self-reliant and developed: CM Yogi Adityanath



Minister Yogi said that during the Amrit Mahotsav of Independence, Prime Minister Modi set a goal for the countrymen: "In 2047, when the country celebrates

its centenary, we want a self-reliant, developed India." The Chief Minister said that an India where every person is happy and harmonious, fulfilling their role in establish-

ing India as a global superpower, is free from caste, language, regional disputes, or poverty. No citizen is a victim of disaster. Every person can fulfill their responsibilities to the nation while living a self-reliant and independent life. Chief Minister Yogi said that India can develop only when everyone pays attention to the five vows. SDRF Vice President Lieutenant

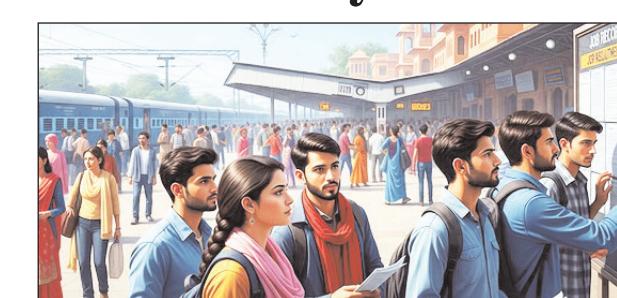
ments that any negligence in pollution control will not be tolerated. Rekha Gupta stated that the Delhi Pollution Control Committee has been directed to immediately issue challans and impose heavy fines on government institutions that are negligent in pollution and cleanliness. FIRs should be filed against institutions that carry out road cutting without permission and fail to pay the fines on time. He stated that thousands of kilome-

Fitch raises India's GDP growth forecast to 7.4 percent

New Delhi

Global rating agency Fitch Ratings has raised its forecast for India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate for the current financial year 2025-26 from 6.9 percent to 7.4 percent. The agency cited increased consumer spending and an improved economic environment due to GST reforms as the main reasons behind this. In its Global Economic Outlook report for December, released on

Railways has provided 5.08 lakh jobs in the last 11 years



New Delhi

duction of new technologies, mechanization, and retirements create a constant need for manpower, which is filled through periodic recruitment through recruitment agencies. The Indian Railways has initiated the recruitment process for a total of 120,579 positions in 2024 and 2025. Additionally, the Railways has created 5.08 lakh jobs in the last 11 years, a record in itself. The Railway Minister explained to Parliament what the government's roadmap is for railway recruitment. In a written reply to Parliament on Wednesday, the Railway Minister informed that the Indian Railways has a vast network. Regular operations, the intro-

across the country. He also clarified that in the future, the need to stop at toll plazas will be completely eliminated. Gadkari explained that under the new system, only the entry of road users will be recorded. The number plate will be automatically identified through a photo.

Research reveals that microplastic particles can cause serious health damage

New Delhi

The harmful effects of plastic bottles have once again come to light. Research has revealed that tiny plastic particles released from single-use plastic bottles can seriously harm our health by affecting vital systems in our bodies. A team from the Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST), Mohali, is an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Science and Technology (DST). The team found that microplastics, when ingested, affect beneficial gut microbes.



Thursday, Fitch Ratings said that India's GDP growth rate for the financial year 2025-26 is projected to be 7.4 percent. Previously, the rating agency had projected economic growth at 6.9 percent. The agency said that increased consumer spending,

improved business environment, and the economic growth boosted by Goods and Services Tax (GST) reforms are the main reasons for this rapid growth. In its Global Economic Outlook report for December, Fitch said, "Growth will remain subdued for the remainder of the current fiscal year 2025-26 (to the end of March), but we have raised our full-year growth forecast to 7.4 percent from 6.9 percent in September."

Briefs

NEW DELHI

Indian freed by Houthis after 5 mths

An Indian national from Kerala, who was in detention of Houthi rebels in war-torn Yemen since early July, has been released. Anilkumar Raveendran was among the crew members of cargo ship MV Eternity C. The Ministry of External Affairs said Raveendran, who was under detention in Yemen since July 7, reached Muscat yesterday and is expected to travel back to India soon.

CHENNAI

Saravanan, veteran film producer, dies

Veteran producer and owner of iconic AVM Studios, M Saravanan, died in Chennai due to age-related ailments on Thursday, sources said. He was 86. Sources said Saravanan was suffering from health issues for a few years and was undergoing treatment intermittently. Popularly known as AVM Saravanan, the legendary producer took over the studio established by his father A V Meiyappan after his death in 1979.

PATNA

Nitish praises PM Modi in assembly

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday praised the Centre in the assembly for its cooperation with his government and requested all members, including those from the opposition, to express their gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi by raising their hands.

LUCKNOW

UP Wildlife Conservation Day observed

On World Wildlife Conservation Day, Uttar Pradesh showcased how conservation and eco-tourism are reinforcing each other across the state's forests and wetlands. Officials say restored habitats, responsible tourism and community participation are helping wildlife return in larger numbers.

INHUMAN ANGLE | Maximum incidents of human trafficking reported from Punjab, Jaishankar informs the Rajya Sabha

3,258 Indians deported by US in 2025, says EAM

NEW DELHI

As many as 18,822 Indian nationals have been deported by the United States since 2009, including 3,258 since January 2025, the government informed the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Responding to supplementaries in the Rajya Sabha, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said state governments and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) have also investigated cases of human trafficking, in which Punjab has the maximum number of cases.

"Since 2009, a total of 18,822 Indian nationals have been deported to India," the minister informed the Rajya Sabha in a written reply to a question.

He said 617 Indians had been deported in 2023, and as many as 1,368 were deported in 2024.

"Since January 2025, a total of 3,258 Indian nationals have been deported by the United States to India. Of these, 2,032 individuals (approximately 62.3 per cent) were deported on regular commercial flights, while the remaining 1,226 (37.6 per cent) arrived on US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) operated charter flights.

Jaishankar said the Ministry of External Affairs remains engaged with the US side to ensure the humane treatment of deportees during US ICE/CBP deportation operations.

The Ministry has strongly registered its concerns with the US authorities on the treatment of deportees, particularly with respect to the



Kangana Ranaut during the Parliament's Winter session in New Delhi on Thursday

'AI reported 3 tech glitches on Boeing 787 since July'

New Delhi: Air India has reported three technical glitches, since July this year, related to Boeing 787 aircraft in its fleet, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Murlidhar Mohol, said that after the accident of the Boeing 787 aircraft on June 12, 2025 in Ahmedabad, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued directions to Air India to carry out enhanced safety inspections on its fleet of Boeing-787 aircraft. All Boeing aircraft were checked and found satisfactory by the airline.

use of shackles, especially on women and children, the minister told the house in his written reply.

No instance of shackling of women and children has been brought to the notice of this Ministry since the 5th February deportation flight, he said.

SIDELIGHTS

■ Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said the current system of toll collection will come to an end within a year, replaced by an electronic system that will ensure a seamless experience for motorists on highways. The new system has been rolled out in 10 places and will be extended across the country within a year, the Union minister of road transport and highways said in the Lok Sabha during Question Hour.

■ According to data presented by Nitin Gadkari in Lok Sabha on Thursday, 1.77 lakh people died in road accidents in 2024, an increase of 2.31 per cent from 2023, when 1.73 lakh fatalities were recorded in 4.80 lakh road accidents.

■ Nearly 20% cashless treatment requests raised by road accident victims under Cashless Treatment of Road Accident Victims Scheme since March 2024 has been rejected by the police, Gadkari informed Parliament on Thursday.

TURBULENCE DECODED



WHAT'S FDTL NORMS

The FDTL norms place a maximum limit on the number of hours a crew member including pilots and cabin staff can remain on duty. This reduces flying time to eight hours per day, 35 hours per week, 125 hours per month and 1,000 hours per year. The rules were implemented following a directive from the Delhi High Court.

DELAY PERCENTAGE

IndiGo's on-time performance (OTP), meanwhile, plunged to 19.7%. This means that four out of five IndiGo flights were delayed. By comparison, 65% of IndiGo's 2,200 flights were delayed on Tuesday and around 50% of its flights were delayed on Monday. In contrast, the airline's punctuality was at 84.1% in October and 67.7% in November.

SKYROCKETING PRICES

Fares on certain routes across India have witnessed a massive jump as IndiGo continues to struggle. A seat from Delhi to Kolkata cost as much as Rs 59,500. A non-stop SpiceJet flight from Kolkata to Delhi cost Rs 36,500. A non-stop evening SpiceJet flight going from Bengaluru to Mumbai cost Rs 31,100. An Air India flight on the same route cost Rs 32,000. These are increases of between four and ten times compared to the usual price.

'Insecure' Centre preventing meet with Oppn, says Rahul

NEW DELHI

ONCE UPON A RAHUL!

Meanwhile, sources in the Ministry of External Affairs said it facilitates meetings for visiting dignitaries with government officials and government bodies and any engagement outside government channels, including meetings with political leaders, is arranged at the discretion of the visiting dignitary.

MEETINGS GALORE

They also conveyed that Gandhi has met several visiting foreign dignitaries since becoming Leader of Opposition on June 9, 2024.

- These included former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on June 10, 2024;
- Vietnam PM Pham Minh Ching on August 1, 2024; Malaysia PM Anwar Ibrahim on August 21, 2024;
- New Zealand PM Christopher Luxon on March 8, 2025
- Mauritius PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam on September 16, 2025.

Narendra Modi government keep the Opposition leaders from meeting the visiting dignitaries. "We too represent India. It is not just the government which does it. The government doesn't want the Opposition to meet people coming from outside. Modi ji and the Foreign Ministry don't follow this norm. It is their insecurity," he asserted.

Gandhi alleged that it was "insecurity" which made the

detailed account of how meetings with visiting dignitaries are fixed. Stating that "these visits are time-constrained", he said, "there is no protocol that requires the Leader of the Opposition to meet them."

Shringla further said for such guests, who meet the PM and the President, there is no necessity to meet any other persons and such meetings "depend on time and inclination".

Kids dying, old people finding it difficult: Sonia on Delhi air

NEW DELHI



Congress MPs Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi at a protest over air pollution in New Delhi on Thursday

from the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

Sonia Gandhi, along with Kharbha and Priyanka and several other MPs wore anti-pollution masks, to convey the gravity of the situation. As the protest was taking place, the overall Air Quality Index in the area was in the "poor" category.

Gandhi, who has a history of pulmonary disorders, urged the government to take immediate actions to contain the problem which affects crores of people living in or travelling to the region. "It is the government's responsibility to do something, as children are dying. The elderly couple from Habra had to sell their land to pay off his debts. Recently, while mapping, BLO of Habra Tapan Dhar, found that Tarun has already been mapped in West Midnapore. Dhar contacted the BLO there and through them, Tarun got in touch with his parents.

-Aritra Singh

Old people like me are also finding it difficult," she said.

SIR unites son, aged parents

Kolkata: Amid reports of deaths allegedly due to undue pressure, there was a silver lining on Thursday when during the process of SIR, a son got reunited with his parents in West Bengal after 26 years!

Tarun Dutta got united with his dad Prashanta and mother Shantona. Tarun had left home without informing anyone after incurring huge losses in his paddy business.

The elderly couple from Habra had to sell their land to pay off his debts. Recently, while mapping, BLO of Habra Tapan Dhar, found that Tarun has already been mapped in West Midnapore. Dhar contacted the BLO there and through them, Tarun got in touch with his parents.

-Aritra Singh

After intel report, Assam govt bans jihadi literature

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has issued a wide-ranging order banning the publication, circulation, possession and digital sharing of extremist and jihadi literature linked to outlawed groups such as Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), Ansar-Al-Islam/pro-AQIS and other similar organisations. The move follows recommendations from the Assistant Inspector General of Police (Law & Order) and supporting observations from the Judicial Department.

With immediate effect, the state has prohibited any form of engagement with these materials, including publishing, printing, selling, exhibiting, possessing or storing them, whether in physical or digital form.

People shifted after gas leak in Dhanbad

Dhanbad: Jharkhand's Dhanbad district administration on Thursday ordered a probe into the incident of a "poisonous gas leak" from underground mines, which also prompted the Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCL) to shift around 1,000 residents to safer locations, officials said. A woman allegedly died, while 12 people fell sick after "carbon monoxide" leaked from such mines in different places of Kenduaidh Basti on Wednesday, they said.

The exact cause of the woman's death, however, is yet to be ascertained, and would only be confirmed after the postmortem. -PTI

Superintendent of Police Vandita Rana said all concerned departments were

Panic at Ajmer Dargah due to bomb 'threat'

JAIPUR

The Ajmer Dargah and Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant collectorate received a bomb threat on Thursday afternoon, raising security concerns ahead of the 814th Urs of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. An email sent to the Collector's office claimed, "Four RDX IEDs have been planted at the Ajmer Collector's office and the Garib Nawaz Dargah. They will explode as soon as Putin arrives."

Additional Superintendent of Police Deepak Sharma said every corner of both locations was thoroughly checked. Authorities have termed the threat serious due to the upcoming Urs, when thousands of pilgrims from India, Pakistan, and abroad are expected.

alerted immediately. The Collectorate and Dargah premises were evacuated, and extensive searches were conducted using metal detectors and dog squads. Entry to the Dargah was closed around 1:00 pm and reopened after about two and a half hours when nothing suspicious was found.

He was taken to AIIMS by his daughter, BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj, and other family members, following a chest pain complaint. However, doctors at the hospital declared him dead, the Delhi BJP said in a statement.

"His daughter Bansuri Swaraj lit the pyre before sunset and completed the last rites, following Sanatan traditions," the statement said.

Mizoram ex-Guv Swaraj Kaushal passes away

New Delhi: Former Mizoram governor and senior advocate Swaraj Kaushal, the husband of late BJP veteran Sushma Swaraj, passed away on Thursday afternoon. He was 73.

the BJP to stoke communal tensions.

Senior minister Firhad Hakim declared the suspension in Kolkata saying what it termed "communal politics" amidst a flashpoint over his plan to lay the foundation of a Babri Masjid-style mosque in West Bengal's Murshidabad on December 6, the Delhi demolition anniversary.

A defiant Kabir retaliated almost instantly, announcing he would resign as MLA, launch his own party later this month, and press ahead with the programme even if it meant getting "arrested or killed".

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee launched a sharp attack on Kabir without naming him, calling him a "Mirza-gaddar (traitor)", who has taken money from

BRACING FOR WINTER

AYODHYA

temperatures. Warm water is now used for his morning bath and soft velvet and woolen clothes have become his regular winter attire. Priests monitor the sanctum closely, switching on blowers when the cold intensifies.

Santosh Tiwari, who has served Ram Lalla for 34 years, said the care offered to the deity mirrors that of a real child. "We make sure he stays warm at all times. His bhog also changes with the season. Jaggery, sesame and desi ghee halwa help keep the body

warm in winter," he explained. With the cold wave setting in, Ram Lalla's schedule has been adjusted.

He now wakes up half an hour later than in summer. After his bath and adornment, devotees can have darshan from 7 am. Darshan continues

until 11:30 am before noon bhog. By night, he is wrapped in a silk quilt after the final aarti. Winter protocols are also visible across Ayodhya's major temples including Kanak Bhawan, Ram Vallabh Kunj and Dashrath Mahal where priests have introduced quilts, shawls and heaters to protect the deities.

In Mathura, Krishna temples have taken similar steps. At Radha Vallabh Lal Mandir, the child form of Krishna has been given

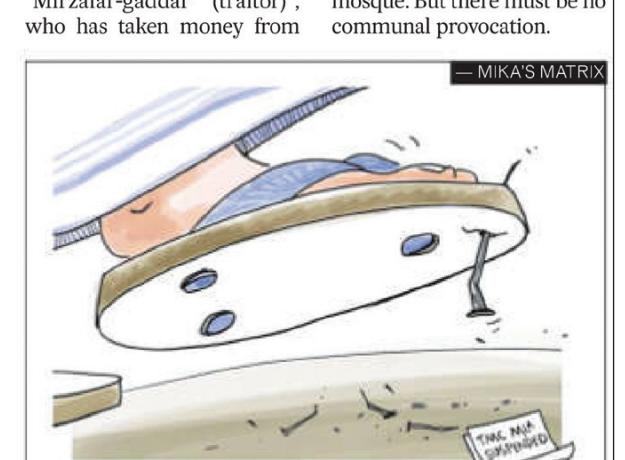
woolen gloves for his hands and warm socks for his feet. An angeethi has been placed in the sanctum to ensure constant warmth. His meals now include saffron and dry-fruits to generate internal heat.

Flower garlands have been temporarily replaced with cloth garlands to avoid the chill of fresh blooms, priest Mohit Maral Goswami said.

At the famous Banke Bihari Temple, priests have also altered the daily menu to suit the season. Offerings like jaggery sweets, sesame preparations and warm rice dishes are served. The darshan schedule has been shifted later in the morning, and the idol is covered with a velvet quilt every night. A heater will be added if the cold becomes harsher, temple staff confirmed.

The updated winter care routines reflect a simple belief across these temple towns: when gods are worshipped in their child forms, no effort can be spared to ensure they stay healthy and warm through the winter.

MIKA'S MATRIX



Married woman dies under suspicious circumstances, parents suspect murder

Family of former block chief flees, leaving daughter-in-law's body behind; married a month ago



Akhand Bharat Sandesh



Prayagraj. The daughter-in-law of a former Apna Dal block chief died under suspicious circumstances on Thursday morning. Her husband is the district vice president of Apna Dal in Fatehpur. The couple had married a month earlier. When her parents arrived, they found the woman's body abandoned in an ambulance. It is alleged that her in-laws had fled, abandoning the body. The ambulance driver stated that the girl's in-laws had sent the

body. The deceased's father said that the in-laws had been misleading them since morning and were not providing accurate information. Four hours later, they called and said the body was in front of the Swarup Rani police station. The police have conducted a post-mortem to determine the cause of death. Married on November 2Dharmendra Singh, a farmer from Sandwa Viday village in Kaushambi, is a resident of the village. He married his daughter, Rashmi Singh (23), with great pomp and

show on November 2nd last month to Aditya Pratap Singh. Aditya lives in Sai Dham Apartments, Rajrooppur, Prayagraj. He originally hails from Khaga, Fatehpur. Mahendra Pratap Singh was elected Vijaypur Block Chief during the BSP regime. He resigned from his post after the SP government came to power in 2012. Mahendra Pratap Singh owns the Lakshmi Brick Fields brick kiln and the Maa Sheetala Petrol Tank in Fatehpur. Rashmi committed suicide, informed over the phone. Rashmi died under suspicious circumstances on Thursday morning. Her in-laws informed her father, Dharmendra, over the phone that she had committed suicide and were being taken to SRN Hospital. Rashmi's family arrived at the hospital shortly afterward. Family members suspect murder. Family members suspect murder in Rashmi's death, saying her in-laws misled them. After the death, our in-laws didn't give us any accurate information. They kept us on the run from morning till afternoon.

Senior officials from the district administration and railway administration conducted a joint inspection in view of preparations for the Magh Mela

Akhand Bharat Sandesh



Commissioner Ajay Pal Sharma, Additional Divisional Railway Manager (General) Deepak Kumar, and other officials from various departments were present during the inspection. During the inspection, the overall

arrangements and detailed action plan for the smooth movement of devotees during the fair period were discussed. Special attention was paid to strengthening "guideline signage" at prominent locations to strengthen crowd management, security arrangements, and guidance on platforms and circulating areas. In addition, detailed discussions were held on adequate publicity, information dissemination, and installation of signage at appropriate locations to properly guide pilgrims traveling to Prayagraj and Prayagraj Rambagh stations during the Magh Mela.

Officials inspected various facilities, including passenger shelters, control towers, entry and exit points, at Prayagraj Junction, Prayagraj Rambagh, and Jhansi stations, assessing their functioning and providing necessary guidelines to make them more effective and smooth. The Railway Administration and Civil Administration, through close coordination, are fully committed to providing passengers with a safe, smooth, and convenient travel experience during the Magh Mela period. Additional Metro Officer Dayanand Prasad, DCP Traffic Neeraj Pandey, Additional District Magistrate City Satyam Mishra, along with officials from the district administration, police administration, and railways were present on the occasion.

Professor Dr. Shiv Shankar Singh's term as Head of the Law Department at CMP Degree College has been extended

Akhand Bharat Sandesh



honored with the "Rajbhasha Gaurav Award 2024" by the Department of Official Language, Government of India, recognizing his academic and linguistic contributions at the national level. On this occasion, Professor Singh stated that during this tenure, they plan to organize national and international seminars, national moot court competitions, legal awareness programs, campus selections, and more. A village will be adopted, and the Law Department will endeavor to publish a journal. On this occasion, faculty members from the Law Department, including Professor Ajay Pratap Singh, Dr. Ramesh Kumar Singh, Dr. Ajay

Kumar, Dr. Padma Aparajita Parija, Dr. Nandini Raizada, Dr. Sonal Khare, Mrs. Anjalika, Dr. Tushar Srivastava, Dr. Ramesh Kumar Bharti, Dr. Gaurav Patel, Dr. Rakesh Kumar Gautam, Dr. Ashok Kumar, Dr. R.D. Kishore, Dr. Purnendu Mishra, Dr. Ritu Raghuvanshi, and Dr. Satyawan Nayak, congratulated Professor

Singh on his re-appointment and wished him a historic tenure. Final-year BA LL.B. (Hons.) students Ayush Vishwakarma, Ujjwal Singh, Parth Mishra, Chandrashekhar Yadav, Abhishek Vishwakarma, and Abhinav Pandey, along with other students from the Law Department, were present.

Kaushambi. Two laborers from Mujahidpur village in the Sandipan Ghat police station area were walking on the road to work at 4:00 am on Thursday. As soon as the laborers reached Chandwari turn, a speeding tractor driver crushed them, resulting in a painful death. The police arrived on the scene after receiving the information and took the bodies of both laborers into custody and sent them for post-mortem. As soon as the information was received, the family members reached the spot

The first team of Kashi Tamil Sangam members were given a grand welcome upon their arrival in Prayagraj

The Kashi Tamil Sangam team members were overwhelmed by the spectacular and picturesque views of the Sangam area

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. Upon the arrival of the first team of the Kashi Tamil Sangam program in Prayagraj on Thursday, Mayor Umesh Chandra Ganesh Kesarwani and City Magistrate Vinod Kumar Singh welcomed the team members with a tilak (a sacred thread) and garlands. Approximately 200 members of the first team arrived in Prayagraj. Students from Jagat Taran Girls Inter College performed welcome songs. Shivank Dwivedi and his team members mesmerized the audience with their bhajans. Members of the Kashi Tamil Sangam were presented with Ganga water. The Mayor honored the team leader with a memento and a shawl. On this occasion, the Regional Archives and the State Manuscript Library also organized an exhibition of records and manuscripts, with displays of ancient texts on paper and palm leaves being a particular attraction. On this occasion, Mayor Umesh Chandra Ganesh Kesarwani, while congratulating the Prime Minister, said that it is a result of his vision that our brothers and sisters from South India are coming to North India and experiencing India's shared culture, traditions, and beliefs. Today, the confluence of North and South is being witnessed on this sacred Sangam bank. He said that your arrival on this sacred land is certainly a sign of India's bright future. Just as the Prime Minister has worked to bring about social change through his policies to create a united and superior India, he has also worked to identify ways to create a harmonious, equal, loving, and patriotic society. This Kashi-Tamil Sangam Yatra is the



result of this. He stated that the Kashi Tamil Sangam Yatra will not only connect the North and South, but also eradicate caste, language, and regionalism within the country. He welcomed and congratulated all those participating in the Yatra.

The Kashi Tamil Sangam team members were taken from the VIP Ghat to the Sangam in decorated boats, where they were allowed to observe and bathe at the confluence of Mother Ganga, Yamuna, and the invisible Saraswati, and were informed about the significance of the holy city of Prayagraj. The members

were mesmerized by the stunning and captivating views of the Sangam area. They also observed the sand art created at the VIP Ghat in the Sangam area. Following the Sangam program, the Kashi Tamil Sangam team members visited and worshipped the reclining Hanuman. The team then visited the Shankar Viman Mandapam Temple and the Swami Narayan Temple. The program was conducted by Dr. Prabhakar Tripathi, Manuscript Officer Ghulam Sarwar, along with other relevant officials, and a large number of people were present.

Lawyer shot in property dispute, police on duty investigating

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A lawyer was shot on Thursday night. Advocate Vijay Pandey was shot in the Teliyarganj area of the city's Shivkuti police station area. Vijay fell bleeding after being shot in the thigh, and the attackers fled. The lawyer has been admitted to Swarup Rani Nehru Hospital. The attack on the lawyer was related to a property dispute. The



accused who fired at the lawyer is his relative. Police have detained several people. Police are examining

Civil Defence Foundation Day will be celebrated on December 6th

Prayagraj. The Civil Defence Foundation Day is being celebrated with great enthusiasm on December 6th, 2025, at the Civil Defence Control Center, Katra, Prayagraj. On this occasion, in the presence of the District Magistrate/Controller of Civil Defence, at 10:30 a.m., flag hoisting, oath taking, message reading, and address will be held. The route of the public awareness rally, which will begin after the flag hoisting ceremony, will pass in front of the Collectorate, enter Katra Bazaar via Laxmi Talkies Square, and return to the rally starting point via Netram Square.

Two laborers walking to work were crushed by a tractor, killing both laborers

The uncontrolled tractor overturned after crushing the laborers

Akhand Bharat Sandesh



Kaushambi. Two laborers from Mujahidpur village in the Sandipan Ghat police station area were walking on the road to work at 4:00 am on Thursday. As soon as the laborers reached Chandwari turn, a speeding tractor driver crushed them, resulting in a painful death. The police arrived on the scene after receiving the information and took the bodies of both laborers into custody and sent them for post-mortem. As soon as the information was received, the family members reached the spot

crying. According to the information, Ajay Kumar Saroj, 20 years old, son of Ramesh Saroj, and Lavkush, 19 years old, son of Devnarayan, residents of

Mujahidpur in the Sandipan Ghat police station area, were walking from their home to Harraipur to work at 4:00 am on Thursday. As soon as the two laborers reached

Chandwari turn, a speeding uncontrolled tractor driver crushed them, resulting in a painful death at the spot. After the accident, the tractor went out of control and overturned. Seeing the accident, people nearby reached the spot and the police station was informed about the incident. The police reached the spot and recovered the bodies of the two deceased laborers. The body has been taken into custody and sent for post-mortem. After the incident, there is chaos in both the families and the crying family members have reached the spot.

A biker returning from the hospital with medication died in a road accident

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Kaushambi. On Wednesday evening, near the ARTO office in the Manjharpur Kotwali area, a young man riding a bike was hit by a speeding vehicle, causing him to fall on the road along with his bike and was seriously injured. Upon receiving the information, people

from the vicinity rushed to the spot and informed the Kotwali police and ambulance about the incident. The Kotwali police reached the spot and admitted the injured to the district hospital for treatment. As his condition became serious, the doctors referred him to Prayagraj. The young man died on the way to Prayagraj. The police, upon receiving

the information, took the body into custody and sent it for post-mortem. According to the information, Nazim, 25 years old, son of Qasim, a resident of Bijlipur village, had gone to Tejmati Hospital on Wednesday evening at 6:00 pm on his bike to get medicine. After taking the medicine, he was returning to his home in Bijlipur village on

his bike. As soon as he reached the ARTO office, a speeding vehicle hit Nazim's bike, leaving him injured. He was admitted to the district hospital for treatment, but seeing his serious condition, the doctors referred him to Prayagraj. While being taken to Prayagraj, Nazim died a painful death on the way. There is chaos in the family.

Editorial

Fundamental hypocrisy in global climate politics

In the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, leaders from industrialised nations delivered impassioned speeches about the urgency of addressing climate change. Yet, behind closed doors, they continued to approve new fossil fuel projects and delay meaningful climate finance commitments. This dichotomy highlights a fundamental hypocrisy in global climate politics: The West often preaches sustainability but falls short in practice, prioritising economic interests over environmental imperatives. As the countdown to the COP29 climate summit in Azerbaijan this continues, the Bonn Climate Change Conference in Germany concluded in a stalemate last week. Nations disagreed on the size and scope of loss and damage financing, representing a significant setback in global climate negotiations. The Bonn talks did not achieve meaningful progress on climate financing, underscoring a persistent issue: industrialised nations, which bear the greatest responsibility for the current climate crisis, resisted calls from Global South countries to compensate those who suffer the most but have contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions. Over a decade ago, developed nations pledged to mobilise \$100 billion annually by 2020 to support climate action in developing countries. This commitment, formalised under the Copenhagen Accord in 2009 and reiterated in the Paris Agreement, has not been met. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that climate finance reached only \$79.6 billion in 2019. It was only in 2022 that developed countries provided and mobilised \$115.9 billion in climate finance for developing countries. By the end of COP29, all parties must agree on a "new collective quantified goal" (NCQG) to guide the provision of climate finance, intended to replace the \$100 billion target after 2025. Progress on negotiating the NCQG has been slow. Disagreements persist on almost every aspect of the new target, including the amount of money to be provided, the sources of these funds, the recipients, and the specific forms of financial assistance. Current climate finance is grossly inadequate for the scale of action required. The \$100 billion target for climate finance is laughably insufficient. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Adaptation Gap Report 2021 estimates that the costs of adapting to climate change in developing countries could reach \$140-300 billion per year by 2030, escalating to \$280-500 billion per year by 2050. Furthermore, the Climate Policy Initiative (CPI) Global Landscape of Climate Finance 2021 report highlights that global climate finance flows reached a record \$632 billion in 2019/2020. Despite this record, the funding falls significantly short of the \$4.13 trillion annual investment required by 2030 to meet the Paris Agreement targets, as estimated by the International Energy Agency (IEA) in its Net Zero by 2050 report. Now even these estimates are seen as low. As highlighted by the Independent High-Level

Expert Group on Climate Finance in their 2022 report, emerging markets and developing countries (excluding China) are staring at a financial chasm. These nations must mobilise approximately \$1 trillion annually by 2025, amounting to 4.1 per cent of their GDP—double the 2.2 per cent spent in 2019. Fast forward to 2030, and the figure balloons to a staggering \$2.4 trillion per year, or 6.5 per cent of GDP. This glaring disparity underscores the urgent need to recalibrate climate finance targets. if we are to meet the colossal demands of climate adaptation.

thy engagement. During the 2018-19 period, the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was found engaging China proactively, and between the period of March 2018 and January 2019, he visited China four times. Also, around the same period, he met US President Donald Trump. Actually, Trump became the first sitting US president to visit North Korea in 2019. Unfortunately, no efforts to engage North Korea have proved successful so far, and the only major countries that have cordial relations with North Korea remain its neighbours, namely Russia

and China. The recent increased bonhomie between Russia and North Korea could be said to have started with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visiting Russia in September. Today, both of these states need each other much more than in the past. Moscow has some dependence on Pyongyang for supplies of arms and ammunition for fighting the war in Ukraine. While North Korea has a dependence on food and energy assistance, interestingly, it is also depending on Russia for assistance in its space surveillance programme.

When Kim Jong Un visited Russia in September, he was assured by Putin of his assistance in the space domain. During the year, North Korea made three attempts to launch a spy satellite in space. The attempts during May and August had failed, while the attempt during was a success, with North Korea putting its first spy satellite, the Malligong-1, on the back of its own Chollima-1 launch vehicle in space. Since during Kim Jong Un's September visit to Russia, there was a promise made for assistance.

Threat from ballistic hypersonic missiles

Aman Sharma

Space is emerging as the forerunner in the era of technology-driven warfare. A country like India, with significant geopolitical heft and the potential to emerge as a power of relevance, would sooner or later face a threat from space—a threat that cannot be defended by conventional means. It is therefore important to analyse if India needs to build a space force that is capable of fighting, not so distant, space wars. The Gulf War I is technically considered to be the first space war where the US relied on space satellite intelligence for aerial and ground operations inside Kuwait and Iraq. The satellite navigation systems played a significant role in the navigation of the US Air Force fighter jets. Currently, space prowess is clearly ruling the Russian-Ukraine and Hamas battlescapes. Taiwan is incrementally coming under the space lens of competing powers. The space satellites started playing their crucial role even before the start of the war. India raised the Defence Space Agency in 2019 as a scaled-down version of the space command. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) also raised DSP to provide technical and Research and Development (R&D) support. In the last



five years, outer space has emerged as a source of concern, primarily the threat from long-range ballistic and hypersonic missiles. Many Direct Ascent Anti-Satellites (ASAT) experimental missile strikes have been tested, including by India (mission Shakti). Counter-missions are being developed for both offensive and defensive forms of space warfare. Even though the Outer Space Treaty debars nations from weaponising space, the writing on the wall makes it clear that a threat from space is lurking. All the major powers, such as the US, Russia, China, India, France, the European Union, and Japan, are building space military organisations. The US Space Force organises, trains, and equips personnel in order to protect US and allied interests in space and to provide space capabilities to the joint forces. The US Space Force, headquartered

at the Pentagon, employs 8,600 military personnel and 77 spacecraft. The Russian space forces are mandated to inform the higher political leaders and military commanders of missile attacks as soon as possible, ballistic missile defence, and the creation, deployment, maintenance, and control of in-orbit space vehicles, like the Persona reconnaissance satellite. These forces operate the GLONASS global positioning system. The Russian Space Forces include the third Missile-Space Defence Army and a Division for Warning of Missile Attacks. The Chinese People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force (PLA-SSF) existed from 2015 to 2024 with the army's ability to fight "informatised conflicts". In April of this year, the Strategic Support Force was dissolved and split into three independent arms: the PLA Aerospace Force,

the PLA Cyberspace Force, and the PLA Information Support Force. Like China, Russia views space as a warfighting domain, and they base their warfighting doctrine around the idea that achieving space supremacy is a precondition for winning a conflict. Russia has fielded a suite of non-kinetic options to create reversible effects on satellite systems in space, including ground-based systems to counter GPS navigation signals, tactical communications, satellite communications, and radars. On the non-kinetic side of this threat continuum, China has operational ground-based jamming systems that are capable of disrupting satellite communications, GPS navigation signals, synthetic aperture radars, missile warning systems, and other satellite systems. Jamming can prevent users from using satellite communication networks, degrade or prevent transmissions of vital missile warning data from space-based sensors to war fighters, and disrupt uplinks and downlinks needed to command and control spacecraft. While analysing the space wars, it is important to study the space-based wars of the past, when the intensity was nominal but gains were asymmetrical. During the two Gulf Wars, the Coalition

bombers and fighters dropped more than 5,000 GPS-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions during the day and night, in all weather, with shattering effectiveness. Satellites also made it possible to direct Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) attacks such as Predator and Global Hawk. US imaging satellites gave commanders an unprecedented view of targets and battlespace. At least seven different types of military satellite systems were used during the Gulf War I. GPS receivers were affixed to tanks, trucks, and aircraft across the theatre. Tank commanders wanted to know the moisture content of the soil in some areas. Tomahawk precision attacks have multiple space based use cases, such as intelligence preparation, target location, command and control, weather assessment, launch, route navigation, and damage assessment.

Space and cyber domains are the major components of 'stand-off' wars, which is the new way of war fighting.

Elements contributing to stand-off conflicts are also moving into the hands of private space operators. While 'space force' would have a mandate to provide space support to conventional forces, it would largely engage.

Women in Indian Politics: A story that has changed little over the years

Sameer

India's progress vis-à-vis women's representation in leadership positions has remained rather slow and rarely linear, often pushing them to the margins of politics. Image:

UN Women/Ruhani Kaur. India recently concluded its 2024 general elections, which took place in seven phases—from April 19 to June 1—to elect all 543 members of the Lok Sabha (lower house). While the results have taken many by surprise, what has been even more astonishing is the fact that for a country that has rigorously been trying to establish a more progressive front on women's rights and gender equality over the past few years, the

new Indian parliament has failed to showcase a notable uptick in the representation of women after the latest elections. Making just 13.63 per cent of the elected strength, the 18th Lok Sabha will comprise only 74 women compared to 469 men. This share is not only abysmally skewed but also lower than the 14.4 per cent share of female representation during the 2019 election, where 78 women were elected as MPs. The irony here is that just last year, India—during its G20 presidency—brought about a paradigm shift in gender-based policy-making by challenging the status quo and with the innovative idea of women-led development in order to ensure women's

inclusion and representation at all levels of decision-making. Even at the domestic level, India—after many deliberations—finally passed the historic Women's Reservation Bill in , which seeks to reserve one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies for women. While it is true that the bill has not yet come into effect, the journey from 13.63 per cent to 33 per cent (for the next elections) still seems rather long, especially given that despite being the central agents of the 2024 elections and forming an important core of party manifestos as well as campaign speeches, only a handful of them were able to achieve the final victory.

India took centre stage during the summit

Abhimanyu

India took centre stage during the summit, and the family photograph taken post-summit is a testament to it. Image: Narendra Modi/X

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

attended the 50th G7

summit on June 14, 2024,

in the city of Fasano in Apulia, Italy.

The region of Apulia, throughout its history, has been inhabited by Greeks,

Romans, Byzantines, Normans, and Spanish.

The region has also served as a bridge between the West and the East,

thanks to its geography. Apulia's rich history as a cultural crossroads under-

scores the significance of this year's G7 summit, which brings together diverse global leaders.

In this summit, along with the G7 countries, the other invitees were India,

the African Union, Brazil, the UAE,

Argentina, and others, making the loca-

tion and the purpose of the summit signif-

icant. India took centre stage during the

summit, and the family photograph taken post-summit is a testa-

ment to it.

Two years ago, India was invited

to the 48th G7 summit in 2022,

after the Russian

invasion of Ukraine.

The primary narrative at that time was

to punish India for

keeping the ties intact with Moscow.

The Western 'experts', who are habituated to see things in binary, refused to believe that India can have ties with the G7 without harming relations with Russia.

As per the Financial Times, the reason behind the invitation to India at the summit was "to woo New Delhi away from its longstanding alliance with Russia". Two years down the line, India's relations are not majorly harmed, neither with Russia nor with the G7 countries! Freshly re-elected, PM Modi's attendance at the G7 summit signals a robust continuation of his administration's foreign policy initiatives, particularly his advocacy for the Global South. In , New Delhi organised the two Voice of Global South Summits, first in January and next in November, to understand the concerns of the developing countries. The words and advocacy of Modi in Apulia should be taken as a continuation of this. Modi exploited the opportunities provided to put forward these concerns.

"India has considered it its responsibility to place the priorities and concerns of the countries of the Global South on the world stage," he said. At the same time, while putting forward his vision of a

coupled with PM Modi's diplomacy, marks a pivotal moment in its global engagement.

By advocating for the Global South in the G7, India continued efforts to emerge as a leader of developing nations in a China-fearing world.

Promise made for assistance in the space sector

Suman

Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to North Korea (18-19 June) has attracted global attention. Today, both of these states are keen to cooperate to overcome the sanctions put on them by the US. This is Putin's only second-ever visit to Pyongyang, with the first taking place way back in 2000. Obviously, a lot has changed during the last two decades or so. North Korea's other good friend, China, has welcomed this visit. Russia has always been important to North Korea. However, during the last few years, not much has happened towards any notewor-

thy engagement. During the 2018-19 period, the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was found engaging China proactively, and between the period of March 2018 and January 2019, he visited China four times. Also, around the same period, he met US President Donald Trump. Actually, Trump became the first sitting US president to visit North Korea in 2019. Unfortunately, no efforts to engage North Korea have proved successful so far, and the only major countries that have cordial relations with North Korea remain its neighbours, namely Russia

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Briefs

MAU
Ghosi Police
Station
Ranked First

Ghosi Police Station has secured the top rank in the district-level evaluation for maintaining law and order and controlling crime. SP Mau Ilamaran praised its working style, prompt disposal, and public relations. The station was declared the district's best. Four police personnel, including the Station In-Charge, were honored with commendation certificates and medals for their exemplary performance.

JAUNPUR
Fake Birth
Certificate
Gang Busted

Jalalpur police busted an inter-state gang involved in making fake birth and death certificates, arresting five members. The racket was exposed when a complainant's submitted certificate was found fraudulent at the CMO office. The gang allegedly prepared fake documents for hefty sums. Police seized nine mobile phones and four laptops from the accused during raids.

BALLIA
Govt. Paddy
Procurement
Proceeds
Smoothly

Paddy procurement at government centers in Gadwar and Hanumanganj blocks is proceeding smoothly. Farmers report a transparent, system-based process. Over 1,229 quintals have been purchased from 29 farmers so far. While 225-230 farmers are registered, some face delays due to crop verification issues in consolidated villages. Elderly farmers are being offered iris scans as an alternative to fingerprints.

CHANDAULI
MGNREGA
Scandal
Exposed in
Mubarakpur

Large-scale irregularities have been exposed in MGNREGA works in Mubarakpur village. Villagers allege that records show hundreds of workers, but virtually no work is visible on the ground. Old photos have been uploaded to show fake progress. They have accused block and district-level corruption and demanded a high-level probe. The BDO has stated an investigation is underway.

LALITPUR
Teachers
Submit
Memorandum
on Pay Scale

The UP Primary Teachers Association submitted a memorandum to the Block Education Officer in Mahroli regarding the implementation of the 'selection pay scale.' The BEO assured teachers that the process to apply the scale is ongoing at the government level and will be resolved soon. The delegation included the block president, general secretary, and a district executive member.

KANPUR
High Alert in
Kanpur Zone
for Dec. 6

A high alert has been issued across the Kanpur Zone for Dec. 6 in view of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Mahaparinirvan Diwas. ADG Alok Singh directed SPs to make security arrangements impenetrable. Orders include extra police force deployment, 24x7 social media monitoring, action against inflammatory posts, identification of illegal Bangladeshi/Rohingya migrants, and stringent handling of cybercrime and women's complaints.

VERIFICATION | Government intensifies action against illegal foreign nationals

Verification drive targets illegal entrants across urban zones

LUCKNOW

The UP government has initiated an extensive verification and action drive targeting illegal foreign nationals identified as Rohingya and Bangladeshi entrants living within urban local bodies. Following directives issued by the CM, municipal bodies have been asked to prepare immediate lists of suspected foreign nationals engaged in local work. These lists are being forwarded to divisional commissioners and police officials for further scrutiny.

Administrative teams across districts have begun identifying vacant government buildings, community centres, police lines, and other secure locations where such individuals can be temporarily housed. Under the standard operating procedure sent by the Union Home Ministry, foreign nationals kept in detention centres will undergo verifica-



Detention centres to be set up across divisions as verification and repatriation procedures move

tion before repatriation through FRRO channels. Those confirmed as Bangladeshi or Rohingya nationals will be sent back through border routes in West Bengal and Assam with the support of the BSF.

Parallel to this statewide process, a field inspection led by the mayor in Lucknow drew attention to clusters of make-

shift settlements linked to suspected illegal entrants. At a site in Gudamba police station limits, officials found nearly 80 huts erected on a plot owned by a local representative. Several connections, including electricity supply, refrigerators, coolers, and household setups, were reported. Most male occupants

Mayor takes action

The mayor conducted an on-site inspection in Lucknow, identifying 80 huts with unauthorised utilities and incomplete documentation. Accompanied by municipal and power department teams, she ordered disconnection of illegal connections, seized handcarts, and issued a 15-day notice for removal, citing state directives on verifying suspected illegal occupants.



Maneka Soni Elected Redmond Councillor



LUCKNOW

Maneka Soni, originally from Lucknow, has become the first Indian-American woman elected to the Redmond City Council in Washington state. She took her oath holding a copy of the Bhagavad Gita while wearing traditional Indian embroidered attire. The oath was administered by Judge Russell, and the event was attended by local officials, community members, and Indian-origin residents.

Redmond, known globally as the home of Microsoft's headquarters and a major technology hub, witnessed a significant moment as Soni defeated an opponent who had held office for eight years. After assuming office, she was also felicitated by the Consul General of India in Seattle, Prakash Gupta.

Lucknow born leader takes oath while holding Gita

Born in Agra and raised in Lucknow, Soni completed her graduation from Lucknow University and spent nearly 20 years in the city before moving ahead in her career. She has over three decades of experience in global corporate roles, including positions at Microsoft, Starbucks, General Motors, and T-Mobile.

Soni has been involved in several social initiatives linked to women's empowerment, domestic violence awareness, youth development, and community welfare. She is the founder and president of AmPowering, a non-profit organization that has supported over 500,000 people.

SIR being used to silence citizens: Akhilesh Yadav

LUCKNOW



SP chief raises questions over "Sanchar Saathi" and privacy violations

In Lucknow, Samajwadi Party President and former Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav levelled serious allegations against the BJP government over the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. He claimed that the ruling government is using the SIR process to hide its failures by enabling large-scale voter deletions.

Yadav appealed to the public to ensure their voter registrations are updated, warning that losing the right to vote could jeopardise reservation and other constitutional protections.

He accused the Election Commission of acting under government pressure, stating that in Bihar, thousands

Mohammad Azam Khan, Gayatri Prajapati, and Ramakant Yadav, he said the opposition and PDA families are being targeted unfairly. He also claimed increasing custodial deaths, fraudulent encounters, and rising crimes against women under the current administration.

Raising privacy concerns, Yadav criticised the "Sanchar Saathi" app, alleging it enables government surveillance and violates citizens' privacy. He said freedom of expression has already weakened and now private conversations are at risk. SP State President Shyam Lal Pal submitted a memorandum to the Chief Electoral Officer, alleging that experienced Yadav and Muslim computer operators involved in SIR duties are being dismissed on caste grounds.

Grand Gate Honours Maulana Athar



LUCKNOW

A grand gate named after the esteemed preacher, Late Maulana Mirza Mohammad Athar, was inaugurated today, December 4, 2025, near the Nakhas Police Post in Lucknow. The ceremony was attended by dignitaries including the Minister of Minority Welfare and Waqf, Danish Azad Ansari, and Shia religious leaders like Maulana Saim Mehdi Naqvi and Maulana Yasoob Abbas.

Rapid rise in wildlife across protected areas across UP



Over ₹161 crore spent on eco tourism facilities across key forest regions since 2022

Wildlife census findings indicate increased animal presence across protected areas. Dudhwa Tiger Reserve now records over 13,000 wild animals, while Katarniaghata hosts over 17,000, and buffer zones report more than 15,000. Rhino numbers have grown from 49 to 66 between 2022 and 2025. Officials attribute the growth to improved monitoring, water availability, and habitat management.

The state has also expanded training for nature guides and encouraged local communities, including the Tharu tribe, to participate in homestay and cultural tourism initiatives. Efforts are underway to promote low-impact tourism, maintain plastic-free forest zones, and integrate wetland and wildlife corridors into long-term eco-tourism planning.

Lucknow Court jails woman for false SC/ST case

LUCKNOW



Court orders recovery of government aid wrongfully obtained by the accused

A special SC/ST court in Lucknow has sentenced a woman, Shaktala Devi, to three years of imprisonment for filing a false case under the SC/ST Act in connection with a land dispute. The case was registered at Wazirganj Police Station, where she had accused Ahmed and several others of illegal possession of her property.

According to the judgment delivered by Special Judge (SC/ST Act) Vivekanand Sharan Tripathi, the allegations made by the woman were found to be fabricated and entirely baseless. The court noted that misusing an important social-protection law for personal vendetta not only causes unnecessary harassment to innocent individuals but also undermines the credibility of the legislation.

The investigation was conducted by ACP Chowk Rajkumar Singh, who confirmed during the inquiry that the woman's claims were false. His report stated that there was no illegal possession and that the narrative presented by the complainant was fictional.

JHANSI

The ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list in Uttar Pradesh has highlighted serious operational stress on Booth Level Officers (BLOs). The discovery of actor Amitabh Bachchan's name—with his father's name listed as Harivansh Rai Bachchan—in Jhansi's voter roll exposed data inconsistencies that many BLOs say stem from unrealistic workload and limited verification time. Residents confirmed that the actor has never lived in the locality, raising questions about how such entries went unnoticed earlier.

In Meerut, the pressure took a dangerous turn when BLO Mohit Chaudhary consumed poison after allegedly facing repeated threats of suspension from his supervisor. His family



Jhansi Records shocking entry of "Amitabh Bachchan" in voter roll

said he had been working nearly 17 hours a day for the past two weeks. His wife reported that she, too, had been helping him finish field duties, describing the last 15 days as

completely "life-altering." Meanwhile, in Badaun, another BLO was seen travelling through villages making public announcements urging residents to complete SIR formalities, fearing that failure to do so might result in names being cut from the voter list. Officials have reportedly demanded 100% completion within strict deadlines, increasing the burden on BLOs who manage hundreds of voters per booth. While some officers manage the pressure with support from colleagues, many admit that round-the-clock field visits, verification checks, and documentation requirements have made the process overwhelming. The ongoing revision exercise has intensified the debate on whether BLOs are being overpushed without adequate manpower or mental-health safeguards.

SC halts demolition of SP leader's marriage hall



Demolition team delivers 40% damage amid accusations of targeted action

are being selectively targeted under the guise of action on alleged illegal construction.

Families living on the upper floors of the buildings reported distress, with several women breaking down as the demolitions began, claiming they were being displaced without proper hearing or arrangements.

Lost parental data cause delays for couple's verification in SIR

VARANASI

The SIR verification process underway in Varanasi has created significant challenges for couples who married through love marriages, especially those whose parental voter details are unavailable or outdated. Several families report that essential information from the 2003 voter lists—such as part number, serial number, and constituency details—cannot be traced, leading to forms being returned by Booth Level Officers (BLOs).

Many BLOs have been relying on old voter lists, cross-dis-

the scheme so far in this financial year, providing employment to 47,76 lakh families.

Officials said the performance reflects an expanded work footprint across districts, with a significant portion of MGNREGA activities linked to rural infrastructure, water conservation, and land development. The department has been instructed to strengthen MGNREGA convergence, particularly with line departments involved in agriculture, water resources, panchayati raj, and rural engineering. Field-level coordination has been described as essential for



improving progress under convergence-based works.

Authorities have also been directed to ensure that eligible labourers who have completed 90 days of work under

Over 47.7 Lakh rural families received employment under ongoing MGNREGA works

MGNREGA are registered with the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Board so they can access welfare schemes administered by the Labour Department. This includes benefits such as insurance, skill development, and social security support.

In a review meeting with

district officials, the Rural Development Commissioner G.S. Priyadarshi emphasised the need to maintain consistent person-day creation. He stated that preventing migration remains a central objective of the scheme, which can be achieved only when sustained employment is available within villages. District administrations were warned that any decline in person-day generation would be taken seriously.

Officials also reviewed labour availability, worksite monitoring, and delays in administrative approvals.

Many BLOs have been relying on old voter lists, cross-dis-

UP tops in rural job generation under MGNREGA

LUCKNOW

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BIG ATTACK AVERTED IN US Unregistered arms and campus attack blueprint seized from Pak origin 25-year-old man

Pak man held before attack

WASHINGTON DC



A 25-year-old Pakistani-origin man has been arrested in the United States for allegedly plotting a mass shooting on a university campus, prompting a major counter-terrorism and weapons investigation by federal agencies.

The suspect, Luqmaan Khan, a University of Delaware student, was taken into custody on November 24 after police intercepted him at a park in Newark, Delaware, during late-night patrols. Officers noticed Khan inside his pickup truck well past authorized hours, raising suspicion. A vehicle search led to the recovery of multiple firearms, ammunition, tactical gear, and what authorities described as a handwritten attack manifesto.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the cache found inside the truck included a .357-calibre Glock Model 31 handgun fitted into a

micro-plastic carbine conversion brace, loaded with 27 rounds. Three additional 27-round magazines were also recovered—one inserted into the conversion slot to enable rifle-style firing—along with a 9mm Glock magazine, an armoured ballistic plate, and a marble composition notebook containing violent plans and operational notes.

Investigators stated that the notebook outlined the use of additional weapons, potential attack methods, and techniques to evade law-enforce-

ment detection. The handwritten notes reportedly referenced an officer from the University of Delaware Police Department, and included a sketched map labelled "UD Police Station," highlighting building entry-exit points, security weaknesses, and movement strategy.

Authorities described the content as "premeditated assault plans" incorporating "warfare tactics" and buildings reconnaissance, suggesting targeted planning rather than random impulse.

Texas troopers find 23 immigrants hidden inside truck sleeper

TEXAS

Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) troopers discovered 23 undocumented immigrants hidden inside the sleeping compartment of a semi-truck during a traffic stop on Interstate 35, authorities reported.

The incident occurred on Friday, November 28, 2025, in La Salle County as part of Operation Lone Star.

A DPS trooper pulled over a white Freightliner truck for driving on an improved

The driver, 24-year-old John David Amaya of Laredo, was arrested and charged with 23 counts of smuggling of persons, a state jail felony.

The individuals, from Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico, were referred to U.S. Border Patrol



for processing.

Under Texas law, passed by Gov. Greg Abbott in 2023, those convicted of human smuggling face a mandatory minimum prison sentence of 10 years.

AUCKLAND

Man swallows Faberge egg

In Auckland, New Zealand, a 32-year-old man stole a \$20,000 diamond-encrusted Fabergé egg from a jewellery store and swallowed it. Police arrested him on the spot and are monitoring him while awaiting natural recovery of the rare, James Bond-inspired locket, which remains unrecovered.

'I'll come to New York', asserts Netanyahu



make sense if Mamdani recognises Israel's "right to exist," adding, "That would be a good opening."

Mamdani, 34, a democratic socialist and one of New York's first Muslim and South Asian leaders elected to office, has criticised Israel's Gaza operations, calling them genocide and promising to direct the New York Police Department to act on the ICC order should

Netanyahu arrive. Israel has strongly rejected genocide or apartheid accusations and maintains its campaign in Gaza is a security response to the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas.

Legal experts say arrest remains unlikely, as mayoral authority cannot override federal or diplomatic protections.

The US government is not party to the ICC, and President Donald Trump's administration—an outspoken ally of Israel—has sanctioned ICC officials and backed Netanyahu's security prerogatives, limiting any local enforcement scope.

Israel, Ukraine strengthen ties in first high-level meet

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar on Wednesday met with Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Tars Kachka in Jerusalem, marking the first visit by a senior Ukrainian official since the 2022 war in Ukraine. Kachka, chairing the Israel-Ukraine Joint Economic Committee, met privately with Sa'ar before extended talks involving their teams. The leaders discussed the war in Ukraine, bilateral relations, and the launch of a joint dialogue on the Iranian threat, agreed during Sa'ar's July visit to Kiev. Sa'ar stressed Israel's awareness of Ukraine's hardships and stressed the importance of Ukraine designating Hamas and Iran's Revolutionary Guards as terrorist organizations.

Germany gets Arrow-3 shield

Israel has delivered its first operational Arrow-3 missile defence system to the German military at a ceremony near Berlin. The handover was led by Israeli Defence Minister Amir Barak, whose parents survived the Nazi Holocaust. The system, part of Israel's largest defence export deal with Germany worth over €3.6 billion, provides Germany independent access to exo-atmospheric ballistic-missile interception above 100 km altitude, with a 2,400 km range. The system, jointly developed by Israel and the US, will be deployed at Holzdorf Air Base, 120 km south of Berlin, with more sites planned nationwide. Moscow has criticised EU militarisation rhetoric linked to the 'Russian threat', denying any intent to attack NATO or Europe.

NAMIBIA

A sperm bank in Namibia is preserving the genetic material of cheetahs, aiming to prevent the extinction of the world's fastest land animal. Founded by American zoologist Laurie Marker in 1990 at the Cheetah Conservation Fund near Otjiwarongo, the facility now holds samples from around 400 cheetahs stored in liquid nitrogen. Cheetah populations have

plummeted by 80% over the last 50 years, with fewer than 7,000 remaining in the wild across 33 fragmented populations. Loss of habitat, human-wildlife conflict, and illegal trade have further isolated these groups, shrinking the species' gene pool and affecting reproduction rates.

Marker collects sperm opportunistically from injured,



captured, or deceased cheetahs, ensuring the bank represents as much genetic diversity as possible. The bank serves as a last-resort backup, similar to efforts to save northern white rhinos, which rely on stored sperm for artificial reproduction.

While natural reproduction remains

Rubio flags radical Islam threat

U.S. Department of State Secretary Marco Rubio has warned of an "imminent global threat" from radical Islam, stating that extremist groups seek to "control more territories and people" beyond regional strongholds. In an interview with Fox News, he described the ideology as "revolutionary," expansionist, and openly targeting the West, particularly the United States and Europe. He cautioned that radical Islamists are "prepared to conduct terrorism, assassinations, and murders" to dominate societies and cultures. Rubio also announced new visa restrictions for individuals and officials who "direct, authorise, fund, or support violence against Christians".

Zia critical, shifts to London

PTI

DHAKA

Former Bangladesh PM Khaleda Zia is in critical condition and preparations are underway to shift her to London for advanced treatment, reports said Thursday.

The 80-year-old leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party was hospitalised on November 23 after a chest infection affected her heart and lungs. Qatar has offered an air ambulance, while landing trials were conducted at Evercare Hospital where she remains in intensive care.

A joint medical board including specialists from China and the UK is reviewing treatment plans.

Thunderbird jet crashes in training



Department responded to the incident at approximately 10:45 AM near Trona, roughly 180 miles (290 km) north of Los Angeles. Fire crews classified the response as an "aircraft emergency" in the surrounding desert region. The Air Force stated that the crash is under investigation, and additional details will be released by the 57th Wing Public Affairs Office. Early local assessments were supported by county fire officials who aided site containment, surveillance, and initial safety operations.

The aircraft, operating over controlled airspace, went down at about 10:45 AM on Wednesday, according to the United States Air Force. A widely circulated social-media video showed the pilot ejecting in time as the jet slowly descended and burst into flames after striking the ground. Authorities confirmed that the ejection occurred at 10:45 AM.

Emergency units from the San Bernardino County Fire

Department responded to the incident at approximately 10:45 AM near Trona, roughly 180 miles (290 km) north of Los Angeles. Fire crews classified the response as an "aircraft emergency" in the surrounding desert region. The Air Force stated that the crash is under investigation, and additional details will be released by the 57th Wing Public Affairs Office. Early local assessments were supported by county fire officials who aided site containment, surveillance, and initial safety operations.

The F-16C was assigned to the Thunderbirds, which are formally based at Nellis Air Force Base. The team, formed in 1953, is known for flying precise aerobatic formations at air shows, training seasonally out of Nellis near Las Vegas to perform tight maneuvers with aircraft flying within inches of each other.

Besson trashes NYT credibility

WASHINGTON DC

US Treasury Secretary Scott Besson has declared that The New York Times is "no longer a credible newspaper," accusing it of publishing biased and "100% fake" reports about President Donald Trump's mental health.

Speaking at a live event hosted by the outlet, he described the newspaper as a "fever swamp" and blamed it for covering up former President Joe Biden's cognitive decline, calling it "one of the greatest scandals of all time."

In an interview-style rebuttal, Besson said he no longer reads the paper and predicted it would lose its "paper of record" status over coming decades. He dismissed a recent article claiming Trump shows signs of fatigue and appears drowsy during meetings, joking that the president phoned him "twice at 2 AM last week instead of three times," implying Trump remains highly active.

Donbass to be fully liberated: says Russian Prez Putin

MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin has reiterated that Donbass will be fully liberated and Ukrainian forces will be pushed out of the territories Moscow now claims as its new regions, either by military means or through negotiations.

His remarks came during an interview with India Today on Thursday, ahead of his upcoming state visit to India. The comments followed extensive diplomatic talks held at the Kremlin on December 2 with US envoy Steve Witkoff, focus-

Putin wants to end war: Trump after US-Russia talks

WASHINGTON

positively, but stressed that he could not reveal details yet. "It does take two to tango," he said, adding, "Their impression was that he (Putin) would like to end the war."

However, senior Kremlin adviser Yuri Ushakov clarified that despite the lengthy discussions, "no compromise" was reached, particularly on territorial disputes involving Ukrainian land. He acknowledged that both sides reviewed possible diplomatic paths toward peace but said that major disagreements remain. "We are no closer to resolving the crisis, and much work remains," Ushakov stated, confirming that the talks continued late into the night with involvement from both sides since the conflict began in February 2022.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office, Trump described the talks as "very good" and said they went

Imran seeks medical access

ISLAMABAD

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has moved the Islamabad High Court seeking urgent permission to undergo medical tests at the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital & Research Centre within three days.

The petition, filed via Ali Amin Gandapur, also requests monthly health check-ups, access to specialised medical teams, and that copies of reports be shared with his family and the court. Khan's party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, claims he is suffering medical complications aggravated during detention, alleging political victimisation.

Belgium rejects EU proposal for channeling frozen Russian assets

BELGIUM

The European Commission was set to open the probe into how the Silicon Valley company integrated its Meta AI system within its popular messaging service earlier this year, the report said.

Brussels is planning a new antitrust investigation into Meta Platforms over the rollout of artificial intelligence features within WhatsApp, the Financial Times reported on Thursday.

Reuters could not immediately verify the report. Meta did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment outside normal business hours.

A Meta spokesperson declined to comment on the upcoming EU probe to the FT.

Foreign Minister Maxime Prevot warned that plan by Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen can bring "dire consequences" for Belgium

a new loan instrument for Kyiv. Belgium, citing legal exposure, economic instability, and liquidity risks to Euro-clear, described the reparations route as the "worst option" for aiding Ukraine without additional EU guarantees.

Prevot criticised the Commission for minimising Belgium's concerns, stressing that the country would shoulder the heaviest burden of any Russian legal retaliation.

Russia not rejoining G7

MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin has confirmed that Russia has no intention of rejoining the Western-led G7 group, describing its global influence as steadily declining. In an interview with India Today ahead of his state visit to India, Putin highlighted that many G7 economies now lag behind emerging nations in purchasing-power parity terms, and the bloc's share in the global economy has been shrinking.

Putin recalled that Russia had stopped attending G7 meetings even before the Ukraine conflict escalated in 2014 and was later excluded following Crimea's secession and vote to join Russia.

He emphasized that while the G7 remains "an important platform" for discussion, Moscow is prioritizing other international forums, particularly BRICS.

offgrid

Sperm bank to safeguard Cheetah

NAMIBIA

A sperm bank in Namibia is preserving the genetic material of cheetahs, aiming to prevent the extinction of the world's fastest land animal. Founded by American zoologist Laurie Marker in 1990 at the Cheetah Conservation Fund near Otjiwarongo, the facility now holds samples from around 400 cheetahs stored in liquid nitrogen. Cheetah populations have



captured, or deceased cheetahs, ensuring the bank represents as much genetic diversity as possible. The bank serves as a last-resort backup, similar to efforts to save northern white rhinos, which rely on stored sperm for artificial reproduction.

While natural reproduction remains

the priority, Marker warns that cheetahs' low fertility and high rates of abnormal sperm may make artificial reproduction necessary in the future.

"Every cheetah is a unique mix of a very small number of genes... without this, we're not going to have much of a chance," she said.

The sperm bank under-

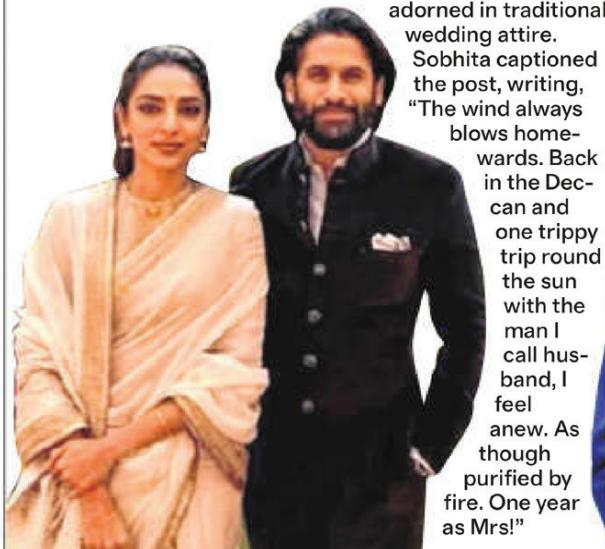
scores the growing role of reproductive science in wildlife conservation worldwide.

SNEAK PEEK

Sobhita and Naga celebrate 1st wedding anniversary

Actress Sobhita Dhulipala seems to be elated and overwhelmed as she completes one year of her wedding with actor Naga Chaitanya. Sobhita shared her wedding-themed reel featuring her and actor Naga Chaitanya. In the post, Sobhita is seen dressed as a South Indian bride, while Naga Chaitanya appears as the groom, both fully adorned in traditional wedding attire.

Sobhita captioned the post, writing, "The wind always blows home-wards. Back in the Decan and one trippy trip round the sun with the man I call husband, I feel anew. As though purified by fire. One year as Mrs!"



Ahan Shetty wraps shooting for Border 2, pens a lengthy note

Ahan Shetty has penned a lengthy note on his social media as he wrapped shooting for his upcoming film *Border 2*, which carries "the weight of real stories, real courage, and the patriotism that lives beyond the screen." Directed by Anurag Singh, the project is a follow-up to the 1997 blockbuster film *Border*, which featured Sunny Deol alongside Suniel Shetty, Jackie Shroff and Akshaye Khanna. The war epic was helmed by J P Dutta. Ahan shared a series of pictures from the set on his Instagram handle. "That's a wrap on *Border 2*. Walking off set today feels heavier than I expected. This film challenged me and gave me moments I'll never forget. I'm leaving with a heart full of gratitude for our armed forces, the incredible artists I've had the chance to share the screen with, and the entire team who have become family," he wrote in the caption.

BTS' Jin donates ₹ 100 mn to underprivileged childrens

Some artists celebrate their birthdays with grand parties or flashy announcements, but BTS' Kim Seokjin, aka Jin, chose a quieter and meaningful way, as always. Just days before turning a year older, the global superstar made a generous donation that once again proved why he's adored not just for his music, but for his heart. On December 1, Jin donated ₹100 million to the Namgwang Social Welfare Association in Busan, extending support to children and youth from vulnerable communities. The organisation confirmed the contribution on Dec 3, sharing that funds would support projects dedicated to the welfare, independence of young people.



Anoushka's sitar damaged

A "devastated and truly disturbed" Anoushka Shankar has said her sitar was damaged on an Air India flight, telling the airline in a social media post that "even an Indian instrument isn't safe with them" and this is the first time in 15 or 17 years that this has happened.

The high-profile musician posted a video on Instagram on Wednesday showing a deep crack through the lower rounded end of the stringed instrument. "First I was just looking at the top of my sitar and felt

like it was really out of tune. And after I turned it and picked it up to play and that's when I realised. This was my first time flying Air India after a long time. You're the country this music belongs to and this is the first time anything like this has happened to my instrument in 15 or 17 years. How have you done this? I have special cases. You guys charge a handling fee and yet you've done this," she said in the video.

She also expressed her dismay that an Indian instrument could be mishandled by an Indian airline.



Actor Amitabh Bachchan applauds Shafali Verma's rise after zero-run debut



Amitabh Bachchan

In an upcoming episode of *Kaun Banega Crorepati*, India's youngest cricket sensation Shafali Verma opens up about her early struggles and the unconventional start to her sporting journey. In conversation with host Amitabh Bachchan, she recalls that her India debut began with a zero-run innings — a moment she remembers vividly.

Reflecting on her childhood, Shafali says, "My family wasn't financially strong, and my father first took my brother for cricket coaching. I would go along and tease him, saying the drills looked easy. One day, my father asked me to try it, and the first two balls I played, I hit well. He was impressed."

With no women's cricket academies near her home, she trained with boys. When her brother fell ill ahead of a tournament, she wore his T-shirt with the name Sahil and played in his place — eventually being named Player of the Tournament. "That was the turning point of my life," she adds.

When Bachchan asked how many runs she scored on debut, Shafali admitted with a shy smile that she started with zero, calling it an embarrassing memory. The host comforted her, saying, "Don't be embarrassed... *jiska zero hota hai, baad mein jaake hero hota hai*."

Shafali's journey, shared on *KBC*, highlights the grit and determination of India's emerging athletes who rise despite limited resources and structural barriers. Her story is a reminder of how perseverance continues to elevate Indian women's cricket on the global stage.



A still from the film

Leonardo has no *Titanic* regrets

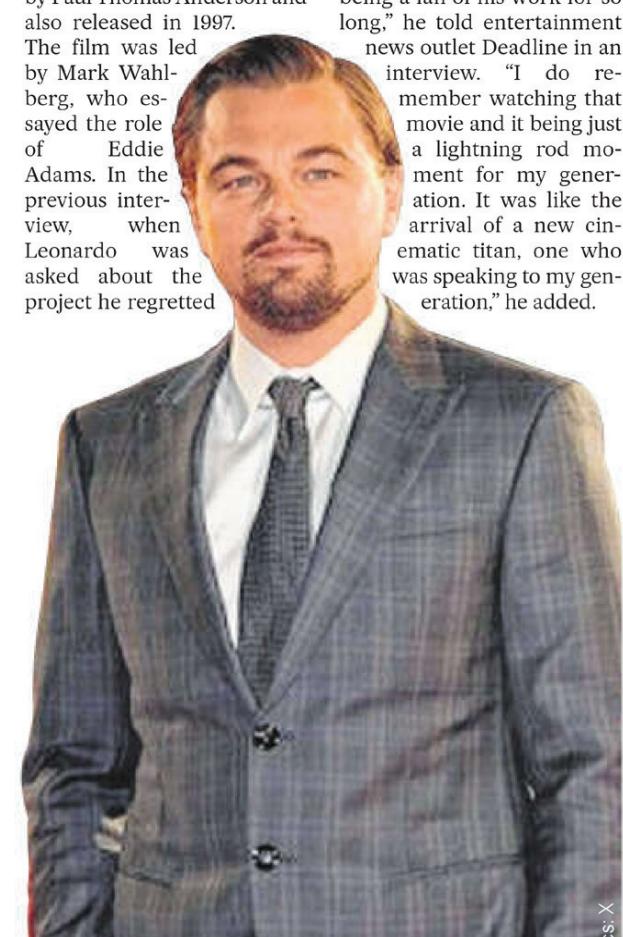
Actor reveals he has no regrets choosing *Titanic* over *Boogie Nights*, praising both films and director Paul Thomas Anderson

Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio could have been a part of the acclaimed film *Boogie Nights* back then, but he chose to feature in *Titanic* and has no regrets over it. The 51-year-old actor featured in the role of Jack Dawson in James Cameron's directorial. Released in 1997, the film went on to win 11 Oscars.

Boogie Nights was directed by Paul Thomas Anderson and also released in 1997. The film was led by Mark Wahlberg, who essayed the role of Eddie Adams. In the previous interview, when Leonardo was asked about the project he regretted

not doing, the actor mentioned the name of *Boogie Nights*.

The *Titanic* has now clarified his answer. "Well, I think that was my answer to a question in the guise of speaking to Paul Thomas Anderson, and, without getting too personal about my own life, the question was, 'What do you regret most?' We were sitting here talking about movies. It came from the standpoint of just being a fan of his work for so long," he told entertainment news outlet Deadline in an interview. "I do remember watching that movie and it being just a lightning rod moment for my generation. It was like the arrival of a new cinematic titan, one who was speaking to my generation," he added.



LEONARDO PRAISES MARK FOR HIS PERFORMANCE IN THE FILM

Now, I don't think anyone could have done a better job than Mark Wahlberg in that movie, so I said it from the perspective of being just a really sincere fan and then watching the way Paul has progressed as a storyteller with these very esoteric, existential films he's made since then that keep you thinking," he said. "No regrets. I mean, fully now in retrospect, I look back at that film and realise the thanks and the appreciation that I have for being a part of it, and to have been able to be in this incredibly fortunate position and not only to have been a part of that movie, but to be able to be the conductor of my own choices since. That has been just the greatest gift," he added.



Aashka, Brent announce pregnancy

Actor Aashka Goradia and her husband Brent Goble are set to welcome second child. Goradia and Goble shared the announcement with a joint Instagram post. The couple said they are expecting the child in May 2026. The post comprised a beach-themed animated video. "Another beach baby is on the way! We are waiting for the next greatest gift to arrive in May 2026. Send us your love and blessings! Aashka, Brent, and Alexander," read the text in it. "On our 8th wedding anniversary!! The best news to share with you all on our special day!! Life with Alexander is going to get more exciting... another BEACH BABY! Send us your love and blessings, as always! #khushibaatnesebadhthai," read the caption of the post.

Scarlett Johansson in talks to star in *The Batman Part II*

Scarlett Johansson is in talks to join *The Batman Part II*, where she is expected to star opposite Robert Pattinson's Caped Crusader, according to Variety. Directed by Matt Reeves, the sequel is expected to go on floors next spring, with Warner Bros. eyeing an October 2027 theatrical release.

Reeves' first film, *The Batman*, opened in March 2022 and went on to collect USD 772 million worldwide. The director and co-writer Mattson Tomlin completed the script for the sequel in June, with production sources indicating that Zoe Kravitz's *Catwoman* is unlikely to return. Reeves, speaking to Variety at the Emmys in September, expressed excitement over the new chapter while reiterating the strict measures taken to maintain secrecy. "It's been a long journey, but I am so incredibly excited. I'm really proud

of the script, and Mattson did," he said. "We put (the script) into a secret pouch that literally has a lock on it with a code... everything is high security."

Details of Johansson's role are being kept under wraps, but her possible entry marks a significant franchise move. The two-time Oscar nominee recently delivered a major box-office success with *Jurassic World Rebirth*, which crossed USD 800 million globally. She is also set to appear in the upcoming reboot of *The Exorcist*, according to Variety. If finalised, the actor will be making a notable shift across the comic-book universe, from her iconic Marvel portrayal of Natasha Romanoff (*Black Widow*) to a key role in DC's expanding slate.



Directed by Matt Reeves, the sequel is expected to go on floors next spring, with Warner Bros. eyeing an October 2027 theatrical release

Pic: X

Briefs

RAIPUR
‘Kohli’s 2nd ton looked inevitable’



Virat Kohli’s second successive ton during the second ODI against South Africa here seemed “inevitable” as the stalwart got off the mark with a six, carrying the confidence of his first-game heroics, feels former India captain Sunil Gavaskar. Kohli struck 102 off 93 balls here on Wednesday. He had scored 135 off 120 deliveries in the first match in Ranchi on November 30. “To be honest, at no point did it look like he wasn’t going to get a hundred. From the first ball he faced, it felt as if he was carrying on from Ranchi,” JioStar expert Gavaskar said. “He got off the mark with a hook for six, a shot he doesn’t often play in the air, which showed the confidence from his previous hundred. After that, unless something unfortunate happened, the hundred always seemed inevitable.”

SHARJAH
Harbhajan slams Ro-Ko critics



Harbhajan Singh finds it a bit unfortunate that the future of legends like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli is being decided by “people who have not achieved much” but he nonetheless expects the duo to carry on till the 2027 ODI World Cup. “It is beyond our understanding. I may not be able to answer because I have been a player myself and what I have seen has happened to me as well. It has happened to many of my teammates but it is very unfortunate. We don’t talk about it or have a discussion about it.” Harbhajan said. “I am so happy when I see a player like Virat Kohli who is still going strong. It is a bit unfortunate that those people are deciding about their future who have not achieved much.”

ABU DHABI
Narine first to take 600 T20 wickets



Known for his variations for the longest time, mystery spinner Sunil Narine etched his name in history after becoming the first bowler to claim 600 wickets in competitive T20 cricket.

ASHES | England finish on 325/9 to take honours on first day

JOE ROOT’S MAIDEN TON DOWN UNDER OUTSHINES STARC’S 6

BRISBANE

Joe Root posted a long-awaited first Ashes century in Australia to give England the honours on Day 1 of the second cricket test despite Mitchell Starc’s six wickets.

Starc removed Ben Duckett and Ollie Pope to have England reeling at 52-2 in the third over Thursday.

That’s when Root went to the crease and set about restoring the England innings, and confidence, following the series-opening eight-wicket loss in Perth.

His unbeaten 135 took England to 325-9 at stumps, with No. 11 Jofra Archer at a career-best 32 in an unbroken 61-run last-wicket stand.

Starc returned to dismiss Harry Brook in the middle session giving him his 415th career wicket, surpassing Pakistan great Wasim Akram (414 from 104 tests) as the most successful left-arm fast bowler in test cricket.

ROOT IN TESTS
160
Matches
13686
Runs
HUNDREDS
40
Total
1
In Australia

Playing his 160th test, Root was 88 not out at the drinks break midway through the night session. He moved into the 90s for the first time in Australia and finally hundred.

It was a jolt England could have done without. Brook was caught at slip slashing outside off stump and falling for 31 from 33 balls to end a 54-run fourth-wicket partnership with Root just as the sun was going down.



Root shared a 117-run stand with Zac Crawley (76) to lift England to 122-3 and partnered Brook in another innings-reviving stand that set England on course for a decent total.

Root’s highest test score in 15 previous Ashes tests in Australia was 89.

Momentum swings

The first two sessions - in the afternoon and the evening - had an element of symmetry with England scoring 98 and Australia taking two wickets in each. So the night session started with England at 196-4. Root and Ben Stokes appeared to be coasting before a brilliant run out by Josh Inglis mixed things up again. Scott Boland bowled Jamie Smith. Starc then removed Will Jacks, Gus Atkinson and Brydon Carse to reduce England to 264-9.

No Nathan Lyon

The most contentious selection of the series so far was Australia’s choice to recall Michael Neser in a five-man pace attack at the expense of spinner Nathan Lyon, who missed out for only the second time on home soil since his debut in 2011. The selection committee later described it as a one off because of the conditions expected at the Gabba.

Hundred finally

Joe Root has finally scored a hundred in an Ashes test for England in Australia. Test cricket’s No. 1-ranked batter ended a 15-test century drought Down Under dating to 2013 when he reached triple figures on Thursday in the first night session of the second test at the Gabba.

SMAT: Kerala stuns Mumbai by 15 runs

Asif takes five wickets against defending champions to star in win

LUCKNOW

Brief score:
Kerala 178 for 5 in 20 overs (Sanju Samson 46, Vishnu Vinod 43; Shardul Thakur 1/34, Shivam Dube 1/18) beat Mumbai 163 in 19.4 overs (Sarfaraz Khan 52, Ajinkya Rahane 32, Suryakumar Yadav 32; KM Asif 5/24, Vignesh Puthur 2/31) by 15 runs.

Sanju Samson, who set the tone for Kerala by smashing a 28-ball 46 after opening the innings.

Fan frenzy for Hardik forces venue shift

Fan frenzy over star India all-rounder Hardik Pandya forced the organisers to shift the match between his team Baroda and Gujarat to a more secure Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium from a nondescript Gymkhana ground here on Thursday.

“It was just matter of how I can play my first 10-15 balls and after that, the process remains the same,” he added.

‘Opening or batting at No. 4, process remains same’

Ruturaj Gaikwad, who hit his maiden ODI century in 2nd ODI, feels after few hits everything falls in place

RAIPUR

A specialist opener in white-ball cricket, Ruturaj Gaikwad failed to click in his maiden outing at the coveted No. 4 spot but came good in his second match with a hundred here and he said he did not find it too difficult to adjust to his new role.

India have been served well by Shreyas Iyer in ODIs at No. 4 but with the Mumbai batter unavailable due to injury, the team management entrusted Gaikwad with the job to build the innings and he did it with aplomb, hitting his maiden century in the second ODI against South Africa on Wednesday.

“I feel it’s a privilege to have that kind of confidence from the management towards an opener who can bat at No 4 as well. I took it that way,” Gaikwad told the media after India lost the high-scoring contest by four wickets.

“It was just matter of how I can play my first 10-15 balls and after that, the process remains the same,” he added.



India's Ruturaj Gaikwad celebrates century during the second ODI against South Africa in Raipur. PTI

The right-handed batter scored a quickfire 83-ball 105 in a 195-run third wicket stand with Virat Kohli (102) to help take India to 358 for 5.

For Gaikwad, it was imperative to channelise his experience of long hauls in 50-over cricket as he looked the perfect foil to Kohli during their 195-run stand, at times matching the batting great in strokes that he played and with immaculate running

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Arshdeep Singh needs consistent ODI outings

Statement spells from the pacer against SA proves it

VISAKHAPATNAM

By his own admission, Arshdeep Singh’s favourite pastime is to watch YouTube compilations of Wasim Akram and Zaheer Khan to learn about the nuances of yorker and reverse swing.

Arshdeep has put those learnings to use quite frequently in T20Is, and it’s not for nothing that he became the first Indian bowler to take more than 100 wickets in that format.

But his spells against South Africa in the recent Ranchi and Raipur ODIs have underlined the need to give the left-arm pacer a consistent run in the 50-over version, something he has been deprived of thus far.

In isolation, his figures of 2 for 64 and 2 for 54 in those matches look modest. But they offer a different picture when placed alongside Proteas’ totals of 332 and 362 for six.

In both the games, Arshdeep had to bowl during SA’s chase under lights with a heavy dew setting in wintry conditions.

But he never let the batters dominate him in either of the matches, register-

ing the best economy among the pacers - 6.4 at Ranchi and 5.4 at Raipur.

At Raipur, Harshit Rana gave away seven runs an over and Prasidh Krishna was carted around for 10.20.

It may be argued that Arshdeep largely bowled when the ball was relatively drier in the first Power Play and when the ball was changed after the 44th over in the second ODI.

But even then to contain or dismiss batters like Quinton de Kock and Marco Janssen on a firm pitch, a bowler needs optimum tactical awareness and the ability to bowl to the set field.

“That is one area where he has improved a lot in recent times. He knows the conditions well, he then adjusts the lengths well and he has now learned the

importance of mixing up his deliveries to avoid being predictable.

“It is very important in white ball cricket in which batsmen keep looking for runs. He has really matured now as a bowler and is mentally tough,” tells Jaswant Rai, his childhood coach.

Rai’s words ring true if one glances back at Arshdeep’s third spell in the first ODI which India won by 17 runs.

The 26-year-old returned to bowl in the last power play, conceding just 16 runs in that three-over spell, and also dismissed Nandre Burger to make a critical difference in a close match.

In fact, the 47th over, in which he ousted Burger, was a wicket maiden, as he used the left-hander’s angles and a well-concealed short-pitched balls to perfection.

No dew in Vizag
Arshdeep will be eager to bowl in the series-deciding third ODI here on Sunday because the high humidity in this coastal city – often as high as 70 per cent in the night – might cut down the effect of dew in the eventuality of India bowing second. It will certainly make his and colleagues’ job much easier here, but his overall statistics in the last two years beginning from 2023 December also testify to his improvement and consistency. Arshdeep has grabbed 16 wickets in 10 matches in this period.

India's Arshdeep Singh gestures during the second ODI against South Africa in Raipur on Wednesday. PTI

‘Runs only matter if you win games’

Markram, who scored ton in Raipur, takes responsibility for first ODI loss

RAIPUR

Architect of South Africa’s series-leveelling win in the second ODI against India here, Aiden Markram says scoring runs matters only when the team wins and he felt responsible for the visitors’ defeat in the first ODI by a small margin. Markram, whose 110 on Wednesday set the stage for South Africa’s four-wicket win in a chase of 359, fell cheaply in the first ODI at Ranchi where India clinched the high-scoring game by 17 runs.

“Runs only matter if you win games, to be fair, or at least for me. If we’d lost today, I’d be as miserable as I would have been in the previous game. Getting the result is something that makes me really happy,” Markram told the media here after the match on Wednesday.

“Somehow, I knew how to play in between (overs) 11 to 40, how to rotate strike (and) what are the boundary options. I was pretty much confident about how I can go through.”

“Being three (wickets) down early in the first game, a lot of that is the difference in the results I feel. From a personal point of view I felt quite responsible for that,” he added referring to the open-

ing game. On Wednesday though, Markram’s ton was followed by a rapid 34-ball 54 from Dewald Brevis and a measured 68 by Matthew Breetzke, which helped the Proteas overhaul the target.

“It felt like we were living the first game out again today,” he said as South Africa strolled but crossed the line.

Markram said there wasn’t much discussion in the mid-innings break. “There wasn’t much to be honest. You kind of know how to chase 350 (or) 360, you have to take the game on a bit and manage that with setting the game up and being smart in between as well.”

World Cup Draw

FIFA hopes for bigger and better spectacle this time

that restrict who goes where.

Twenty-two teams in Friday’s draw are headed to playoffs that determine the final six berths on March 31.

There will be 104 games instead of 64 in the World Cup running from June 11 through July 19 at 16 venues throughout North America.

“I’ve always thought that what FIFA should do is do it like the Final Four and do 64 teams with no groups, just a knockout,” said Alan Rothenberg, the head organizer of the 1994 World Cup in the U.S., comparing soccer with the NCAA basketball

where there will be a half-time show for the first time.

In addition to 12 group winners and second-place nations, eight third-place teams advance to a new round of 32. The World Cup winner will play eight games.

“I’ve always thought that what FIFA should do is do it like the Final Four and do 64 teams with no groups, just a knockout,” said Alan Rothenberg, the head organizer of the 1994 World Cup in the U.S., comparing soccer with the NCAA basketball

tournament.

Led by captain Lionel Messi, who turns 39 during the tournament, Argentina seeks to become the first nation to win consecutive World Cups since Brazil in 1958 and 1962. Messi and Portugal’s 40-year-old Cristiano Ronaldo are expected to play in a record sixth World Cup.

At least four countries have qualified for the first time. Cape Verde (ranked No. 68), Curaçao (82), Jordan (66) and Uzbekistan (50) have

qualified for the first time and four playoff teams could become debutantes: Albania (63), Kosovo (80), New Caledonia (149) and Suriname (123).

FIFA has set record initial prices of up to \$6,730 for a ticket along with as much as \$175 for a parking place and \$73,200 for a hospitality package - up from \$25 to \$475 for the 1994 tournament in the U.S. Almost 2 million tickets among what is expected to be more than 6 million have been sold.



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo in a file pic. AP