

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Thursday, 08 January, 2026

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

Briefs

GUWAHATI

BJP patriarch Purkayastha passes away

The patriarch of the Assam BJP and former Union Minister, Kabindra Purkayastha, breathed his last on Wednesday at 11:45 am at the Silchar Medical College and Hospital (SMCH). He was 95 years old. He had been on life support at SMCH for the past two weeks. Upon receiving the news of his deteriorating health, his son, Member of Parliament Kanad Purkayastha, was urgently summoned to Silchar from Delhi. His death was officially announced at 5:06 pm. A large crowd of party leaders and workers had also gathered at the Silchar Medical College.

CHANDIGARH

BJP launches campaign on G RAM G

The Punjab BJP on Wednesday launched an awareness campaign on the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act to, what it termed to counter the misinformation being spread by opposition parties, including ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Congress against the same. Launching the drive was launched from the Fazilka district, the state BJP president Sunil Jakhar said that under the new scheme it has been ensured that the money meant for poor labourers reaches them directly, and the number of employment days has been increased from 100 to 125.

MUMBAI

Generic meds stores grow; adoption lags

Despite the rapid expansion of organised generic medicine chemist shops across multiple states, their adoption among common citizens remains strikingly low, accounting for only about 4% of the overall drug retail market. This highlights that while availability has increased, it has failed to translate into widespread usage, as prescribing and purchasing behaviour continues to be dominated by branded medicines.

Over the last few years, initiatives led by several parties, including Jan Aushadhi Kendras, have significantly improved access to affordable medicines. These outlets offer price transparency, regulatory compliance, and assured quality standards. Yet, the intended benefit to patients remains limited, largely because doctors continue to prescribe branded medicines, leaving little room for generics to gain ground.

TURKMAN GATE | FIR says group of 30-35 raised slogans, broke barricades; 5 people, including juvenile, taken into custody

Demolition drive sparks clash, 5 Delhi cops hurt

NEW DELHI

A group of 30-35 people allegedly raised slogans against police, broke barricades and snatched and damaged a loud-hailer during a court-ordered anti-encroachment drive near the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque at Turkman Gate area, according to an FIR lodged by the Delhi Police.

Five people, including a juvenile, were taken into custody and 10-15 others were detained for questioning as a senior police officer said more than 100 protesters were involved in stone pelting on police officers and MCD officials involved in the drive on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday. Five police personnel were injured in the clash, they said.

The incident occurred around 12:40 am when the crowd, despite prohibitory orders, gathered near Turkman Gate and began raising slogans against the



A security official keeps vigil at a vandalised site after violence erupted in Ramliia Maidan area, in New Delhi, early Wednesday

police, the FIR lodged at Chandni Mahal Police Station said.

Constable Sandeep, in his complaint, said police made repeated announcements through a loud-hailer asking the crowd to disperse, but the group allegedly refused to follow orders.

"Police barricading had been put in place, and a crowd of about 30 to 35 people had gathered at Turkman Gate,

raising slogans against the police administration," the FIR read.

"However, the crowd did not comply and continued to raise slogans, broke barricades and began indulging in rioting," it said.

The situation escalated when some people allegedly pelted stones at police personnel, leaving at least five policemen, including the station house officer (SHO),

injured. The injured were taken in a government vehicle to LNJP Hospital, where they were admitted and treated.

The constable said he can identify several people involved in the violence if they are produced before him. "They obstructed police personnel in the discharge of their official duty, damaged government property, including the loud-hailer and barricades, and caused injuries to police staff," the FIR added.

Violence broke out when the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) began removing illegal constructions near the mosque in compliance with the directions of the Delhi High Court. Police said residents had been informed in advance about the demolition drive and adequate force was deployed at the spot.

Four people, identified as Mohd Arib (25), Mohd Kaif (23), Mohd Kashif (25) and Mohd Hamid (30), have been arrested, while a 17-year-old boy has been apprehended.

Modi, Netanyahu swap notes on terror fight

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday held a telephonic conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to convey New Year greetings.

The two also exchanged views on the regional situation.

In a post on X, he said, "Glad to speak with my friend, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and convey New Year greetings to him and the people of Israel. We discussed ways to further strengthen the India-Israel Strategic Partnership in the year ahead. We also exchanged views on the regional situation and reaffirmed our shared resolve to fight terrorism with greater determination."

This is the first direct conversation between the two



leaders since the start of 2026.

According to an official statement, PM Modi and Netanyahu expressed satisfaction with the steady advancement of bilateral cooperation and agreed to deepen collaboration across key areas for mutual benefit.

PM Modi reiterated India's support for efforts aimed at achieving a lasting and just peace in the Middle East, including the early implementation of the Gaza Peace Plan. Both leaders strongly condemned terrorism in all forms and agreed to remain in close contact.

Was stripped, alleges woman BJP worker, K'taka cops deny charge

BENGALURU

A BJP worker in Hubballi was allegedly stripped and beaten up in a police van, after she was arrested on charges of assaulting a government worker during the SIR drive in Hubballi.

The BJP activist woman has been identified as Sujatha Handi and the police were acting on a complaint filed by Congress Corporator Suvarna Kallakuntla. A video of the incident that went viral shows the woman in a disrobed situation and being mishandled by five female and one male police official inside the police van.

However, the police were quick to deny the charges and said the woman stripped herself and assaulted the police

personnel. One of the woman constables also showed scratch marks on her stomach allegedly caused by Sujatha. H u b b a l l i - D h a r a w a d Commissioner Shashikumar said that the woman was involved in many other cases also and the police were looking for the person who made the video and shared it on the internet.

However, the BJP has not taken the incident kindly. According to the victim's mother, Sujatha was accompanying the officials in the SIR drive taken up by the Hubballi-Dharwad officials in Keshavapur limits. The local corporator Suvarna Kallakuntla was against the drive and had asked the police to initiate action against Sujatha. When Sujatha objected to the arrest, she was

After CM record, Sidda fuels power shift buzz

BENGALURU

The day when he created a record by surpassing former Karnataka Chief Minister Devaraj Urs to become 'longest serving CM', Siddaramaiah has fuelled speculations of leadership change by saying 'I don't know how long I am going to be there.'

The statements gained significance in the wake of two month long power transfer tussle between Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar, where supporters of both the leaders are at loggerheads.

Siddaramaiah, who was in Haveri on Wednesday to participate in a government function said that he had survived in politics with the blessings of the people. "However, I don't know how long I am going to stay here. I am satisfied with the work I have done," Siddaramaiah said.

While Siddaramaiah's fans in the state were ecstatic over him creating a new record, the media war between his supporters and DK Shivakumar's supporters continued. While Social Welfare Minister Dr HC Mahadevappa said that the Congress would



be doomed if Siddaramaiah is sidelined, Housing Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan said that Siddaramaiah would continue to be the Chief Minister till 2028.

Meanwhile, DK Shivakumar supporter and Ramanagar MLA Iqbal Hussain said that he was still confident that Shivakumar would become chief minister in a few days. "We were hoping that the leadership change would take place by January 9. It may take a few more days and it is likely to happen by January 14, on the eve of auspicious Sankranti," he said.

Congress MLA from Magadi HC Balakrishna went one step further and suggested that Siddaramaiah should pave the way for Shivakumar at least now. "Whatever had to be accomplished is over. At least now, he (Siddaramaiah) should think of giving way as per the promise he made," Balakrishna added.

Rahul takes dig at govt over Trump's PM remarks

NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of US President Donald Trump's recent remarks on his ties with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and tariffs, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday took a swipe at the government and posted an old video in which he had talked about how in 1971 then PM Indira Gandhi had withstood pressure from America.

Trump on Tuesday said that Prime Minister Modi is "not that happy with me" because of the tariffs imposed by Washington on Delhi for its purchases of Russian oil.

Trump, delivering remarks at the House GOP Member Retreat, also claimed that "Prime Minister Modi came to see me, 'Sir, may I see you please,' Yes."

"I have a very good relationship with him. He's not that happy with me because you know they're paying a lot of tariffs now because they're not doing the oil, but they are, they've now reduced it very substantially, as you know, from Russia," Trump said.

Nehru opposed Somnath Temple construction: BJP

NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday shared copies of a letter written by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to then Pakistan Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, accusing Nehru of opposing the reconstruction of the Somnath Temple and putting "appeasement politics" above India's civilisational heritage.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi ahead of the Somnath Swabhiman Parv, scheduled to be held from January 8 to 11, BJP leader Sudhanshu Trivedi said Nehru had shown "deep hostility" towards the temple. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to attend the event.

Trivedi said that while he

held no personal grudge against Nehru, he strongly opposed what he described as his "terrible and frightening ideology". He claimed that Nehru had consistently objected to the reconstruction of the Somnath Temple after Independence.

According to Trivedi, Nehru wrote letters to several senior leaders, including cabinet ministers, President Rajendra Prasad and Vice-President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, questioning the need to rebuild the temple and advising them not to attend its inauguration. He also alleged that Nehru wrote to chief ministers stating that the reconstruction had damaged India's image abroad.

Trivedi further claimed that Nehru asked the I&B minister to restrict media coverage of the temple's consecration ceremony.

US murder victim's body to be flown home: Reddy

HYDERABAD

Union Coal Minister G Kishan Reddy on Wednesday said the mortal remains of Nikitha Godishala, who was allegedly killed in the US, are expected to be brought to the country by today. He said all legal and administrative procedures have been completed, and that the Indian Embassy in Washington, which stated that it has no objection.

Over 1 cr UP voters to get EC notices

LUCKNOW

In a major move ahead of the final publication of the electoral roll, the Election Commission will issue notices to over 1.04 crore voters in Uttar Pradesh whose records could not be matched with the 2003 voter list, triggering one of the largest verification exercises in the state in recent years.

State Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said these voters will be required to submit any one of 12 prescribed valid documents to establish their eligibility. He said names of those who fail to respond or produce documents will not

BLO dies in Bengal, family alleges stress
A booth-level officer (BLO) in West Bengal's Malda district died on Wednesday, with her family members alleging that she was under stress due to excessive workload in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state, police said. The deceased, identified as Samprita Choudhury Sanyal, had been "unwell for the past few days and was advised to take rest by doctors, but she continued working for the electoral roll revision exercise", her husband said.

be included in the final electoral roll, which is scheduled to be published on March 6 after the disposal of claims and objections.

Rinwa said claims and objections can be filed till February 6, and the Commission will complete scrutiny by February 27.

The revision exercise spans all 75 districts and 403 assembly constituencies of Uttar Pradesh, covering 1,72,486 polling stations. As many as 5,76,611 booth level agents appointed by recognised political parties have assisted election officials in the process.

Voters, whose names are missing from the draft roll or who find incorrect or outdated entries, can apply for inclusion or correction. New voters must apply through Form 6, overseas voters who have not taken foreign citizenship through Form 6A, objections through Form 7, and corrections or change of address through Form 8.

Voters can verify their status on voters.eci.gov.in by clicking on "Search in Electoral Roll" and entering their name, father's name or EPIC number. The status can also be checked through the Voter Helpline App or by contacting the local Booth Level Officer.

Ballari violence gets murkier, BJP plans Jan 17 showdown

BENGALURU

The Ballari violence on January 1, where BJP and Congress workers clashed over tying banners in front of Gangavati BJP MLA Gali Janardhan Reddy's house resulting in the killing of a Congress worker, is getting murkier with the BJP getting ready for a big showdown in Ballari on January 17.

While BJP alleges that the government was trying to hush up the case and frame the BJP for the violence, the Congress is blaming BJP for the entire fiasco.

The problem for the Congress is that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has distanced himself from the

incident, while Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar is trying hard to save his MLA Nara Bharath Reddy, whose private security personnel's bullet killed the Congress worker. Meanwhile, the state government has transferred Ballari IGP Vartika Katiyar for dereliction of duty and has made Kalburgi IGP in charge of Ballari in her place.

Meanwhile, Shivakumar also locked horns with Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy, who alleged that two post-mortem were conducted on Congress worker Rajashekhar's body, and that the bullet was removed during the second post-mortem.

DK Shivakumar denied that there were two post-mortems and asked Kumaraswamy to

show the proof for that. Kumaraswamy said that the first post-mortem was conducted by Dr Yogish of BIMS and when he did not remove the bullet, the senior police officers called Dr Chethan and conducted the second post-mortem. Since the police did not cooperate in burying the evidence, they were transferred, Kumaraswamy added.

Former Minister B Sriramulu also expressed his doubts that the government was trying to destroy all the evidence.

Opposition leader R Ashok said the government was exhibiting a dictatorial attitude in handling the Ballari issue. "On Jan 17, our party is organising a massive rally in Ballari," he said.

Rescued two Bengali migrants detained in Maha: TMC's Banerjee

KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress (TMC) national secretary Abhishek Banerjee said he had rescued two migratory workers from Maharashtra who, he said, were sent to jail illegally for speaking Bengali.

Talking to the media, the migratory workers mentioned that they were in jail for seven months and thanked Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and TMC national secretary Abhishek Banerjee for helping them to return to Bengal.

Notably, during Banerjee's visit to Asit Sarkar's residence

at Tapan in South Dinajpur, Goutam Barman (BJP booth president) from MoS Sukanta Majumdar's constituency highlighted that none from BJP took their calls when they were in trouble.

Banerjee urged both Asit and Goutam not to go to BJP-ruled Maharashtra. Here jobs for them will be arranged.

"After their illegal arrest in Maharashtra they were asked to pay 1.5 lakh/ person and they would be released. The likes of Sukanta Majumdar and other local BJP leaders didn't provide any help to them. They didn't even entertain their requests," added Banerjee.

ED attaches properties worth ₹91cr in Mahadev betting case

MUMBAI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached movable and immovable assets worth Rs91.82 crore in connection with its probe into alleged illegal betting operations linked to Mahadev Online Book (MOB) and Skyxexchange.com, the central agency said on Wednesday.

The attachment was carried out by ED through a Provisional Attachment Order (PAO) issued under Section 5 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002. The assets include bank balances, high-value real estate, and other liquid investments, which the agency said represent proceeds of crime (PoC)

generated from large-scale online betting and gambling activities.

According to the agency, bank balances amounting to Rs74.28 crore were attached from accounts held in the names of Perfect Plan Investment LLC and Exim General Trading-GZCO. The ED claimed these entities were linked to accused Sourabh Chandrakar, Anil Kumar Agarwal and Vikas Chaparia.

Officials claimed that these firms were used to park, layer and project PoC as legitimate foreign investments, thereby masking the illegal origin of the funds. The ED said its investigation suggests that the accused routed betting proceeds through multiple juris-

dictions before reinvesting them into India.

In addition, properties worth about Rs17.5 crore belonging to Gagan Gupta, a close associate of Hari Shankar Tibrewal, the alleged owner of Skyxexchange.com, were also attached. These include high-value real estate and liquid assets, some of which were held in the names of Gupta's family members and were allegedly acquired using cash generated from illegal betting activities, officials said.

The ED claimed that its probe revealed that illegal betting platforms such as Mahadev Online Book and Skyxexchange.com generated large PoC, which were laundered through a network of benami bank accounts.

LT Grade Exam to be held on schedule, admit cards to be released on January 8

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: The Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (UPPSC) is going to conduct the Assistant Teacher, Trained Graduate (LT Grade) Preliminary Examination-2025 on January 17 and 18, as per the pre-determined schedule. Admit cards for the candidates will be released on January 8 on the commission's website <https://uppsc.up.nic.in>. Candidates were demanding that the exam be postponed. They argued that there would be difficulties in transportation on January 18 due to the Mauni Amavasya bathing festival, and therefore the exam should be postponed throughout the state. However, the commission had not set up any examination centers in Prayagraj keeping this problem in mind. On Wednesday, the commission's Under Secretary, Omkar Nath Singh, issued a press release clarifying that the examination will be held on January 17 and 18, 2026. On January 17, the

Social Science exam will be held in the morning session from 9 to 11 am, and the Biology exam will be held in the afternoon session from 3 to 5 pm. On January 18, the English exam will be held in the morning session from 9 to 11 am, and the Physical Education exam will be held in the afternoon session from 3 to 5 pm. There are a total of 1826 posts for LT Grade teachers in these four subjects. According to the commission's Under Secretary, Omkar Nath Singh, the Social Science subject, which will be held in the first session on January 17, will have four sections: Geography, History, Economics, and Civics. Each section will have 60 questions. Candidates will have to choose and answer any two sections. In addition, there will be 30 questions on General Studies. Candidates will be able to download their admit cards and instructions from Thursday using their OTR number. Candidates will be given entry into the examination

center one hour and 30 minutes before the scheduled time of the examination, and entry will be closed 45 minutes before the scheduled time of the examination. A photocopy of the ID proof must be submitted to the invigilator. Candidates must carry two photographs and the original and a photocopy of their ID proof with them to the examination center. Candidates must compulsorily provide a photocopy of their ID proof in the examination hall.

Caught cheating will result in life imprisonment

The provisions of the Uttar Pradesh Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 will apply to the LT Grade preliminary examination. According to this Act, using unfair means in the examination, cheating or facilitating cheating, impersonating or disclosing the question paper, or conspiring to disclose it, etc., are considered offenses. Such cases may result in a fine of up to one crore rupees and/or life imprisonment.

SHUATS Director Vinod B. Lal gets relief Interim stay on criminal proceedings, state government asked to respond

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court has granted an interim stay on the criminal proceedings against Vinod Bihari Lal, Director of Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS), Naini, Prayagraj. The court has also sought a response from the state government on the petition. This order was passed by Justice Sanjay Kumar Pachauri. An FIR has been registered against Vinod Bihari Lal at Naini police station on charges of forgery, conspiracy, attempt to murder, and other offenses. The trial court, taking cognizance of the police report, issued a summons on December 21, 2023. The petitioner has filed a petition in the High Court seeking to quash the

entire proceedings in the case. The petitioner claims that the FIR was registered based on false and fabricated allegations without any concrete evidence or basis. The petitioner's name was not included in the FIR; it was registered against unknown persons. His name was added later during the investigation. There is no evidence to suggest that the petitioner conspired to commit the alleged crime. Considering these facts as prima facie arguable, the court granted an interim stay on the proceedings against the petitioner until further orders. The court has issued a notice to the government and the opposite party. They have been directed to file a counter-affidavit within three weeks. The next hearing will be held after eight weeks.

Three girls, including two sisters, died in Kardhana village within 24 hours

Varanasi

Two sisters, Harshit (6), Anshika (3), and Nancy (4), died after eating oleander pod seeds in a 24-hour period between Sunday and Monday in Kardhana village, which falls under the jurisdiction of the police station. The family cremated the sisters without informing the police. Nancy died on Monday afternoon, after which the Mirzapur police took possession of her body. A post-mortem will be conducted. The family told the police of Mirzamurad police station that the three girls had eaten the seeds of Kaner, mistaking them for Amla. The stoves have not been lit in the houses of both the neighbors for two days. The tree from where the girls had eaten the poisonous seeds has also been uprooted and thrown away by the family members. Seven children, including Harshita and Anshika, daughters of Mithilesh Prajapati, a resident of Kardhana village and Nancy, daughter of their neighbor Manish Prajapati, were playing in the village at some distance from their house on Sunday morning. While playing, the children saw a Kaner pod and plucked it. Nancy, Harshit and They were playing a short distance from their home. While playing, the children spotted a oleander pod and plucked it. Nancy, Harshit and Anshika mistook it for a gooseberry (Indian gooseberry) and ate it. Shortly after, they developed stomach pains, so the three girls went home. By evening, Harshita health deteriorated. Her family rushed her to a private hospital, where doctors declared her dead. Before the family could recover from the shock, Harshita younger sister, Anshika also became ill on Monday morning. The family also took her to the hospital, where she died during treatment on Monday afternoon. The deaths of two girls from the same family cast a pall of gloom over the village. Meanwhile, Nancy health also deteriorated. The family immediately took her to the BHU Trauma Center, where she also died during treatment.

Huge crowd of devotees gathered at all Vinayak temples in Kashi on Sankat Ganesh Chaturthi

Varanasi

In the city of Ashutosh, women observe this fast on the Chaturthi date of Krishna Paksha of Magh month for the long life and success of their children. Due to the effect of this fast, the children get Riddhi Siddhi and Ganesh removes all the obstacles coming in their life. On this day, women observe Nirjala fast for the whole day and in the evening, they consume water for the fortnight after worshipping Ganesh and offering Arghya to the Moon. Sankat fast is observed on the Chaturthi date of Krishna Paksha of Magh month. Sankat Haran Ganpati is worshipped on this day. Vidya, Buddhi, Varidhi Ganesh and Moon are worshipped on this



day. Bhalachandra Ganesh is worshipped on Sakat Chauth. From Tuesday morning, fasting women gathered at the Shri Bada Ganesh temple in Lohatia, Siddhivinayak temple in Vishwanath Gali, Shri Chintamani Ganesh temple in Sonarpur and Shri Durga Vinayak temple in Durga Kund. The fasting women reached all

the Vinayak temples and stood in line to offer garlands of grass, fruits, sweets and other offerings to Shri Ganesh Maharaj. Crowds of devotees from near Kabir Chaura lined up at the Shri Bada Ganesh temple in Lohatia until late at night for darshan and worship. At 11:30 pm, the temple priest, Pandit Rajesh Kumar Tiwari, performed the Maha

Aarti of Shri Bada Ganesh Ji Maharaj with 108 leaves, while Mahant Subbarao Laxman Shastri, the head priest of Shri Chintamani Ganesh in Sonarpur, performed the Maha Aarti of Shri Ganesh. Devotees throughout Kashi worshipped Ashutosh son, Shri Ganesh Maharaj from dawn until late at night. In view of the huge crowd at Shri Bada Ganesh Temple, Traffic Superintendent Anshuman Mishra completely banned traffic from Kabir Chauraha towards Maidagin and from Maidagin towards Kabir Chaura Road till 8:00 pm, because on the occasion of Shri Ganesh Chaturthi, temporary shops were set up on both the roads from Kabir Chauraha to Lohatiya, due to which there was a huge crowd of devotees.

Road Diversion to Resolve Traffic Jam Issues

Bahraich

In order to raise public awareness about traffic rules and reduce road accidents, as well as to improve the traffic congestion situation in the city, District Magistrate Akshay Tripathi inspected the movement of buses at locations including the Roadways Bus Stand and Marimata Chauraha. He instructed that buses going to Shrivasti, Gonda and Balrampur should be diverted and those that can travel from out-



side the city should not enter the inner city, so as to prevent traffic jams. The DM also emphasized that arrangements should be made before KDC so that passengers can depart smoothly and continue their journey without causing congestion. A request has

been made to the Roadways Department for land to facilitate this plan. Efforts will be made to ensure that buses that should not enter the city will operate from outside. The action plan is expected to be implemented within a week.

After 25 Years, Industrial-Trade Representative Council Elections in Rupaidiha, Merchants Excited

Baharich

Merchants in the border town of Rupaidiha have expressed great excitement following the announcement of the election date for the branch unit of the Industrial-Trade Representative Council. A meeting was held on Sunday at Rahul Party Palace, where merchants were provided detailed information about the elections and the attending guests were honored with ceremonial shawls. The voting for the Uttar Pradesh Industrial-Trade Representative Council, Rupaidiha unit, will take place on January 18, 2026. Elections for the positions of President, General Secretary, Treasurer and eleven other members will be conducted by the local temporary election management committee. Nominations will be filed on January 6 and 7



with withdrawals on January 8. The process of assigning election symbols will also be completed by the evening of January 8. Acting Trade Council President Shailesh Jaiswal said, "Where there are merchants, there is a trade council. Our organization is our strength.

If re-elected with the support of the traders, I will work sincerely for the welfare of the business community. Only those traders whose names are included in the voter list will have the right to vote. Voting will be held from 9 AM to 3 PM and the counting of

votes will start at 4 PM on the same day, with results expected within two hours. All local establishments will remain closed on the election day. The meeting was attended by Provincial President Banwari Lal Kanchhal, senior journalists and eminent traders, including Acharya Daya Shankar Shukla, Sanjay Bansal, Maniram Sharma, Syed Raja Imam Rizvi, Shailendra Jaiswal, Yogendra Sharma, Sonu Kaushal, Ramesh Mishra, Deependra Mishra, Amit Maddheshiya, along with hundreds of merchants and citizens.

SSB Installs Face Detection Camera System at Rupaidiha Border to Strengthen Security



Bahraich

To enhance security along the India-Nepal international border, the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has installed a state-of-the-art face detection camera system at the Rupaidiha border post. With the implementation of this new system, travelers crossing the border will now be identified not only through identity cards but also using advanced digital facial recognition tech-

nology. Until now, citizens of India and Nepal were required to show their ID cards while crossing the border. Under the new system, travellers' faces will be digitally recorded by the high-tech cameras installed at the border, enabling security agencies to monitor suspicious activities more effectively.

According to SSB officials, the primary aim of this system is to prevent illegal entry by third-

country nationals. It also seeks to modernize and technologically strengthen border management, making security surveillance more efficient. This technology is expected to bolster crime control and reinforce national security in the border region. Local residents have welcomed the SSB initiative, stating that it will significantly enhance security in the border area and provide an effective check on illegal activities.

Rupaidiha Journalists' Association Holds Meeting, Decides to Convene Meetings Every 15 Days

Bahraich

An important meeting of the Rupaidiha Journalists' Association was held on Monday evening at 6:00 pm at the residence of association



member Ramesh Kumar Singh. A large number of members of the association were present at the meeting. During the meeting, various important issues related to the organization were discussed in detail. With the objective of making the association more strong and active, it was unanimously decided to organize regular meetings every 15 days. Emphasis was also laid on expanding the organization and increasing its membership. Prominent members present at the meeting included association patrons Sher Singh Kashoudhan, Sanjay Kumar Gupta, Shakeel Ahmed, Banaras Giri, Irshad Hussain, Ramesh Kumar Singh, Dharendra Kumar Sharma, Ramesh Kumar Mishra, Shyam Kumar Mishra, Mohammad Saleem, Arvind Kumar Verma and Mohammad Kausar, along with several other journalists, who shared their views. At the end of the meeting, all members pledged to work together with unity for the protection of journalists' interests and to further strengthen the organization.

Deputy Chief Minister Maurya inspects Naini-Jhansi Ring Road and Ganga Bridge

During the inspection, he reviewed the progress of the construction work

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya on Wednesday conducted a site inspection of the ring road connecting Naini to Jhansi and the bridge under construction over the Ganga River. During the inspection, he reviewed the progress of the construction work, its quality, and safety standards in detail. The Deputy Chief Minister obtained information about the current status of the construc-



tion from the execut-

ing agency, GPT

Infraprojects Limited,

and gave clear

instructions that all

work should be com-

with high quality. He said that negligence at any stage of the construction would not be tolerated. He also instructed NHAI officials to regularly inspect the construction site and ensure strict adherence to quality standards. The Deputy Chief Minister categorically stated that there should be no compromise on quality in the project.

During the inspection, public representatives, as well as senior officials of the executing agency and NHAI, were present.

LT Grade Exam to be held on schedule, admit cards to be released on January 8

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: The Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (UPPSC) is going to conduct the Assistant Teacher, Trained Graduate (LT Grade) Preliminary Examination-2025 on January 17 and 18, as per the pre-determined schedule. Admit cards for the candidates will be released on January 8 on the commission's website <https://uppsc.up.nic.in>. Candidates were demanding that the exam be postponed. They argued that there would be difficulties in transportation on January 18 due to the Mauni Amavasya bathing festival, and therefore the exam should be postponed throughout the state. However, the commission had not set up any examination centers in Prayagraj keeping this problem in mind. On Wednesday, the commission's Under Secretary, Omkar Nath Singh, issued a press release clarifying that the examination will be held on January 17 and 18, 2026. On January 17, the Social Science exam will be held in the morning session from 9 to 11 am, and the Biology exam will be held in the afternoon session from 3 to 5 pm. On January 18, the English exam will be held in the morning session from 9 to 11 am, and the Physical Education exam will be held in the afternoon session from 3 to 5 pm. There are a total of 1826 posts for LT Grade teachers in these four subjects. According to the commission's Under Secretary, Omkar Nath Singh, the Social Science subject, which will be held in the first session on January 17, will have four sections: Geography, History, Economics, and Civics. Each section will have 60 questions. Candidates will have to choose and answer any two sections. In addition, there will be 30 questions on General Studies. Candidates will be able to download their admit cards and instructions from Thursday using their OTR number. Candidates will be given entry into the examination center one hour and 30 minutes before the scheduled time of the examination, and entry will be closed 45 minutes before the scheduled time of the examination. A photocopy of the ID proof must be submitted to the invigilator. Candidates must carry two photographs and the original and a photocopy of their ID proof with them to the examination center. Candidates must compulsorily provide a photocopy of their ID proof in the examination hall. Caught cheating will result in life imprisonment. The provisions of the Uttar Pradesh Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 will apply to the LT Grade preliminary examination. According to this Act, using unfair means in the examination, cheating or facilitating cheating, impersonating or disclosing the question paper, or conspiring to disclose it, etc., are considered offenses. Such cases may result in a fine of up to one crore rupees and/or life imprisonment.

Folk songs and classical music performances captivated the audience at the Kala Sangam pandal in Parade Sector-3

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: A grand event of folk songs, folk dances, dance dramas, and classical music was held today at the Kala Sangam pandal of the Culture Department, Uttar Pradesh, located in Parade Sector-3 of the Magh Mela area. The audience present in the pandal seemed to be immersed in the melodious flow of folk and classical music. The special performance of the program was by Mumbai-based celebrity tabla player Anuradha Pal. Anuradha Pal, a recipient of several national and international awards, mesmerized the audience with her performance "Tabla Sings Stories". Whether it was producing the sound of a damru (a small drum) from



the tabla or translating the playful banter between a husband and wife during shopping at the fair into music—her art created both

silence and thunderous applause in the pandal. Prayagraj's renowned classical singer Pt. Prem Kumar Malik, a 12th-generation

artist of the Darbhanga Gharana and a recipient of a gold medal from the President, enthralled the audience with his renditions

of Shiva Stuti and Ganga Stuti in Raag Bhimpalasi and Raag Shankara. His melodious voice captivated classical music lovers. The famous folk dancer Beena Singh (Prayagraj), along with her troupe, presented a vibrant and excellent performance of the Dhediya dance, performed in celebration after Lord Rama's victory, leaving the audience spellbound. In the program, Prayagraj's renowned singer Bhupendra Kumar compelled the audience to sway to his renditions of bhajans like "Zara Halke Gaadi Haanko Mere Gaadi Wale," "Sitaram Sitaram Kahiye," and the ghazal "Na Jee Bhar Ke Dekha, Na Baat Ki." Among today's main attractions was Madhavi Madhukar, who is India's

first Sanskrit stotra singer. They enthralled the audience by presenting numerous melodious Sanskrit hymns, including verses from "Triveni Stotram," "Prayag Ashtakam," "Tirtharajo Jayati Prayagah," and "Achyutam Keshavam," filling the venue with a devotional atmosphere. Their melodious hymns are listened to by over one crore listeners every month. The entire program created such a captivating ambiance that the audience remained seated for a long time. The stage was skillfully managed by Renu Raj. All the artists and teams were honored with shawls and certificates by the officials of the Department of Culture for their outstanding performances.

Admissions Begin for January 2026 Session at Rajarshi Tandon Open University

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj, commenced the admission process for the January 2026 session on Wednesday. Inaugurating the admission process for the January 2026 session, Vice-Chancellor Professor Satyakam said that the university has made the admission process very simple and accessible this time. Students will not face any difficulty in applying. According to UGC guidelines, the admission process will be completed only after students create their APAAR ID, ABC ID, and UGC Debit ID. The university's expert technical team has greatly simplified this process so that students do not face any problems while filling out the forms. Professor Satyakam said that the university is committed to conducting all admissions in the January 2026 session in accordance with the National Education Policy 2020. In this era of digital revolution, the open university has ensured an online admission system keeping in mind the convenience of the learners. The open university is striving to make higher education accessible to every individual aspiring for quality education.



The university has started admissions in a total of 64 programs in the January 2026 session, including 24 postgraduate programs, 06 undergraduate programs, 04 awareness programs, 07 diploma programs, and 23 certificate programs. An Artificial Intelligence (AI) based skill course is being introduced in the second year of all undergraduate programs. In the first year of the January 2026 session, a Diploma in Museology, MA Home Science, and BCA programs are also being launched. Vice-Chancellor Professor Satyakam, while addressing the coordinators of all 12 regional centers – Prayagraj, Lucknow, Bareilly, Agra, Ballia, Ayodhya, Jhansi, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Kanpur, Varanasi, and Gorakhpur – who were connected online during the admission inauguration session, instructed them to provide all possible assistance to the students visiting the centers

so that they do not face any difficulties during the admission process. He also advised the coordinators to use various social media platforms to disseminate information about admissions to as many people as possible. Professor Satyakam expressed hope that with the cooperation of all regional center coordinators, they would definitely achieve the target of one lakh students this time, and no student would be deprived of admission. Earlier, the admissions in-charge, Professor Jai Prakash Yadav, gave a detailed presentation on the online admission process. Professor Ashutosh Gupta, Director of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell, welcomed the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Satyakam, and Registrar Colonel Vinay Kumar offered the vote of thanks. Directors and in-charges of various academic departments were also present on the occasion.

Laying the Foundation for a Bright Future for Local Youth: MUNPL's Skill Training Program



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Meja

On 07 January 2026, MUNPL under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, launched a skill training program aimed at promoting skill development and employment-oriented training for local youth. The program was inaugurated by Shri G. Srinivasa Rao, CEO, MUNPL. Under this initiative, a total of 40 candidates

will be provided with three months of fully residential training at CRISP, Bhopal in the trades of High Pressure Welding Technician and Solar PV Installer Technician. Through this batch, the 40 trainees will be equipped with technical competencies aligned with modern industrial requirements.

This training program is completely residential, and after completion of the training, CRISP, Bhopal



will ensure 100 percent placement for the trainees. On this occasion, Shri G. Srinivasa Rao stated that MUNPL is committed to providing skill development and employment opportunities to local youth, and that this initiative in collaboration with CRISP is an important step towards empowering youth by providing them with technical knowledge and making them self-reliant.

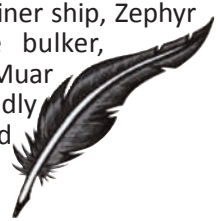
During the program, the

CEO, MUNPL and other dignitaries flagged off the bus and sent the trainees to CRISP, Bhopal for training. Present on the occasion were Shri Narendra Nath Sinha, GM (Operations & Maintenance), Shri Anand Prakash, GM (Project), Shri Ashok Kumar Samal GM (Maintenance), Dr. A. K. Chaudhary (Chief Medical Officer), Shri Vivek Chandra, HoHR along with representatives from CRISP, Bhopal.

Editorial

Great Nicobar Project is a trade game-changer for India

It is surprising that the strategic islands of Andaman, Car Nicobar, and Great Nicobar have not been developed all these years into ports and military bases to enhance trade and security in India's maritime zone. Nicobar offers excellent connectivity to at least five countries to the east—Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka—as well as Indian ports on the eastern coast. Some islands in Nicobar and Lakshadweep are out of bounds for outsiders, as these are inhabited by tribes that have not had any contact with the outside world. The scenic Barren Island is also out of bounds, as it is the only active volcano in India. There can be no two opinions as far as the need to protect the privacy of the tribes inhabiting some of these islands. There are reports of earlier attempts to establish contact with them and draw them into the civilisational mainstream, which were unsuccessful. Rules and regulations were made considering their resistance and respecting their right to continue with their unique lifestyle. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956, designates tribal reserves and restricts entry for outsiders. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, provides a legal framework against exploitation, while the Forest Rights Act, 2006, recognises their land rights. The Ministry of Home Affairs has put in place several restrictions and announced specific policies for the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) such as the Jarawas and Shompen. So, several laws and restrictions are already available to protect and preserve the identity of the tribal communities. In this scenario, there is hardly any need to shelve strategically important projects and infrastructure development schemes that will boost trade and commerce, tourism and maritime economy, and connectivity. Out of the 10 busiest container terminal ports in the world, six are in China, and one each in Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These account for as much as 60 to 70 per cent of the 20-foot and 40-foot (1 TEU and 2 TEU) containers transshipment. Apparently, nearly all these container terminals and other ports in Asia and the Indian subcontinent, as well as in China and the Far East, depend on the shipping lanes through the Malacca Strait, which accounts for nearly \$3.5 trillion in global trade. The Strait of Malacca is also an important maritime highway for the stakeholders of Indo-Pacific as it connects the Indian and Pacific Oceans. For the Quad and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), this sea lane of communication, accounting for nearly 60 per cent of the global GDP, becomes the lifeline to trade, commerce, and connectivity. There is no reason why India should not have a technologically equipped, functional, state-of-the-art port in Nicobar to tap into the trade happening through its precincts. Besides the economic uplift, a port facility in Nicobar and on other islands in the Indian Ocean can help India resolve other challenges too. By virtue of the gigantic number of ships—about 90,000—passing through a narrow Strait, the sea lanes of communication and the ports have become choke points in the Indian Ocean. Interestingly, in spite of the vast expanse of the sea, ships follow a designated route guided by navigation software, GPS, and Electronic Charting System (ECS), very much like the flight path in the sky. This often results in ships cruising very close and colliding due to massive waves, ocean currents, or simply not following the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS). In 2021, a container ship, Zephyr Lumos, collided with the bulkier, Galapagos, off the port of Muar in the Strait of Malacca, badly damaging the Galapagos and resulting in a huge oil spill.



Socialist propaganda takes full advantage of this failing of human beings

Hemingway has a short story set in the Spanish Civil War context in which an old man leaving his town on the approach of rebel armies sits on the outskirts and shows concern, to a questioner (a foreign correspondent) with the fate of his old cat that he was obliged to leave behind than with the tragedy of the people involved in the horrors of the unusually savage civil war! We know that all through the long national liberation movement in India the British could find quite a number of Indian collaborators at the expense of their own countrymen. They did not feel the passion for freedom to any marked extent. They could not imagine how the country could manage without the British to govern them! To the large majority of people everywhere the status quo and the customary round seem to be as much part of nature as the stars, the sun and the moon. They cannot imagine a different state of affairs. In moral experience we are keenly aware that people have the greatest difficulty in realising in imagination the inward feelings and attitudes of their own neighbours. A great writer has a short story showing how the heads of husband and wife on adjacent pillows entertain widely different thoughts that seem to belong to separate worlds! The great problem of human life is this one of increasing understanding of men of each other's inward life by means of a more sensitive imagination. Socialist (communist) propaganda takes full advantage of this failing



of human beings. It depicts the ideal state of affairs under their Utopia in such a complete fashion that nothing is left to the imagination of those who are carried away by the promises of socialism regarding its new heaven and new earth, regarding its abolition of poverty, its reign of equality, its opportunity for self-realisation for all and so on. No schemes of logical criticism of the economics, psychology and philosophy of communism can have any effect on the believer and the fellow traveller. He comes to believe in the Marxist Gospel as in a new Bible or Koran as an infallible revelation for the scientific age of the present and future. The picture presented by the propaganda of the communist-socialists occupies the imagination of the intelligentsia of the present age, by and large, by reiteration, emphasis and appeal to humanitarianism as the only way of redeeming the under-dog. It benumbs the critical faculties. Moreover, criticism presupposes knowledge of alternatives. The greatest service that philosophy as a systematic science of reflection on ultimate reality and ultimate values renders

to civilisation, as pointed out so impressively by Dr. A. N. Whitehead, is the suggestion of alternative vision of society and natural relations or structure. Such alternative ideas release the mind from the stranglehold of custom or dogma, new or old and create an attitude of mind more open and hospitable to new ideas and rival hypotheses. It is therefore necessary to break the spell of socialist dogma on the imagination of fellow travellers and those attracted by its dogma on travellers and those attracted by its Utopia as the only way of progress based on science. This can be done by showing alternatives. Professor Bauer (specialist in the economy of backward peoples in the University of London) has said after a study of Indian Plans and Policies that the Indian Government seems more interested in realising socialism than in economic development itself! He has recorded his deliberate opinion that in the absence of the elaborate structure of controls and regulations, cribbing, cabinning and confining Indian enterprise in the private field, a faster and more many-sided progress in development would result.

That is to say, his special knowledge of economic facts and ideas enabled him to see other alternative possibilities in the Indian scene at present blocked by official programmes and policies and their acceptance as good and inevitable by the public. Even the opposition parties have failed to present sufficiently well-informed and comprehensive schemes of development making for better results without curbing individual initiative, repressing capital formation and freezing investment in the private sector. Another reason for this state of affairs, that is, for the failure of imagination on the part of critics and the general public to visualise their own schemes of development inspired by their own principles, views of social ideals and economic well-being and to present them to the electorate in rivalry to the official policy is their inability to think of alternatives. There was an opportunity before Indian leaders at the advent of independence in August 1947. But unfortunately India had a leader, sold body and soul to socialism at the moment of national self-government. Even before the first Five-Year Plan was launched under the auspices of the Planning Commission in perfect imitation of the Soviets, Parliament was enacting the Industrial Policy Resolution (1949) which laid down the outline of socialist policy reserving the commanding heights of the economy, as the phrase goes (in British Socialist parlance) meaning nationalisation or otherwise taking control of

the key industries, transport, insurance, railways, communications, mines, steel and other heavy industries for government ownership and management. The imagination of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru was completely dominated by the socialist programme of centralised economy after the pattern of Soviet Russia. The other members of Parliament had not the imagination to visualise the deleterious consequences for production and liberty, price levels, tax levels, misery depths and so on of such socialism as was realised through the years. They did not think out the rationale of the policies of socialism afresh. They took the European programmes for granted. They betrayed slave mentality in the intellectual and temporal field to an astonishing extent, for which the country is suffering even today. For one thing, the policies have not been reviewed from a rationalist and experiential point of view in the light of Indian conditions. The results of the Plans in terms of actual effects on the economy—prices, taxes, production, redistribution, national income, prosperity all round etc. have not been assessed from an independent point of view even yet. The founding of the Swatantra party is one sign of the awakening on the part of the intelligentsia that an alternative policy is possible and necessary. The work of the Libertarian Social Institute of Mr. Lotvala has been earliest in the field with its own independent and critical rethinking of Marx and communist programmes.

Qatar played all sides, peacemaker to Islamist safe haven. Now there's no place to hide

There, standing in a grey puddle of light under the glass-domed lounge at the Bayerischer Hof in Munich, Germany, former Afghan spymaster Amarullah Saleh understood the nation he had given his life to build was about to die. For almost a decade, the Taliban had enjoyed safe haven in Doha, operating a de facto embassy there with diplomatic protections. They received funds, drew up combat plans, and travelled to meet their top leaders in Karachi and Peshawar. The killing in Afghanistan, however, had continued without interruption—and President Ashraf Ghani wanted the jihadists gone. He said as much to the Emir of Qatar during the Munich Security Conference in 2020. A smile on his face, the Emir replied: "Well, we have only permitted them to stay in Qatar. Everything else, including their expenses, is managed and overseen by the Central Intelligence Agency. If you want this to end, ask the CIA to stop." This week, Qatar's

role as peacemaker in the Middle East came under assault, as a squadron of Israeli combat jets targeted terrorist group Hamas' headquarters, not far from Doha's famous Corniche. The bombing took place just as Hamas was discussing a Gaza ceasefire proposal made by US President Donald Trump. There was no reaction from the formidable air defences at Al-Udeid air base, home to the Qatar Emiri Air Force, the United States Air Force, and the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force. For decades, Qatar has sought security and prestige as the mediator between the United States and nations in conflict across the Middle East—sending billions of dollars to Hamas with the complete approval of the Israeli Prime Minister, funneling cash to Benjamin Netanyahu's aides, helping the Islamists who seized power in Syria, and exerting influence from Egypt to Libya and Tunisia. As the world order threatens to buckle under new strains.

The key difference between India and China's response to Gen-Z protests in Nepal

The Generation Z-led protests in Nepal have caught the global attention, and international agencies as well as countries have come forward to condole the loss of around 30 lives and hundreds who were injured. While the United Nations noted, "We are shocked by the killings and injury of protesters in Nepal today and urge a prompt and transparent investigation." How did Nepal's closest neighbours, India and China, respond? A day after the protests began in Nepal on 8 September, India stated the next day that it was "closely monitoring the developments in Nepal...(and) our thoughts and prayers are with the families and deceased. India also added that "as a close friend and neighbour, we hope that all concerned will exercise restraint." The same evening, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "The violence in Nepal is heart-rending. I am anguished that many young people have lost their lives. The stability, peace and prosperity of Nepal are of utmost importance to us. I humbly appeal to all my brothers and sisters in Nepal to support peace." There was a divided crowd on social media about India's

approach, whether it was helpful and friendly or interventionist, but this came as no surprise, as the so-called border blockade of 2015 had already set the social media toolkit on India with hashtags like #BackoffIndia #GoBackIndia. It would not be an exaggeration to say that small-state syndrome became an intense public mood in Nepal as it approached relations with India, especially after Nepal promulgated the constitution in 2015. In a carefully worded statement, India added that it had 'noted' the new constitution and avoided using words like "welcome" to acknowledge the promulgation. In the same statement, India had urged that "issues on which there are differences should be resolved through dialogue in an atmosphere free from violence and intimidation and institutionalised in a manner that would enable broad-based ownership and acceptance" as it was deemed as external interference. However, these hashtags often resurface. While India quickly reacted to current developments, some in Nepal eagerly awaited a statement from China—its northern neighbour. Interestingly, China's response to Gen Z to

the current political developments appeared cautious and calculated, reflecting its broader regional strategic interests. After 2008, Beijing has carefully treaded with the Communist leadership in Nepal to deepen its diplomatic ties and goodwill in Nepal. The move has been viewed as a key element for strategic influence over the region. Leaders like KP Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias Prachanda did not hesitate to use the China card to stoke the nationalistic sentiments in Nepal. Finally, on 10 September, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson issued a statement saying, "China and Nepal are each other's traditional friends and neighbours. Hope the various sectors in Nepal will approach the domestic issues properly and restore order and stability in the country soon." This was a typical Chinese statement—deliberately vague, refraining from specifying the events or parties involved, and notably omitting any reference to the human cost of the unrest. The carefully crafted words reflect China's preference for cautious diplomacy and projects that they do not comment.

Lifting night shift ban increased female employment in India—only among big firms

Do laws designed to protect women from unsafe working conditions constrain the demand for their labour? This question sits at the centre of global debates about protective legislation in labour markets. Our recent research (Gupta et al. 2025) examines what happened when Indian states lifted long-standing bans that prevented women from working night shifts in factories. Our findings offer important lessons for policymakers seeking to expand female employment, particularly considering the significant labour reforms that

have been recently initiated by many state governments. Do laws designed to protect women from unsafe working conditions constrain the demand for their labour? This question sits at the centre of global debates about protective legislation in labour markets. Our recent research (Gupta et al. 2025) examines what happened when Indian states lifted long-standing bans that prevented women from working night shifts in factories. Our findings offer important lessons for policymakers seeking to expand female employment,

particularly considering the significant labour reforms that have been recently initiated by many state governments. This "paternalistic discrimination" (Buchmann et al. 2023) reflects a global pattern. At least 20 countries still prohibit women from working at night, while 45 countries ban women from sectors deemed "unsafe" by lawmakers (World Bank, 2024). These restrictions, however well-intentioned, assume women lack agency to make their own employment choices and that employers are unable to provide safe workplaces for

all workers. India's experience is particularly important given its strikingly low female labour force participation rates and the potential for manufacturing to provide formal employment opportunities for women. In the early 2000s, a series of High Court judgements held that prohibitions against women working at night were unconstitutional because they deprived women of economic opportunities. Following these judgements, between 2014 and 2017, seven Indian states—Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh,

Draft Electoral Rolls Released for All Four Assembly Constituencies of Etah Under SIR-2026



Etah

In accordance with the directives of the Election Commission of India, the draft electoral rolls for all four Assembly constituencies of Etah district were released on Tuesday under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) Programme-2026. A meeting was convened by Sub-District Election Officer/Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Satyaprakash with representatives of all recognized national and state-level political parties, during which copies of the draft electoral rolls were formally handed over. As per the draft rolls prepared after completion of the SIR process, Etah district now has a total of

10,91,541 registered voters, including 6,01,728 male 4,89,794 female and 19 third-gender voters. Constituency-wise figures indicate 2,92,999 voters in Aliganj (103), 2,64,787 in Etah Sadar (104), 2,71,948 in Marhara (105), and 2,61,807 in Jalesar (SC) (106) Assembly constituencies. The Sub-District Election Officer informed that during the door-to-door verification conducted under the SIR, 2,20,426 ASD (Absent, Shifted, Dead) voters were identified. During the revision process, the names of 32,604 deceased voters 1,01,057 permanently shifted persons, 13,686 duplicate registrations and 9449 other ineligible voters were removed from the

electoral rolls. For public convenience, the draft electoral rolls have also been made available on the District Election Officer official website (DEO portal). Claims and objections regarding the draft electoral rolls can be submitted up to February 6, 2026. The meeting was attended by District Congress President Haji Ashiq Hussain, BSP District President Dharmendra Soni, BJP General Secretary Sushil Gupta, CPI(M) representative Gyan Singh Baghel, Aam Aadmi Party representative Sonu Kumar, Samajwadi Party District President Parvez Zubairi, BJP leader Sachin Upadhyay, along with representatives of other recognized political Parties.

IAS Officer Swapnil Pal Assumes Charge as Kamrup Metropolitan District Commissioner



Assam

IAS officer Swapnil Pal formally took charge as the District Commissioner of Kamrup Metropolitan district, Assam on Monday. He was assigned this key responsibility under a recent transfer order issued by the Assam government. Swapnil Pal, a 2018 batch IAS officer, brings a track record of exemplary service from his previous role as Commissioner of Tinsukia district. His new assignment positions him to drive development in Guwahati and surrounding areas, focusing on urban admin-

istration and public welfare schemes. He has prior experience as Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) in Rangia, Kamrup district and has held other significant administrative positions. Local administrative circles view his appointment positively, given Kamrup Metropolitan rapid urban growth and challenges like flood management, traffic improvements, healthcare expansion and Smart City projects. After assuming charge, District Commissioner Pal held a meeting with officials and staff at the Collectorate office. Residents of the district have welcomed the new

DC, while various social organizations congratulated him and expressed expectations for swift action on issues such as waterlogging, waste management and housing development. Kamrup Metropolitan is Assam most vital administrative unit, encompassing Guwahati and several other areas. This appointment signals a new chapter in Assam administrative service with the state government promoting officer rotations to enhance efficiency. Pal policies are expected to play a pivotal role in reshaping the district future in the coming days.

Minister Ashok Singhal launches 'Swasthyaban Shramik Yojana' in Digboi, lays foundation stone for new health Centre

Assam

Health and Family Welfare and Water Resources Minister Ashok Singhal on Tuesday launched an ambitious health scheme titled 'Swasthyaban Shramik Yojana' at Halonghabi Tea Garden area in Digboi under Tinsukia district. The scheme aims to provide accessible, affordable and quality health-care services to the general public and workers residing in tea garden areas. Notably, a day earlier on Monday, Minister Singhal had rolled out three major health department schemes at several locations including Makum and Sadiya in Tinsukia district. Continuing his two-day programme, he on Tuesday not only launched the new scheme in Halonghabi Tea Garden but also laid the foundation stone of a health centre in the District. Speaking at the function organised at Halonghabi Tea Garden, Singhal said that the 'Swasthyaban Shramik Yojana' is a strong step taken by the state government for the welfare of the tea garden workers' community. He stressed that preventing illness and staying healthy is more important than merely treating diseases. "A healthy individual is an asset to society. Therefore, we must remain physically active. Only when every citizen of Assam becomes health-conscious and strong will the state be able to become more economically robust," the minister said in his address. He urged people to devote at least one hour every day to yoga, walking or other physical exercises. After the programme, the minister laid the foundation stone of the Chikarajan Mini Primary Health Centre (Mini PHC) at Philobari under the Digboi Assembly constituency. MLA of Digboi constituency Suren Phukan, Chief Executive Member of Moran Autonomous Council Arunjoyoti Moran, along with several distinguished guests and local dignitaries were present at Tuesday events.



Be careful to avoid sudden paralysis and heart attack in winter season: Dr. Ghulam Khwaja

Especially people above 40 years of age should get regular checkups done: Dr. Ghulam Khwaja

Bhadohi. Most people have to suffer serious diseases like heart attack and paralysis if they do not balance their daily routine and are not careful about eating and drinking. In this regard, senior heart specialist doctor Dr. Ghulam Khwaja, manager of Star Hospital and Heart Care Center located in



Ramraipur of the city, said that if caution is not taken in the winter season, the risk of heart attack and paralysis is higher. It is said that in cold weather, more blood is needed to keep the body warm. In winter, there is lack of blood in the heart etc. inside the body due to which

the risk of heart attack and paralysis increases. To avoid this, we should use hot water and be careful while eating and drinking. And to keep blood pressure under control, one should be tension free. Khwaja said that patients, especially those above 40 years of age,

should keep getting their checkups done regularly. They should get their blood pressure and sugar checked and keep consulting the doctor after the check-up, so that the patient can know the disease before the next diagnostician and get the right treatment. Dr. Ghulam Khawaja said that such patients should be cautious in eating and drinking, like oil, spices and other greasy things and should not use drinks and smoking at all. One should exercise regularly and live a tension free life. Khwaja said that most of the time when people have chest pain, they say that it is a gas problem and

consider it to be gas and get it treated, whereas it is actually a heart disease. If you treat it as gas then an incident can happen at any time and in such a case the patient may even die, hence do not mistake it for gas. He said that when there is chest pain or pain in both the arms, back or neck, then in such a situation get checked by a doctor immediately. It is said that if during preliminary investigation it is known that there is a heart disease then the doctor treats it properly. Dr. Ghulam Khawaja told about the symptoms of heart attack that in the beginning there is pain while walking, first there is momen-

tary pain then gradually the time increases, there is pain for 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes. Get tested at that time also so that the doctor can know that there is enzyme disease, this is called early prevention. The disease can be prevented with medicine. Khawaja said that if you have pain in chest, both arms and back, then consult a doctor immediately so that you can be saved from the disease. He said that heart attack does not give time immediately, in such a time, take the patient to the doctor as soon as possible, the sooner you go, the safer you will be.

Final Publication of Agra Division Graduate-Teacher Voter List Completed

Etah

The Sub-Divisional Election Officer, Satya Prakash, announced that, following the directives of the Election Commission of India, the final publication of the electoral rolls for the Agra Division Graduate and Teacher constituencies of the Legislative Council has been completed as scheduled. He stated that copies of the finalized voter lists have been provided to representatives of all recognized political parties, enabling them to review the lists in a timely manner. The Sub-Divisional Election Officer emphasized that the entire process was conducted in a fully transparent and impartial manner. Highlighting the importance of this step, he said that the final publication of the voter list is a crucial milestone in preparations for the upcoming



elections, ensuring a smooth, credible and reliable electoral process. He also urged all concerned parties to actively participate in the democratic process while strictly adhering to the guidelines issued by the Election Commission. The event was attended by prominent political representatives, including District Congress President

Ashiq Ali, BSP District President Dharmendra Soni, BJP General Secretary Sushil Gupta, CPI(M) representative Gyan Singh Baghel, Aam Aadmi Party representative Sonu Kumar, Samajwadi Party District President Parvez Zubairi, BJP leader Sachin Upadhyay and other party representatives.

Sanjeevani Hospital eye camp becomes an example of health care in Suriyawan

Bhadohi

Taking a commendable initiative towards overcoming the lack of better health facilities in rural areas, a massive free eye cataract operation camp was organized by Sanjeevani Hospital in Suriyawan Nagar Panchayat area, which gave a positive message in the field of health-care. A total of 250 people registered for their eyes to be examined in this camp, out of which after medical examination, 50 patients were found suitable for cataract operation. All these patients were successfully operated free of cost by lens implantation using modern technology, while the remaining patients will be operated on in the upcoming dates. The



camp was inaugurated by Ravindra Nath Tripathi, former MLA Bhadohi by lighting the lamp and cutting the ribbon. On this occasion, he said that such camps are a boon for the rural people, where due to financial constraints, people are not able to get timely treatment. In the camp, not only free check-up and operation facilities were provided, but also free blankets

were distributed to all the operated patients and vehicles were arranged to take them safely to their homes, which is an excellent example of humanitarian service. For this noble work, social workers, city residents and public representatives of the area praised Dr. Santosh Kumar, the director of Sanjeevani Hospital and congratulated him and said that he has taken a

step from darkness to light in the lives of hundreds of people. Dr. Giving information, Santosh Kumar said that such eye camps will be organized regularly on every Tuesday and Thursday, so that more and more needy patients can get the facility of free cataract treatment. He also informed that modern facilities like blood bank, CT scan, X-ray, pathology center are available in Sanjeevani Hospital and completely free medical facilities are provided to Ayushman card holders and patients eligible for other government health schemes. During the camp, patients and their families were made aware about eye diseases and were advised to get their eyes checked from time

to time. In this event, Additional District Information Officer Anil Kumar Singh, Councillor Ajay Modanwal, Awadhesh Umar, Vijay Shankar Rai, Rakesh Umar, Anil Verma, Munna Jaiswal, Mala Umar, Kishan Gupta, many respected journalists, distinguished citizens, public representatives and a large number of city residents were present. This eye camp organized by Sanjeevani Hospital was not only a health programme, but it will also be remembered as a strong step towards social responsibility, service spirit and good governance, which assured the people of rural areas of better, accessible and respectable health services.

Raashii Khanna says playing an Army wife in 120 Bahadur was emotionally challenging, showing strength, sacrifice, and quiet resilience

120 Bahadur tests Raashii

Pan-India star Raashii Khanna is set to play a demanding role in her upcoming Bollywood film *120 Bahadur*, portraying the life of an Army wife. She will be seen sharing the screen with Farhan Akhtar. At the film's music launch, Raashii opened up about the challenges of bringing this character to life, saying the emotional depth of the script tested her as an actor.

"I think I'm very fortunate to be part of *120 Bahadur*. Playing an Army wife is a challenge in itself," Raashii said. "Every scene was written with depth, and I often got very emotional while

performing. There's an undercurrent of loss throughout the film because, like every army wife, she has to accept that her loved one might not return. That's a heavy feeling to live with, and I tried my best to portray it authentically."

Raashii also acknowledged her co-star and director, saying, "Farhan Akhtar supported me throughout, and our director Rameesh Ghai is the captain of our ship."

The film promises to highlight the sacrifices and quiet resilience of military spouses, showcasing the emotional strength they carry every day. Raashii Khanna's performance is expected to be both nuanced and powerful, adding to her growing reputation as one of Indian cinema's versatile performers.

Known for her work across Telugu, Tamil, and Hindi films, Raashii Khanna continues to balance big commercial films with content-driven roles. Alongside *120 Bahadur*, she is gearing up for projects like *Farzi Season 2*, *Ustaad Bhagat Singh*, and *Talakhon Mein Ek*, continuing to shape the new wave of Indian cinema.

Mahavatar demands Vicky's discipline

As per reports, Vicky Kaushal to quit non-veg food and alcohol for Amar Kaushik's *Mahavatar*



Vicky Kaushal in *Mahavatar*

Vicky Kaushal is all set to play the role of Lord Parashurama in Amar Kaushik's *Mahavatar*. The first look of the film, which was released last year in November, had generated a lot of curiosity among the audience, and everyone is eagerly waiting for the movie.

According to a report in Bollywood Hungama, Vicky and Amar will quit alcohol and non-veg food as a part of their prep for the movie. A source told the portal, "A film like *Mahavatar* requires complete focus, and the duo have decided to give it all to make it a pure spectacle for the cinema-going audience. They have decided to quit non-veg food, and will start their prep for the film with a grand pooja ceremony towards the middle of next year."

"While Amar has already given up on the food habits, Vicky has decided to do so once the shoot for *Love And War* is wrapped up. It's his way of showing respect to the part of Lord Parashurama," added the source.

Prince and Yuvika introduce Ekleen

Actor couple Prince Narula and Yuvika Chaudhary finally revealed the face of their daughter Ekleen for the first time. On Wednesday, the duo, along with their one-year-old daughter, visited a Gurudwara in Mumbai to seek blessings on the occasion of Guru Nanak Jayanti. The couple, who had often hidden their daughter's face on social media, finally introduced her in public.

Prince was seen wearing a white kurta, twinning with his baby girl, who looked adorable in a pretty white dress, while Yuvika donned a beautiful red salwar suit. The family happily posed for the paparazzi, with Yuvika joining her hands in a gesture of respect and encouraging little Ekleen to do the same. Ekleen's cuteness stole hearts on social media.

A few days ago, Prince and Yuvika celebrated daughter's 1st birthday to-

gether. Sharing the photos, Prince wrote, "Happy birthday my baby doll @ekleennarula. I love u so much my baby. U have changed my life with ur beautiful smile, papa apke liye sab kare ge apka sab say acha insaan banane ke kosish kare ge tah ke ap sab ko respect do or full roadie banai ge mera beti fighter bane ge mama ke jaan or papa ke life."

Actor couple Prince Narula and Yuvika Chaudhary publicly reveal their one-year-old daughter Ekleen's face during Guru Nanak Jayanti celebrations



A new creative revolution

The Mumbai AI Film Festival (MAFF) recently hosted a landmark event at the historic Royal Opera House, uniting filmmakers, creators, and tech innovators to explore the future of storytelling.

With over 1,270 applicants and finalists from 19 cities and three countries, the festival highlighted how artificial intelligence is transforming Indian cinema. MAFF showcased AI-powered films and offered workshops on integrating technology with creative processes, emphasizing how algorithms, generative visuals, and smart editing can push cinematic boundaries.



Rooh-e-Noor: Women's ensemble



Academy and National Award-winning composer A.R. Rahman recently unveiled Rooh-e-Noor, a six-member all-women vocal ensemble led by Khatija Rahman. Launched under Rahman's KM Musiq label, the group also has Kannika Urs as Project Head.

The ensemble, comprising Khatija Rahman, Pooja Tiwari, Sana Aziz, Shaoni, Amina Rafiq, and Shifa Ruby, aims to celebrate the transformative power of women's voices. The band's production team includes vocal trainers Pooja Tiwari and Shaoni, music supervisors Amina Rafiq and Shifa Ruby, and music production by Sana Aziz, Sarthak Kalyani, and Nakul Abhyankar.

"Rooh-e-Noor isn't just a band, it's a light that connects hearts," Rahman said.

Tanya's big Mumbai move

Bollywood actress Tanya Maniktala has taken a major step in her professional journey as she is officially shifting her base from New Delhi to Mumbai. Sharing her thoughts on the big move, Tanya told IANS: "Mumbai is the dream of every cinema lover. It's the city that breathes cinema, and for me, being here feels like being in the middle of all the action. Mumbai has given me so many opportunities to fulfill my dreams, and every project I've worked on here has helped me grow as an actor and as a person."

The actress added: "It's where my roots are, my family, my memories. Mumbai is where my heart stays. Due to my upcoming work commitments and projects lined up here, I've decided to shift my base to Mumbai. It just feels like the right time to make this transition." Tanya will next be seen in *Paan Parda Zarda*. The show is set in the gritty underbelly of the gangster world. *Paan Parda Zarda* promises a powerful narrative driven by layered characters, intense drama, and high-stakes action.



Pic: Instagram: @tanyamaniktala



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

Mamdani's wearing

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

Thailand frees 18 PoWs

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

Peru train crash kills 1

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

Travel ban on US nationals

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

US freezes care funds

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

Eurostar snag fixed

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

Iran appoints cent bank gov

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

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

Israel to ban dozens of aid agencies from Gaza

TEL AVIV

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

only partially functional and face shortages of essential medical equipment and supplies. The total collapse of sanitation infrastructure has left 7.40,000 people vulnerable to toxic flooding."

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



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

A statement

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

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



Granddaughter of JFK no more

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

In November, Schlossberg, a climate journalist, announced her diagnosis of an aggressive form of cancer. She said in an essay she had been given less than a year to live. Schlossberg was the daughter of designer Edwin Schlossberg and diplomat Caroline Kennedy, and is survived by her husband George Moran and their children, Edwin, 3, and Josephine, 1.

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

2026: FAST FORWARD

The year is packed with major global events

POLITICS

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

MUSIC

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

SPACE

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



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

Marilyn Monroe's 100th: Centennial celebrations.

Hadi murder suspect in Dubai

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

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

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

way. This case is completely false and based on a fabricated conspiracy," Masud said.

"Because of this false implication, I was forced to flee the country and come to Dubai. I came here with great difficulty, though I held a valid 5-year Dubai visa," he added.

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

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

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

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

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

France to ban social media for U-15s

PARIS

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

UKRAINIAN UAV ATTACK ON PUTIN'S RESIDENCE

Russia releases video proof

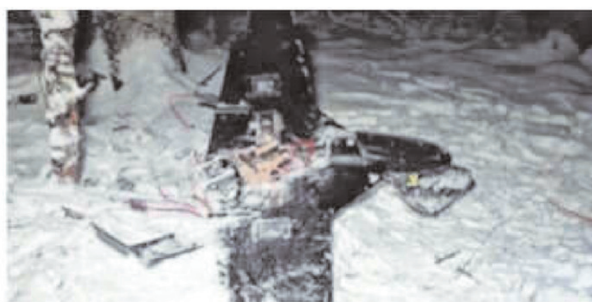
MOSCOW

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Power company DTEK said two of its energy facilities suffered significant damage. The company said 10 substations that distribute electricity in Odesa were damaged in December alone.

NY speech: Xi vows to reunify China & Taiwan

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



sp Briefs

GREATER NOIDA
National
Boxing
QFs set

Nikhil Zareen, Pawan Bartwal, and Sumit secured dominant wins at Gautam Buddha University to reach the quarter-finals. For the first time, men's and women's championships are held simultaneously, featuring 600 boxers competing across 10 weight categories.

when cricket
meets comedy
royalty

Former cricketer Yuvraj Singh with veteran Telugu actor and Padma Shri awardee Brahmanandam at the official announcement of the former's partnership as Brand Ambassador for Big Academy in Hyderabad, Telangana on Tuesday PTI

NOIDA

Lucknow
Lions halt
Yoddhas

Lucknow defeated Yamuna Yoddhas 60-44 in a high-stakes UPKL clash. Young raider Shivam scored a perfect 19 points from 19 raids, while Arjun Deshwal's leadership ensured Lucknow maintained their top-table position, denying Yamuna the second spot.

gibbs-white
lights up london

Nottingham Forest's Morgan Gibbs-White (centre) celebrates scoring during the English Premier League soccer match between West Ham United and Nottingham Forest in London on Tuesday AP/PTI

NEW DELHI

SAI partners
for athlete
care

The Sports Authority of India and Safdarjung Hospital will sign an

English Daily
AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code
UPENG04488

Prayagraj
Printer, Publisher &
Owner Swami Shree
Yogi Satyam for
Yog Satsanga Samiti

Printed at
PARASHAKTI OFFSET
118A/2A Chaukhandi
Kydganj, Prayagraj-211003
Uttar Pradesh

Published from
Kriyayoga Asharam
& Anusandhan Sansthan
Jhansi, Prayagraj-211019

Editor:
SWAMI SHREE YOGI SATYAM
All disputes of news and
publication against the
AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH
are the subject matter of
Allahabad Jurisdiction.

Email ID:
akhandbharatsandesh@gmail.com
Mob. 9415235084, 9565333000

IMPASSE PERSISTS | ICC open to dialogue, but rejects Bangladesh's venue shift demand

Security talks on, but no move from Kolkata & Mumbai

DUBAI/DHAKA

The diplomatic stalemate over Bangladesh's participation in the T20 World Cup in India continues, with the International Cricket Council (ICC) rejecting Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) demand to

shift its group matches from Kolkata and Mumbai to Sri Lanka. However, the ICC has expressed willingness to "work closely" to address BCB's security concerns.

BCB's Firm
Stance

At a press conference,

BCB officials were uncompromising. Government advisor Asif Nazrul asserted, "On the questions of Bangladesh's security, honour, and dignity, we will not compromise." BCB President Aminul Islam invoked the India-Pakistan "hybrid model" precedent, arguing the same security

rationale should apply to Bangladesh.

ICC's Position

The BCB categorically denied reports of an ICC ultimatum to "play in India or forfeit," calling them "completely false." The board stated it is engaged in "constructive engage-

ment" with the ICC, seeking an "affable and practical solution."

Root Cause &
Context

The standoff stems from the BCCI's instruction to IPL's Kolkata Knight Riders to release Bangladeshi pacer Mustafizur Rahman, a move

linked to rising diplomatic tensions. In retaliation, the BCB submitted its venue-shift request. Mustafizur has since been picked up by the Pakistan Super League (PSL).

What Next?

With the World Cup starting February 7, time is

critical. ICC security planners will now work with BCB on detailed assurances. While a last-minute venue change appears unlikely, the coming days will test whether cricket can navigate these turbulent political waters and ensure all teams compete in the marquee event.

U19 WC 2026 SCOUT REPORT | One tournament...One generation...Endless possibilities

TEEN TITANS
READY TO SHINE

NEW DELHI

The ICC Men's Under-19 Cricket World Cup 2026, scheduled from January 15 to February 6 in Zimbabwe and Namibia, promises a thrilling showcase of cricket's next generation. From record-breaking batters to match-winning all-rounders, the tournament is stacked with young stars ready to announce themselves on the world stage.

Here's a continent-spanning watchlist of players expected to headline the marquee event, as highlighted in the ICC's media release:

Australia

Oliver Peake (Captain)

A U19 World Cup winner already, Peake brings experience and composure. With a Big Bash contract, a first-class debut for Victoria, and exposure on Australia's Test tour of Sri Lanka, he leads Australia armed with pedigree and polish.



England

Farhan Ahmed (Captain)

The younger brother of Rehan Ahmed, Farhan has rewritten English records — youngest to take 10 wickets in a first-class match, breaking a mark held since 1865. Returning for his second U19 World Cup, he captains England with wicket-taking pedigree.



South Africa

Jorich van Schalkwyk

A record-shatterer of rare scale. He smashed 164* to break a 25-year SA U19 record, then followed it with a historic 215, becoming the first double-century in Youth ODIs. Now with first-class experience, he eyes Player of the Tournament honours.



Bangladesh

Rizan Hossain

A pace-bowling all-rounder inspired by Ben Stokes, Rizan brings balance. He boasts centuries against England and consistent returns against Afghanistan, making him a key middle-order and first-change option.



Ireland

Adam Leckey

Ireland's batting mainstay, Leckey piled up 323 runs in five innings during their Zimbabwe tour. An Overseas Scholarship recipient, he brings experience, technique and temperament at the top.



West Indies

Jonathan van Lange

A rare multi-sport athlete and national table tennis champion, Van Lange adds flair and athleticism to the West Indies batting unit and will be a key support to skipper Joshua Dorne.



Final Word

From teenage phenoms to battle-ready leaders, the U19 World Cup 2026 is set to be a proving ground for tomorrow's superstars. As cricket's future converges in southern Africa, expect records to tumble, careers to ignite, and new heroes to rise.

Pakistan

Sameer Minhas

Form player of the tournament coming in. His 172 in the U19 Asia Cup final was historic — the highest-ever by a Pakistan U19 batter.



Zimbabwe

Kian Blignaut

Son of former international Andy Blignaut, Kian is a top-order batter who can also bowl leg-spin. A U19 century and strong 'A' team performances suggest he's ready to carry host-nation hopes alongside twin brother Michael.



Sri Lanka

Sethmika Seneviratne

A right-arm seamer who thrives on discipline and control. With eight wickets at 15.75 in the U19 Asia Cup and strong overseas returns, he will spearhead Sri Lanka's bowling revival.



Afghanistan

Faisal Shinozoda

A technically sound top-order batter, Faisal starred in the U19 Asia Cup with 155 runs, including a century vs Bangladesh — a team he clearly enjoys batting against. Versatile across the top order, he is Afghanistan's batting Lynchpin.



India

Vaibhav Suryavanshi

Arguably the most talked-about teenager in world cricket, Suryavanshi (14) is already redefining prodigy. A century on U19 debut at 13, the youngest-ever IPL signee, and a blistering 35-ball IPL hundred, underline his meteoric rise. He smashed 262 runs at a strike rate of 182 in the U19 Asia Cup, including a record-breaking 171 vs UAE.

Ayush Mhatre (Captain)

India's leader brings consistency and calm. With a List A average of 65.42 and as India's top scorer in the U19 Asia Cup 2024, Mhatre will be the backbone of the batting unit.



MY NATION COMES FIRST

Indian presenter denies BPL 'Drop', calls it personal opt-out

NEW DELHI

Indian sports broadcaster Ridhima Pathak has forcefully denied media reports claiming she was "dropped" from her assignment with the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). In a statement on social media, she asserted the decision was a personal one to opt out.

"In the last few hours, there's been a narrative suggesting I was 'dropped' from the BPL. That is not true. I made a personal decision

to opt out. For me, my nation comes first—always," Pathak stated.

THE CONTEXT:
HEIGHTENED
SPORTS
DIPLOMACY
TENSIONS

Her announcement comes amidst a sharp deterioration in India-Bangladesh cricket relations, triggered by:

The BCCI's instruction to Kolkata Knight Riders to release Bangladeshi pacer Mustafizur Rahman from his IPL contract.

The Bangladesh government's order to suspend the broadcast of the upcoming IPL season.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) approaching the ICC to relocate Bangladesh's 2026 T20 World Cup

matches from India to Sri Lanka over security concerns.

PATHAK'S
STAND: 'CRICKET
DESERVES
TRUTH'

Emphasizing her commitment to the sport's values, Pathak added: "I value the game of cricket far beyond any single assignment... I'll continue to stand for integrity, for clarity, and for the spirit of the game. Cricket deserves truth. Period."

She thanked supporters and declined to comment further.

THE BIGGER
PICTURE

While Pathak did not explicitly link her decision to the political rift, the timing underscores how sports

personnel are increasingly navigating complex geopolitical currents. Her statement reflects a growing trend where individuals in the sports ecosystem feel compelled to take principled stands as off-field tensions spill into the arena.

THE VERDICT

Ridhima Pathak's clarification moves her BPL exit from a narrative of professional rejection to one of personal and possibly patriotic choice. It highlights the delicate position of sports professionals in cross-border leagues during diplomatic frosts. As the India-Bangladesh cricket impasse deepens, her stand adds another layer to the story, where the game's "spirit" is being invoked beyond the boundary rope.

KOLKATA

The opening day of the Tata Steel Chess India witnessed a masterclass from a legend and a statement from a prodigy as five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand and American teen Hans Niemann emerged joint leaders with 2.5 points after three rounds of Rapid games on Wednesday.

Anand's timeless
class

Returning to the tournament after six years, the 56-year-old showed his enduring brilliance. He outplayed Wesley So of the USA in round one, drew with China's Wei Yi, and then clinically defeated compatriot Aravindh Chithambaram to share the top spot.

Niemann's bold
charge

The young American GM Hans Niemann matched Anand's score, causing a major upset by defeating R. Praggnanandhaa in round three after earlier beating Russia's Volodar Murzin and drawing with Vidit Gujrathi.



Chess Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand during a match at the Tata Steel Chess India 2026 Rapid and Blitz Open tournament in Kolkata on Wednesday PTI

Other Key Results

Vidit Gujrathi delivered a powerful performance, dominating Arjun Erigaisi with a rare knight-and-bishop checkmate. In the women's section, American IM Carissa Yip leads with 2.5 points, while India's Vantika Agrawal impressed with 2/3 points, including a win over R. Vaisali.

Standings
Snapshot

(After 3 Rounds)

Open (Leaders): Viswanathan Anand, Hans Niemann (USA) — 2.5 pts.
Women (Leader): Carissa Yip (USA) — 2.5 pts.