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Bengaluru woman arrested for killing husband and projecting it as a case of heart attack

Sanjay Kumar Bengaluru, January 13: Bengaluru police on Saturday arrested a woman on charges of killing her husband with the help of her lover and then trying to project it as a case of heart attack. The incident was reported from HSR Layout area. The accused has been identified as Nandini Bai, a resident of HSR Layout, while her deceased 30-year-old husband was named Venkata Nayak. The police have also arrested her lover Nitish Kumar. According to the police, Nandini had called Nitish home on January 9 while Venkata was out. But he returned home and caught the two red-handed, following which an argument ensued between Nandini and Venkata. Following this, Nandini and Nitish hit the victim with a stone,

leading to his death. They dragged his body near the toilet and placed the stone there. She then called the police and claimed that her husband had collapsed near the toilet and died after banging his head on the sharp-edged stone. The police initially registered a case of unnatural death. However, the post-mortem report revealed that it was a case of murder and preliminary investigation also confirmed that it was not a natural death. The police detained Nandini and she confessed to the crime on being questioned. The probe revealed that Nandini and Nitish were childhood friends and hailed from Sathya Sai region in Andhra Pradesh. They had an affair and Nitish would come from Andhra Pradesh to meet Nandini whenever her husband was away.

Seven-month-old boy mauled to death by stray dogs in Bhopal

Bhopal, January 13: A seven-month-old boy was mauled to death by a pack of stray dogs in Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal, police said on Saturday. A video of the incident, which occurred in Ayodhya Nagar, on Wednesday, went viral on social media and was brought to the notice of the police and the administration, an official said. The police exhumed the baby's body, which his family had buried on the day of the incident, and sent it for post-mortem, he said. The baby belonged to a family of labourers. Before the incident, his mother placed him on the ground as she had some work nearby, inspector Mahesh Nilhare of Ayodhya Nagar police station said. A pack of dogs bit the child and dragged him away, he said. People in the vicinity raised an alarm, but by then, the dogs had disfigured and severed an arm of the infant, killing him on the spot, the official said. The child's family, hailing from Guna, buried his body in a village close to Bhopal, he said, adding that the police would register a first information report in connection with the case. Meanwhile, an official said that the district administration has provided financial help of Rs 50,000 to the boy's family, and another Rs 50,000 would be disbursed soon. The Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC)

Committed to INDIA, but Congress should acknowledge its limitations in Bengal: Trinamool Congress

Simmi Kaur Babbar Kolkata, January 13: The Trinamool Congress (TMC), which is abstaining from the virtual meeting of the INDIA bloc, on Saturday, affirmed its commitment to it, but said that Congress should recognise its limitations in Bengal and permit the party to spearhead the political battle in it. Top leaders of parties of the opposition INDIA bloc are holding discussions on strengthening the alliance, chalking out a formula on seat sharing and deciding whether to have a convenor of the opposition parties' grouping. This is the second attempt as the previous attempt to hold a virtual meeting a few days ago did not materialise. A TMC MP, familiar with the situation, emphasising the party's 'dedication' to the grouping said, "We are committed to the INDIA alliance and want to work together to defeat the BJP. But we sincerely wish that the Congress leadership acknowledges the limitations and weaknesses of their Bengal unit and allows us (TMC) to lead

the fight in the state." The TMC, on Friday, said that Mamata Banerjee would not be able to attend the virtual meeting

seat sharing for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, citing its prior stance which it had communicated to the Congress. The

solo if negotiations fail. Recently, state Congress president and the party's leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who is a vocal critic of the TMC, asserted that his party would not 'beg' for seats from the TMC. Multiple sources familiar with the situation have confirmed that the TMC could consider sharing three to four seats with the Congress out of the state's total 42 Lok Sabha seats. In the 2019 elections, the TMC secured 22 seats and the Congress bagged two, while the BJP secured 18 seats in the state. Chowdhury had won the Baharampur seat, while Abu Hasem Khan Choudhury, a former union minister, secured a third consecutive win from Malda Dakshin. Banerjee's proposal for an alliance between the TMC, Congress and the Left in West Bengal, in November last year, met swift dismissal from the CPI (M) and criticism from some Congress leaders. Days later, she accused the two parties of aligning with the BJP and asserted that the TMC would confront the saffron camp in West Bengal.



as she has "prior engagements and will not be able to change them at 16 hours' notice". "We were told no one else can attend as only one person is allowed from each of the INDIA constituent parties," he said. Earlier, the TMC had declined to send representatives to meetings with the Congress national alliance committee on

TMC had offered Congress two seats in West Bengal based on the result of the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The Congress, however, deemed the offer inadequate. Last week, the TMC Lok Sabha party leader Sudip Bandopadhyay indicated the party's willingness to collaborate with the Congress, but said the party would go

Proposal to make Nitish convener came up at INDIA meet

Navdeep Singh Sahni Patna, January 13: A close aide of Bihar Chief Minister (CM) Nitish Kumar, on Saturday, confirmed that a 'proposal' to make the JD(U) president convener of the INDIA bloc came up at the meeting of coalition leaders through virtual mode. Mallikarjun Kharge named INDIA bloc chief at key meet, Nitish Kumar's name proposed as convener. However, JD(U) national general secretary Sanjay Kumar Jha said Kumar had "so far not given approval" to the offer which would be deliberated upon within the party even as he claimed that the Bihar CM was in favour of a Congress leader becoming the chairperson. "Yes, there was a proposal (prastaav aaya tha)", said Jha, who has been accompanying Kumar to all meetings of the alliance, when jour-

nalists approached him with queries outside the chief minister's residence. "The CM has so far not given his approval to the proposal", he said, adding "we will let

Kharge the chairperson of the recently formed alliance. "On the contrary, it was our honourable CM himself who had suggested that someone from the Congress head the coalition", claimed Jha. Meanwhile, senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad scoffed at the turn of events in the INDIA bloc which was formed last year following Nitish Kumar's efforts to bring together parties opposed to the ruling NDA at the Centre. "Nitish babu reminds me of the Urdu verse bade beabru hokar tere kuche se ham nikle (it was in utter disgrace that I was made to exit your place)", said Prasad, who is also the MP from Patna Sahib. He also remarked, "Let a SIT be formed to investigate who gave assent, who refused, and who quarrelled (kisne inkar kiya, kisne ikrar kiya, kisne takrar kiya) at the meeting. Even by a long shot, they have no chance of forming the next government."



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to visit Iran as fears of regional war escalate

Tejinder Kaur Babbar New Delhi, January 13: With the security situation in the Red Sea becoming more untenable, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is planning to visit Iran next week to understand the scenario from the other side after having spoken to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday. The minister is visiting Iran after massive rocket, drone and missile salvos were conducted by the US-UK forces on Ansar Allah's (Houthi) position in Yemen on Thursday night. Jaishankar will meet his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and hold discussions on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and the subsequent Houthi attacks on commercial shipping to force Israel

to lift the besieged enclave's blockade. India is bracing for "imported" inflation because most ships to and from Europe, except those flying the Russian and Chinese flags, are trying to avoid the Red Sea-Suez Canal area. As a result, they are taking a long detour via the Cape of Good Hope that has jacked up transportation costs to almost double the pre-

vious rate. Iran is playing a vital role in the conflict as it is backing at least five parties that are keeping Israel militarily engaged — Ansar Allah (Yemen), Hezbollah (Lebanon), Hamas (Gaza) and Iraq-based Kata'ib Hezbollah and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq. The US State Department readout after the Jaishankar-Blinken conversation stated that the latter "welcomed increased cooperation with India in defending freedom of navigation in the region". Iran though has the opposite aim of disrupting commercial shipping, especially of Israel-owned ships, in order to put pressure on Tel Aviv to let in humanitarian aid in adequate volume into Gaza.



Samyukt Kisan Morcha to hold a tractor rally in Patiala District on January 26

Patiala, January 13: Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM-Patiala unit) held a meeting at Gurdwara Dukh Nivaran Sahib today. The meeting was chaired by SKM leader Davinder Singh Punia. It was unanimously decided in the meeting that a tractor march will be held at Patiala, Samana, Pataran, Nabha and Rajpura on January 26, to mark the anniversary of Kisan March at Delhi on January 26. Pamphlets will be printed and distributed in the villages for encouraging farmers for their participation in the march. Punia said that huge numbers of farmers are expected to participate in the tractor rally. During the tractor rally the farmers will demand the strict implementation of MSP on crops and compulsory lifting of the produce. Beside, other demands including loan waivers and cancellation of pending criminal cases will be highlighted during the rally. During the meeting, the leaders of Kisan Morcha also lambasted the central government for driving a false propaganda against kisan leader Dr. Darsanpal. Leaders including Kulwant Singh, Gurmeet Singh Dittuvar, Gurbachan Singh, Hari Singh Daun, Jarnail Singh Harbhajan Singh Butar and Kuldeep Singh said the Kisan Morcha and farmers will give a suitable response to the propaganda tactics being played by the government to foil the tractor rally.

Registration of 15-year-old government vehicles to be cancelled: Mukesh Agnihotri

Naresh Malhotra Shimla, January 13: Registration of government vehicles completing 15 years would be cancelled and these vehicles would be scrapped, Himachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri, who also holds the transport portfolio, said on Saturday. Addressing the reporters here on Saturday, Agnihotri said that six scrapping centres would be established in the state and expression of interest has been invited for setting up these centres under the scrapping policy. These vehicles would be replaced with electric vehicles. Terming it as a "year of reforms" in the transport department, the deputy chief minister said

the fitness certificates of private vehicles would be issued through automatic testing stations. Earlier, it was done manually. Informing that 50 per cent of the total accidents take place

directions have been issued for identification of accident-prone stretches (black spots) to take remedial steps with the help of the Public Works Department and district administrations. A deadline has been set to install an intelligent traffic management system and CCTVs at all 12 transport barriers in the state by June 30 this year. There are 22,43,524 vehicles in the state, including 19,25,593 private and 3,17,931 commercial vehicles. At present, there are 2,811 electric vehicles in the state, majority of which are two wheelers. Out of these, 2,412 are private vehicles and 399 are commercial vehicles, he informed. As many as 1,221 applications have been received



on the national highways and human error is responsible for the majority of the road accidents, he said that

Punjab model Divya Pahuja's body found from Bhakra canal in Haryana

Chandigarh, January 13: Body of Punjab ex-model Divya Pahuja, who was shot dead in a hotel, was on Saturday recovered from a canal in Haryana's Fatehabad, said a Gurugram police official. The body



has been recovered from a subsidiary canal of the Bhakra in Tohana, said Gurugram Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime) Varun Kumar Dahiya. The Gurugram police said Pahuja's body was dumped in the Bhakra canal near Patiala in Punjab on January 3, a day after she was murdered. Police based

their information on disclosures made by Balraj Gill, one of the men who allegedly disposed of her body. Pahuja, 27, was shot dead in a hotel room in Gurugram on January 2. She was killed because she had allegedly been extorting money from the hotel owner by blackmailing him with his "obscene pictures". The 27-year-old Gurugram-based model had recently secured bail after seven years in connection with the alleged fake encounter of Gurugram's most-wanted gangster, Sandeep Gadoli. Pahuja was allegedly killed by Abhijeet Singh, the owner of the hotel City Point, where she was staying, and his associates Hemraj and Om Prakash. Both Hemraj and Om Prakash used to work in Abhijeet's hotel. The police had accessed the CCTV footage where the accused can be seen escaping the crime spot in a blue BMW car, carrying Divya's body in the boot. Besides, another CCTV footage showed Abhijeet, the woman, and another person arriving at the hotel reception on January 2 and proceeding towards Room No 111.

### Stop issuance of caste certificates with Jagan photo, Varla writes to Chief Secy

**VIJAYAWADA.** The TDP has urged Chief Secretary KS Jawahar Reddy to stop the issuance of caste certificates with the photo of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. In a letter to the Chief Secretary on Friday, TDP general secretary and Politburo member Varla Ramaiah recalled the assurance given by the Chief Election Commissioner that free and fair elections will be guaranteed by providing a level playing field to all the political parties in the State.

"The revenue authorities are now issuing caste certificates with the photo of Jagan. This self-acclaim and eulogy are quite unprecedented and uncalled for to discharge public duties. It is nothing but promotion of political interests and personality cult at the expense of public



exchequer leaving ethical and moral considerations," he observed.

Varla said the election notification is expected anytime and the Model Code of Conduct comes into effect with immediate effect. Mentioning the code, Varla said, "The party in power, whether at the Centre or in the State or States concerned, shall ensure that no cause is given for any complaint that it has used its official position for the purposes of its election campaign." "Keeping this in view, we demand that this unethical practice of political promotion be stopped forthwith by directing the administration not to use the photo of Jagan on official documents like caste certificates and passbooks," he said.

## Talks to resolve strike of Anganwadi staff fail

Education Minister Botcha Satyanarayana and Advisor to Government Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy participated in the talks with the unions of Anganwadi workers on Friday.

**VIJAYAWADA.** The talks between the group of ministers representing the State government, and the leaders of Anganwadi workers and helpers failed to yield results for the third time. On Friday evening, Education Minister Botcha Satyanarayana and Advisor to Government Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy participated in the talks with the unions of Anganwadi workers, who have been on an indefinite strike for the past 32 days.

Speaking on the developments after discussions with the Anganwadi union leaders, Sajjala said the State

government has been initiating discussions with the intention to resolve the issues of the Anganwadi workers.

"The government is determined to address the demands of the Anganwadi workers and helpers. As promised by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, we have increased the wages of Anganwadi workers and helpers. Steps are being taken to fix TA and DA of Anganwadi staff," he said. He further made it clear that police never misbehaved with Anganwadi staff, and they invoked the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) for the sake of

pregnant women and infants who are facing trouble due to non-supply of nutrition kits. "However, for the benefit of pregnant women and infants, we have made an alternative arrangement due to strike of Anganwadi staff, Sajjala explained and requested the workers and helpers on behalf of the government to join their duties after calling of the stir.

Alleging that there was a political agenda behind the Anganwadi strike, Sajjala clarified that new workers will be recruited as per the rules, reiterating that the government should work according to the needs of the



### Karnataka HC upholds permission denial to medical college



**BENGALURU.** The Karnataka High Court upheld the disapproval for the renewal of permission for 150 first year MBBS seats at GR Medical College and Research Centre, Mangaluru, for the academic year 2022-23 and also shifting of students to other medical colleges.

The division bench of Justices PS Dinesh Kumar and TG Shivashankaregowda passed the order, dismissing the petition filed by GR Medical College. The National Medical Council (NMC) on December 13, 2021 granted permission to the college to

establish the medical college for an intake of 150 students from 2021-22. On September 5 and 6, 2022, NMC conducted an inspection. Based on the inspection report, the renewal of permission has been disapproved for 2022-23. The college stated that the inspection was conducted during Onam which is in violation of Regulation 8(3)(1) of the establishment of Medical Colleges Regulation, 1999. The court, however, said Onam is not declared a holiday by the state government. The allegations that the inspection was contrary

to the Regulation is untenable. The court is not in dispute that there is no denial with regard to the deficiencies pointed out by NMC except for an explanation that the medical college had declared a holiday. No ground is made out to exercise extraordinary jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution to interfere with the order, the court said. The denial of permission would jeopardise the careers of students. No exception can be taken to the state government re-locating the candidates to different colleges, it added. A

## Activists oppose Karnataka govt order on surrendering wildlife articles

The activists sent a letter to the chief wildlife warden of the Karnataka forest department and Minister Khandre, pointing to the legal factor of the proposed amnesty.

**BENGALURU.** The Karnataka state government's one-time order asking people to surrender wildlife articles in their possession has evoked strong opposition from activists and environmentalists. They sent a letter to the chief wildlife warden of the Karnataka forest department, and to Forest, Environment and Ecology Minister Eshwar Khandre, pointing to the legal factor of the proposed amnesty. Praveen Bhargav, trustee, Wildlife First, in a letter dated January 11, 2024, said the proposed amnesty scheme for surrendering animal articles and trophies may not be in compliance with the law, and a recent Supreme Court judgment in 1720/2023 (SLP No. 15232/2020).

He said that as per the judgment, the declaration of Wildlife Stock Rules, 2003, framed by the Central government, the time period for declaration is over in 2003. It overrides any other rule framed by the state government in this regard in 1973. "The



recent amendments in 2022 have not provided any fresh opportunity to declare any animal article. On the contrary, the newly inserted Section 42A in the Wildlife Protection Act provides for surrender of animal articles or trophies which have been legally held under a Certificate of Ownership. Thus, that the intention of Parliament was not to provide an opportunity to facilitate surrender by those without a Certificate of Ownership," he said. The letter also pointed out that a statute must be read as a whole in context, and not based on an individual provision alone. In the present

issue, other provisions of the Act apply, like Section 39(2) which mandates that any person who obtains possession by any means must, within 48 hours, report to the nearest police station or authorised officer; Section 39(3) which lays down that no person shall, without previous permission of the Chief Wildlife Warden or authorised officer, acquire or keep government property; Section 48A which imposes restriction of transportation of wildlife; and Section 49 which prohibits the receiving or acquisition of any wild animal, article or trophy.

"The rules, guidelines or orders cannot be in excess of law and if so, they will be ab-initio void to that extent. In view of the legal position and court order, the government and department should get the matter examined by a competent committee of independent legal experts, since enabling such surrender will have wide-ranging implications for wildlife protection," Bhargav said.

## Write clear, legible prescriptions: Odisha govt to doctors after high court directive

The Health and Family Welfare department has issued a circular instructing physicians to stop zig zag handwriting which, in most cases, is not readable by the common man or by judicial officers.

**BHUBANESWAR.** Days after strong observations of the Orissa High Court on doctors' handwriting, the state government on Friday directed medical professionals to ensure every prescription, postmortem and medico-legal report is in legible writing. The Health and Family Welfare department has issued a circular instructing physicians to stop zig-zag handwriting which, in most cases, is not readable by the common man or by judicial officers. Despite instructions to prescribe in clear and legible handwriting reflecting generic names of medicines, the department observed that a substantial number of doctors in the state resort to such handwriting which cannot be read.

In an order issued to all the medical centres, private clinics and medical colleges and hospitals, chief secretary PK Jena said, "The doctors must write in proper handwriting or in a typed form when they are prescribing medicine or writing medico-legal reports as per the guidelines of National Medical Commission (NMC)." The chief secretary also urged the doctors, dealing with medico-legal issues and writing casually with very poor handwriting, to change their attitude and write either in capital letter or in a typed form

or in good handwriting so nobody suffers from unnecessary difficulty in comprehending them. Expressing displeasure over negligence by many of the medical officers in following government directions given from time to time to prescribe in clear handwriting, Jena said the high court direction must be followed scrupulously. Even as the duty schedules of medical professionals are erratic and finding time to write something comfortably often hinders their capacity to examine more and more patients within the stipulated time, medicine stores often find it difficult to understand the actual name of drugs.

In a stern order last week, the high court had directed the chief secretary to issue a circular to all the medical centres instructing them to ensure medicine prescriptions and medico-legal reports are written in proper handwriting or in typed form. Considering a petition filed by the father of a person who died of snakebite, the court had taken strong exception to the casual approach of most doctors while prescribing drugs or writing postmortem reports which has been badly affecting the comprehension of medico-legal documents.

## Odisha BJP to set up panel to bring in party hoppers

**BHUBANESWAR.** Following the central party's footsteps, the state BJP has decided to constitute a screening committee to identify leaders from other political parties desirous of joining the saffron outfit ahead of the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

The focus will be on Lok Sabha and Assembly seats in which the organisation of the party is weak and where it does not have sitting MPs or MLAs. State unit president Manmohan Samal informed this to mediapersons after the meeting of the election management committee held here on Friday.

However, he did not elaborate more on the issue. Sources in the BJP claimed as many sidelined leaders from other political parties particularly the ruling BJD are in touch with



the party for joining it ahead of the general elections, such committee has become necessary to screen them. Those with winning potential in Lok Sabha and Assembly seats are likely to be considered

for induction into BJP. However, sources maintained it will take some time to form the committee as it needs clearance from the central leadership. Several senior leaders of the state unit will be tasked with screening of those aspiring to join the state BJP. The task will be more complex as screening of Assembly seats will also have to be done.

Meanwhile the election management committee of the party met here in the evening in the presence of Odisha in-charge Sunil Bansal and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. As elections are only three months away, a decision was taken to expedite all organisational preparations and intensify campaign at the grassroots.

While BJP has eight Lok Sabha members from the state, the party's strength in the Assembly is 22 in a House of 147.

## Odisha: Man arrested for obstructing work, abusing lady ASI

**BHUBANESWAR.** City police arrested a 29-year-old man for allegedly obstructing repair on NH-16 near Hi-Tech Square on Thursday night and threatening a lady assistant sub-inspector (ASI) with dire consequences when she confronted him.

Accused Aparup Narayan Rout of Kesura hurled abuses at National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) officials, road engineers, contractors, and workers. ASI Anjana Baral of Mancheswar police station and other personnel, who were patrolling in the area rushed to the spot and confronted Rout. However, Rout abused Baral in obscene language and even manhandled her.

He also threatened to kill her. Rout was then overpowered by the personnel and whisked away to Mancheswar police station. "A case was registered and Rout arrested. A car was also seized from him," said an officer of Mancheswar police station.



**VHP state president Viji Thampi is the lone leader scheduled to attend the consecration representing Sangh organisation s in the state.**

## Sangh Parivar aims to cover 50 lakh houses in Kerala with 'Akshat' distribution

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.** Determined to fully cash in on the Ayodhya sentiment ahead of the general election, the Sangh Parivar in Kerala aims to cover 35-50 lakh houses in the state with distribution of 'Akshat' (worshipped rice) from the Ram temple by January 15. The parivar organisations, including RSS, VHP, Hindu Aikya Vedi, BJP, Sevabharathi and BMS, began the initiative on January 1.

VHP state president Viji Thampi is the lone leader scheduled to attend the consecration representing Sangh organisations in the state. As many as 26 seers representing different mutts, including Mata Amritanandamayi, Swami Chidanandapuri, Swami Udit Chaitanya, Swami Amritaswarupananda Puri, Swami Viviktananda and Swami Brahmaswaroopananda, are expected to take part in the ceremony. Other prominent invitees include actor Mohanlal, director Priyadarshan, SNDP Yogam general secretary Vellappally Natesan, NSS general secretary G Sukumaran Nair, thantri of Guruvayur temple Chennai



Dineshan Namboodiripad and that of Sabarimala temple Kandarajeevaru, in addition to some business magnates and few Padma award winners. "They were invited by the temple trust," Viji Thampi told TNIE. "Invitation has been extended to individuals who had donated more than Rs 1 crore. The priests will be brought to Ayodhya by the Margdarshak Mandal, the organisation of priests under VHP," he said. RSS workers and leaders who have been actively participating in the distribution of 'Akshat' are

joyful at the reception they are receiving from people. "We are receiving great response from people," RSS prarthana karyavahak PN Easwaran told. "People are receiving each group with utmost pleasure. We visit all houses. We even visited Devaswom Minister K Radhakrishnan's house and handed over Akshat, a leaflet about Ayodhya and photo of the Ram temple. We want to cover at least 35 lakh houses by January 15. To achieve this, Sangh Parivar workers will cover 15 lakh houses on January 14," he said.

Although no RSS leader is taking part in the January 22 ceremony, the organisation will bring 2,000 contingents of its workers and their families, who have participated in the Karseva in 1990 and 1992. Hindu Aikya Vedi, which spearheaded the Sabarimala protests in 2018, is actively participating in the programme. "We saw more acceptance now from people compared to Ramasila pooja function in 1990s," said Hindu Aikya Vedi state president K P Sasikala. Many politicians who used to oppose our politics received us cordially.

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NEWS BOX

### Shops and dhabas in residential areas sealed

**Gurgaon.** The department of town and country planning on Friday sealed six commercial units — dhabas, sweet shops and a trader's office — in residential areas of sectors 17 and 18 as they could not give satisfactory replies to show-cause notices.

DTCP's enforcement wing and police carried out the drive. "These commercial activities were being carried out without permissions. Offenders had been issued show-cause notices for violation of norms, but they could not furnish satisfactory replies and they didn't shut down on their own. So, an action has been initiated," said district town planner (enforcement) Manish Yadav. He said legal action will be taken against anyone who tries to restart operations. The latest action is part of DTCP's drive to clear encroachments and free government-owned land in the city. The department has served notices to 800 property owners for alleged violations. Under Non-Nuisance Rules of the Haryana Urban Development Act, commercial activities on residential properties of licenced colonies are illegal.

Commercial activities such as a medical clinic, lawyer's office and some other consultation professions are allowed only after permission is granted by the department. In these cases, 25% of the built-up area on the ground floor or a residential property can be used for commercial purposes with permission. Approvals are typically given for five years and the operator has to deposit a fee of Rs 60,000 with the DTCP.

### Flouting lane driving norms on Delhi-Gurgaon eway? You'll be booked

**GURGAON.** In a first, traffic police have started filing FIRs against the drivers of commercial vehicles found violating lane driving norms on the Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway. As many as 14 FIRs have been filed in two days, cops said.

The move comes three weeks after police, for the first time, deployed drones to manage traffic on the high-speed stretch, using them to spot congestion and accelerate response as well as issue challans for lane driving violations. At present, traffic cops are enforcing lane driving only for commercial vehicles on the expressway, which witnesses heavy traffic, especially during rush hours when people drive to



offices in the NCR city and return home from there.

Traffic police started booking drivers for the violation on January 8. "After using drones for checking lane violations in December, we have gone a step ahead and are lodging FIRs to ensure strict compliance of lane driving norms by commercial vehicles. We will continue to take strict action against violators," DCP (traffic) Virender Vij told TOI. Those booked for far include the drivers of two trucks, two trolley trucks, two dumper trucks, one mini-truck, one mini-bus, one auto and five light commercial vehicles. In the first nine days of this year, a total of 1,967 challans have been issued for the offence, and police have collected nearly Rs 20 lakh in fines.

### Traders in Sadar Bazar served notices by MCG for encroachment

**GURGAON.** MCG on Friday sent notices to 62 shop owners to remove encroachments in front of their shops in Sadar Bazar. The civic body, in its notice, warned them if the encroachments have not been removed, their shops will be sealed. This is the first time that the civic body has sent notices to traders to tackle encroachment in the area. MCG has not been able to pedestrianise Sadar Bazar, which is one of the oldest markets of the city and is congested. "We have started issuing notices to the traders who, despite repeated reminders, don't remove encroachment done in front of their shops. They are given three days' worth of time and if they don't remove the encroachment, we will seal these 62 shops and action will be taken by the police as per law. This is being done to facilitate pedestrians and shoppers," said Naresh Kumar, MCG joint commissioner for Swachh Bharat Mission. According to MCG officials, while the encroachment upon roads leaves less space for pedestrians and disrupts traffic, it also poses a challenge in cases of fire incidents. In such heavily-encroached areas, it takes time for the emergency vehicles to reach the spot.

### Curbs on drones, checks at hotels: Vigil stepped up ahead of R-Day

**Gurgaon:** Amid preparations for Republic Day, the police will be verifying documents of visitors staying at hotels, guest houses and PGs by conducting surprise checks until January 26. Restrictions have also been imposed on drones and micro lights. "Hotel and PG owners have been instructed to keep ID proofs of guests, and failure to comply with the directive may lead to lodging of FIRs against them," Deepak Gahlawat, DCP (headquarters), said. After enforcement of Section 144 of CrPc starting January 15, police have imposed restrictions on drones, aircrafts, gliders, balloons, kites and micro lights. Security measures have been intensified through rigorous inspections at cafes, hotels and restaurants along with regular monitoring of visitors.

Additional forces will be deployed, especially around important installations and public places so that no untoward incident takes place and everything goes on smoothly ahead of Republic Day, teh DCP added.

Police are keeping a close vigil at sensitive locations to maintain law and order before and during the Republic Day celebrations.

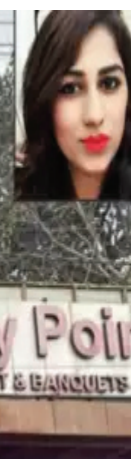
# Ex-model's murder: How Patiala trail led to Kolkata

**GURGAON/KOLKATA.** Balraj Gill, a nine-day manhunt for whom ended in Kolkata on Thursday, is a Delhi high court lawyer who allegedly disposed of former model Divya Pahuja's body with the help of associate Ravi Banga in a canal near Patiala.

Ravi is still absconding.

Police said Balraj was arrested at Kolkata. Bidhannagar cops were in plainclothes when they spotted him after intel from Haryana Police that he may be in the West Bengal capital. "Balraj switched on one of his phones, and Haryana Police managed to trace it to Kolkata. They had sent us information about him. Our officers were in plainclothes when they intercepted him while he was enquiring at an airline ticket counter," said a police officer in Bidhannagar. Haryana Police had issued look-out circulars (LOC) against Balraj and Ravi, along with monetary rewards of Rs 50,000 each for any information about their whereabouts. The duo was last seen in CCTV footage from Hotel City Point in Gurgaon, where Divya was allegedly shot dead by its owner Abhijeet Singh (56), on

January 2. They drove off in a BMW after Abhijeet and two hotel employees helped stuff the body into the car. According to the Gurgaon police special investigation team (SIT) probing the murder, Balraj and Ravi disposed of the body in return for Rs 10 lakh as cash from Abhijeet. The BMW was found abandoned near a bus stand in Patiala, but Divya's body is yet to be found. After his arrest, Balraj told Bidhannagar police that he and Ravi dumped the body into a canal behind a police outpost between Patiala and Sunam in Punjab on January 3. Subsequently, police narrowed down their search to a 60km area in Patiala. The two abandoned the BMW and went to Chandigarh, from where they took a train to Kolkata. They parted ways at Howrah station. A Gurgaon police officer said that a team has stayed back in Kolkata to trace Ravi. "We are trying to get the exact location where they had



dumped the body... We will get more details only when we get the chance to interrogate Balraj," the officer said.

A court in Kolkata on Friday accepted police's request to take Balraj into three-day transit remand to get him to Gurgaon. Divya was jailed in 2016 for allegedly conspiring with Gurgaon cops to stage an

encounter in which gangster Sandeep Gadoli. Abhijeet and the two hotel employees — Hemraj (28) and Omprakash (23) — were arrested on January 3. Megha, a 20-year-old delivery agent, who allegedly helped dispose of the murder weapon and Divya's belongings was arrested on January 8.

With cops unable to trace the body for over a week, Divya's family had demanded that the probe should be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation. TOI reported last week that a team of Gurgaon cops, when alerted about a body at the hotel on the evening of January 2, had checked the wrong room, and on finding nothing suspicious, left the premises. The body was lying in another room on the same floor of the hotel.

The family has also rejected the police theory that Abhijeet killed Divya because she was threatening and extorting him with photos that she had of him.

## Students can attend boards if bond amount paid: Min to schools

**GURGAON.** Students of unrecognised private schools can fill their examination forms if these schools pay the bond amount set by the government in order to get temporary recognition.

Kanwar Pal Gujjar, minister of education, said after paying the bond amount, schools will also be able to get two more years of temporary recognition, therefore more time for the process to get permanent affiliation. According to a TOI report, more than 60,000 students from 1,300 unrecognised private schools were not likely to be able to appear for board examinations because of no affiliation. Gujjar said, "We cannot let the students suffer because of drawbacks on the part of schools.



Schools that manage to deposit the bond amount will get an extension of 2 years to meet the required norms of a recognised or board-affiliated school." He further clarified that if a school fails to deposit the money, it will not be allowed to take admissions for the upcoming session of 2024-25. Notably, the government had refused to give temporary recognition

to private schools for the 2023-24 session. The department has asked temporarily recognised private schools to deposit a bond amount and as per the latest orders, if any such school fulfills all norms and takes permanent recognition from the government by March 31, the bond amount would be refunded. Private school operators were protesting against the high bond amount, which led to a standoff between the government and unrecognised schools.

There are more than 3 lakh students in these 1,300 schools and at least 60,000 of them will be appearing for class 10 and 12 board examinations this year. They have so far not filled the exam forms for the exam scheduled to begin from February 28.

## Delhi's funds share to fast-track Ggn rapid rail route: Chief secy

**Gurgaon:** Work on the Haryana corridor of Namo Bharat (rapid rail) is expected to gain pace after years, now that the Delhi government has agreed to release its share of funds. Two rapid rail corridors from Delhi to Haryana have been on the drawing board for several years, awaiting funds and clearances. They are unlike the corridor on the other side of NCR — Delhi to Meerut — where trains are already functional on a 17km section in Ghaziabad. Another 25km stretch to Meerut South is expected to be ready this year while the entire section could be functional by 2025. Haryana chief secretary Sanjeev Kaushal, who was in the city on Friday, said the state government would now ensure that the key mobility projects didn't face any further delay. Last month, the Delhi government informed the Supreme Court that it had agreed to pay its share for the construction of two Namo Bharat corridors — Delhi-Panipat and Delhi-Gurgaon-Shahjahanpur-Neemrana-Behror.

According to its payment schedule, Delhi will pay Rs 5,704 crore for the two routes over a period of six years till 2029. Of this, Rs 3,261 crore is for the Delhi-Panipat line, while Rs 2,443 crore is for the other corridor. The rapid rail corridor passing through the city will run along NH-8 and will be connected to the Airport Express Line of Delhi Metro, Kaushal said. Earlier, the line was to run via Old Gurgaon from Kapashera border to Signature Tower Chowk. Branching out from Aerocity in Delhi, the rapid rail corridor running parallel to NH-8 will have its first station at Cyber Hub after entering Gurgaon. From this underground station, the line will run to the left of the carriageway heading out of Delhi. The Kherki Daula station, Kaushal said, will have three levels. From here, trains will take the elevated tracks till they reach the terminating station in Rajasthan's Behror. Stations in the Delhi part of the corridor — starting at Sarai Kale Khan and passing through Jor Bagh and Munirka — will be under the ground. Apart from rapid rail, work on the Gurgaon Metro is also likely to start at the earliest, the chief secretary said. "The state cabinet has already approved the formation of the Haryana Metro Rail Corporation (HMRC) on the lines of Delhi Metro for the construction of the corridor. A secretary-level officer of the Centre will be appointed the chairperson of the corporation and an administrative officer from the state will serve as the managing director," said Kaushal. The chief secretary was in the city to attend the annual event of the Haryana Railway Infrastructure Development Corporation (HRIDC) and inaugurate its new office building. "Haryana is the first state in north India to develop a modern railway system and establish a railway corporation," he added.

## Speedsters under police lens on Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, 1.5k fined in December

**GURGAON:** Traffic police issued 1,493 online challans amounting to Rs 29.8 lakh for speeding beyond 120kmph on the Gurgaon stretch of Delhi-Mumbai Expressway last December, the month that 80 cameras were made operational on the route.

DCP (traffic) Virender Vij said on Friday that 80 cameras were installed at 16 locations over the 78km portion of the expressway. These were integrated with Gurgaon police control room. "The cameras alert the control room when they detect any vehicle moving beyond the speed limit of 120kmph. Like that, automatic speed challans are issued. We urge people to follow the norms," he said. TOI earlier reported about high-end cars and sports cars the likes of Ferrari, Mercedes, Porsche, BMW and Rolls-Royce testing their horsepower on the eight-lane expressway. It was estimated that around 500 vehicles broke the maximum speed limit on the expressway every day, and among them were high-end cars spotted driving at 200kmph or more.

The 246km Sohna-Dausa stretch of the expressway was inaugurated in



February 2023, but it was only after two accidents involving high-end cars were reported that focus shifted to the problem. On August 22 last year, a Rolls-Royce that broke away from a 20-car convoy crashed into the back of a fuel tanker on the expressway in Nuh, killing the driver and co-driver of the

tanker. Two weeks later, on September 5, a Mercedes collided with a milk tanker on the same expressway section. The Mercedes driver succumbed to his injuries at a hospital. In both these cases, the Rolls-Royce and Mercedes were racing at speeds more than 200kmph.

## Noida cleanest in UP, but waste waiting to be lifted in many sectors, say residents

**NOIDA:** The Swachh survey, whose results were announced on Thursday, judged Noida to be the cleanest city in the state. But residents in the satellite township of Greater Noida complained of mounting garbage waiting to be lifted from roadsides. Complaints of C&D waste littered on the roads of the sector were made by residents of Alpha 2, while Beta 1 residents reported that numerous sheep and goats were let loose in the sector's parks with no check from the authorities. Jyoti Singh, a resident of Alpha 1, noted that while Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is being conducted across the region, the ground reality does not reflect the campaign's goals. "People continue to dump waste in the open, many times in front of their neighbour's house. Some people take out their garbage in the dark and leave it out in the open. By morning, the stray animals have littered this waste all over, as was the case on Friday," Singh said. While some residents blame locals for their lack of sensitivity, others say that sanitation workers are also lax in carrying out the job on time, as many complaints on the same have been made by residents



of sectors Gamma, Beta 2 and Delta, among others. Alok Singh, founder of the local social body Active Citizens Group, added that people often hang garbage packets outside their houses overnight. "These too are invitations for stray animals like cattle and dogs which pull out the waste and spread it on the road. We should act with responsibility," he said.

In Alpha 2, RWA general secretary NP Singh reported that untended construction and demolition waste has been left littered at many places in the sector. Later on, Girish Kumar from GNIDA noted the problem and got the garbage cleared from Alpha 1 and other

sectors. Harinder Bhati, a resident of Beta 1, said that numerous sheep and goats had entered the sector's parks. "The concerned officials of Greater

Noida Authority, especially health and civil departments, should pay attention. Is this park meant for residents or animals?" he said.

## Possible threat': Gangster's anticipatory bail plea rejected

**NOIDA.** The additional sessions court on Thursday refused to grant anticipatory bail to rebar and scrap businessman Ravi Kana in a gang rape case. His lawyer argued that the complaint against Kana was filed after more than six months and that he had been framed by members of the Sunder Bhati gang, but the government counsel submitted that the accused had a criminal antecedent and there is a serious threat to the woman. On December 30 last year, the woman (25) approached Sector 39 police and submitted a complaint on charges of gang rape against Kana and four others. She alleged that in June earlier that year, she was called to the Gardens Galleria Mall

in Noida for a job offer. There, at the parking lot, five men were waiting for her in a car. They allegedly raped her at gunpoint and made a video, threatening that they will release it if she spoke up. Three of the other accused — Azad, Vikas and Raj Kumar — have been arrested so far, while Kana and Mehmi have been absconding. Bail pleas of the three other suspects arrested in the rape case were also rejected by the court recently. Kana's lawyer Chaudhury Hariraj Singh argued Kana was framed in the rape case. "All the five accused in this gang rape case are relatives. The victim filed a police complaint after six months and 11 days and she did not give a satisfactory reason for the delay.

## NEWS BOX

## Republicans push back on Biden plan to axe federal funds for anti-abortion counseling centers

WASHINGTON. In a new twist to the fight over abortion access, congressional Republicans are trying to block a Biden administration spending rule that they say will cut off millions of dollars to anti-abortion counseling centers. The rule would prohibit states from sending federal funds earmarked for needy Americans to so-called "crisis pregnancy centers," which counsel against abortions. At stake are millions of dollars in federal funds that currently flow to the organizations through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, a block grant program created in 1996 to give cash assistance to poor children and prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

"Programs that only or primarily provide pregnancy counseling to women only after they become pregnant likely do not meet the...standard," the Health and Human Services agency said in its rule proposal released late last year. More than 7,000 comments have been submitted on the proposed rule, which includes a series of restrictions on how states would be able to spend TANF monies. The proposal limiting funds for anti-abortion counseling centers is the Biden administration's latest attempt to introduce federal policies that expand abortion access.

Conservative states, meanwhile, have severely restricted the care since the US Supreme Court stripped women of their federal right to an abortion in 2022.

Congressional Republicans this week introduced legislation that would block the Health and Human Services Agency from restricting the funds from the centers. The bill has no chance of becoming law this year. "Pregnancy centers are an important and vital alternative for expectant mothers," Republican Rep. Darin LaHood of Illinois said Thursday during a House Ways and Means Committee hearing to mark up the legislation. The anti-abortion counseling centers have become an increasingly popular way for conservatives to sermonize against abortions, with an Associated Press investigation last year finding that states have been sending more and more money to the programs over the last decade. More than a dozen states have given the centers roughly \$500 million in taxpayer dollars since 2010.

Last year, Pennsylvania's Democratic governor cut funding for all centers from the state budget.

The centers' mission is controversial not only because workers often advise pregnant patients against seeking an abortion, but critics say, the organizations can provide some misleading information about abortion and contraception, like suggesting that abortion can cause breast cancer.

## Taiwan votes in key election under Chinese threats

TAIPEI. Millions of Taiwanese voted Saturday for a new president in the face of threats from China that choosing the wrong leader could set the stage for war on the self-ruled island. Beijing slammed frontrunner Lai Ching-te, the current vice president, as a dangerous "separatist" in the days leading up to the poll, and on the eve of the vote, its defence ministry vowed to "crush" any move towards Taiwanese independence. Communist China claims self-ruled Taiwan, separated from the mainland by a 180-kilometre (110-mile) strait, as its own and says it will not rule out using force to bring about "unification", even if conflict does not appear imminent. Voting began at 8:00 am (0000 GMT) at nearly 18,000 polling stations across the island, with almost 20 million people eligible to cast ballots.



In a Taipei school, 54-year-old professor Karen was the first in line to enter a polling booth. "I looked into the ballot box and felt that I've never been as excited as this moment, because there is one candidate I believe who can bring hope to the future of Taiwan," she told AFP. A 70-year-old retiree surnamed Liu arrived early at a New Taipei City elementary school, the same station where current President Tsai Ing-wen voted. "I hope the next administration will do as well as the current one," she said. Taiwan has strict election laws for polling day that effectively prevent media from asking voters about their specific choices to avoid influencing the outcome.

'Hard-won democracy' Results are expected Saturday evening, with the outcome watched closely from Beijing to Washington -- the island's main military partner -- as the two superpowers tussle for influence in the strategically vital region.

## Donald Trump ordered to pay The New York Times and its reporters nearly \$400,000 in legal fees

NEW YORK. Former President Donald Trump was ordered Friday to pay nearly \$400,000 in legal fees to The New York Times and three investigative reporters after he sued them unsuccessfully over a Pulitzer Prize-winning 2018 story about his family's wealth and tax practices. The newspaper and reporters Susanne Craig, David Barstow and Russell Buettner were dismissed from the lawsuit in May. Trump's claim against his estranged niece, Mary Trump, that she breached a prior settlement agreement by giving tax records to the reporters is still pending. New York Judge Robert Reed said that given the "complexity of the issues" in the case and other factors, it was reasonable that Donald Trump be forced to pay lawyers for the Times and the reporters a total of \$392,638 in legal fees.

"Today's decision shows that the state's newly amended anti-SLAPP statute can be a powerful force for protecting press freedom," Times spokesperson Danielle Rhoads Ha said, referring to a New York law that bars baseless lawsuits designed to silence critics. Such lawsuits are known as SLAPPs or strategic lawsuits against public participation. "The court has sent a message to those who want to misuse the judicial system to try to silence journalists," Rhoads Ha said.

# US carries out fresh strikes on Iran-backed Houthis after Biden vows to keep pressure on

Washington/Aden The United States carried out an additional strike against Yemen's Houthi forces on Friday, two officials told Reuters, after President Joe Biden's administration vowed to protect shipping in the Red Sea. The latest strike, which one of the US officials said targeted a radar site, came a day after dozens of US and British strikes on the Iran-backed group's facilities. The officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, did not provide more details. Radar infrastructure has been a key target in the US military effort to halt Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. The Houthi movement's television channel Al-Masirah reported that the United States and Britain were targeting the Yemeni capital Sanaa with raids. Intensifying concerns about a widening regional conflict, US and British warplanes, ships and submarines on Thursday launched missiles against targets across Yemen controlled by the group, which has cast its maritime campaign as support for Palestinians under siege by Israel in Hamas-ruled Gaza. Even as Houthi leaders swore retaliation, Biden warned

earlier on Friday that he could order more strikes if they do not stop their attacks on merchant and military vessels in one of the world's most economically vital waterways. "We will make sure that we respond to the Houthis if they continue this outrageous behaviour," Biden told reporters during a stop in Pennsylvania on Friday. Witnesses confirmed explosions early on Friday, Yemen time, at military bases near airports in the capital Sanaa and Yemen's third city Taiz, a naval base at Yemen's main Red Sea port Hodeidah and military sites in the coastal Hajjah governorate. White House spokesperson John Kirby said the strikes had targeted the Houthis' ability to store, launch and guide missiles or drones, which the group has used in recent months to threaten Red Sea shipping. The Pentagon said the US-British assault reduced the Houthis' capacity to launch fresh attacks. The US military said 60 targets in 28 sites were hit. The Houthis, who have controlled most of Yemen for nearly a decade, said five fighters were killed, but they vowed to continue their attacks on regional shipping. The UK Maritime Trade



Operations information hub said it had received reports of a missile landing in the sea around 500 meters (1,600 feet) from a ship about 90 nautical miles southeast of the Yemeni port of Aden. The shipping security firm Ambrey identified it as a Panama-flagged tanker carrying Russian oil. Drone footage on the Houthi's al-Masirah TV showed hundreds of thousands of people in Sanaa chanting slogans denouncing Israel and the United States. Your strikes on Yemen are terrorism," said Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a member of the Houthi Supreme Political Council. "The United States is the Devil." Biden, whose administration removed the Houthis from a State Department list of "foreign terrorist

organizations" in 2021, was asked by reporters if he felt the term "terrorist" described the movement now. "I think they are," he said. The Red Sea crisis is part of the violent regional spillover of Israel's war with Hamas, an Iran-backed Islamist group, in the Palestinian enclave of Gaza.

Hamas militants rampaged through southern Israel on October 7, killing 1,200 people and seizing 240 hostages. Israel has responded by laying waste to large sections of Gaza in an effort to annihilate Hamas. More than 23,000 Palestinians have been killed. Tobias Bork, a Middle East security expert at Britain's Royal United Services Institute, said the Houthis wanted to portray themselves as champions of the Palestinian cause but were mainly concerned about retaining power. At the United Nations Security Council, US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield defended the Yemen strikes, saying they were intended to "disrupt and degrade the Houthis' ability to continue the reckless attacks against vessels and commercial shipping."

## Huge Ancient Lost Cities Found In Amazon Rainforest

Paris. Archaeologists have discovered the largest and oldest network of pre-Hispanic cities ever found in the Amazon rainforest, revealing a 2,500-year-old lost civilisation of farmers.

The vast site, which covers more than 1,000 square kilometres (385 square miles), was long hidden by the jungle in the Upano valley on the foothills of the Andes mountain range in eastern Ecuador. However, a French-led team of researchers have used laser-mapping technology taken from above, as well as archaeological excavations, to uncover 20 settlements -- including five large cities -- connected by roads.

Stephen Rostain, an archaeologist at France's CNRS research centre and the lead author of a new study, told AFP it was like discovering "El Dorado".

The scale of this urban development -- which includes earthen homes, ceremonial buildings and agricultural draining -- has never been seen before in the Amazon, Rostain said.

"It is not just a village, but an entire landscape that has been domesticated,"

he said. Rostain said he detected the first traces of this lost civilisation 25 years ago, when he spotted hundreds of mounds in the area. In 2015, his team of researchers flew over the region using laser technology called Lidar, which allowed the scientists to peer through the forest canopy as "if we had cut down all the trees," Rostain said. They found more than 6,000 earthen mounds, rectangular earthen platforms which served as the base of homes for the "Upano people". On the floors, the researchers found "all the domestic remains one would see in a home -- fireplaces, large ceramic jars for beer made out of corn, grinding stones, seeds, tools," Rostain said.

Remarkably, the cities are all crisscrossed by large, straight streets -- "just like in New York," he added.

Some cities have a large central alley where people from the surrounding villages gathered, Rostain said, comparing these streets to those of the ancient Teotihuacan city in modern-day Mexico. Rostain speculated that

several thousand people could have attended such ceremonial events, though further analysis is being carried out to estimate how many people lived in the region. Some of the mounds are up to 10 metres (33 feet) tall, suggesting they were not homes but communal areas for rituals or festivals. The small fields show that the agrarian society "took advantage of the smallest empty space to ensure it bore fruit," Rostain said. All these accomplishments would have needed leaders, planning, engineers to plan the roads, he suggested. What happened to the previously unknown Upano people -- so named by the researchers -- is not known. Construction on the first mounds is thought to have begun between 500 BC and 300-600 AD, around the time of the Roman empire.

Other large villages discovered in the Amazon date from between 500-1,500 AD, according to the study published in the journal Science on Thursday.

But this network of cities is "much older and much bigger," Rostain said.

## Amid Threats From China, Taiwan Votes In Key Election

Taipei. Millions of Taiwanese headed to the polls Saturday for a presidential election, following threats from China that choosing the wrong leader could set the stage for war on the self-ruled island. Beijing slammed frontrunner Lai Ching-te, the current vice president, as a dangerous "separatist" in the days leading up to the poll, warning voters to make "the correct choice" if they want to avoid military conflict.

Communist China claims self-ruled Taiwan, separated from the mainland by a 180-kilometre (110-mile) strait, as its own and says it will not rule out using force to bring about "unification", even if conflict does not appear imminent. Voting began at 8:00 am (0000 GMT) at the nearly 18,000 polling stations across the verdant island, with almost 20 million people eligible to cast ballots. Turnout at the last election in 2020 was almost 75 percent, but analysts predict a lower number this time. Results are expected Saturday evening, with the outcome

watched closely from Beijing to Washington -- the island's main military partner -- as the two superpowers tussle for influence in the strategically vital region. During a raucous campaign, Lai of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) pitched himself as the defender of Taiwan's democratic way of life. His main opponent Hou Yu-ih, of the opposition Kuomintang (KMT), favours warmer ties with China and accuses the DPP of antagonising Beijing with its stance that Taiwan is "already independent". Hou's KMT has said it will boost economic prosperity, while maintaining strong relationships with international partners, including the United States. The race has also seen the rise of the upstart populist Taiwan People's Party (TPP), whose leader Ko Wen-je has drawn support with an anti-establishment offer of a "third way" out of the two-party deadlock.

The KMT and TPP tried to strike a deal to join forces against the DPP, but the

partnership collapsed in public acrimony over who would lead the presidential ticket. All three parties held final rallies on Friday night in front of crowds of hundreds of thousands.

As well as a president, voters will also elect lawmakers to Taiwan's 113-seat legislature as well as a president.

Taiwan bans the publishing of polls within 10 days of elections, but political observers say the 64-year-old Lai is expected to win the top seat, though his party is likely to lose its parliamentary majority. Cog in the world economy -- Located on a key maritime gateway linking the South China Sea to the Pacific Ocean, Taiwan is home to a powerhouse semiconductor industry producing precious microchips -- the lifeblood of the global economy powering everything from smartphones to cars and missiles. China has stepped up military pressure on Taiwan in recent years, periodically stoking worries about a potential invasion.

## Winter storm grips northern US, blizzard warning in some places

### A dangerous winter storm swept across the northern United States, causing deadly avalanches, accidents, and cold-related deaths.

St Louis A dangerous winter storm swept the northern United States on Friday, with blinding snow in some places, freezing rain in others, and bitter cold temperatures and whipping winds across several states. The massive storm continues a week of strong winter weather for much of the US that has led to deadly avalanches and treacherous ice-covered roads. On Friday, a man was believed dead in an avalanche in the Idaho backcountry. A Wisconsin man died while snow-blowing his driveway. Political leaders in Illinois implored Texas Governor Greg Abbott to stop sending migrants to Chicago, which is on the verge of dangerous weather. Abbott refused. Authorities announced Friday that a suburban Chicago man died of cold exposure, apparently becoming the first cold-related death of the season. The man,

whose identity wasn't released, was found Thursday in the suburb of Schiller Park, the Cook County medical examiner's office said. An autopsy performed Friday found that the man's death was weather-related, and the medical examiner's office ruled it an accident. We'd like two minutes of your time in order to understand you better. Please take this reader survey. Heavy snow and strong winds made driving virtually impossible in parts of Iowa, so much so that Republican presidential hopefuls called off campaign events. "Black ice" from freezing rain caused wrecks and brought Kansas City, Missouri, to a standstill. Flight cancellations were common, including more than 1,000 at Chicago's airports.

In Idaho, two men were rescued after being caught in an avalanche Thursday afternoon near the Montana border, but a third man was missing and presumed dead. The US Air Force assisted in the search and rescue. Authorities weren't sure what the men were doing in the area that had been under an avalanche danger warning for several days. The Idaho avalanche came a day after the first US avalanche death of the season was reported in California on Wednesday.

The Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's office said Friday afternoon that it was investigating the death of a 69-year-old man who became unresponsive



while snow-blowing his driveway in Franklin, a Milwaukee suburb. No further information was released. Republican candidates campaigning ahead of Monday's Iowa caucuses were contending with a blizzard warning covering most of the state. Nikki Haley's campaign canceled three Friday events and said it would be hosting "telephone town halls." Ron DeSantis' campaign postponed events in Marshalltown and Clear Lake. The Iowa State Patrol posted photos of an icy wreck. "Please, don't put yourself or others in danger," the agency wrote. "The road conditions are extremely dangerous!" Blizzard warnings were issued in some places, including southwestern Minnesota and the Green Bay area of Wisconsin. Forecasts for the Milwaukee area predicted heavy snow stretching into Saturday morning with wind gusts up to 40 mph (64 kph). The cold was the bigger concern in the Dakotas. It was 11 degrees below zero F

(minus 24 C) in Bismarck, North Dakota, on Friday morning, and forecasters warned the weekend would get even worse. It could reach 20 below F (minus 29 C) by early Sunday. Chicago is expecting several inches of snow through the weekend, with wind chills well below zero. Advocates worried about the growing population of migrants sent up from the US-Mexico border -- more than 26,000 have arrived since last year. By

Friday, dozens were staying in eight parked "warming buses" to avoid sleeping outside while they await space in city-run shelters. Angelo Travieso, a Venezuelan bused up from Texas, wore a light jacket and sandals with socks after sleeping on one of the buses. "I slept sitting because there is almost no space left," he said. "The buses are also small and you practically have to stay inside because of the heating, because it is deadly cold outside." Mayor Brandon Johnson said the city will suspend plans to enforce a 60-day cap on shelter stays for asylum seekers through at least Jan. 22 because of the cold snap. Meanwhile, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker released a letter pleading with Abbott. "As we grapple with the existing challenges of your ongoing manufactured crisis, the next few days are a threat to the families and children you are sending here," Pritzker wrote.

## Pongal gaiety with parents and pupils



**CHENNAI.** Clapping their hands, dressed up in their new vibrant clothes, wearing mallipoos, and chanting 'Pongal O Pongal', the kids at Bala Mandir Madhuram Narayanan Centre (MNC) for Exceptional Children celebrated Pongal on Friday. "We have celebrated Pongal for almost 20 years. This year, the speciality is that we are celebrating Pongal outside the building, in the front yard. We wanted to encourage the children to participate freely and we aim to expose the kids to real-life celebrations," shared Vimala Kannan, founder-principal, MNC. The organisation has a culture of involving parents in almost every activity, especially for kids under the category of Early Intervention (under the age of six), elevating it to a wholesome event. "Usually we get involved in kolam making and watch other celebrations unfold inside the school. This time it was like

celebrating it in our village, with everyone involved," shared Devi, a parent. Pongal preparations were monitored and coordinated by the teachers. Vimala said that almost 15 kg of Pongal was prepared. The turmeric for the event was used from the school's herbal garden, Madhuram, maintained by students and teachers. Under the school's scheme Sambhavam an experiential learning that encourages the kids to get involved in outdoor activities that add to developing their intellectual abilities, the school management noted that activities like gardening and preparations for festivities, help them gain more exposure and experience in all activities. Andar Raghavan, member in charge, Bala Mandir MNC, said that the kids were given demonstration classes on what Pongal is and how the celebrations proceeded. She said, "The kids were taken

to the shops. They were shown the vessels, vegetables, and other necessary items. For the festival, they created the brick oven. All of them brought materials like sand and sticks and made the furnace. They also got involved in organising and decoration. However, the preparation of the pongal dish was done by teachers and parents, with regard to the safety of the kids near the fire." After the Pongal holidays, the teachers informed that the children would be asked to recollect what they did for Pongal, making it an unforgettable experience for them.

Though everyone participated in almost every task, the students were categorised into different sections. Andar said, "For the orientation itself, we made them into four groups - three groups of kids from the Early Intervention section and one group of kids from the Jivikam section (above the age of 8)." Jaya, a parent, said, "Even every parent was assigned a different task, which made us concentrate more on our task and contribute to the event." The school currently has around 66 students under the Early Intervention category and 32 under Jivikam informed S Vasanthi, director, Bala Mandir MNC. She said, "We want the children to get involved in every activity, thus, we are ensuring integration at every level.

We at MNC, also make it a practice for the parents of the kids to attend the classes along with the children, especially for Early Intervention. Their attendance is also mandatory for as long as their children need extensive support. Through this, we empower parents to become advocates for their children."

MNC was established in 1989 as a research and demonstration centre and integrated with Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust in 2018. Maya Gaitonde is the honorary general secretary and Jaya Krishnaswamy is the founder of the MNC Unit.

## Coimbatore city goes downhill in cleanliness rank

**Social activists cited poor knowledge and planning by the Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation (CCMC) as the reason behind the drastic dip in the ranking.**

**COIMBATORE.** Coimbatore city secured a lowly 182nd place in the clean cities (Swachh Survekshan 2023) ranking list released by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) on Thursday. Coimbatore, which ranked a respectable 42 in 2022, plunged down over 100 places to hit 182nd spot in 2023 out of the 446 cities that were ranked.

Social activists cited poor knowledge and planning by the Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation (CCMC) as the reason behind the drastic dip in the ranking. Speaking to TNIE, Environmentalists & Secretary of the Kurichi-Vellalore Pollution Prevention Action Committee, K S Mohan said, "The CCMC is not taking any serious steps to cut down on the garbage piled up across the city and in Vellalore dump yard. Coimbatore has become a garbage city. Even the National Green Tribunal had expressed its disappointment over the solid waste management efforts of the CCMC. In winter foul smell from the Vellalore dump yard spreads in the mornings." He also added, "It would have been acceptable if they had either improved their rankings or slipped just a few places down, but

dropping from 42 to 182 in just a year is unacceptable. The CCMC and its officials do not have proper knowledge of planning solid waste management in the city."

Speaking to CCMC Commissioner, M Sivaguru Prabakaran said, "We scored less in waste processing and on collection criteria. Our



ranking dipped due to some issues in these aspects. We have planned to renovate and run all the Micro-Composting Centres (MCCs) and Material Recovery Facilities (MRF) at their full potential. We have also sent a proposal to the government for a biomining project and for setting up biogas plants to improve solid waste management. We will take all the necessary steps and improve the rankings by next year."

## Man kills mother for refusing him Pongal gift money

**"Murugan used to quarrel with his mother demanding her old age pension and also insisted on registering her house in his name."**

**TENKASI.** An 80-year-old woman was stoned to death by his son, who was in an inebriated state, after she allegedly refused to hand him over the Pongal cash gift of Rs 1,000 here on Thursday. The deceased has been identified as S Sivanthipoo, a resident of Thippanamatti village. The Pavoorchatram police have arrested S Murugan (50) in connection with the incident.



"Murugan used to quarrel with his mother demanding her old age pension and also insisted on registering her house in his name. Sivanthipoo received Rs 1,000 as part of the Pongal hamper on Thursday and Murugan

demanding the money, leading to a scuffle. Liked by her refusal to hand over the money, Murugan strangled his mother using a saree and also hit her on the head with a grinding stone. She died on the spot," sources said.

Following this, a police team led by inspector Suresh and sub inspector Govindaraj rushed to the spot and sent the body to Tenkasi District Headquarters Hospital for postmortem.

## Local bodies lax in utilising fund allocations for waste management in Kerala

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.** Waste management is one of the serious issues being faced by the state. The annual budgetary allocations from the state and Centre for waste management projects are plenty but when it comes to utilization, the performance of local bodies across the state is below par.

To address the worsening waste crisis and make Kerala a garbage-free state, the Local Self Government Department has launched the Malinya Muktham Nava Kerala campaign. Even after months of its launch, the utilization of funds for waste management projects by local bodies continues to remain poor. The unavailability of land and stiff local protests against waste management projects are some of the reasons being highlighted by the local bodies for the poor utilization. A large share of funds allocated in the budget and Swachh Bharat Mission remains unspent as local bodies are found to perform poorly in executing waste management projects in the state. Of the total Rs 2,993 crore allocated for waste management projects in the budget, the



local bodies could spend only Rs 142 crore. Meanwhile, of the total of Rs 129 crore sanctioned under the Swachh Bharat Mission, the local bodies could utilize only 35.26 percent. With the Malinya Muktham Nava Kerala campaign which aims at making Kerala a garbage-free state going on in full swing, the LSGD is making interventions to utilise allocated funds before March end.

The total solid waste generation in Kerala is estimated at 3.70 million tonnes annually, of which 2.17 million tonnes (59 per cent) are contributed by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

LSGD Department Additional Chief Secretary Sarada Muraliedharan told TNIE that resistance from local people is a major hurdle preventing the local bodies from utilising funds relating to waste management. "When it comes to

new constructions, there is a lot of resistance. Without identifying suitable land, the local bodies cannot go ahead with waste management projects. We have asked local bodies to prioritise feasible projects and are following up with technical sanctions.

We have constituted district-level committees monitored by the LSGD chief engineer to expedite the clearances. Also, we are offering all kinds of technical support to help the local bodies finalise the projects," said Sarada Muraliedharan. He said that fund crunch is also one of the reasons that led to poor utilisation. "The projects are getting ready and it takes time to finalise the DPRs of these projects and soon all of these projects will take off and by March-end many of these projects will be automatically closed," she added. She also added that the new Ordinance will help reduce local protests.

"The new ordinance envisages a lot of privileges for the people residing close to waste projects. The entire area will develop," she added.

## Omni bus operators stick to fare cap

**CHENNAI.** The pricing regulation implemented by the Omni Bus Owners Association last Deepavali has proved advantageous for commuters this Pongal festival as bus fares were maintained at Rs 900 to Rs 2,900 across all classes on Friday and Saturday, according to online booking platforms such as Abhi Bus, RedBus and MakeMyTrip.

The rates for AC sleeper bus from Chennai to Tirunelveli, Madurai and Coimbatore, typically ranging between Rs 4,000 - Rs 5,000 during festivals, remained below Rs 3,000 for all classes. Additionally, government bus services resumed statewide, with special buses from temporary bus stands. On an average, omni buses ferry about 65,000 commuters a day during festivals and extended holidays. After receiving numerous complaints about excessive fare charges during Deepavali last October, the transport department took action by impounding 104 omnibuses across the state. This compelled



bus operators to fix a fare cap for festivals and extended holidays. "Similar to Deepavali, we have not raised fares for the Pongal festival. Commuters were charged according to the fare list available on their portal <http://www.toboa.in>," said A Anbalagan, president, All Omni Bus Owners Association. Transport department sources said in addition to the 2,100 scheduled buses, 901 special buses were operated from Chennai. Besides, 1,986 buses are being operated

outside Chennai. "A total of 1.2 lakh commuters have reserved tickets online for SETC and TNSIC buses for the Pongal festival. On Friday alone, 1.2-1.5 lakh commuters are likely to use government bus services," said an official, adding that the handling capacity of CMBT is 35,000 passengers a day. "As SETC buses have been shifted to Kilambakkam KCBT, the congestion on GST, Inner Ring road and other arterial roads have significantly come down."

## Central committee inspects flood-affected areas in Thoothukudi

**They also assessed the loss to shops and commercial establishments, besides, crop damages in Eral, Authoor, Srivaikuntam, Athimarapatti, and Agaram.**

**THOOTHUKUDI.** A second batch of the central committee on Friday inspected the damage wrecked by the recent heavy rain across the Thoothukudi district and the subsequent spate in Thamirabarani river during the middle of last December. The seven-member team, comprising KP Singh, Ranganath Audam, R Thangamani, Dr Ponnusamy, Rajesh Tiwary, KM Balajee and A Vijayakumar, inspected breaches in rivers and tanks, damages to roads, bridges, commercial streets and residential areas due to flash floods.

The team took stock of the situation in the presence of Additional Chief Secretary and Commissioner of

Revenue Administration S K Prabakar, and visited Thoothukudi Medical College Hospital, Athibarasakthi Nagar and Om Sakthi Nagar in the Thoothukudi corporation area, and the temporarily established canals that drain out stagnant water from Mapiyaiyoorani village to Periyapallam stream. Further, the committee members inspected Murapanadu water pumping station, damaged roads, Srivaikuntam anaicut, flooded houses in Ponankurichi, Kadambakulam, breached ponds, damaged areas in Korampallam tank bunds, and Avudaiyarkulam tank, Meignanapuram PHC, Tiruchendur-Tirunelveli



state highways, uprooted EB poles, towers, broken Eral bridge, and Eral taluk office. They also assessed the loss to shops and commercial establishments, besides, crop damages in Eral, Authoor, Srivaikuntam, Athimarapatti, and Agaram. When the committee interacted with farmers in Athimarapatti, the latter urged the members to recommend crop-wise compensation for banana, paddy and other crops, as

each has different cultivation costs, sources added. The committee also conducted a review meeting in the presence of Collector G Lakshminpathy, former collector Dr K Senthil Raj, commissioner Dinesh Kumar and others at the collectorate, and sought a report from the state officials. Previously, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had also visited the flood-hit areas in the district.

## Illegal structures on government land demolished in Hyderabad

**The authorities reportedly demolished a big shed, wine shop, food court and other structures.**

**HYDERABAD.** The Revenue authorities in coordination with Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) on Friday demolished the unauthorised structures that have come up on a government land on Road No 3 of Banjara Hills. The land was allegedly occupied by former BRS MLA K Upender Reddy and others. The authorities reportedly demolished a big shed, wine shop, food court and other structures. A few days ago, Banjara Hills police

registered a case against former Palair legislator Upender Reddy based on a complaint filed by Shaikpet tehsildar Anitha Reddy last week, alleging that he had encroached upon the government land.

According to the complaint, 2,185 square metres of government land in Plot No 8-C, Road No 3, Banjara Hills was allegedly occupied by Upender Reddy and others. The BRS leader also built sheds on the said land to run a liquor shop.



## Delving into the Christian outreach

ON Xmas Day, PM Narendra Modi threw his house open to select members of the Christian community. The Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Delhi, Anil Couto, was invited and, of course, he accepted the invite. Cardinal Oswald Gracias was present too. It presented them a golden opportunity to voice the collective view of most Christians that the fate of the community in 'New India' is very, very uncertain. Did the Church leaders do that? How and why did Modi change his affections? Did he suddenly realise that all religions were conceived and made by men as explanations for the unknown or was it a compulsion in view of the Lok Sabha elections? Or was it the criticism he faces in the foreign press for being inimical to the minorities? Did the US President or the UK Prime Minister, the latter a practising Hindu, suggest to him that a change of heart would burnish his image?

PM Modi never fails to astonish and astound. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's economist husband Parakala Prabhakar has closely followed the PM's pronouncements. In the first chapter of his book, *The Crooked Timber of New India — Essays on a Republic in Crisis*, Prabhakar has mentioned the PM's statements at different times and observed that he is not bothered if his stance changes with the occasion. The Bishops would be well advised to read this chapter. Pastors owing allegiance to various Protestant Christian denominations, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists, are routinely beaten up along with their supporters, while praying to the same Jesus Christ whom our PM has now cited as the model for his development programme, 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas'.

I am not enamoured of religious conversion. I feel it is more necessary for preachers of every religion to highlight the true spirit of religion, which encompasses truth, justice, compassion and service. All preachers should concentrate on making people better human beings. Changing gods is not a necessity. Modi admitted in his 'Christmas message' that Christ was a servant. My favourite hymn at the weekly service in the Church is: Lord, make me like You. Please make me like You. You are a servant. Make me one, too. Every time I hear these words, I wonder: Why are all government officials not exposed to this simple thought? This is not to suggest that the Christian connection that inspired me should be held up as a guiding light. But the hymn, adopted and suitably tweaked to make it a universal principle, should be mandated by no less a person than our PM. I dare to propose this because nobody from the Sangh Parivar raised the voice of dissent to his 'Christmas message'.

If Modi wants Christians to feel that they will not be discriminated against in 'New Bharat', he should begin by publicly advising BJP leaders like Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma not to make misleading statements. Sarma had accused iconic anthropologist Verrier Elwin of playing a role in converting tribals of the North-East and opposing the setting up of a petroleum industry in that region. That statement was partisan and false. Elwin had given up his Christian beliefs much before he visited the North-East for his anthropological research. The government's hesitation in approving the Supreme Court collegium's recommendation in the case of Justice KM Joseph was another instance of its apparent bias against Christians. Justice Joseph, a former Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court, was elevated to the post of a Supreme Court judge when it was certain that he could not hope to be the Chief Justice of India.

The main grouse of the Parivar against Christians is that they convert lower-caste Hindus, Dalits and tribals to Christianity and thereby distort the Hindu social order ordained by the Varna system. Such distortion happens only when there are mass conversions like those that took place in Goa after Portuguese missionaries of the Franciscan, Dominican and Jesuit orders followed their seafaring compatriots to Goa in the 15th and 16th centuries. Such mass conversions are impossible today. They will neither be tolerated nor attempted.

## Indian Science Congress needs to survive and thrive

Scientists interested in sharing their knowledge with students and interacting with peers across disciplines find the ISC useful.

THE first week of January is usually an important period in the calendar of the Indian scientific community. This is when the annual mega event — the Indian Science Congress (ISC) — is held. It is inaugurated by the Prime Minister and is attended by thousands of scientists and students from all over the country. But January 2024 is different. Lovely Professional University, which was to host the ISC this year at Phagwara (near Jalandhar), withdrew at the last moment — citing 'unforeseen challenges' — and the Central government, which provides financial support, also backed out. This forced the organisers, the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA), to put off the event for now.

The ISC is a unique forum. Unlike scientific conferences dedicated to narrow specialisations and attended by elite academics, Science Congress sessions are multidisciplinary and open to all regular science students and researchers in degree colleges and universities. It has also been a place for science policymakers to brainstorm on critical issues and make recommendations to the government. Such recommendations have helped shape policies and even resulted in new government departments like the Department of Environment (later upgraded to a ministry) and the Department of Ocean Development (now known as the Ministry of Earth Sciences). Above all, the ISC serves important functions of science communication and promotion of scientific temper as well as the spirit of inquiry.

Since its founding in 1914, ISC annual sessions have been held without a break, except for the disruption caused due to the Covid pandemic. The story of the Science Congress is closely interwoven with the growth of modern science in India. The ISCA was the brainchild of two British academics serving in India — Prof PS MacMahon of Canning College, Lucknow, and Prof JL Simonsen of Presidency College, Madras. They conceived it on the lines of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The objective was to provide a common forum for all those interested in pure and applied sciences, and the interface of science with society. It was the first such platform where scientific workers engaged in mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, geology and biology could meet and exchange new and emerging ideas. Such meetings of minds, over the years, gave rise to new scientific societies and professional bodies — resulting in a coherent Indian scientific community.

Critics of the ISC say that the forum has lost relevance and has remained rooted in its century-old traditions and format. Such a perception is superficial and ignores the evolution that the ISC has undergone during different phases, while keeping pace with the growth of science in India. The first phase from 1914 to 1947 represented the period in which there was greater interaction between Indian and European scientists working in Indian universities and laboratories. Indian science academies, too, were in their formative phase. So, the ISC was the only forum where scientists could present their thoughts.



All the papers presented at ISC sessions were peer-reviewed, giving rise to the concept of peer evaluation of scientific work and international recognition for it. The publication of scientific journals in India was also a byproduct of the ISC. Science and Culture, founded by Meghnad Saha, is a prime example.

In the late 1930s, when the freedom movement gained momentum and the national leadership started planning for a future India, the ISC platformed new ideas about deploying science for national development through rapid industrialisation and the social obligation of science. It was at the 1937 session of the ISC that Jawaharlal Nehru made his iconic statement: "Science is the spirit of the age and the dominating factor of the modern world. The future belongs to science and to those who make friends with science and seek its help for the advancement of society." He was the General President of the ISC in the year of Independence and addressed it every year till his death in 1964. Subsequently, it became a tradition for PMs to address the scientific community at the ISC and they often used the occasion to make important policy pronouncements.

As the process of organising the scientific setup in the form of national laboratories and research councils began after Independence, the ISC, too, entered a new phase. While continuing to be a forum for scientific research, it became a platform to discuss larger policy issues like planning, food crisis and health development. Along with researchers from the university system, those from national laboratories and scientific departments began to dominate the proceedings. As discipline-specific

professional societies developed and national science academies matured over the next few decades, the ISC lost some of its sheen as scientific developments were presented not on the ISC platform but at meetings of professional bodies.

Given the diverse and highly specialised and competitive nature of science today, it would be unrealistic for the ISC to remain the first choice of scientists to present their work. So, in recent years, many in the scientific community feel that the ISC has been reduced to a mere carnival. Taking advantage of poor gatekeeping by local organisers, the ISC has seen anti-science elements infiltrating its sessions. However, scientists interested in sharing their knowledge with young students and budding scientists and interacting with peers across disciplines find the ISC useful. Other than premier research and academic institutes, India has many universities and colleges where science is taught. Their students and faculty are not members of elite professional bodies and academies. They look to the ISC to present their work and interact with top scientists and policymakers. Nobel laureates addressing ISC sessions are the greatest attraction and a source of inspiration for students. It is for all these reasons that the ISC needs to survive and be renewed. At a time when we are witnessing the rise of pseudoscience through social media, we need more fora like the ISC to promote scientific temperament and counter anti-science tendencies. The Central government owes an explanation as to why its Department of Science and Technology decided to discontinue financial aid to the ISC.

## Sena factional feud

Anti-defection law needs to be reviewed

ALMOST a year after the Election Commission of India granted the party name 'Shiv Sena' and party symbol (bow and arrow) to the faction led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Assembly Speaker Rahul Narvekar has declared that this faction is the 'real Shiv Sena', not the one helmed by former CM Uddhav Thackeray. The Speaker took the decision after examining the two Sena factions' cross-petitions seeking disqualification of each other's MLAs following a split in the party. A coup engineered by Shinde in June 2022 had cleaved the party that Bal Thackeray had founded back in 1966. With the majority of the Sena MLAs backing Shinde, then CM Uddhav had preferred to quit rather than face a floor test. This had caused the collapse of the Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, which had the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress as junior partners. The Speaker's verdict has strengthened Shinde's position in



the election year — Maharashtra will witness both Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in 2024. It is back to the drawing board for the beleaguered Uddhav, who faces the

uphill task of making his faction — the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray or UBT) — electorally competitive. The fresh setback may also impact his outfit's seat-sharing arrangement with the Congress and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP faction.

As of now, the battle over Balasaheb's legacy has been won by Shinde, who is backed by the BJP and the NCP (Ajit Pawar group). However, the split and its unsavoury aftermath have not only undermined the sanctity of the electoral mandate but also brought into question the efficacy of the anti-defection law. The alarming ease with which MLAs are able to jump ship and yet escape disqualification makes it obvious that the law needs to be overhauled. The loopholes which opportunistic politicians continue to exploit brazenly must be plugged.

## Gurugram's realty surge runs parallel to decline in Delhi

The old power-broker system was heavily dependent on the Delhi-centric functioning of the Congress, and even the old BJP.

Two months ago, a flat in Gurugram was sold for over Rs 100 crore. It's true that this was a massive apartment, covering more than 11,000 sq ft. But it is still a mind-boggling price tag. In fact, in the past couple of years, prices in Gurugram's tonier blocks have shot up, while those in the high-end markets of Delhi have stagnated.

On an average, real estate prices in the 10 most expensive localities in Delhi have gone up by just 3 per cent in the past one year, and 21 per cent in the past three years. Compare that to Gurugram's top 10 condominiums, where the average price has risen by 29 per cent in one year, and 76 per cent in three years. Today, the per square foot rate of a luxury apartment in Gurugram is about 33 per cent more than a comparable builder flat in a posh part of South Delhi. I believe that this shift of money from Delhi to Gurugram mirrors a fundamental change in how power functions in India. To understand this, we need a short flashback into why real estate prices exploded in Delhi from the late 1980s. It can be explained in one word — corruption. And it coincided with economic liberalisation that began under Rajiv Gandhi, and accelerated with the Rao-Manmohan reforms. The fundamental reason for this was that liberalisation allowed private capital to take control over the most prized of all treasures — public assets. As we know from the case of coal mines, often these assets would be given on a first-come-first-served basis, while others would be handed over through non-transparent tenders. At the same time, the private sector got easy access to bank credit, giving corporate India a greater share of total loans issued by commercial banks.

But it wasn't easy to get access to ministers and babus sitting in the hallowed corridors of power in Lutyens' Delhi. An entire ecosystem of fixers developed in India's capital to broker deals between business houses and the government. Till India's economy was driven by a licence-quota-permit raj, there were a handful of business houses which controlled most of the



manufacturing sector. They dealt directly through politicians. Opening up the economy made it an open house for anyone who had a connection inside government offices. You would find them in perpetual meetings hanging around in five-star hotel coffee shops and lounges.

It is an open secret — if it is a secret at all — that most deals brokered between business houses and those who ran the government involved greasing palms. A lot of it was unaccounted for, and came in cash. Some of this money also went to the deal brokers and fixers. Much of this was in black. It is a no-brainer that the easiest places to park cash are in gold and real estate. So, throughout the 1990s and well into the mid-2000s, big-ticket real estate transactions in Delhi had a huge cash or 'black'

component. Money was flowing into real estate without any connection with what the average household could afford. One sign of this was that rental yields from these properties were a fraction of the EMIs that one would have to pay to buy them. Real estate became both a store of wealth and also a multiplier of wealth. Real estate brokers and builders became immensely rich overnight. Some of them upgraded to register themselves as companies and even listed them on the stock markets. At times, this would result in unintended comic situations, such as when I was interviewing a real estate magnate and an industrialist during a pre-Budget show in 2007. The industrialist looked at the real estate company owner and said that he looked very familiar. The realty honcho looked sheepish, as he revealed that he had been

the broker for the industrialist's first home. Anyone who has covered politics in the UPA period will bear testimony to the exponential growth of power brokers in Delhi. Most of them had some sort of a cover business, but their main income came from brokering deals between netas and corporates. These people proliferated in the expensive residential areas of Delhi, pushing up prices dramatically in the 2000s.

The Modi government seems to have dismantled this ecosystem completely. Power has shifted away from South Delhi to Mumbai and Ahmedabad. At the same time, a different part of the economy has grown exponentially. This is the startup ecosystem, many of which were launched from small offices and apartments of Gurugram. Some of these startups have become unicorns and their founders have received untold wealth from funding agencies and by selling some of their stakes in IPOs. These are the people who are pushing up prices in Gurugram at a time when prices are falling in Delhi. This will have a significant effect on the composition of the elite and the public culture it fosters. The old power-broker system was heavily dependent on the Delhi-centric functioning of the Congress, and even the old BJP. Those who matter in the Modi government do not have roots in Delhi. Delhi's culture was closely tied to what political scientist Sudipta Kaviraj called the bureaucratic-managerial-intellectual elite. In popular language, this elite has come to be known as the Lutyens' elite, with their liberal-secular culture. Power brokers had to perform pay obeisance to that culture, and even absorb and embody it.

The new power elite has no such ties. It is driven by mercantile values and cultural practices. This, as I have argued elsewhere, forms the basis of the new authoritarian ultranationalism that we see in public discourse. It is the foundation of the 'New India' we hear of today, which is muscular, majoritarian and deeply aspirational.

## 5 herbs that can add flavour to any juice



Herbs can lend a refreshing taste to mocktails as well as fresh fruit juices

**Mint:** Mint leaves have a pungent but pleasant menthol flavour, with a sweetish aftertaste. Mint goes well with most fruits, so add this to your guava, peach, apple and sweet lime or pomegranate juice. Always serve chilled.

**Basil:** Fresh green and aromatic basil also offers several benefits. For one, it is an anti-oxidant. It also helps with respiratory problems and indigestion. To use it, simply tear a few basil leaves and add them to your juice. A great morning pick-me-up is chilled orange or watermelon juice with some cinnamon and basil leaves.

**Lavender:** You may not know this, but the herb lavender has a sweet floral aroma and pairs well with mint. The leaves can be used with strawberries, peaches and lemonade gets a nice burst of flavour when you add a few sprigs of fresh lavender to a glass.

**Lemongrass:** This one can be bought at any local market. Aromatic lemongrass not only adds flavour to a soup or hot tea but it's a nice addition to a fresh orange or pear juice. Remember, when you buy lemongrass, ensure its base is intact.

**Kaffir lime leaves:** Tangy kaffir lime leaves can be used to liven up any citrus juice. Just add the leaves on their own or them into smaller pieces.

## How to reuse cooking oil?



Are you wary of using your cooking oil after frying a batch of nachos, because of the health implications? Here are some tips to reuse them.

### Choose the oil

If your frying technique is off, your oil won't be reusable. Every oil has a specific smoking point - the temperature where the oil starts breaking down. Use oils like canola, peanut or vegetable oils with a high smoking point that won't break down easily. Avoid reusing olive oil as it has a low smoking point and a dominant flavour, which makes it a bad choice for deep-frying in the first place.

### Filter the oil

After the first (and each subsequent) fry, drain the oil and filter it. Any impurities and unwanted extras like loose crumbs or bits of batter are going to spoil the oil's integrity, making it burn the next time you heat it. Put a few layers of cheesecloth in a metal strainer to filter out the crumbs.

### Refrigerate it

Let the oil cool down till it's at room temperature, and then refrigerate it in an air-tight container.

### Use separate oils according to flavour

The oil is going to take on the flavour of the food you cooked in it, which makes fried fish oil ideal for shrimp, but not good for onion rings. Separate the oils to prevent bad flavour overlaps.



# Guilt-free Bakes take over

Cakes, breads and cookies - the most calorie-laden, sinful delights - can be anything but healthy. Right?

However, some city bakers are all set to change the mindset. They are using wholesome and organic ingredients to add health and taste to your bakes! Think cakes like olive jalapeno, American corn, lemon pomegranate, almond tea-crunch, desi kaju katli, meetha paan, apple oats, red-velvet (with beetroot), pumpkin walnut bread and zucchini choco-chip cookies among others. There is something for everybody - fitness enthusiasts, lactose intolerants, nut-intolerants, lactating mothers, vegans and even those suffering from diabetes or celiac. Gluten-free, sugar-free and vegan cakes among other healthy bakes, which use alternative ingredients like moong dal, wholewheat, oats, ragi, jowar, bajra, sooji and almond flour, are a reality now. Most of the healthy bakes are sweetened with natural ingredients like honey, jaggery, figs, nuts, dates, carrots and bananas. Instead of vegetable oil, rice bran or olive oil is used.

Fresh fruits, beetroot, zucchini and amaranth seeds are added for colour and flavour, while puffed bajra, dry fruits, muesli, soya cream, butter of dry fruits are used to decorate the cake, instead of calorie laden milk cream or the unhealthy fondant. "Staples, like millets ensure that the cakes are also rich in fibre," says baker Arun Kaulige. Durga Menon adds, "Vegetables and fruits add a different character to the bakes, which you will not find with artificial flavours or regular bakes." Before you turn up your nose at the organic ingredients,

you should know what you are eating in the name of sweet treats. Meeta Wala valkar says, "When I was learning how to bake, I was appalled by the unhealthy ingredients that went into it. After baking, we would bring our creations home, which was then served at dinner. In a month's time, my family started suffering from many health issues."



And that is not startling if you consider the fact that apart from copious amounts of flour, sugar, butter, oil and cream, seven types of chemicals go into any regular bread or cake. "It is a vicious cycle - to balance the sourness of preservatives, you add acidity regulator, which makes the bread hard. So you add dough softener. Then, to balance the sourness, you decrease the percentage of fruit and add sugar. So we decided to break out of it and just make healthy bakes. Our cakes use no decoration at all. Not even names on birthday cakes," Meeta added.

The healthy revolution started about five years ago, but is gaining prominence now. When Chaitali Raizada started healthy baking five years ago, it was an uphill task for her to reach out to others. The fact that atta cakes tend to be dense, and not fluffy, led to speculation about the taste and texture. "Earlier, people were skeptical about the taste of healthy cakes. But now, the city has become much more fitness conscious, and most people who have tasted this have lost the palate for regular stuff." Chaitali believes her bakery is not about desserts. It's a way of life that is free from the clutches of white flour, sugar, artificial colours, additives, preservatives, chemicals, pesticides and even microwaves or non-stick ware.

A surgery and a strict diet that followed is what got Nikita Sanjay Narang to look at healthy baking seriously. "A dietician told me that I was to have no food with preservatives, flour, sugar, etc. But I had a sweet tooth and a passion to bake. So, after six months of experimenting, I finally started coming up with healthy recipes. However, when I market my cakes as no flour, no butter and no sugar and no egg, people think it will have no taste. Though I struggled earlier, the demand is definitely on the rise now."

Karen Lobo Dutta's sweet cravings during her pregnancy prompted her to look up healthy options. Today, she aims to train the next generation to eat healthy even when they are indulging. Simran Oberoi Multani shares those views. "I started healthy baking for my son, who is a toddler now. Even if he snacks on my cakes on a daily basis, I wouldn't worry. The passion to bake healthy also led me to devise an oats and almond biscuit containing flaxseeds and jaggery, which helps young mothers in lactating better."

However, for Jeeva Anna George, it was a question of survival. "In 2010, I was diagnosed with celiac - a disease in which the small intestine is hypersensitive to gluten, leading to difficulty in digesting food. I was put off most food items as gluten is in almost every product with a shelf life. So I started baking my own stuff," she says, adding that schools for children with special needs are part of her clientele.

### How to use your ice cube tray

Use fruit cubes for your party: Fruit-infused ice cubes are a great idea for a party. Choose fruit like watermelon, strawberries and cherries (de-seed them). Put some fruit into each tray and cover with water. Freeze. You can also do this with different shaped cubes. With this, bid goodbye to artificial drinks and say hello to an enticing, flavourful treat.



# Clever ways to use your ice Cube tray

Use herbs for cooking: Don't fret over herbs going stale anymore. Just store your thyme, oregano and rosemary in ice trays. Select fresh herbs. Chop them up neatly and place them in the different compartments. Add a little olive oil in each till it fills to the top. Cover with a plastic wrap and freeze. Remove the cubes and use them whenever needed. Store edible flowers: Using edible flowers in cooking is a top trend for the year and now you can

freeze your roses and lavender in ice cube trays to add to your chilled drinks. Simply toss a few cubes into your glass of water and enjoy the refreshing change. You can also store zucchini flowers for your ricotta, drumstick flowers for pungent chutneys and lavender for desserts, biscuits and other bakes.

Make coffee ice cubes: Here's something to add to your chilled coffee. Just pour warm coffee into the ice cube tray and let it freeze. Use these for enhanced flavour to your glass.

## 6 foods that are dangerous for your teeth

Who doesn't want healthy teeth which translate into a bright smile? While there are many healthy options to get a glowing batch of teeth there are also some foods that mean disaster to your teeth. Here's what you should avoid -

### Sweet candy

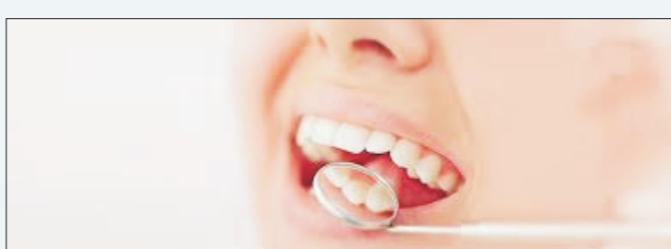
Candy sweets, especially hard candies have tons of sugar which is bad for tooth health since the sweet can cause cavities and get stuck in the crevices causing more bacteria.

### Tea and coffee

The tannic acids in coffee and even in some teas can wear down enamel and stain your teeth brown. While you cannot give up tea or coffee completely, try to keep it to the minimum and opt for green tea too.

### Pickles

We all find pickles tasty and great as



accompaniments to our meal, but the combination of super-acidic vinegar and sugar is a recipe for enamel erosion.

### Citrus fruits

Lime, Lemons, Oranges, and Grapefruit, they all are loaded with citric acid which can cause enamel erosion and tooth decay. If you cannot completely avoid them, try to minimize it by avoiding too much of acidic foods and drinks through the day. The best way to find out an acidic food is to see if any

food or drink easily stains the teeth.

### Soda

Top 5 real estate destinations to invest in 2016

### Prop Tiger

Beat the heat this summer with a trip in Australia  
Tourism Australia

Recommended By Colombia

Soda has a combination of sugar, acids, and carbonation which is too bad for teeth since it leads to tooth erosion and decay. While studies show a glass of red wine every once in a while can be good for the heart and cholesterol levels, the beverage can stain teeth quite easily. The acids in red as well as white wine wear down the surface of teeth, which is why stains are so common.

## 'Indulge' fest to treat capital's whisky, cigar lovers

Indulge, a whisky and cigar festival to be held here next month, will feature an array of the greatest whiskies paired with a selection of cigars.

Dramz Whiskey Bar and Lounge will host the fest February 6-7. In its maiden edition, Indulge will feature 46 labels, 20 distilleries and eight experts around the world who will talk about cigars and whiskies.

Some of the prominent whiskies that the patrons could relish include the likes of Glenfiddich (21, 18, 15 and 12 years), Balvenie, Glenlivet (25, 21, 18, 15, Founders Reserve and 12), Royal Salute 21, range of Chivas Regal, Old Pulteney,

Balblair, Cardhu, Oban, Tomatin, Mackmyra Preludium 06 from Sweden and more.

These whiskies will be paired along with some cigars that boast of names like Beenacudo, Padron, Bespoke, Campessino, Costa, to name a few, from The Smoke Company.

"Being an ardent lover and collector of fine whiskies and single malts, I have been working on the concept for more than a year. A festival like this creates a platform where I could share the same with all those who love great whiskies," Sunil Aggarwal, owner of Dramz and director of Indulge, said in a statement.



## After Mahadev, money laundering case against 8 betting apps over 2023 IPL matches

**The Enforcement Directorate has registered a money-laundering case against eight betting apps for illegally broadcasting IPL matches and accepting bets.**

New Delhi. The Enforcement Directorate has registered a money-laundering case against eight betting apps, including the Fairplay app which was recently promoted by Bollywood personalities. The ED case was registered based on a First Information Report (FIR) by the firm Viacom18, which mentioned the Fairplay app and other such apps that had illegally broadcast IPL tournaments on their streaming sites. While the 2023 IPL tournament was going on and broadcasting rights were with Viacom18, apps like Fairplay were broadcasting it live through illegal software on their websites and platforms and were accepting bets on the current matches being played, the FIR mentioned.

Further, it said that the actors and singers who were under scanner allegedly promoted advertisements, asking people to watch IPL on such apps. Fairplay not only used social media for promotion but had put up ads on trains, metros, and billboards across the city, it alleged. Earlier in the Mahadev app case, an investigation by the Enforcement Directorate revealed how Bollywood personalities played a key role in the promotion of the app. The investigations also revealed links between promoters of the apps and underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's



brother, Mushtaqeen. The probe revealed how even some politicians made thousands of crores illegally by duping innocent people into betting on the platform. Bollywood rapper Badshah, whose witness's statement was recorded by the Maharashtra cyber police last year in October, along with several other celebrities, were accused of promoting the betting app and urging viewers to tune in on the application to watch cricket matches. The case also involved allegations related to digital piracy and violation of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). The Fairplay app is allegedly connected to the Mahadev Open Book (MOB) platform. Earlier, the case was registered on April 20, 2023, based on a complaint lodged by Vinitchandra Sharma, vice-president of the legal department, at the Viacom 18 group. The complainant had alleged that the matches were illegally

streamed on Fairplay, and many celebrities had endorsed and promoted the betting application. Viacom18 owns several television channels and the OTT platform, VOOT. Sharma complained to the cyber police that the accused online apps had shown Viacom 18's content without acquiring legal rights, for monetary gains, thereby causing a loss to the company of over Rs 100 crore. In October 2021,

Viacom 18's anti-piracy team found out that there were seven apps — Pikashow, Foxi, Vedu, Smart Player Lite app, Film Plus app, Tea TV app and Wow TV app, that were allegedly illegally showing serials, reality shows and other content being aired on Viacom 18 platforms. The company's anti-piracy team later found that from March 31, 2023, to April 7, 2023, the Fairplay app had also shown Tata IPL matches live illegally.

## Ex-Model Divya Pahuja's Body Recovered From Haryana Canal 11 Days After Hotel Murder

New Delhi. Police have found the body of former model Divya Pahuja, who was killed at a hotel in Gurugram on January 2, in a canal in Haryana's Fatehabad district on Saturday, news agency IANS reported. The body was in a decomposed state when it was recovered from the Bhakra canal in Tohana, said Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime) Varun Dahiya. Divya was shot dead by Abhijeet Singh, the owner of the City Point Hotel near the Gurugram bus stand, where she was staying in room number 111. The police said that Abhijeet and Divya were in a relationship and he killed her in a fit of rage after she refused to erase some of his compromising photos

from her phone. Abhijeet's friends, Balraj Gill from Sector-5, Panchkula, and Ravi Banga from Gurudwara Road Model Town, Hisar, are believed to have disposed of Divya's body. The police have arrested five people in connection with the murder — Abhijeet, his associates Om Prakash, Hemraj, Balraj and a woman named Megha. Ravi Banga is still on the run. Megha had assisted Abhijeet in getting rid of the murder weapon, the documents and other personal items of the victim. Om Prakash and Hemraj had helped Abhijeet lift Divya's body and put it in the trunk of a BMW car.

## Delhi Cop, On Night Duty, Shoots Himself In Head With Service Revolver

At 3 am, Ramavtar informed Prem Singh that he wanted to rest for 10 minutes and went to sit in his car which was parked near the barricade, a police official said.

New Delhi. A Delhi Police assistant sub-inspector allegedly shot himself in the head while on duty at a picket in south Delhi's Kotla Mubarakpur area, officials said on Saturday. ASI Ramavtar and Sub-Inspector Prem Singh were deployed on night picket duty at BP Marg, an official said. "At 3 am, Ramavtar informed Prem Singh that he wanted to rest for 10 minutes and went to sit in his car which was parked near the barricade," the official said.

"When Prem Singh went back after sometime,



Ramavtar was found dead. He had a bullet injury in his head," the official said, adding that his service revolver was also found lying nearby. Another official said Ramavtar, a native of Mahendergarh, Haryana, joined the force in 1993 and was currently posted in Kotla Mubarakpur police station. The ASI's family has been informed about his death, the officer said. The reason behind the "extreme step" is being probed, he added.

## Delhi Police Issues Traffic Advisory Ahead Of Republic Day Parade Rehearsals

New Delhi. The Delhi Police on Friday issued an advisory on traffic restrictions near the India Gate in central Delhi for four days due to the Republic Day parade rehearsals, officials said. According to the advisory, rehearsals of the Republic Day parade would be held on Kartavya Path on Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday from Vay Chowk to the India Gate. "In order to facilitate the uninterrupted movement of the parade on Kartavyapath, there will be restrictions on the movement of traffic at Kartavyapath-Rafi Mar Crossing, Kartavyapath-Janpath Crossing, Kartavyapath-Man Singh Road



Crossing and Kartavyapath-C-Hexagon, from 7 am to 12 pm on these gates," it stated.

Kartavya Path from Vijay Chowk to India Gate will also remain closed for traffic, it said. The Man Singh Road, Janpath, Maulana Azad Road, the Rail Bhawan roundabout, Rajendra Prasad Road, Windsor Place roundabout, Sunheri Masjid roundabout, Rafi Marg, MLNP roundabout, MLNM, Q Point, C-Hexagon, Jaswant Singh roundabout and Ashoka Road will also remain heavy at the time of rehearsal, the advisory said. Motorists are requested to observe traffic rules and follow the directions of traffic police personnel. People are also requested to plan their journey to avoid inconvenience, it added. Traffic was also affected near the India Gate on Wednesday and Thursday.

## Mumbai-Guwahati IndiGo flight lands in Dhaka due to fog, poor visibility

A Guwahati-bound IndiGo flight, 6E5319, which departed from Mumbai, was diverted to Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Thursday due to fog and poor visibility.

New Delhi. Guwahati-bound IndiGo flight 6E 5319 from Mumbai made an emergency landing in Dhaka in the wee hours of Saturday due to sudden bad weather conditions in Assam's capital city. The flight was delayed initially when taking off from Mumbai, close to midnight. In a statement, the airline said, "IndiGo flight 6E 5319 from Mumbai to Guwahati was diverted to Dhaka, Bangladesh due to bad weather in Guwahati. Due to operational reasons, an alternate set of crew is being arranged to operate the flight from Dhaka to Guwahati." The airline also said passengers were informed of updates and were served refreshments on board. Sources at the airline told India Today that due to bad weather conditions at the Kolkata airport and



because of the runway closure at Bhubaneswar airport, the airline's cockpit crew decided to land in Dhaka. Meanwhile, Congress's Suraj Singh Thakur, who said he was on the diverted IndiGo flight, confirmed the flight couldn't land in Guwahati. "I took IndiGo flight 6E 5319 from Mumbai to Guwahati. But due to dense fog, the flight couldn't land in

Guwahati. Instead, it landed in Dhaka. Now all the passengers are in Bangladesh without their passports, we are inside the plane.?" the minister wrote on X. In Delhi, the minimum temperature on Saturday dropped to 3.6 degrees Celsius, as the national capital recorded its coldest morning this winter season. A blanket of dense fog affected train operations in the city. The weather department has issued a red alert for Delhi, Punjab and Haryana for Saturday, due to the prevailing cold wave conditions. An orange alert has also been issued for Sunday. The weather department also said that dense fog and prevailing cold wave conditions are unlikely to abate in parts of northwest India during the next three to four days, till January 16.

## Delhi University Asks Departments To Ensure CCTVs Outside Women's Washroom

Last October, about 10 students of Delhi University's Bharti College complained that they were secretly filmed while changing in an IIT-Delhi washroom during a fashion show at the institute's fest.

New Delhi. The Delhi University has directed its colleges to install CCTV cameras outside women's toilets and changing rooms during fests in the aftermath of an incident in which some women were secretly filmed while changing in IIT-Delhi, officials said on Friday. In a recent advisory, the administration also asked its colleges and departments to ensure that CCTV camera arrangements were made at all gates of the institutes and hostels to avoid any mishap. "After recommendations by the Delhi Police, we have made relevant additions to fest guidelines in view of the recent incident at IIT-Delhi. We have asked colleges to make CCTV arrangements in front of ladies' washrooms and

dressing rooms during fests for the safety of students," DU proctor Rajni Abbi told PTL. Last October, about 10 students of Delhi University's Bharti College complained that they were secretly filmed while changing in an IIT-Delhi washroom during a fashion show at the institute's fest. Police arrested a 20-year-old contractual sweeper in the case and sent the person to judicial custody. A case under section 354C (voyeurism) of the Indian Penal Code was registered at the Kishangarh police station. Under the revised guidelines, the colleges have been asked to conduct an assessment of their boundary walls before any big event and install low concertina wires to prevent outsiders

from scaling the walls. The advisory also suggests a centralised public announcement system at all gates of the institute. Before any big event where students from outside are invited to any institute, the administration must hold an advanced security liaison meeting with all stakeholders. The advisory also puts a cap on the strength of students allowed during fests, suggests a check on the structural stability of the stage during a concert, hiring of door frame metallic detectors and making proper light arrangements to cover dark patches. Entry to the events should be regulated through Google Forms, copies of which have to be submitted to the police along.

## Burglars Responsible For Oil Spill': Manipur Power Firm In Police Complaint

**Manipur State Power Company Ltd (MSPCL) in a police complaint alleged theft and burglary caused the oil leak from the heavy fuel power station in Leimakhong**

New Delhi. The oil leak from a defunct heavy fuel power plant in Manipur's Leimakhong on Wednesday happened allegedly after "incidents of theft and burglary" at the abandoned facility, according to a police complaint filed by the Manipur State Power Company Ltd (MSPCL). The MSPCL in the police complaint filed on Thursday alleged theft and burglary caused the oil leak from the

heavy fuel power station and hydropower plant house in Leimakhong, based on which the police filed a zero first information report (FIR) in Sekmai, 20 km from the state capital Imphal. A 'zero FIR' can be filed at any police station. Such an FIR has no number assigned, hence the name 'zero FIR', and the police station where the case has been filed has to send the FIR to the correct jurisdiction.

"The perpetrators had also caused spillage of heavy oil, leading to an unceasing release of oil into the nearby river which has posed a significant threat to the public water supply by contaminating the river water and creating a hazardous environmental situation," the Manipur Police said in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "The security forces are making all efforts to identify and arrest the accused persons," the police said.

Sekmai, where the 'zero FIR' has been filed, is 10 km from the power plant in Leimakhong. It is the Leimakhong police station where the FIR has to be forwarded for investigation. However, with ethnic tensions in Manipur and people of different communities living in Sekmai and Leimakhong, the matter takes a very



sensitive dimension.

The oil leak had contaminated the Leimakhong river and streams in Kanto Sabal village and Sekmai area, raising concerns over long-term environmental damage, and shortage of drinking water in areas along the river. The Public Health and Engineering Department has, as a precaution, temporarily closed the water supply schemes located near the streams, and will re-open them once the test samples confirm the water is safe to drink. The government said it has arranged drinking water by boring tube wells and sending water tankers to the affected area. The Chief Minister's Office in a statement on Friday said the oil contamination "has been effectively controlled." An expert team has been formed to investigate the

incident and conduct a comprehensive assessment of contamination and its impact on the surrounding areas. Additional security measures have also been taken up as well," the statement said, adding Chief Minister N Biren Singh held a meeting with Chief Secretary Vineet Joshi, experts from the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, Indian Coast Guard, and officers from other departments. The Chief Minister's Office said residents who need drinking water may call these helplines - 8794006422, 7085922914. While the police will run their own investigation separate from a three-member committee formed by the Governor into how the leak happened, publicly available information throws up several questions as to the location of the heavy-fuel power plant and its distance to the river. The nearest point from the power station to the river is 450 metres, while the farthest point is 2.5 km within Leimakhong. There are buildings, school, church, market and other structures between the river and the power plant. A surface oil leak would have contaminated the areas between the river and the power plant.

## DRDO starts trials of light tank Zorawar, to hand over project to Army in months

DRDO has started the internal development trials of the light tank Zorawar and is planning to hand it over to the Army for further trials in the next four months.



New Delhi. In another push for the indigenous defence sector, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which is the research and development wing of the Defence Ministry, has started internal trials for the light tank 'Zorawar'. Light in weight, and easier mobility, these tanks of the Army are set to address defence capabilities in high-altitude areas, including the Ladakh sector. DRDO will hand the project over to the Army for further trials within the next four months. The project also involves a private player, Larsen & Toubro (L&T). Sources said that the tank's internal trials have begun, aiming for completion by the end of March or mid-April, paving the way for subsequent user trials with the Army.

The light tank, part of a 59-tank order to DRDO and its private sector development and production partner, addresses the Indian Army's need to enhance mobility and manoeuvring capabilities in the Ladakh sector. Facing a similar deployment of Chinese light tanks in large numbers, the Indian Army sought to develop comparable capabilities, a project recently approved by the Defence Acquisition Council. Collaborating with L&T under the Make in India initiative, DRDO is working on building a 25-tonne light tank capable of swift movement in high mountainous terrain. One of the crucial features in consideration is an active protection system designed to shield combat vehicles from anti-tank guided missiles and projectiles. The Army also aims for the light tank to be amphibious, allowing deployment in riverine regions, including the Pangong Tso Lake in eastern Ladakh, where the Indian forces have countered Chinese light tanks.





- Add the grated paneer, cucumber and garam masala powder.
- Cook for a minute or two on low-medium flame.
- Garnish with coriander leaves and switch off the flame.
- Heat a tawa over medium flame.
- Warm the chapati (or tortillas).
- Add some of the paneer vegetable mixture.
- Roll the chapati tightly.
- Serve at once.

**Spinach Cheese Pizza**  
A simple and delicious pizza that can be served for lunch or dinner.

**Ingredients**  
Pizza Base - 1 (available readymade or use this pizza dough recipe), Onion - 1, big, finely chopped, Spinach - 1/2 bunch (or 1 small bunch), cleaned, washed, chopped, Parsley - 1/2 cup, finely chopped + extra to garnish, Cheddar Cheese - 1/4 cup, grated, Red Chilli Flakes - as per taste + extra to garnish, Cumin Seeds - 1 tsp, Olive Oil - 3 tsp, Pepper Powder as per taste, Salt - a small pinch (optional), Tomato Sauce or Pizza Sauce to spread

**Optional Ingredients**

# 5 Healthy Lunch box recipes for Kids

Try out from our list of quick and healthy breakfast/tiffin box options that are quick to make and easy to carry.

**Egg Salad Sandwich**

A healthy and delicious breakfast dish for kids and adults alike. These sandwiches are simple and easy to make too.

**Ingredients**

Bread Slices - 4, Eggs - 2, hard-boiled, finely chopped, Mayonnaise (or Butter) - 4 tsp, Red Chilli Flakes - 1/2 tsp, Salt as per taste, Pepper Powder as per taste, Ghee as required

**Optional**

Tomato - 1, sliced  
Spring Onions - 1/4 cup, finely chopped  
Red Onion - 1, sliced  
Lettuce Leaves - few, chopped

**Method**

Mix the eggs, mayonnaise, red chilli flakes, salt and pepper powder in a bowl. Spread this on 2 bread slices. Top up with the tomato, spring onions, red onion and lettuce leaves. Cover with the remaining slices. Heat a tawa over low flame. Place the sandwiches and apply little ghee around the edges. Cook for 30 seconds on each side and remove. Serve with french fries.

**Chicken Noodle Stir-Fry**

A simple and delicious meal, this easy to make stir-fry with chicken, noodles and vegetables is ideal for lunch or dinner.

**Ingredients**

Chicken Fillets - 200 gms, finely sliced, fat trimmed, Plain Noodles - 200 gms, Oil - 1 1/2 tsp, Onion - 1, small, finely sliced, Garlic - 1 clove, finely sliced, Ginger - 1 cm piece,

grated, Sweet Chilli Sauce - 2 tblsp (recipe here), Fish Sauce - 3 tsp, Coriander Leaves - 1/4 cup, chopped, Green Peas - 2 to 3 tblsp, shelled, boiled

**Optional**

Spring Onions - 2, chopped, Button Mushrooms - 1, chopped, Carrots - 2 tblsp, chopped, Capsicum - 2 tblsp, chopped, Red Chilli Flakes - 1/2 tsp, Peanuts - 3 tsp, crushed, Lettuce - few, shredded

**Method**

- Cook the noodles as per packet instructions (or in a pan of slightly salted water for 4 to 5 minutes).

- Stir once and drain well.

- Keep aside.

- Heat oil in a pan over medium flame.

- Saute the onions for a minute or until soft.

- Add the ginger, garlic and cook for 20 seconds.

- Add the chicken and cook for 5 minutes or until cooked.

- Add the peas, carrots, spring onions, mushrooms, capsicum, red chilli flakes, lettuce, chilli sauce, fish sauce, noodles and stir well.

- Stir-fry for 2 to 3 minutes.

- Add the coriander leaves and peanuts. Stir again.

- Serve warm.

**Egg Noodles**

**Ingredients**

Plain Noodles - 1 packet, boiled as per packet instructions, Eggs - 4, Cabbage - 1 cup, finely chopped, Carrot - 1/2 cup, grated, Beans - 1/2 cup, finely chopped, Onions - 1 cup, finely sliced, Green Chillies - 2, sliced lengthwise, Black Pepper Powder - 1/2 tsp, Ajinomoto - as required, Ginger Garlic Paste - 1 tsp, Coriander Leaves - handful, chopped, Salt as per taste, Oil - 2 tsp

**Method**

- Heat oil in a pan over medium flame.

- Add the ginger garlic paste and fry for 20 to 30 seconds.

- Saute the onions, beans and green chillies for a minute or two.

- Add the cabbage, salt, pepper powder and ajinomoto.

- Stir-fry for a minute.

- Add the boiled noodles and break the eggs into the pan.

- Mix well and cook for 2 minutes.

- Garnish with coriander leaves.

- Serve hot.

**Veg Paneer Roll**

This easy to make and delicious Veg Paneer Roll makes for a perfect lunch, evening snack or a light dinner. Made with grated paneer and vegetables cooked in spices and then wrapped in a chapati (or a tortilla), they are a popular street food item these days.

**Ingredients**

Chapati (or Tortilla) - 3 to 4, Paneer - 3 tblsp, grated, Carrot - 2 tblsp, finely chopped or sliced, Capsicum - 1, small, chopped, Cucumber - 2 tblsp, chopped (optional), Onion - 1, small, chopped, Green Chilli - 1, small, finely chopped, Ginger Garlic Paste - 1 tsp, Tomato - 1, small, finely chopped, Red Chilli Powder - 1/2 tsp, Garam Masala Powder - 1/2 tsp, Cumin Seeds - 1/4 tsp, Saunf - a pinch, Curry Powder - 1/4 tsp, Coriander Leaves - handful, chopped, Salt as

per taste, Oil - 2 tsp

**Method**

- Heat oil in a pan over medium flame.

- Fry the saunf and cumin seeds for 30 seconds.

- Add the onions and green chillies.

- Saute for a minute or until onions turn light golden.

- Add the ginger garlic paste and stir well for 30 to 40 seconds.

- Add the capsicums, carrots and saute for another minute.

- Add the tomatoes and cook for one more minute.

- Add red chilli powder, curry powder and salt.

- Stir well.

Tomatoes - 1/2 cup, chopped (or use sundried tomatoes), Mushrooms - 1/4 cup, chopped

**Method**

- Heat oil in a nonstick pan over medium flame.

- Saute the onions until golden.

- Add the spinach and cook for 3 to 4 minutes or until all moisture has evaporated and the leaves are wilted.

- Remove and transfer to a bowl.

- Add parsley and mix well.

- Sprinkle pepper powder, cumin seeds, salt and red chilli flakes

- Add 2 to 3 tsp of the tomato sauce on the pizza base and spread evenly.

- Place 2 to 3 tblsp of the spinach mixture and spread well.

## Sweet Potatoes More than superfood!

X-man: Apocalypse star Olivia Munn recently revealed on social media the secret behind the radical change in her appearance. She said having one roasted Japanese potato (sweet potato) everyday is the reason behind her youthful skin. Originally grown in the Americas, sweet potato is known to have been domesticated more than 8000 years ago. Sweet potatoes, because of their fibre dense composition have widely been used throughout the Indian subcontinent as a fasting food that satiates hunger for long periods. Precisely this is the reason why dieticians recommend it in the weight loss diet. According to celebrity nutritionist Sandhya Gugnani, "Sweet potatoes are nutrition dense food. If you think because of its sweet taste, it should be shunned by people who avoid sugar; one must know that they actually help in lowering blood sugar because of their



low glycemic index. It is helpful in controlling blood pressure and prevents constipation because of the high fiber content."

**Power packed super food**

**Good for the eyes:** If you believe in the term 'superfood', sweet potatoes fit the bill perfectly. According to a recent research on African kids, it was found that sweet potatoes meet from 35% to 90% requirement of Vitamin A.

**Anti-ageing and anti-cancer:** Carotenoids present in sweet potatoes are said to have important anti-oxidant and anti-cancer properties. When passing through digestive tract, this fibrous tuber absorbs dangerous free radicals and heavy metals that might cause cancer. Studies at Harvard University have proved that there is a reduction of more than 30 percent chance of having lung cancer in people eating foods rich in beta carotenoid.

**Prevent stress; control blood pressure, heart-healthy:** Rich in Vitamin B6, they have been proved to reduce the risk of cardiovascular ailments. They are rich in magnesium which is necessary for healthy artery, blood, bone, heart, muscle, and nerve function.

Potassium found in sweet potatoes helps in regulating heartbeat and nerve signals and also in relaxing muscle contractions, reducing swelling, and protecting and controlling the function of kidneys.

**Energy rich:** As the sugar found in sweet potatoes

• **Originally grown in the Americas, sweet potato is known to have been domesticated more than 8000 years ago.**  
• **Sweet potatoes, because of their fibre dense composition have widely been used throughout the Indian subcontinent as a fasting food that satiates hunger for long periods.**

is slowly released in the blood stream, they are often recommended in diet of athletes and players and those who suffer from low blood pressure.

**Healthiest cooking method**

It is important to 'cook' sweet potatoes before consuming them for better absorption of nutrition.

**Boiling:** It is a recommended method as consuming boiled and mashed sweet potatoes helps in better assimilation of beta-carotene (vitamin A). In boiled form they have a lower glycemic index and hence is helpful in slow release of sugar in body.

**Stir frying:** Frying it with 3-4 gm of fat is actually helpful because the nutrients become more active and are easily absorbed by body. But ensure that you do not over do it.

**Steaming and roasting:** Steaming for 7-8 minutes is sufficient in making nutrients available.

The commonest way of having sweet potatoes is in roasted form because it tastes the best like this. Do not over roast it, and also avoid pouring too much vegetable oil as it may destroy nutrient composition.

When one must avoid it While diabetics and weight watchers can have it in measured quantities, individuals

with already existing and untreated kidney or gallbladder problems should eat it only after consulting the physician.

**Sweet Potato Biscuits**

**Ingredients**

**Sweet Potatoes** - 1 cup, cooked and mashed, Buttermilk - 1/4 cup, Maida (Plain Flour) - 1 1/2 cups, Light Brown Sugar - 3 tsp, Baking Powder - 1 1/2 tsp, Baking Soda - 1/4 tsp, Butter - 1/4 cup, unsalted Salt - 3/4 tsp

**Method**

- Combine the maida, brown sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Whisk well.

- Add the butter and mix until the mixture is crumbly.

- Whisk the mashed sweet potatoes and buttermilk in another bowl.

- Add this to the flour mixture and mix well until the dough is sticky.

- Sprinkle some flour on a flat surface and knead the dough 4 to 5 times.

- Roll it out to 1/2 to 3/4 inch thickness and cut the dough into 2 inch rounds.

- Place them on a baking tray lined with parchment paper.

- Place the tray into a preheated oven at 225C/450F and bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove and cool.

- Store it in airtight container and serve as needed.

## Zerodha's Nikhil Kamath congratulates OpenAI CEO on wedding with throwback picture

**New Delhi** Co-founder of Zerodha Nikhil Kamath on Friday took to social media to extend his congratulations to Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, on his marriage with his long-time boyfriend, Oliver Mulherin. Nikhil Kamath, on his Instagram story, shared a picture with Altman from the previous year's White House State Dinner, where he had met the newlyweds. The US State Dinner, hosted by American President Joe Biden, was in honour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, wherein Kamath was among the special dignitaries invitees. Sam Altman and Oliver Mulherin also attended the state dinner at the White House.

In an intimate seaside ceremony, Sam Altman tied the knot with his partner. Oliver Mulherin also confirmed the news via an Instagram post. The caption of the post reads, "married my best friend and love of my life".

## Tata buys Capital Foods for Rs 5,100 cr

**NEW DELHI.** Tata Consumer Products has signed a definitive agreement to acquire 100% equity shares of Capital Foods, owner of the brands 'Ching's Secret' and 'Smith & Jones', for an enterprise value of Rs 5,100 crore.

In all, 75% of the equity shareholding will be acquired upfront and the balance 25% shareholding will be acquired within the next three years. With this the Tata Group company managed to outdo consumer-goods giants such as ITC, Nestle HUL and Kraft Heinz which were also in the race to acquire Capital Foods.

Sunil D'Souza, MD & CEO, Tata Consumer Products said, "We believe this is a good strategic and financial fit. It will open up significant market opportunities in the fast-growing non-Indian cuisines segment, leveraging the sales and distribution platform that we have built... This transaction will accelerate momentum in our business and is margin accretive to our business." Capital Foods has strong umbrella platform brands with a portfolio of unique products for in-home consumption in fast growing categories. Ching's Secret is a market leader in Desi Chinese across its product categories - Chutneys, Blended Masalas, Sauces and Soups. Smith & Jones is a fast-growing brand catering to in-home cooking of Italian and other western cuisines. The overall size of the categories in which Capital Foods operates is estimated at Rs 21,400 crore.

This acquisition now pits Tata against Nestle's Maggi, the market leader in Desi Chinese segment. Ajay Gupta, Founder of Capital Foods said, "The journey ahead is going to be a giant leap for us, full of endless possibilities and definitely exhilarating!" Gupta had founded his company in 1996 and currently holds about a 9.45% stake while the rest is held by private equity funds General Atlantic and Arta Asia.

75% shareholding to be acquired upfront

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## Want To Invest In Eco-Friendly Schemes SBI Introduces THIS Term-Deposit Plan

**New Delhi.** State Bank of India (SBI), the country's largest lender, has introduced a new initiative called the SBI Green Rupee Term Deposit (SGRTD) to gather funds to support environmentally friendly projects. The goal is to contribute to the growth of a green finance ecosystem in India, as stated by SBI.

What Is SBI's Green Rupee Term Deposit?

A green deposit, such as the SGRTD, is designed for those who want to invest their extra cash reserves in environmentally friendly projects. This move aligns with the Indian government's goal of achieving net carbon neutrality by 2070. SBI Green Rupee Term Deposit vs Regular Term Deposits

Similar to regular term deposits, a green fixed deposit offers investors a fixed interest rate over a set period. The main difference lies in how the funds collected under green deposits are utilized. (Also Read: Citigroup Announces Plan To Trim 20,000 Jobs Over Next Two Years) Unlike traditional fixed deposits, the focus of green fixed deposits is on supporting projects with a



positive impact on the environment. The range of projects funded by green fixed deposits is diverse, covering financing for solar power projects, wind farms, organic farming, and energy-efficient infrastructure.

Who Can Invest In SBI's Green Rupee Term Deposit?

This deposit scheme is open to everyone, including resident individuals, non-individuals, and non-resident Indian (NRI) customers.

SBI's Green Rupee Term Deposit: Tenor

Investors can choose from three tenors: 1,111 days, 1777 days, and 2222 days. SBI's Green Rupee Term Deposit: How To Apply? To apply for this deposit scheme, individuals can currently do so through the branch network, and soon it will also be accessible through digital channels like YONO and Internet Banking Services (INB), according to the bank.

# 'I work more than 70 hours at this age': Sudha Murty backs husband's office grind

**Sudha Murty, who is married to the co-founder of Infosys NR Narayana Murthy, has backed her husband's view on increasing the country's productivity with the youth putting in "at least 70 hours a week" at work.**

**New Delhi** Author and philanthropist Sudha Murty has backed her husband Narayana Murthy's notion of committing "70 hours per week" to work in a bid to increase the country's productivity. Sudha Murty, 73, stated that she works "more than 70 hours even at this age" and that she does not perceive the labour as "grinding or anything". Last year, Narayana Murthy, (the co-founder of Infosys), 77, ignited a nationwide debate with his "IT workers should work 70 hours week" remark. In an

exclusive interview with India Today's Consulting Editor Rajdeep Sardesai, Sudha Murty was asked whether she shared Narayana Murthy's view of "70 hours per week" and grinding at the office. In her response, she implied that work-life need not always be synonymous with grinding and that work-life could fall under the ambit of enjoyment, if one was passionate about their occupation. She likened working hard to holidays too. "At least for both of us, work was always a joy. So it was not grinding or anything. I even work more than 70 hours at this age because it is like work is different, or you can't share your family life. It is not true. We can still do that along with the work. Like you come home, you know, I'm in the kitchen, he'll come and help. Is it not spending time together? So my definition is you should enjoy your work, you should be passionate about your work, the work is a holiday there," Sudha Murty said. Sudha Murty also shared that contrary to the contemporary "work-life balance and



mental health" debate, she held the notion that one can "enjoy working" and "working together" as she did with her husband. "You know because today's generation says we need a work-life balance, what about our mental health? If we spend so much time working, when will we genuinely enjoy life? What is enjoying life? I always enjoyed working, my work, working with him, and working together in the house," Sudha Murty said. She further shared an anecdote, citing her friend, who'd once said, "Look, we in India must first get a life and then talk about work-life balance."

"I think it was a fantastic statement by Sri KV Kamath. I am very indebted to him for making this whole philosophy very clear in that short sentence," she told Rajdeep Sardesai. "70 hours is not important, productivity is! Narayana Murthy. Meanwhile, in an exclusive conversation with India Today, Narayana Murty affirmed his previous advice that young Indians should commit to a 70-hour at work per week. "Absolutely, 70-hour weeks should be there as a way to give back to society," Murthy said. "My view has always been that those of us in India who have received so much benefit from the country, from the taxpayer, have an enormous responsibility to work very, very hard to bring a chance for the betterment of life for the poorer sections of society," he added. Murthy also said that he used to work 85 to 90 hours a week till he retired and said the number 70 is not important, and that the focus should be on productivity "like the Germans did after World War II, like the Japanese did".

## Citigroup Announces Plan To Trim 20,000 Jobs Over Next Two Years

**New Delhi.** Citigroup is planning to trim down its workforce by 20,000 jobs over the next few years, aiming to boost profits and give back cash to its shareholders, as announced by the US bank on Friday. The restructuring details were shared alongside the fourth-quarter results, where the bank reported a substantial loss. By 2026, Citigroup's employee count is expected to be around 180,000, down from 240,000 in 2022. This reduction also considers the anticipated spinoff of Citi's Mexico subsidiary, Banamex. (Also Read: 8 Game-Changing Govt Women Empowerment Schemes In India) Jane Fraser, the CEO of Citi, has introduced a major corporate revamp, shifting to five business lines from the previous two. The bank has also scaled down its global consumer banking presence by selling off assets in countries like China and Vietnam. (Also Read: Japan And Singapore Have

World's Strongest Passport; Check India's Ranking) Fraser stated, "Last month we announced consequential changes that align our organizational



structure with our strategy and changes how we run the bank. When completed, we will have a simpler firm that can operate faster, better serve our clients and unlock value for our shareholders." In the fourth quarter, Citigroup reported a loss of \$1.9 billion, a notable drop from the \$2.5 billion profit in the same period in 2022.

Revenues saw a three percent decline, amounting to \$17.4 billion. Several expenses, including \$780 million for severance and other reorganization costs, contributed to the fourth-quarter charge. Citi's CFO, Mark Mason, mentioned that this charge corresponds to 7,000 job cuts over the next year. Additional one-time costs included a \$1.7 billion special assessment to replenish a Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) emergency fund after the failures of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank. Citigroup also recorded reserves of \$1.3 billion related to risks associated with Argentina and Russia, along with an \$880 million impact from the devaluation of the Argentine peso.

Despite the challenges, Citigroup's shares experienced a 0.8 percent increase in morning trading.

## Wipro Q3 net profit falls 12% to Rs 2,694 crore

**For Q4, company expects revenue from IT services segment in range of -1.5% to +0.5% in constant currency terms**



Delaporte said the demand environment overall remains cautious. "Clients are still making conservative investments, looking for efficiency, more returns on investment, and better optimisation of existing investments. But we are seeing some indicators for growth." He added that the company saw good performance in its consulting business, with Capco reporting a double-digit sequential growth in order bookings, which is the highest in the last three quarters. Wipro acquired global management and technology consultancy firm Capco in 2021 for \$1.45 billion. The company's IT services operating margin for Q3 stood at 16.0%, down 111 bps sequentially. Its total bookings stood at \$3.8 billion, up by 0.2% QoQ and large deal bookings were at \$0.9 billion. Delaporte said the

company is likely to see an improvement in the margin once the market turns around. Its voluntary attrition came in at a 10-quarter low of 12.3% in the third quarter. Its headcount continues to drop as it ended the third quarter with 4,473 fewer employees. In Q2, it saw a decline of 5,051 employees. Wipro chief human resources officer Saurabh Govil said, "We believe that we have enough capacity to grow and for specific skills and technologies we continue to hire." Talking about artificial intelligence, the CEO said AI is now moving from the curiosity and experimentation stage, to becoming vital to business strategy. "We can confidently say that every long-term, large deal now has an AI component. A substantial portion of our clients are looking for us to develop use-cases tied to their business goals. They want us to use AI-models to drive tangible results. AI is now embedded across most of our existing solutions and offerings. In addition, every business line is working to launch new offerings that use AI," he added.

## Oil price up 3% after US, Britain strike on Houthis

**Oil prices in the international market on Monday rose more than 3% on Friday as the US and Britain carried out strikes on Houthi military targets in Yemen.**

**NEW DELHI.** Oil prices in the international market on Monday rose more than 3% on Friday as the US and Britain carried out strikes on Houthi military targets in Yemen.

Brent Crude Price, the benchmark of crude price in international market, was trading at \$79.74 a barrel, up by 3.04% or \$2.35 while WTI Crude was trading at \$74.31 up by 3.18% or \$2.29 at 7.25 PM (Indian Standard Time) on January 12, 2024. Both benchmarks were on course for a second straight weekly rise.

The US and the UK attacked the Houthi military in response to attacks by the Iran-backed group on shipping in the Red



Sea. The conflict raised concern of broader conflict in the Middle-East that could disrupt oil supply from the region. As per energy analysts, if the Strait of Hormuz impacted, it will present over double the impact of the Ukraine war on oil market. The Houthi attacks in the Red Sea have disrupted international commerce on the key route between Europe and Asia, which accounts for about 15% of the world's shipping traffic.

The Houthis have attacked commercial

vessels in the Red Sea to show support for Palestinian militant group Hamas. Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden said the targeted strikes were a clear message that the US and its partners will not tolerate attacks on its personnel or "allow hostile actors to imperil freedom of navigation". A Houthi spokesperson said the group will continue to target shipping heading towards Israel. Shipping giant Maersk and others are diverting vessels away from the Red Sea, warning customers of further disruptions.

## HCLTech beats estimates; reports Rs 4,350 crore net profit

**BENGALURU:** HCLTech on Friday posted a 6.2% year-on-year (YoY) increase in consolidated net profit for the December quarter at Rs 4,350 crore. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 4,096 crore in the year-ago period.

The company's revenue for the quarter stood at Rs 28,446 crore, up 6.5% YoY. The company won 18 large deals- six in services and 12 in software- in the third quarter. Its new deal wins stood at \$1,927 million. C Vijayakumar, CEO and MD, HCLTech said the company has delivered an operating margin of 19.8%, a 126 bps improvement sequentially and 16 bps improvement YoY.

"We are quite excited about the strategic progress HCLSoftware has made over the last year, delivering 5% YoY CC revenue growth with a significant increase in subscription and support revenue and consistently growing annual recurring revenue," Vijayakumar said.

He said the company is continuing to invest in AI, specifically Gen AI as well as cloud native capabilities across its products and services to address evolving client needs. Prateek Aggarwal, CFO, HCLTech, said the company's services



revenue has crossed a milestone of \$12 billion (Rs 1 lakh crore) on a run rate basis. The company has added 3,818 freshers and its attrition rate stood at 12.8%. HCLTech expects its constant currency revenue growth for FY24 including ASAP acquisition to be between 5% and 5.5% y-o-y. Its EBIT margin is expected to be between 18% and 19%. The company's net headcount also increased by 3,617 in the December quarter. The Board of Directors has declared an interim dividend of '12 per equity share and the record date of January 20 is fixed for the payment. "The payment date of the said interim dividend shall be January 31, 2024," it said in a filing. The company also announced the appointment of Bhavani Balasubramanian as an Independent Director with effect from January 12, 2024. A Chartered Accountant by qualification, Bhavani has over four decades of experience in auditing a variety of clients, including listed companies and multinationals across different industries, the company said.

## ED arrests 5 in Rs 56K crore Bhushan Steel loan fraud case

**NEW DELHI.** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday arrested five persons in connection with Rs 56,000 crore bank loan fraud committed by erstwhile promoters of Bhushan Steel (BSL). The arrested persons are Pankaj Kumar Tiwari, the former vice-president, banking of the company, former VP accounts Pankaj Kumar Agarwal, ex-chief financial officer Nitin Johri, Ajay Mittal, the brother-in-law of former promoter Neeraj Singal, and Ajay Mittal's wife and sister of Neeraj Singal, Archana Mittal. The investigative agency said that during the investigation it was revealed that the erstwhile Managing Director Neeraj Singal and his associates formed several shell companies. They rotated funds from one company to another through a chain of multiple entities. The funds were circulated to infuse capital, buy property and for other personal purposes not intended by the Banks. They also prepared forged documents and made fraudulent representations before the banks to discount Letter of Credits (LCs) and diverted.

NEWS BOX

AFC Asian Cup: India face tough Australia challenge



**BENGALURU.** Exactly five years and one week ago, India started an Asian Cup campaign in the most spectacular of fashions, smashing four goals past Thailand. On Saturday though, as the Blue Tigers kick off another Asian Cup campaign at the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium in Al Rayyan, the focus will be on not getting smashed. For on the opposite side of the pitch will be Australia, one of the best teams in Asia.

When Australia last played in the same stadium, it was in the Round of 16 of the 2022 World Cup and they almost took eventual champions Argentina to extra time, before losing 2-1. That is the kind of quality India are against. Of course, they have lost a number of players since, and a generation is finding their way. But they were still good enough to beat Bangladesh — a team against which India has drawn four times in their last five games — 7-0 in the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers in November. More than half of Australia's squad play their football in Europe. In short, there is perhaps not a better time for Indian football fans to keep their expectations grounded.

Downplaying expectations was perhaps the dominant theme in India coach Igor Stimac's pre-match press conference. "I'm not putting any pressure on players. We will go out and fight," he said. "We will go out and fight. It's going to be a difficult match for us. We all know the strengths of Australia, and their achievements as well. Their players are coming in from European clubs, where they've been playing competitive football week in, and week out. It's not easy. But we are here to embrace all such challenges."

"We are excited that the kick-off time is close. We have had a nice 12 days here working hard. All the boys are excited and we are looking forward to the game. Hopefully, it turns out to be wonderful for our 17 debutants. It is a place for them to learn," he added. But, unlike the last time India played Australia — the 2011 Asian Cup — when fans did not dare to even dream of a miracle, both Stimac and his players will know that on their day, they can dance with the best in Asia. It was under Stimac that India held defending Asian Cup champions Qatar to a goalless draw in 2019. One does not have to go that far back into the past either. In September last year, India held Iraq — a team that has since held Qatar and lost only by a solitary goal to South Korea — to a stalemate in normal time.

Dean Elgar joins Essex on 3-year deal after retiring from international cricket

**New Delhi.** Former South African batter Dean Elgar has penned a 3-year deal with Essex ahead of the upcoming edition of the county season.

Elgar recently retired from international cricket after the two-match Test series against Rohit Sharma's India.

In the first Test at the SuperSport Park in Centurion, the left-hander won the Player of the Match award for scoring 185 and guiding the Proteas to victory. Elgar also captained South Africa in his farewell Test after Temba Bavuma was ruled out due to injury.

After joining Essex, the 36-year-old Elgar was delighted as he geared up for the 'new chapter' in his career. "I'm thrilled to embark on this new chapter of my cricketing journey with Essex. The Club have been pushing for honours in recent years, and I'm eager to contribute to further success," Elgar was



quoted as saying. "I've thoroughly enjoyed my previous experiences in county cricket, and I'm really looking forward to joining up with the squad ahead of season," he added. Anthony McGrath, the head coach of Essex, welcomed Elgar and talked about the value the latter brings to the county team.

"Dean brings a wealth of talent and experience that will undoubtedly strengthen our squad for the 2024 season," McGrath was quoted as saying.

"He has had an outstanding career in Test cricket and has demonstrated to the world his desire to score runs at the highest level, right up until he retired.

"His achievements in the international arena speak volumes about his capabilities and we are excited to witness his impact at Essex," McGrath added. Elgar made his debut for South Africa back in 2012 and his career spanned 12 years. In 86 Tests, the southpaw racked up 5347 runs at an average of 37.92 and a strike-rate of 47.78 with 14 centuries and 23 half-centuries to show for his efforts.

Final chance to book Paris tickets for Savita and co

Women's team faces tricky assignment in Ranchi but a podium finish will guarantee them a place in this year's Olympics



**CHENNAI.** After falling agonisingly short of a podium finish in Tokyo, where Great Britain went past them to secure the bronze, the Indian team dusted themselves off to bag a bronze medal in the 2022 Commonwealth Games and Asian Games and won the Asian Champions Trophy in 2023. However, their biggest challenge awaits them in Ranchi starting from January 13, where they hope to qualify for the 2024 Paris Olympics after missing out on the direct berth via the Hangzhou Games.

Knowing the top three teams out of eight competing in the January 13-19 tournament will qualify for the marquee event in France, India has the task cut out for them with the likes of the USA, Italy, and New Zealand in their group. With this being their final chance to qualify for the Olympics, head coach Janneke Schopman wants her team to forget their so close yet so far finish in the Asian Games and concentrate on what is to come. "We did not qualify for the Olympics

from the Asian Games and we know it was a missed opportunity. But we don't dwell on the past," Schopman said at the pre-tournament press conference. "We are hoping to do well in this tournament. We need to be better (than before) and if we play to our best, we can qualify for the Olympics (from here)," she added. "We would love to be part of the Olympics, but we know we have to qualify for it first and it depends on how well we play in this particular tournament. We have worked our best in the lead-up to the tournament and now the focus is on ourselves," captain Savita Punia echoed the sentiments.

India will miss one of their most experienced player and vice-captain, Vandana Katariya, in the tournament as she was ruled out just nine days before the event after fracturing her cheekbone during a training session. In her absence, Nikki Pradhan has been named deputy, while young Baljeet Kaur has been added to the squad. In the absence of the only player with more than 300 caps, India's first challenge against the USA, the team they beat to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, might look like an uphill task, but the head coach has her team well prepared.

"USA is a threat. We have played against them earlier, though the past or the rankings do not

matter much. We are a good side, we want to play good hockey and we are ready for the tournament," she said. India will then lock horns with New Zealand, currently ranked 9th in the world, and then close out the group stage with a fixture against Italy on January 16. And Schopman expects her team to follow the simple formula to come on top in Ranchi. "We want to play according to our principles and foundation. Our game plan is to understand the situation and make the right decisions according to the needs of the game at that particular point."

Despite winning the Asian Champions Trophy at the same venue in November 2023, India could not convert a lot of their penalty corner opportunities into goals throughout the Asian Games. To deal with those issues, the women's team has practiced under Rupinder Pal Singh and Schopman believes it was vital for her players to hone their skills under his guidance. "Rupinder has the expertise as he is an experienced player. He knows the pressure on the top of 'D'. It was a great help for the likes of Gurjit Kaur and Deepika to fine-tune their skills. I am very happy with that," the confident coach mentioned.

After failing to book the direct berth, the women's team has one final chance to qualify for the Olympics for a third time in as many editions. Only time will tell if they can grab this chance.

Nazmul Hasan to step down as Bangladesh Cricket Board president, takes up Ministry role

**New Delhi.** The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will have a new president after incumbent Nazmul Hasan was given responsibility for the Ministry of Youth and Sports following his victory in the general election. Despite there being no legal impediments to holding both positions simultaneously, Nazmul has expressed concerns over potential perceptions of bias if he were to continue in both roles. He stated that while there is no direct conflict between his ministerial role and the BCB presidency, as there have been instances of individuals holding similar dual roles both domestically and internationally, he believes it would be more appropriate to focus solely on his ministerial duties to avoid any speculation of favoritism towards cricket. Nazmul has been at the helm of the BCB since 2012 and has emphasized the importance of not rushing into a decision that could negatively



impact Bangladesh's cricket. He mentioned the need for discussions with the International Cricket Council (ICC) regarding his committee responsibilities, as he currently chairs one of the committees and the ICC typically prefers elected bodies to complete their full terms. "There is no relationship between getting ministry and leaving from the post of BCB because

earlier there were several ministers who also fulfilled the roles. It is also there abroad and so that is not the issue." With the next BCB elections not due until October 2025, should Nazmul step down immediately, a current director from within the BCB will be required to take over on an interim basis, as per the organization's constitution and the guidelines set by the ICC that prevent government interference and mandate an electoral process for the president's position. "But it would be good if that is not the case (holding both the posts) because then there might be speculations of me prioritizing cricket. I want to prioritize everything (being the Minister of Sports)," he added. BCB's elections are due only in October 2025 and an existing member of the governing body may take charge on an interim basis in case Nazmul quits.

IND vs ENG: Dhruv Jurel finds his way among the big boys after dream India call-up

**New Delhi** Dhruv Jurel's selection for the Indian team for the Test series against England wasn't something that could have been predicted. However, on Friday night, Jurel got the pleasant surprise after being picked to play the first two Tests against the Three Lions.

Soon after, Jurel shared the delightful news with his fans. In an Instagram post, Jurel wrote, "Having the tears of joy and happiness." India picked three wicketkeepers, one of whom was Jurel, along with KL Rahul and KS Bharat. Although there are remote chances of Jurel getting his maiden cap, being a part of the Indian dressing room should do his confidence a world of good. Back in 2020, at 18-year-old Jurel first made his first appearance at a big level while representing India in the U19 World Cup in South Africa. Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ravi Bishnoi and Kartik Tyagi hogged the limelight for the Boys in Blue and Jurel was not amongst their top players in the tournament. However, Jurel did make a mark with a knock of 52 off 48 balls with three fours and one six against Sri Lanka, contributing to India's win by 90 runs. But apart that, he did not get enough chances to play more impactful knocks.

It took Jurel two more years to make his first-class debut for Uttar Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy. In his maiden first-class season, he scored 158 runs from seven innings with two half-centuries, giving a glimpse of what's to come. December 2022 was a major year in Jurel's career. He opened the batting for UP and scored 249 runs off 329 balls against Nagaland at the Nagaland Cricket Stadium in Sovima. In six matches that season, Jurel racked up 429 runs at an average of 71.50, finishing as the second-highest run-scorer for UP after new sensation Rinku Singh.

In 15 first-class matches, Jurel has scored 790 runs at an average of 46.47 with one century and five half-centuries to his name. Jurel also scored 69 in one of India's A match against South Africa A in Benoni. He was also a part of the Rest of India squad for the Irani Trophy match against Saurashtra in 2023, although it was Bharat who got a chance ahead of him. Jurel got a massive break when the Rajasthan Royals (RR) picked him to play in the 2022 Indian Premier League (IPL). RR secured the services of the 22-year-old wicketkeeper after buying him at his base price of INR 20 lakhs. With Jos Buttler and Sanju Samson in the team, Jurel did not get a chance in his maiden season for the Royals.

Ranji Trophy 2024: Prasidh Krishna sustains quadriceps injury in Karnataka's match against Gujarat

- Prasidh Krishna injured himself in Karnataka's Ranji Trophy match against Gujarat
- Prasidh bowled 14.5 overs in the first innings of the game
- Prasidh recently played in the 2-match Test series against South Africa



after bowling only 14.5 overs in the first innings. Vijaykumar Vyshak bowled the last ball of the over. Prasidh got the wickets of Manan Hingrajia and Siddharth Desai before going away. PTI reported that Prasidh would not take any further part in the match as a player needs around four to six weeks to recover from a quadriceps injury. Prasidh is currently under the supervision of the Karnataka medical staff. The speedster can also get

in touch with the support staff of the India A team, which is presently in Ahmedabad for their two-day match against England Lions. Prasidh recently played in the two-match Test series in South Africa where he also made his Test debut for India. However, he had a tough time after he picked up only two wickets and leaked runs at an average of 65.

Prasidh also played in the T20I series against Australia where he set the dubious record for the worst bowling figures by an Indian in the shortest format. In the third T20I of the series at the Barsapara Stadium in Guwahati, he finished with figures of 4-0-68-0 as Australia chased down 223 off to the last ball to win by five wickets. Prasidh had to defend 21 runs in the final over, but he could not as Glenn Maxwell raced his way to a hundred.

IND vs PAK: Pakistan faced hostile environment in Ahmedabad in World Cup match vs India, says Mickey Arthur

**New Delhi.** Pakistan's former team director Mickey Arthur admitted that the ODI World Cup match against India in Ahmedabad was one of the most difficult moments during his tenure, as he led the team through a hostile environment. Arthur moved on after Pakistan failed to reach the semifinals of the showpiece event last year, while former all-rounder Mohammed Hafeez replaced him in the role. "It was extremely tough not having any Pakistan support. The one thing that really drives the Pakistan team is the incredible support they receive at grounds and hotels. Here we never had that, and that was quite tough in a World Cup, particularly for the players," Arthur was quoted as saying by the Wisden.



never moaned or complained once. They cracked on and tried their best - nevertheless it ultimately does play a role in motivation when you can't see or hear that support base around you," he added. Pakistan's World Cup campaign

was marred as usual by high-level off-field turbulence, including reports of dressing room discord and leaked WhatsApp conversations from then-captain Babar Azam. However, Arthur claimed that all of the outside commotions had little impact on the team.

"The outside noise with Pakistan is incredible, you just have to check your Twitter feed to see so many fires that are ignited out there, that have absolutely no truth attached to them. You end up - and I found this out the first time - you're just constantly extinguishing those fires and chasing your tail. What we knew within our team was our game plan, and the defined roles that the players had, and we cracked on with it. There were unequivocally no massive disagreements with the players," Arthur added.

- Mickey Arthur reveals India-Pakistan match was one of his tenure's toughest moments
- Mickey Arthur cited lack of support for Pakistan in the World Cup as a major challenge
- Arthur moved on after Pakistan failed to reach the semifinals of the World Cup last year



# Rukmini Vasanth

## Serves Winter Wear Inspiration In White Fur Coat And Turtleneck Sweater

Actress Rukmini Vasanth, a prominent figure in Tamil and Telugu films, managed to win everyone's hearts with her stellar acting prowess and active social media presence. Besides, her amazing fashion choices that she displays through her social media posts have also garnered her the fame that she is enjoying today. Dropping a recent post on her Instagram, she left her fans drooling and the picture is now viral. Rukmini Vasanth's latest set of pictures has the actress serving major fashion goals in her chic ensemble, that is perfect for the winter season. Rukmini Vasanth can be seen fully covered in her light blue high-neck sweater, which she layered with a white oversized fur coat. For the bottoms, she went for a pair of blue denim jeans. With a pair of black gloves to protect her from cold, chilly air, the actress was a pure delight to watch. Rukmini Vasanth accessorised her looks with a pair of golden hoops and carried a brown sling bag, enhancing the appeal of the look. For makeup, she kept it minimal in light pink lipstick and a little tint on both her cheeks. She tied her hair in a ponytail. Dropping the cute pictures, Rukmini wrote, "There's no in-between."



Rukmini's fans are in awe of the natural beauty that she is. They quickly joined the bandwagon to drop numerous comments on the pictures of the actress. One of them even compared her to the iconic paintings and noted, "You're so charming; somewhere u look like a lady in Ravi Varma painting." Another highlighted the ethereal beauty of the actress saying, "Cuteness has a face than be like RUKMINI Vasanth." A third noted by saying, "Fell in love with you."

Rukmini, currently, has many other cinematic ventures in her lineup of films. She will appear in the film Bagheera, directed by Soori. It is expected to hit the theatres in 2024. Bagheera boasts a talented cast starring Srii Murali, Prakash Raj, Achyuth Kumar, and Garuda Ram.

Ram Charan and Upasana Receive Invitation To Attend Ram Mandir Consecration Ceremony in Ayodhya



Global star Ram Charan and his wife Upasana have received an exclusive invitation to attend the auspicious consecration ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22. The invitation was personally delivered by Shri Sunil Ambekar, who visited their home in Hyderabad to extend the heartfelt invitation. The event is expected to witness the presence of not only devotees but also celebrities, political leaders, industrialists, and sports personalities.

The Pran Pratishtha ceremony, to be led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is scheduled to take place in the historic town of Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. This monumental event is anticipated to witness the presence of a distinguished gathering, including political leaders, industrialists, sports personalities, and celebrities. Several celebrities across the nation have received invitations for the event. Personalised invitations, accompanied by flower bouquets, have been sent to actors such as Rajinikanth, Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, Ayushmann Khurrana, Randeep Hooda, Ajay Devgn, Kangana Ranaut, Dhanush, Jackie Shroff, and Tiger Shroff for the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir Pran Pratishtha ceremony.

On January 22, over 100,000 devotees are expected in Ayodhya for the 'pran pratishtha' ceremony of the Ram Mandir, which will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The temple complex, built in the traditional Nagara style, has dimensions of 380 feet in length (east-west direction), 250 feet in width, and 161 feet in height. As per Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra general secretary Champat Rai, each floor is 20 feet high, and the temple boasts a total of 392 pillars and 44 gates. With an expected attendance of over a lakh devotees and approximately 7,000 guests from India and around the world, the ceremony is set to be a grand celebration of cultural and spiritual significance. Ram Charan, who was last seen in SS Rajamouli's RRR alongside Jr NTR and Alia, is currently filming for Shankar's debut Telugu movie, Game Changer.

Remember Pulijanmam Actress Sindhu Menon? Here's What She's Up To These Days

Sindhu Menon was a popular actress during the 90s and late 00s. She has starred in Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam and Tamil films. She started acting as a child artist and quickly cemented her position in the industry. But, where is she nowadays? Sindhu Menon was born to a Malayali family. She has an elder brother named Karthik, a VJ, who recently turned into an actor. Due to her multilingual skills, she has worked in Malayalam, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada industries. She is a trained Bharatnatyam dancer who got an opportunity to be a part of the movie industry after one of the judges in her dance competition, Bhasker Hedge introduced her to a Kannada movie director K. V. Jayaram. She was roped in for the movie Rashmi in 1994. The film Rashmi paved the way for her into the industry. Sindhu Menon soon got several offers to act and finally became a full-time actress. She got the role of



the lead actress in Prema Prema Prema in 1999 at the age of 13. By age 15, she entered the Telugu, Malayalam and Tamil film industry. She has acted in the movies Bhadrachalam, Uthaman and Samuthiram, respectively. She was even featured in the 2002 movie Nandi opposite Kannada star Kiccha Sudeepa. A few of her popular movies are Kadal Pookkal, Trinetrnam, and Khushi. However, she received immense fame and recognition after her movie Pulijanmam, which also earned her the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in 2007.

After the silver screen, she moved to the small screen and began to host shows and act in serials like Sriman Srimathi and Stree Hrudayam. In 2009, Sindhu Menon starred in Bharya Onnu Makkal Moonnu and Rahasya Police. Later, she was featured in the Tamil movie Eeram. After a gap of three years, in 2012, she was last seen in a Marjadikuru movie.

# Nikki Tamboli

## Flaunts Her Curves In Black Yoga Pants; Hot Video Goes Viral

Nikki Tamboli sure knows how to set temperatures rising! Nikki, best known for her stint on Bigg Boss 14, often makes headlines for her fashion choices. With her stellar good looks, confident smile and impeccable fashion sense, Nikki's outfit game is always on point. Recently, the actress was spotted in town wearing a black top and black yoga pants. She accentuated her look with nude makeup and kept her tresses flowing. As she headed towards her gym, with a water bottle in her hands, Nikki turned and greeted the paparazzi present there by striking several poses. The video that was shared by the popular paparazzo handle Voompla also captured Nikki smiling and waving hands before exiting the scene. The clip soon went viral on social media.

Although Nikki Tamboli became a big name after Bigg Boss 14, she has done numerous films as well. She played prominent roles in Tamil and Telugu movies and was even seen in the television show Sifir Tum in 2021. In a recent interview with News18 Showsha, Nikki Tamboli spoke about how she is happy that the perception of her being just 'a pretty face' is slowly changing. "Earlier, I had to skimmish the stereotype of primarily being more of a pretty face. Filmmakers and producers are grasping with the fact that I'm a lot more than that," Nikki Tamboli told us. Slowly and steadily, all thanks to the work opportunities I've been bestowed with, I've been able to paint the fact that there's a lot of finesse in my craft as a performing artist. I'm glad that the people in the industry who matter are acknowledging the performer in me and are bringing work offers to me accordingly," the 26-year-old actress added. Since her stint in Salman Khan's Bigg Boss 14, Nikki has been featured in several music videos. She often makes headlines for her stylish and bold outfit choices.

