

Filmmaker Shyam Benegal cremated with full state honours

Sanjay Kumar

Mumbai, Dec 24: Veteran filmmaker Shyam Benegal, the pioneer of the parallel cinema movement in Indian cinema in the 1970s and 1980s,



was cremated on Tuesday with full state honours and a three-gun salute here. Benegal, known for films such as 'Ankur', 'Mandi', 'Nishant', and 'Junoon', died on Monday at a hospital here due to chronic kidney disease. The last rites of the filmmaker, who celebrated his 90th birthday on December 14, were held around 3 pm at Dadar's Shivaji Park crematorium. Benegal's cinema contemporaries,

colleagues and younger generations of actors and artists accompanied wife Nira and daughter Pia in paying their last respects to the icon, whose movies captured the many realities of India. Naseeruddin Shah, Rajit Kapoor, Kulbhushan Kharbada, and Ila Arun, who starred in many of Benegal's films, were present to bid adieu to the director. Also present were actor Ratna Pathak Shah, her son Vivaan Shah, writer-poet Gulzar, director Hansal Mehta, lyricist-writer Javed Akhtar, actors Divya Dutta, Boman Irani, Kunal Kapoor and Anang Desai. Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, whose Film Heritage Foundation recently restored Benegal's 1976 'Manthan' for a screening at the Cannes Film Festival, was also present. Gulzar said what Benegal brought to cinema was a revolution that will never come again. 'He hasn't departed, we have departed from him and seen him off. He brought a revolution, he has gone with that revolution of change in cinema. Nobody else will be able to bring that wave, revolution once again.

'Pre-determined exercise': Kharge, Rahul's dissent at NHRC selection panel meet

Simmi Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Dec 24: Leaders of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi had recorded their dissent over the selection of the chairperson and members of the National Human Rights Commission on the grounds that the process adopted was "fundamentally flawed" and a "pre-determined" exercise that ignored mutual consultation and consensus. They had proposed the names of Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman and Justice Kuttiyil Mathew Joseph for the position of chairperson. However, former Supreme Court judge V Ramasubramanian has been appointed as the new chairperson of the NHRC. The post of NHRC chairperson had been lying vacant since Justice (ret'd) Arun Kumar Mishra completed his tenure on June 1. The meeting of the Selection Committee for picking the chairperson and members of the NHRC was held on December 18 at the Parliament House. The high-powered committee headed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, includes Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Home Minister Amit Shah, Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha

Mallikarjun Kharge as members. In their dissent note, Kharge and Gandhi recorded their disagreement on the grounds that the selection process adopted by the committee was fundamentally flawed. "It was a pre-determined exercise that ignored the established tradition of mutual consultation and consensus, which is essential in such matters. This departure undermines the principles of fairness and impartiality, which are critical to the credibility of the Selection



Committee," their dissent note said. Instead of fostering deliberation and ensuring a collective decision, the committee relied on its numerical majority to finalise the names, disregarding the legitimate concerns and perspectives raised during the meeting, Kharge and Gandhi said. They said the NHRC is a vital statutory body tasked with safeguarding the fundamental human rights of all citizens, particularly those from the oppressed and marginalised sections of society. "We proposed the names of Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman and Justice Kuttiyil Mathew Joseph for the position of Chairperson, keeping in mind both merit and the need for inclusivity. "Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman, a distinguished jurist from the minority Parsi community, is renowned for his intellectual depth and unwavering commitment to constitutional values. His inclusion would send a strong message about the NHRC's dedication to representing India's pluralistic society," they said. Similarly, Justice Joseph, a former Supreme Court judge, belonging to the minority Christian community, has consistently delivered judgments that emphasise individual freedoms and the protection of marginalised groups, making him an ideal candidate for this critical position, Kharge and Gandhi said. "Furthermore, for

Jagdeep Dhankhar on no-confidence motion: 'Bypass surgery with a vegetable knife'

ST Correspondent

New Delhi, Dec 24: Vice President of India and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday reacted to the now-dismissed 'no confidence' motion against him, saying the opposition tried to perform "bypass surgery" with a vegetable knife. A notice against vice president and Rajya Sabha chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar was rejected by the deputy chairman of the Upper House, Harivansh, on several grounds, including technical flaws on December 19. A notice against vice president and Rajya Sabha chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar was rejected by the deputy chairman of the Upper House, Harivansh, on several



grounds, including technical flaws on December 19. "Any Constitutional position has to be vindicated by commitment to sublimity, sterling qualities, and Constitutionalism. We are not in a position to settle scores," he said at an event. Hyderabad police asks Allu Arjun to appear! For more details & latest news, read on here "Look at the notice against the Vice-President. Chandrashekar ji had said, never do bypass surgery with a vegetable cutting knife... that was not even a vegetable cutting knife. The person who wrote my notice had rust on his knife! I was stunned after reading it. But I am surprised that none of you have read it," he added. Jagdeep Dhankhar also commented on low productivity in the Parliament. "Have you noticed any great debate in Parliament in the last few decades? Have you noticed any great contribution made on the floor of the House? We are in the news for the wrong reason. We have learned to live with order, which is only a disorder. However, accountability has to be enforced by the media because media is the only conveyance to reach the people at large," he added. At least 60 opposition members had signed the notice for removal of Dhankhar from his post on December 10, alleging that they did not have trust in him and that he was "biased".

Himachal govt to resolve pending cases of employment on compassionate grounds

Simla, Dec. 24: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Tuesday directed officials to formulate a comprehensive policy for employment on compassionate grounds and said his government intends to settle all pending cases. Chairing a high-level meeting, he asked the officials to compile and present data like the department, age and educational qualification of the applicants seeking employment on compassionate grounds, a statement said. The state government is adopting a "liberal and sympathetic" approach to offer employment in the government sector to those who lost their family members during service, he said and instructed the officers to come up with the requisite data in the next meeting on January 10. The government is committed to supporting the well-being of dependents by giving preference to widows and orphans in providing employment on compassionate grounds, he said and added that various aspects would be viewed to benefit the maximum number of applicants. Sukhu said that his government has also constituted a Cabinet sub-committee under the chairmanship of Education Minister Rohit Thakur with Technical Education Minister Rajesh Dharmani and Ayush Minister Yadvinder Goma as its members to examine the matters of compassionate appointments.

Shah emphasises use of biometrics technology to identify unidentified bodies

Navdeep Singh Sahni

New Delhi, Dec. 24: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday stressed the need for using biometrics technology to identify unidentified bodies and unidentified "found persons". Chairing a review meeting on the implementation of the three new criminal laws with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) here, Shah also emphasised the use of technology in all criminal investigation matters. He said alerts should be generated for all the cases at pre-defined stages and timelines should be fixed - from the registration to disposal of the case - for the benefit of victims and complainants. Biometrics technology should be adopted to identify unidentified bodies and unidentified found persons, Shah asserted. According to an official state-



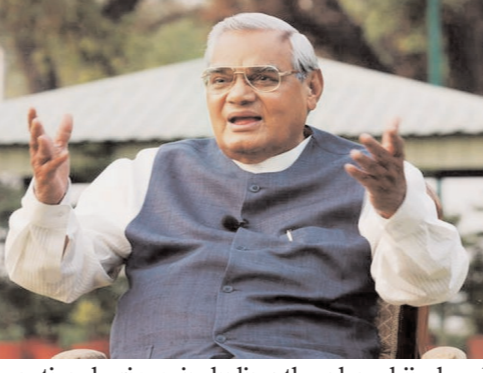
ment, Shah said regular dispatch of alerts to investigating officers as well as senior officers as per pre-defined time-

(ICJS), the New Criminal Laws and National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS), prisons, courts, prosecution and forensics with ICJS 2.0 at all India level. During the discussion, the home minister asked the NCRB to facilitate the complete implementation of the new criminal laws in the ICJS 2.0, the statement said. He emphasised the use of applications like eSakshya, Nyaya Shruti, eSign and eSummons in every state and Union Territory. Shah said a team of officers of the Ministry of Home Affairs, NCRB should visit the states and Union Territories to increase the adoption of technical projects and assist them in all possible ways. He emphasised regular interaction with senior police formations of states and Union Territories to monitor the progress of CCTNS and ICJS regularly and provide impetus to the project.

Vajpayee's legacy lives on as country marks his birth centenary

Tejinder Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Dec 24: Delivering one of his more famous speeches at BJP's inaugural convention at Shivaji Park in Mumbai, Atal Bihari Vajpayee predicted on December 30, 1980 with his signature flourish: 'Andhera chhatega, suraj niklega, kamal khilega' (darkness will end, the Sun will rise, lotus will bloom). As his birth centenary arrives, his words have aged well, with BJP returning to power for a third straight term at the centre and lotus in full bloom. If Prime Minister Narendra Modi made BJP's cultural agenda the centre of national politics, Vajpayee helped the party occupy this centre when its cultural agenda was considered an anathema. A statesman politician and a peerless orator, India's first non-Congress prime minister to have served a full term commanded respect and affection from across the political aisle and stood tall with his innate democratic spirit, honed through decades in



opposition, in a politics crowded with powerful satraps. The three-time prime minister was the original builder of coalition politics at the national level, successfully running an alliance government for a full term while navigating some of the biggest

quarters, including right wing organisations considered ideologically affiliated to BJP but less than friendly to him for not pushing their cultural and economic agenda, but his standing ensured that he faced no political threat or popular backlash. And even as he was still smarting from the fall of his government by one vote in the Lok Sabha in April 1999, his firm military and deft diplomatic response to Pakistan's intrusion into Kargil as the head of a caretaker government earned him plaudits and powered the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance to a more stable majority, ensuring him a full term at the helm. Ashok Tandon, media adviser to Vajpayee during his six-year stint as PM, said besides being an outstanding parliamentarian who did his bit in "strengthening the roots of parliamentary democracy" after entering the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1957, he brought "good governance" at the centre

of agenda as the head of government. "Good governance was his landmark contribution. He headed a diverse coalition of parties and kept them together, while pursuing policies which helped the country in every field," he said, citing the launch of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, PM Gramin Sadak Yojna and the Golden Quadrilateral highway project under his stewardship. It was his boost to reforms, disinvestment and infra projects that made the idea of 7 to 8 per cent growth rate possible and his government legislated fiscal prudence through the FRBM Act in 2003. However, the fruits of reforms came a little too late and this coupled with BJP's political missteps, especially in the crucial state of Uttar Pradesh, and the Congress-led UPAs harnessing of rural distress delivered a shock defeat to Vajpayee in 2004 amid a decline in his health. His public appearances were limited, he campaigned last for his party in the 2007 assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh before slowly fading away from the public eye as dementia hit him.

Wrong to compare 5 PM voter turnout data with final polling data: EC

Naresh Malhotra

New Delhi, Dec. 24: The Election Commission on Tuesday asserted that there were no arbitrary additions or deletions of voters in Maharashtra where assembly polls were held recently. In its response to the Congress, the poll authority also said it would not be correct to compare 5 PM voter turnout data with final polling data. The Congress had approached the poll panel in November flagging various concerns related to the Maharashtra assembly polls. Coming out with a detailed note and frequently asked questions (FAQs), the poll authority told the Congress that increase in voter turnout from 5 PM to 11:45 PM was normal, being part of the process of aggregation of voter turnout. It said there can be bona fide but inconsequential differences in votes polled and votes counted. The EC asserted that it is impossible to change actual voter turnout as statutory Form 17C giving details of voter turnout is available with authorised agents of candidates at the time of close of poll at the polling station itself. It said rule-based process was followed with

transparency in Maharashtra electoral roll preparation and there were no irregular pattern in voter deletions in the state. It told the Congress that due process was followed, including participation of



Congress representatives in preparation of electoral rolls. The commission told the party that its complaint of an average addition of 50,000 electors between July and November in 50 assembly seats, out of which 47

have been won by the Mahayuti, is factually incorrect and misleading. It said the fact is that only six assembly constituencies had total additions of over 50,000 electors during the period. Hence the question of winning in 47 seats on this basis does not arise. While detailing the well laid out mechanism with sufficient checks and balances and disclosures, the EC emphasised that the watertight statutory scheme ensures that deletion and addition of voters is done strictly according to rules with fullest involvement of political parties at every stage. It underlined that there were no bulk deletions or unusual deletion patterns of noticed across all assembly seats. Deletions of an average of 2,779 electors per seat happened on account of death or shifting and duplicate entries after following due process, including participation of party representatives. The Commission also listed out nearly 60 instances of proactive involvement of political parties or candidates during the entire electoral process. The Commission reiterated that political parties, being key stakeholders, are involved scrupulously at each and every stage of the election process from 'Roll to Poll' (preparation of electoral rolls to completion of poll process).

Bangladesh launches \$5 billion graft probe against Sheikh Hasina in nuclear power plant case

Dhaka, Dec. 24: An anti-graft panel in Bangladesh has launched an investigation against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her family in connection with the allegations of embezzling USD 5 billion in the Rooppur nuclear power plant, according to a media report. Indian companies are participating in constructing the Rooppur nuclear power plant which is being built by Rosatom, Russia's state-run corporation, in Bangladesh. The first Bangladeshi nuclear power plant, the Russian-designed Rooppur, is being built 160 km west of the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka. Along with Hasina, her son, Sajeeb Wazed Joy, and Tulip Siddiq, her niece and the UK's Treasury minister, were also questioned, BDNews reported on Sunday. There are accusations of embezzling USD 5 billion in the Rooppur Nuclear

Power Plant project, the report added. The development came two days after the High Court issued a rule asking why the Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) inaction over an alleged transfer of USD 5 billion from the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project to a Malaysian bank by Hasina, Joy, and Tulip should not be declared illegal, the report added. According to ACC documents, the allegations of corruption in the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project were brought to light by Bobby Hajjaj, chairman of the National Democratic Movement (NDM). Hasina, 77, has been living in India since August 5 when she fled the country following a massive student-led protest that toppled her 16-year regime. Her sister Rehana accompanied her. Joy resides in the US, while her niece Tulip is a member of the British parliament.

## Factories pay less for leaves, Kundha tea planters protest

**NILGIRIS.** Condemning tea factories for paying Rs 3 less per kg than the committee-fixed price of Rs 24.59 for green tea leaves, small plantation owners in Kundha launched a strike on Monday. The planters also did not send leaves that have already been plucked to eight tea factories. "In October, MSME Minister TM Anbarasan assured that green tea leaves would be procured as per the committee fixed price but till date it has not been implemented," said Manjai V Mohan,



founder of Badagesa Party which is supporting the protest.

The committee consisting of the district collector and tea board executive director fixed Rs 24.59 for green tea leaves from small scale farmers. However, eight state owned factories are paying them Rs 3 less. Sources in the INDCOSERVE which is managing the eight factories said they are facing a financial crisis and are unable to provide the price. "We are aware of the protest. The difference in the amount could be between Rs 1.5- Rs 1.7 crore and the government is aware of it. It's upto the state government to pay the price," said an official from Nilgiris.

# Human interaction posing threat to lion-tailed macaques, finds study

**Feeding of the animals by humans has increased, leading to potential health risks among species**

**KOCHI.** An increase in human interaction is posing a threat to the already endangered lion-tailed macaque. The primate, endemic to the Western Ghats, is classified as endangered on the IUCN Red List. With a population of just over 4,200, the species faces threats from habitat loss, fragmentation and human encroachment.

A study by Sheheer T A and Dr Peroth Balakrishnan, researchers at the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), and Prof Mewa Singh of the University of Mysore, published in the journal 'Primate

Conservation,' reveals that increased food provisioning and habituation to human activity are jeopardising the survival of the species.

"Lion-tailed macaques (LTM) adapted to the dense evergreen forests of the Ghats and remained isolated from human habitations, till recently. But some behavioral changes are being noticed, where LTMs are seen accepting food offered by humans and consuming discarded food. It seems the salt content in human food is attracting the primates. This shift is detrimental to their health, increasing the risk of disease transmission, malnutrition, and dependency on unnatural food sources," said Dr Peroth, head of the department of Wildlife Biology at KFRI. The researchers surveyed roads passing through LTM habitats at eight key locations along the Western Ghats, including Anamalai Hills, Nelliampathy, Nilambur Ghats, Sholayar, Gavi, Sabarimala, Vallimalai Hills and Agumbe. Approximately 25% of the LTM population in these areas engages in interactions with humans, representing about 12% of the species' total estimated

population. The distribution of LTMs is limited to 47 sub-populations across seven landscapes with an estimated total population of about 4,200 individuals. The interactions include behaviours such as



accepting food from tourists, raiding roadside waste, competing for human food with other species and venturing into human settlements.

"The feeding of wildlife has become a popular form of human-wildlife interaction, but it comes with serious risks. While humans have interacted with wildlife throughout history, this modern

practice often disrupts natural behaviour and ecosystem. Feeding, especially along roadsides or during ecotourism activities, can change wildlife behaviour, ecology, and population dynamics, sometimes leading to conflicts with humans. Additionally, feeding wildlife can attract unusually high concentrations of animals to specific areas, altering natural ecological balances," said Dr Peroth.

The research paper recommended immediate intervention, including public awareness campaigns, to educate tourists and locals on the dangers of feeding wildlife. Strict regulations should be enforced to prohibit food provisioning and littering in macaque habitats. Steps should be taken to provide a safe and natural habitat to LTMs by expanding and reconnecting fragmented habitats. There is a need to continuously track macaque populations and interactions to inform adaptive conservation strategies, it said. "We must balance human activity with wildlife conservation. Sustainable tourism practices and habitat protection are essential to ensure the survival of LTMs in the Western Ghats," said Dr Mewa.

## Thieves eat, smoke before cleaning up Rs 28L jewellery from teacher's house

**The anti-socials scaled the terrace of teacher Nirupama Sahoo's rented accommodation and entered the house through the roof of the single-storied building.**

**BHUBANESWAR.** A gang of burglars had all the time in the world as they ate and smoked before decamping with gold and silver ornaments worth at least Rs 28 lakh from a high school teacher's house in Paika Nagar area within Nayapalli police limits of the city in the small hours of Monday.

The anti-socials scaled the terrace of teacher Nirupama Sahoo's rented accommodation and entered into the house through the roof of the single-storied building. Then they used iron rods to break six cupboards and box beds where the jewellery were kept. The stolen goods include 400 gram gold and 500 gram silver jewellery. The burglars appeared familiar with the fact that Nirupama is on a visit to Maharashtra's Shirdi Sai Temple. Her two sons - Bibhu and Shibu work as engineers in Dubai. Her younger son Shibu had got married earlier this year and the family members had kept all their gold and silver ornaments in the cupboards and



the box beds after the wedding. The culprits had scoured all the three rooms in the house and selected the jewellery which they appeared to have clear knowledge about. They also took away Rs 10,000 cash but left behind imitation jewellery items and foreign currencies.

Before wrapping up their act, they ate apples and smoked in Nirupama's house. Though her house has a CCTV camera, its angle did not capture the burglary. However, a neighbour's CCTV camera showed a bike-borne youth wearing a hoodie, trailed by a car, suspiciously moving near the

house. While Nirupama stays with her elder daughter-in-law and grandson, her younger brother Niladri resides in the same locality. Since Nirupama is on tour, she had asked her daughter-in-law and grandson to go her brother's house, located a stone's throw away, during the night.

The incident came to light when her daughter-in-law returned home at 5 am on Monday. She found the cupboards broken and box beds removed, following which she alerted her uncle Niladri. Nayapalli police reached the spot along with a scientific team. The cops established that the miscreants had trespassed into the house by breaking the terrace door. Police sources said the burglars possibly targeted the house between 3 am and 4 am.

Police suspect that anti-socials familiar with the area and those acquainted with Nirupama's family may have been behind the burglary which was carried out with precision.

## TNSTC terminates 100 temporary workers in Kovai

**COIMBATORE.** Around 50 temporary drivers and conductors working in the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSC) gathered at the collectorate and submitted a petition to Collector Kranthi Kumar Pati seeking intervention as they were asked to stop coming for work from December 17.

TNSC officials said as per the norm services of crew who have completed 100 duties would be terminated and a fresh batch of workers will be recruited. N Somasundaraj, a temporary driver for

TNSC, Coimbatore, said, "We have been working in TNSC for the last two years. During festival season, during special bus operations, and strikes by regular staff, we are given work at Rs 700 for eight hours of work. All of a sudden, 100 temporary drivers and conductors have been told not to come for work without giving any reason."

Naveen, another temporary staff, said, "TNSC officials said they will provide us work until we get confirmed as permanent staff. Now, they have told us to collect our original certificates from the concerned depot and leave. Despite multiple efforts, Coimbatore division TNSC officials refused to meet us." When contacted S Sreedharan, General Manager of TNSC, Coimbatore Division, he said, "As per norms, temporary workers are given only 160 duties. After that, TNSC offers jobs to a new batch. We did not give them any assurance of permanent jobs."



## Supreme Court appointed Amicus curiae visits Maradu demolition sites

**KOCHI.** On a visit to locations in Maradu where four flat complexes were demolished in 2020, the Supreme Court-appointed amicus curiae on Monday asked the municipality to hand over a report with details of authorised buildings existing on the sites.

The amicus curiae, Gaurav Agarwal, and his team visited the locations on the directive of the apex court to analyse the viability of reconstruction of apartment complexes at the same sites, following the request of flat owners.

Four high-rise buildings -- Holy Faith H20, Alfa Serene, Jain Coral Cove and Golden Kayaloram -- were demolished on the order of the Supreme Court in January 2020, on

finding that the apartments violated coastal regulation zone (CRZ-2) rules, which prohibit any construction within 200m of the high-tide line of waterbodies.

Later, it was brought to the notice of the SC that the sites that comprised the complexes fell under CRZ-3 norms and not CRZ-2, therefore reducing the restrictions from 200m to 50m. This allows high-rise buildings such as those that were demolished to be constructed in the area. "The purpose of today's (Monday) visit was to analyse the viability of construction of new apartment buildings in the sites they were demolished earlier. We have sought details on authorised buildings existing on the plots from Maradu municipality. Only after receiving this data

can we analyse the distance from the waterbodies and size of buildings that can be built. After we receive the details, Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority (KCZMA) officials will again visit the sites before submitting the report to the apex court," said P Kalaiarasan, environmental engineer with the directorate of environment and climate change of KCZMA. The team also comprised KCZMA officials, district collector N S K Umesh, the chief town planner, the district town planner, the government pleader, the deputy collector and municipality officials. Around 343 owners lost their flats in the demolitions. In September, a three-judge SC bench asked the state government to consider "some relief"

for flat owners, and orally remarked that the entire dispute could have been settled by imposing heavy fines.

Maradu municipality chairman Antony Ashanparambil said the civic body supports the construction of new apartment complexes. "The three-member committee appointed by the Supreme Court comprising the then principal secretary, district collector and municipality chairperson presented a misleading report in 2019, leading to the demolitions. It was a wrong move on the part of the state government. Police should have also taken action against the then panchayat president, who was responsible for false documentation that led to the demolitions," he told.

# Kerala police look to boost anti-narcotic operations using drones; tender floated

**Recently, the Cyber Operations Wing of the Kerala Police issued a tender to procure 20 drones, for an estimated total cost of Rs 60 lakh, under the scheme.**

**KOCHI.** The Kerala Police are enhancing their anti-narcotic operations with the procurement of drones for surveillance, search, and tracking purposes. The drones will be part of the police's 'Yodhav' scheme, aimed at combating the growing drug menace in Kerala. Recently, the Cyber Operations Wing of the Kerala Police issued a tender to procure 20 drones, for an estimated total cost of Rs 60 lakh, under the scheme.

"Surveillance plays a crucial role in anti-narcotic operations. Drug peddlers often operate in isolated areas. The mere arrival of police officers alerts the peddlers, who then escape and hide the contraband. The drones will help in the surveillance of the suspects and assist in search and tracking operations," a police officer explained. He said they have only



floated a tender for the drones at present. "The procurement will proceed once we receive bids from suppliers," the officer said. As per the police department, the drones need to have some specific features, including the

ability to perform vertical take-off and landing, a minimum flight time of 20 minutes, a 2 km range, and ability to fly at altitudes of not less than 400m.

Additionally, the drones should also be able to record and transmit high-resolution videos and capture photographs. "The plan is to equip the District Anti-Narcotic Special Action Force (DANSAF) units in each police district with drones. Besides narcotics control, the drone technology will also be integrated into police stations for maintaining law and order," the officer said.

DANSAF is the police's specialised unit focused on monitoring drug peddlers and gathering intelligence for anti-narcotic operations. In 2023, the Kerala Police registered 30,697 cases under the Narcotic

Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, while 22,643 cases under the Act have already been registered until October this year. Last year, Kerala became the first state in India to implement drone surveillance units in all police districts.

Additionally, 25 cops were trained in drone operations at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras. Moving a step further toward strengthening security, the police are also set to acquire an anti-drone system capable of neutralising hostile drones.

**Yodhav scheme**

The Yodhav scheme, launched in 2022, aims to tackle drug menace through collaboration with multiple agencies and local bodies. The police also launched the Yodhav app, which allows citizens to report drug-related activities.

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News box

Rs 230 cr green damages not collected, NGT serves notice to Haryana

**Gurgaon.** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) last week issued notices to the Haryana govt and the state's pollution control board after a petition argued that Rs 230 crore, which was imposed on entities or individuals who had violated environmental norms, was yet to be recovered and utilised to make up for the damages. The bench of judicial magistrate Sudhir Agarwal and expert member Dr A Senthil Vel on Dec 20 gave the state govt and Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) a month to reply.

The tribunal was hearing a plea filed by Delhi resident Varun Gulati, who argued that govt and HSPCB's "inefficiency" in recovering environmental compensation was harming the environment by preventing restoration, remediation and rejuvenation efforts. "Allegations made in the application in our view give rise to substantial questions relating to environment arising out of implementation of enactments mentioned in Scheduled-I of NGT Act, 2010. We, accordingly, issue notices to respondent no. 1 - State of Haryana and respondent no. 2 - Haryana State Pollution Control Board," the order said. The tribunal scheduled the next hearing in the case for Feb 13. The petitioner told TOI on Monday that "it was imperative for authorities to act swiftly to enforce the principle of 'polluter pays', and ensure that the necessary restoration efforts are carried out".

Asked about the plea, an HSPCB official said the board was taking immediate steps to recover compensation from polluters. "We acknowledge the concerns raised by NGT and are committed to ensuring the recovery and effective utilisation of environmental compensation. Our efforts will be directed towards restoring and rejuvenating the damaged environment," the official said.

MCG forms panels to prepare tender docs on sewage ops and maintenance in Gurgaon

**Gurgaon.** MCG has formed a committee to prepare comprehensive tender documents concerning sewerage operation and maintenance in the city. The committee has received directives to incorporate stringent regulations, terms and substantial financial penalties for any breach of contractual obligations. The decision was made in a meeting held recently to discuss sewerage-related complaints.

"The panel has been instructed to draft tender documentation by Dec 30. During the discussion, it was proposed that the organisation's track record should be evaluated in the bidding process, and any organisation penalised above 20% should be barred from participating in the tender," MCG commissioner Ashok Kumar Garg said. According to Garg, data suggests that sewage-related issues constitute 90% of grievances lodged at the samadhan camps. Moreover, the commissioner also issued directives for all officers to respond to public calls without fail. Any complaints received through WhatsApp groups must be promptly addressed, and updates should be shared within the group. Officers failing to answer calls will face departmental proceedings, Garg said in the meeting. He emphasised that work-related negligence is unacceptable, and recurring complaints will trigger disciplinary measures against the responsible officer.

A structured penalty system has been established for the same. The first complaint results in a warning, followed by a show-cause notice on the second complaint. The third complaint invokes action under Rule-8 of the Haryana Civil Services (Punishment and Appeal) Rules, 2016, while the fourth leads to Rule-7 proceedings. He further specified that officers with multiple complaints against them could potentially face termination from service.

2 held for house break-ins, Rs 7.7 lakh recovered

**Noida:** Police arrested two members of an inter-state gang that allegedly breaks into houses to steal money and jewellery on Sunday night. Police recovered Rs 7.7 lakh in cash, along with stolen goods and jewellery.

According to police, on Dec 16, the accused stole cash and jewellery along with other valuables from a house in Jagriti Apartment in Sector 71. On Dec 18, they broke into a house in Mamura, Sector 66 and stole cash and jewellery. ADCP (central Noida) Hirdesh Katheriya said that, on Sunday, a team from Phase 3 police station took action on the basis of beat policing and confidential/electronic information. Accused Jitendra alias Golu and Rajesh alias Ganja were arrested from the service road near Gandhi roundabout the same night. An FIR has been registered against the two under Section 305(A) (theft) of the BNS.

"During interrogation, the accused revealed that they used to carry out reconnaissance of the area by removing the number plate on their bikes. Then they targeted locked houses and opened them with the help of a 'master key'. After committing the theft, they used to leave by putting the number plates back on their



vehicles," the ADCP said. The accused, along with their accomplices, would steal jewellery from people's locked houses and then immediately have the items cleaned with chemicals to sell it.

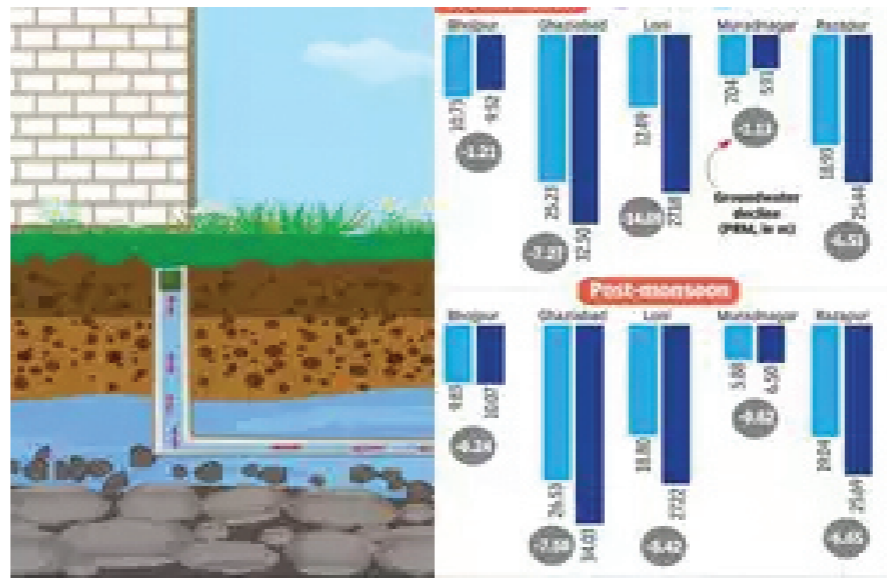
"They keep some jewellery after cleaning it for their own use. The thieves themselves clean the jewellery with chemicals so that the victim may be unable to identify it," Katheriya said. According to Phase 3 SHO Dhruve Bhushan Dubey, police recovered around Rs 7.7 lakh in cash along with gold and jewellery from the accused's possession.

Groundwater levels fall in Gzb, Loni is worst affected

**Ghaziabad:** Not unlike its neighbour Noida, urban and densely populated parts of the city are fast losing groundwater due to excessive use. Groundwater in Loni, according to an analysis by Ghaziabad's groundwater department, plummeted almost 15 metres between 2018 and 2024.

Data was collected through piezometers at five blocks of the city before and after monsoon. Post-monsoon figures for Loni were relatively better. Groundwater, which was detected at a depth of 18.8 metres, dropped to a depth of 27 metres, recording a decline of over 8 metres over the six years. Ghaziabad block, which covered areas such as Vaishali and Vijay Nagar, followed Loni in witnessing the highest groundwater losses.

The average decline in Ghaziabad pre-and post-monsoon was around 7 metres, the department found. The largest depletion within Ghaziabad block was seen in Vijay Nagar, which recorded a fall of 8.6 metres pre-monsoon, and 6.7 metres in post-monsoon assessments between 2018 and 2024. Another



station at Shri Guru Nanak Kanya Inter College saw groundwater availability decline by over 12 metres in the same timeframe. At Vaishali station, the fall was 6.2 metres in calculations taken ahead of monsoon in 2018 and 2024. The third block, Razapur, saw a relatively lower depletion, though it was still significant, at over 6 metres both pre-and post-monsoon. The losses in

Bhojpur and Muradnagar blocks were the lowest. Officials said Ghaziabad's water supply to its burgeoning population is inadequate, and households and societies have to rely on groundwater to meet their needs. The city's daily water demand is around 345 million litres, while GMC's supply is 320 MLD, a shortfall of 25 MLD.

Residents said piped Ganga water supply was promised to Vijay Nagar almost a decade ago, but it is yet to reach the houses there. Officials said funds are to be released, and work to get river water there would take another four months after that.

"Water scarcity is severe here, especially during the summer. It affects around six lakh residents. Groundwater level is one of the lowest in the district, and we have been demanding Ganga water for years. The Pratap Vihar Ganga water treatment plant is on the other side of the road, and still, our demands have not been met," said Manish Verma, a resident of Vijay Nagar. TOI had reported earlier this year that Ghaziabad extracted an alarming 123% of water it recharged last year. This extraction rate surpassed that of 75 districts in UP, where the average was significantly lower at 70.8%, according to an assessment ordered by the Central Ground Water Board. Ghaziabad was also ranked among India's 151 water distressed districts, according to central govt's Jal Shakti Abhiyan 2024.

300 property owners face action for illegal commercial use in DLF 3 in Gurgaon

**Gurgaon.** The department of town and country planning (DTCP) has launched a crackdown on illegal commercial activities operating in residential properties in DLF Phase 3.

Acting on the orders of the Punjab and Haryana high court, enforcement teams issued show-cause notices to over 300 property owners, marking a significant move to curb violations in the area. Notices were also publicly pasted on buildings to ensure compliance. District town planner (enforcement) Manish Yadav said, "In accordance with the high court's directives, notices were issued to violators in DLF Phase-3." Yadav said, "Seven days were given for responses, failing which actions under the Urban Development Act will follow,

involved in illegal activities. The next hearing is scheduled for Jan 10, 2025. According to DTCP enforcement officials, the notices mandate property owners to submit



their documents and responses within seven days. Failing to provide commercial operations. Following the court's recent order, the

converted into six- to seven-storey structures. These buildings house paying guest accommodations (PGs), guest houses, restaurants, general stores, boutiques, salons, clinics and commercial offices, flagrantly violating zoning regulations. Despite previous sealing actions, these property owners showed blatant disregard for the law, as activities resumed shortly after enforcement actions. The issue came a light after the DLF City Resident Welfare Association (RWA) filed a petition in the HC in 2020, citing rampant unauthorised construction and

Major reshuffle in MCG engg wing to tackle staff shortage in Gurgaon

**Gurgaon.** After more than a month in office, commissioner of Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG) Ashok Kumar Garg has implemented changes and reorganised the engineering department of the civic body. The corporation's engineering wing, which faces staff shortages, now operates with five executive engineers who share the divisions and responsibilities. "The commissioner has ordered reshuffling in the engineering department to ensure smooth functioning of the corporation," a senior MCG official, privy to the matter, said.

The official said, "The wing faces a shortage of engineers, with the current staff count falling below the approved strength of positions allocated

Hry suspends 24 officials for failing to curb stubble burning

**Gurgaon.** The Haryana govt on Tuesday suspended 24 officials over alleged failure to take adequate steps to prevent stubble burning incidents in their respective areas. The Supreme Court in the last hearing had pulled up the Punjab and Haryana governments for not acting against those found guilty of stubble burning. It also summoned the state chief secretaries to appear before it on October 23 for an explanation. Apart from suspending these 24 agriculture department officials, the Haryana government has so far arrested 18 farmers in the Kaithal district for burning crop residue and has black-

listed around 400 farmers for stubble burning and has barred them from selling their crops at mandis for a period of two years. The arrested farmers were later let off on bail. The officials, who have been placed under suspension, include agriculture inspectors, supervisors and agriculture development officers from nine districts - Jind, Panipat, Hisar, Kaithal, Karnal, Fatehabad, Kurukshetra, Sonapat and Ambala. There have been over 1500 cases of stubble burning in Punjab so far this season, while this figure for Haryana is around 400 so far. "We are trying whatever we can to keep the stubble burn-

ing cases to a minimum level. We are providing resouces for farmers which will prevent them from burning crop residue. The action that has been taken against the farmers as well as the agriculture department officials is because they have failed to comply with the directions of the Supreme Court," said an official. The main opposition party Congress has hit out against the BJP govt for taking such action against the farmers. "This is an anti-farmer govt and therefore it is arresting them. It just wants to put up a show in the court that it is doing something to prevent stubble

burning by arresting these farmers, but in reality it has failed to prevent and find a lasting solution to this problem," said a Congress leader. Punjab said it had registered 874 FIRs and lodged 471 daily diary

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SHEELA DEVI Mother of No 784109G, Rank-SGT, Name-ASHOK KUMAR residing at VILL-BHADANA, PO-BHADANA, DISTT- SONIPAT, HARYANA-131403 have changed my name from SHEELA DEVI to SHEELA for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 24/12/2024 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Asha W/o Chandrapal R/o House No-29, Gwal Pahani, Gurgaon, Haryana-122003, Have Changed My Minor Son Name Vaibhav To Vaibhav Tanwar For All Future Purpose

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I Babita devi W/O Chitrang Kumar Mishra R/O 41629, LAXMI VIHAR VILLAGE BURARI, DELHI, BURARI, NCT OF DELHI-110084, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Jyoti in my Aadhar card no 3284 7603 4813. The actual name of mine is Babita Devi, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Kapil Kasotia S/o Jagdish Kasotia R/O Flat No-904, Tower-15, Orchid Petal, Sohna Road, Sector-49, Gurgaon, Haryana-122018, Have Changed My Minor Daughter Name Aanya To Aanya Kasotia For All Future Purpose

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Monika Dev D/O Satish Dev W/O Abhimanyu Singh R/O OMQ-378/2, Air Force Station, Rajokri, South West Delhi - 110038 Have Changed my name to Monika Singh for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, GULAFSHA D/O MOHD ZULFIQAR residing at A-10, DDA COLONY, NEW JAFRABAD, SHAHDARA, DELHI-110032. Have changed my name to GULAFSHAN for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, JANAKI W/O DAVIDER SINGH residing at H NO-14, GALI NO-3, A-BLOCK, WEST KARAWAL NAGAR, DELHI-110094. Have changed my name to JANAKI for all future purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SYAMALA W/O MOHD ZULFIQAR residing at A-10, DDA COLONY, NEW JAFRABAD, SHAHDARA, DELHI-110032. Have changed my name to KHUSH- NASEEB for all future purposes.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that Mr. Rudresh Chaudhary and Mr. Satbir Singh are claiming to be owners of Property bearing No. C-18, area measuring 167.22 sq. mtrs., out of Kharsa No 41/14, situated in the abadi of Gali No. 03, Paschim Sadatpur Vistar, Sadatpur, Karawal Nagar, Delhi-110094. All persons are hereby informed that above mentioned owners want to sell the said property to a person who wants to obtain a loan from our client against the said property. If anybody has any objection's upon the ownership of above owner over the said property/floors, its sale/mortgage/ligitation, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 7 days of the present.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform the general public that Mrs. Nilam, wife of Mr. Gaur Prasad, intends to purchase the residential property bearing No. 961, measuring 37.5 sq. yards, out of Kharsa No. 961, situated at Sahaspur Extension, Village-Loni (Chakrand Bahar), Pargana & Tehsil Loni, District Ghaziabad, U.P. - 201102, from Mrs. Mohini Jain. Mr. Veer Singh purchased the said property from Mr. Suresh Sharma through a sale deed dated 22.10.2010 as Regd. No. 4158, Subsequent to Mr. Suresh Sharma, who passed away on 14.09.2021, left behind legal heirs, namely Mrs. Ram Vati (his wife). Thereafter, Mrs. Ram Vati sold the said property through a sale deed dated 02.11.2020 as Regd. No. 9426 to Mrs. Mohini Jain. Please note that the chain documents, including the death and surviving certificate and NOC from other legal heirs in the name of the late Mr. Veer Singh, are not available. The property is to be financed by Satya Micro Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd., Branch Uttam Nagar, Delhi. Any person(s) found in possession of the said property, including the sale deed, then kindly contact the undersigned along with original property document, within 07 days from date of this notice on below address, failing which, the claim as per affidavit sale deed shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.

**NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY**  
Open E-Tender Notice NER-LJN-2024-134  
On behalf of the President of India, Divisional Railway Manager/ Engineering, North Eastern Railway, Lucknow, invites online tender for the following work, detail of which is as given below: E-Tender No.: NER-LJN-2024-134, Name of work: Earthwork in formation, Extension of Bridge no. 253 RCC box, linking of track, turnouts etc. in connection with provision of two nos. stabilising lines (70m each) by modifying the 140 ton crane siding in Malliani yard under the jurisdiction of ADE/Malliani, Estimated cost (₹): ₹ 1,98,78,704.34, Earnest Money (₹): ₹ 2,49,400.00, Completion Period: 09 months, Note: 1. The tender for the above tender number NER-LJN-2024-134 can be uploaded up to 15:00 hrs. on 15.01.2025 and this tender will be opened after 15:00 hrs on the same day. 2. All the information related minimum qualification, complete details of terms and conditions of the above tender is available on North Eastern Railway website www.ireps.gov.in. Tenderer should read the corrigendum (if any) available on the website related to this tender information before uploading the tender form and be sure to take into consideration as well. Div. Railway Manager (Engg.) CPRO/W-337 (Lucknow)

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that Mr. Sangeeta Rani is claiming to be owner of Property bearing No. 3, area measuring 287 sq. yds., out of Kharsa No. 19/2, 19/3, 10/23/1 Min, situated at abadi of New Ganesh Park, Rashid Market, in the area of Village Khureji, Khars, Ilkha Shahdara, Delhi, vide G.P.A. & W.I. dated 05.09.2011 executed by late Mr. Jagdish Lal Gulati. All persons are hereby informed that above mentioned owner wants to sell the said property to a person who wants to obtain a loan from our client against the said property. If anybody has any objection's upon the ownership of above owner over the said property/floors, its sale/mortgage/ligitation, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 7 days of the present.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
The general public is hereby informed that Sh. Ajay Kumar Gupta and Smt. Rekha Gupta are the owners of the entire third floor, with roof rights, of the property bearing No. 62, Block 4, measuring 214 sq. yds. situated in the Layout Plan of Northern City Extension Scheme No. II, Subzi Mandi, Delhi, presently known as Roop Nagar, Delhi. Sh. Ajay Kumar Gupta and Smt. Rekha Gupta purchased the said property from Sh. Mukesh Baghel through a Sale Deed dated 29.03.2017. The property is to be financed by Anand Rath Global Finance Ltd., Branch Lajpat Nagar, Delhi. Any person(s) found in possession of the said property and any objection, then kindly contact the undersigned along with original property document, within 07 days from date of this notice on below address, failing which, the claim as per affidavit sale deed shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the LLP proposes to make a petition to Registrar of Companies, NCT of Delhi & Haryana under section 13 (3) of the Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008 seeking permission to change its Registered office from the state of "Haryana" to the state of "Delhi". Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the registered office of the LLP may deliver or cause to be delivered or send by Registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition supported by an affidavit to the Registrar of Companies, NCT of Delhi & Haryana, within 21 (twenty one) days from the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the petitioner Uthaan Estate Developers LLP at its registered office at the address mentioned above.

**NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE CHANGE OF REGISTERED OFFICE OF THE LLP FROM ONE STATE TO ANOTHER**  
Before the Central Government Northern Region Bench, Delhi  
Registrar of Companies, NCT of Delhi & Haryana  
In the matter of sub-section (3) of Section 13 of Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008 and rule 17 of the Limited Liability Partnership Rules, 2009, AND  
In the matter of UTHAAN ESTATE DEVELOPERS LLP having its registered office at Plot No. 558 P, Sec 27, DLF QE, Gurugram, Haryana- 122002 (...Petitioner)  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the LLP proposes to make a petition to Registrar of Companies, NCT of Delhi & Haryana under section 13 (3) of the Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008 seeking permission to change its Registered office from the state of "Haryana" to the state of "Delhi". Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the registered office of the LLP may deliver or cause to be delivered or send by Registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition supported by an affidavit to the Registrar of Companies, NCT of Delhi & Haryana, within 21 (twenty one) days from the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the petitioner Uthaan Estate Developers LLP at its registered office at the address mentioned above.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that 1. Mott Inam, 2.Mohd. Ikram, 3. Mohd. Iqar and 4. Mohd. Shamshad are the owners of Built up Shop on Ground Floor without roof rights, part of Property no. 1869 & Old no. 628, 628-7, admeasuring 29.74 Sq. Mtrs., situated at Chersa Kiana Nali Sarak, Delhi-110006 vide Sale Deed dated 15.11.2011, doc. no.10733. All persons are hereby informed that above owner through Ikram Saree Collection, wants to obtain a loan from our client against the said property, if anybody has any objection's upon the ownership of above owner over the said property, its mortgage/ligitation, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for the general public information that my Client Smt Omprakash Chauhan S/O Late Mahavir Singh & his wife Smt. Hemlata Both R/O H.No. 64, Narngi Razapur, Hazrat Nizamuddin, South Delhi, Delhi-110013, have debarred, disown and break down all the relationship from their son namely Anuj and his wife namely Lalita, from their all moveable and Immoveable properties either self acquired or ancestral, situated all over India due to their misconduct, disobedience and misbehavior attitude. My client will not be responsible in future for their acts which is done by them.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for the general public information that I, Harneet Singh Wadhwa S/O Amarjeet Singh Wadhwa R/O House No.- 6, North Avenue Road, West Punjabi Bagh, Punjabi Bagh, S.O. West Delhi, Delhi-110026, declare that the name of mine and my minor son have been wrongly written as Harneet Singh and Svasjibir Singh in my minor son's namely Svasjibir Singh Wadhwa aged 17 years in his 10th educational documents. The actual name of mine and my minor son are Harneet Singh Wadhwa and Svasjibir Singh Wadhwa

NEWS BOX

### Middle-east war: Israeli's defense minister accepts killing Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh

World Israel's defense minister has confirmed that Israel assassinated Hamas' top leader last summer and is threatening to take similar action against the leadership of the Houthis rebel group in Yemen. The comments by Israel Katz appeared to mark the first time that Israel has acknowledged killing Ismail Haniyeh, who died in an explosion in Iran in July. Israel was widely believed to be behind the blast and leaders have previously hinted at its involvement. In a speech Monday, Katz said the Houthis would meet a similar fate as the other members of an Iranian-led alliance in the region, including Haniyeh. He also noted that Israel has killed other leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah, helped topple Syria's Bashar Assad and destroyed Iran's anti-aircraft systems. "We will strike (the Houthis') strategic infrastructure and cut off the head of the leadership," he said. "Just like we did to Haniyeh, Sinwar and Nasrallah in Tehran, Gaza and Lebanon, we will do in Hodeida and Sanaa," he said, referring to Hamas and Hezbollah leaders killed in previous Israeli attacks. The Iranian-backed Houthis have launched scores of missiles and drones at Israel throughout the war, including a missile that landed in Tel Aviv on Saturday and wounded at least 16 people. Israel has carried out three sets of airstrikes in Yemen during the war and vowed to step up the pressure on the rebel group until the missile attacks stop.

### Where Does Santa It Is Not Finland, Greenland Or Sweden

Queensland. Sending a letter to Santa can be difficult as no one can agree on where exactly Santa lives. Several countries are competing to claim Santa as one of their citizens. Finland's tourism industry suggests Korvatunturi in Lapland is where Santa keeps his workshop, and the link between Santa and Lapland brings in hundreds of millions of tourist dollars. Danes say Santa is in Greenland. Sweden suggests Mora is the place, and has built the theme park Santaworld. These places certainly look the part with white snow in winter and reindeer. They're also close to the North Pole. Not so jolly traditions They also have old and often quite disturbing folklore about the man in red. Pagan Finns celebrated St Knut's Day in wintry January by having men in furry jackets, the nuuttipukki, go from house to house with a sack of presents. Except the nuuttipukki weren't giving gifts and would likely make children cry. They came demanding gifts and would curse bad luck to any household not handing over a present. The Finnish tradition nuuttipukki, photographed here in 1928, saw men in furry jackets demanding presents. Finnish Heritage Agency, CC BY Eventually, the gift grabbing nuuttipukki became the gift giving Joulupukki. Like other northern traditions such as the Yule Lads of Iceland, this visitor gave gifts but only to well behaved children. By the 19th century, Santa Claus was settled in popular awareness more or less what we think of now: a jolly old man with a beard, a sleigh, reindeer and presents, living somewhere northern and cold. That image built on but sanitised the more grotesque European folklores of elves, gnomes and other supernatural creatures who either brought or demanded gifts. But standardising Santa's appearance did not settle where he actually lived and worked. In the mid-19th century the illustrator Thomas Nast portrayed Santa as a jolly old man in Harper's Weekly, and the illustration and the archetype took off. But Nast just showed Santa in a wintry landscape.

### Low Birth Rates, Ageing Population Make South Korea 'Super-Aged Society'

Seoul, South Korea. South Korea has become a "super-aged society", with 20 percent of its population aged 65 or older, official data showed on Tuesday, a gloomy trend driven by an alarmingly low birth rate. Asia's fourth-largest economy recorded just 0.7 births per woman late last year -- one of the lowest birth rates in the world and far below the replacement rate of 2.1 needed to sustain the current population. That means South Korea's population is ageing and shrinking rapidly. Those aged 65 and older "account



for 20 percent of the 51.2 million registered population, numbering 10 million", the interior ministry said in a news release on Tuesday, placing South Korea alongside Japan, Germany and France as a "super-aged society". It also means the elderly population has more than doubled since 2008, when it numbered fewer than five million, according to the ministry. Men account for 44 percent of the current 65-and-older group, the data showed. The government has poured billions of dollars into encouraging more births, with Seoul authorities offering subsidies for egg freezing in one recent effort. However, such efforts have failed to deliver the intended results and the population is projected to fall to 39 million by 2067, when the median population age will be 62. Experts say there are multiple causes for the twin phenomena of low marriage and birth rates, ranging from high child-rearing costs and soaring property prices to a notoriously competitive society that makes securing well-paid jobs difficult.

# Explained: Donald Trump's Big Warning Over Panama Canal Amid Rising Chinese Influence

Washington DC. The thought of China is haunting Donald Trump who is troubled over Beijing's growing influence right under US' tail - the Panama Canal - a bridge connecting the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean through strategically located Panama, the country which links North and South America. US President-elect Trump, who is always ready to threaten others with tariffs, is also perturbed by Panama charging "excessive tariffs" for the use of the Panama Canal. So unsettled is he, by the combination of these two factors, that Mr Trump has openly declared that the US might consider taking control of the Panama Canal. Writing about his concerns on his social media platform Truth Social, Donald Trump warned that he would never let the Panama canal fall into the "wrong hands." Reminding the government in Panama that the canal was originally built by the United States more than a century ago, Mr Trump wrote "It was solely for Panama to manage, not China, or anyone else". He further re-posted a video of himself titled "We would and will NEVER let it fall into the wrong hands!"

#### BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PANAMA CANAL

Till the early 20th century the shortest way to reach the Pacific Ocean from the Atlantic Ocean and vice versa was to either sail around Cape Horn located in Chile at the southern tip of South America or to sail through the Strait of Magellan - also at the southern end of South America - in Chile. Both meant sailing around the entire continent of South America and nearly reaching Antarctica before sailing back up either into the Pacific or the Atlantic - this was neither economical, nor efficient. After much thought, research and survey, a narrow, but possible way was discovered cutting across the Isthmus of Panama. However, there was a herculean challenge to be overcome in order to achieve that. The waterway was at different levels and there was no way a ship could either climb or descend where there was a sudden change in topography. For the waterway in the isthmus to be converted into a man-made canal, it would require an engineering marvel - one that was both inconceivable



and unheard of in the early 20th Century.

The United States of America was the only nation at the time that had the technical knowledge and expertise to be able to make it happen. And so, in May, 1904 - less than a year after Panama declared Independence from Colombia in November, 1903, the US began the construction of the Panama Canal. A treaty was signed between the United States and Panama under which the canal would be constructed and managed by the US. After 10 years of engineering works round-the-clock, the Panama Canal became a reality in August, 1914 with the

SS Ancon becoming the first ship to pass through the canal. The US continued to control and operate the canal and its surrounding areas until a new agreement was signed between Panama and the US called the Torrijos-Carter Treaty in 1977. This provided for the handover of the canal to Panama after joint operations for nearly two decades. The Panamanian government took full control of the canal in 1999. DONALD TRUMP vs PANAMANIAN PRESIDENT JOSE MULINO Apart from the warning that the US would never allow operations of the Panama Canal to be handed over to another country amid China's growing influence and muscular posturing globally, Donald Trump expressed his displeasure over "very high" tariffs being charged by Panama. Writing on Truth Social, Mr Trump said "The fees being charged by Panama are ridiculous, especially knowing the extraordinary generosity that has been bestowed to Panama by the US."

## US NSA Jake Sullivan Urges Bangladesh To Protect Human Rights Amid Hindu Attacks

World Amid rising international concern over large-scale attacks on minority Hindus in Bangladesh, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke with the interim government's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on Monday. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to protecting human rights and promoting religious harmony in the troubled South Asian nation. "Both leaders expressed their commitment to respecting and protecting the human rights of all people, regardless of religion," the White House said in a readout of the call. Sullivan thanked Yunus for his leadership during challenging times and reiterated the United States' support for a stable and democratic Bangladesh. "The United States supports a prosperous, stable, and democratic Bangladesh, and offers continued assistance in addressing the challenges it faces," the White House added. This conversation comes less



than a month before President Joe Biden transfers power to Donald Trump, who will be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States on January 20. Indian American Democratic Congressman Shri Thanedar has been vocal about the issue, urging the White House to address the killings of Hindus and destruction of temples in Bangladesh. "The United States has a storied history of championing the oppressed, and this issue should be no different," Thanedar said last week at the US Capitol. He

emphasized the need for Bangladesh to rebuild on principles of equality and justice. Hindu Action, an advocacy group, has reported ongoing violence against Hindus in Bangladesh, including temple burnings, killings, and assaults on priests and community leaders. Utsav Chakrabarti, executive director of Hindu Action, accused Yunus of failing to control extremist groups like Jamaat-e-Islami, which he claimed are behind the violence. "It is incumbent upon our current administration and the upcoming one to impose sanctions on Bangladesh," Chakrabarti said. He also proposed the creation of autonomous zones for religious minorities, including Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians, to ensure their safety. "We must chart a clear path for the safety of the 15 million Hindus in Bangladesh," he added.

## Bangladeshi Traders "Forced" To Import From Pakistan Amid Growing Maritime Ties: Report

Dhaka. In a concern for India, trade and maritime ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh seem to be getting stronger, with a second cargo vessel from Karachi reaching the Chittagong port this week. The Panama-flagged ship 'MV Yuan Xiang Fa Zhan' entered Bangladeshi waters on Sunday afternoon, according to Bangladeshi media reports. The vessel, which travelled via Karachi, Pakistan, and Dubai, United Arab Emirates, is carrying a substantial load of 811 containers of essential industrial materials such as soda ash, dolomite, and marble blocks, along with goods like garments raw materials, sugar, and electronic products, Dhaka Tribune and Daily Observer reported. The development came a day after Bangladesh's interim leader, Professor Muhammad Yunus, met Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Egypt's Cairo, where Dhaka and Islamabad "agreed to strengthen relations."

Concern For India Quoting sources, The Economic Times reported that traders in Bangladesh are being forced to import goods from Pakistan. It also said that some officials in Bangladesh's shipping ministry are suggesting to review of the India-Bangladesh shipping pact, which gave India access to Chittagong and Mongla ports. Chittagong Port is a strategically located docking site in the Bay of Bengal. Over the years, India has used its relationship with ousted premier Sheikh Hasina to keep an eye on the activities at Chittagong port, where in 2004, around 1,500 boxes of Chinese ammunition were confiscated.

The consignment, worth an estimated USD 4.5-7 million, was allegedly masterminded by Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The consignment was allegedly meant to be delivered to banned terrorist outfit ULFA (United Liberation Front of Asom) in India. New Delhi worries a resurgence of Islamist extremism in Bangladesh could target India and support insurgent groups in northeastern states. Adding to India's worries, Bangladesh, in September, removed the clause which required the port authorities to physically inspect cargo from Pakistan on arrival. This makes it easier for Pakistani vessels to use the maritime routes without the physical inspection of cargo. Earlier, the restrictive trade policy under Ms Hasina required cargo from Pakistan to be offloaded in Malaysia, Singapore, or Sri Lanka and then transferred to other vessels that carried them to Bangladesh. Indian officials kept a watchful eye on sea routes that connect Chittagong.

Bangladesh-Pakistan Ties Muhammad Yunus, the 84-year-old Nobel laureate, who took over as leader of Bangladesh's interim administration in August, is a staunch opponent of Ms Hasina's policies, which were fundamentally pro-India and anti-Pakistan. Since he came to power, one of his areas of focus has been improving relations with Islamabad. A major development in this regard was to initiate direct maritime connectivity between the two previously hostile Muslim-majority nations, which were once one country.

## Blogs To Bluesky: How Social Media Changed Our Response To Disasters

Jakarta, Indonesia. The world's deadliest tsunami hit nations around the Indian Ocean two decades ago before social media platforms flourished, but they have since transformed how we understand and respond to disasters -- from finding the missing to swift crowdfunding. A 9.1-magnitude quake caused a tsunami that smashed into coastal areas on December 26, 2004, killing more than 220,000 people, broadcasters, newspapers and wire agencies were the main media bringing news of the calamity to the world. Yet in some places, the sheer scale took days to emerge. Survivor Mark Oberle was holidaying in Thailand's Phuket when the giant waves hit Patong beach, and penned a blog post to fend off questions from family, friends and strangers in the days after the disaster. "The first hints of the extent were from European visitors who got text messages from friends back home," said Oberle, adding people initially thought the quake was local and small, when its epicentre was actually near western Indonesia, hundreds of miles away. "I wrote the blog because there were so many



friends and family who wanted to know more. Plus I was getting many queries from strangers. People were desperate for good news tales," said the US-based physician, who helped the injured. The blog included images of cars ploughed into hotels, water-filled roads and locals fleeing on scooters because rumours produced "a stampede from the beach to higher ground". Bloggers were named 'People of the Year' by ABC News in 2004 because of the intimacy of first-hand accounts like those published in the days following the tsunami. But today billions can follow major events in real-time on social media, enabling citizen journalism and assistance from afar, despite the real risk of rumour and

misinformation. During Spain's worst floods for decades in October, people voluntarily managed social media accounts to assist relatives trying to locate their missing loved ones. After Turkey's devastating earthquake last year, a 20-year-old student was rescued thanks to a post of his location while buried under the rubble.

'Fast picture' Two decades ago, the online social media landscape was vastly different. Facebook was launched early in 2004 but was not yet widely used when the tsunami hit. One of YouTube's founders reportedly said an inspiration for the platform's founding in early 2005 was an inability to find footage of the tsunami in its aftermath. Some tsunami images were posted on photo site Flickr. But X, Instagram and Bluesky now allow for instant sharing. Experts are clear that more information saves lives -- hours lapsed between the tremor's epicentre near Indonesia and the giant waves that crashed into Sri Lanka, India and Thailand's coastal areas.

## Pakistan May Get 40 5th-Gen Stealth Fighter Jets From China Within 2 Years

World. In a game-changing proposition, China is reportedly in talks with Pakistan for Islamabad to procure 40 advanced stealth fighter jets from Beijing. The J-35A is China's most advanced military aircraft. If the deal is finalised, Pakistan will be the first and only country globally to have a squadron of the stealth J-35A multi-role fighter jets outside of China. It will also mark the first export of China's most advanced military aircraft by Beijing. The J-35A is China's second fifth-generation stealth fighter jet. After United States, China is the only other country in the world to have two 5th-gen military aircraft. Pakistan is looking to replace its ageing fleet of US-made F-16s and the French Mirage fighters. As per a report in the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post, which further quotes the Pakistani media, China will deliver all 40 stealth fighter jets in less than two years. China's entire defence industry is already set up for mass production as it does not depend on any other country for any part of the aircraft. The report also states that Pakistan's Air Force has already approved the purchase of these

jets. Though there is no confirmation from Beijing, should such a deal materialise, it will provide Pakistan a massive boost to its air defence and has the potential to tilt the regional dynamic as Islamabad will acquire stealth technology.

#### WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT THE CHINESE J-35A STEALTH AIRCRAFT

The Shenyang J-35A stealth fighter is a twin-engine, single-seater, supersonic, air-superiority, multi-role fighter jet that can carry out missions on land and at sea. The J-35A is the second fifth-generation stealth fighter China has developed after the J-20. The J-35A's design is similar to the US Lockheed Martin F-35, the only difference is that the former is twin-engine and the latter has a single engine. China is known for copying the design of several US aircraft - The J-20 and the US F-22 Raptor are very similar in design except for canards that are present in J-20. The Chengdu J-10, also known as the "Vigorous Dragon", is yet another Chinese aircraft which seems to be a copy of the US F-16 fighter jet. According to a report by the Global Times, the



mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, "J-35A functions within both stealth and counter-stealth combat frameworks. Its mission focuses on gaining and maintaining air superiority, eliminating hostile fourth/fifth generation fighter jets and ground/surface air defence forces, as well as intercepting aerial hostile targets including fighters, bombers and cruise missiles." The article was published the day China unveiled the jet for the first time last month. China plans to induct the aircraft into the Air Force and the Navy, exactly the way the F-35 is used by the United States,

having three variants - The F-35A for the Air Force, F-35B for the Marine Corps and F-35C for the US Navy.

#### PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC CRISIS

Despite a severe economic crisis in the country, Pakistan, which is surviving on bailout packages by the IMF and World Bank, is reportedly going ahead with the deal. It is not clear though, how such a massive deal will get financed. According to defence experts, it won't come as a surprise should China decide to extend another loan which Pakistan won't be able to pay back. Pakistan has already accumulated so much debt from Beijing that it is not financially possible for Islamabad to pay it back. Many experts believe that at some point Pakistan will have to sell national assets and maybe even parts of the country to be able to settle the debt. Though the buzz is ripe in Islamabad, Beijing has not confirmed the sale of its stealth fighter jet in any official communication. Neither has it mentioned it in the passing. When the J-35A stealth fighter was first displayed publicly by China at the annual air show at Zhuhai city.

**TN teachers in provisional list file petition to fill up vacant posts**

**DHARMAPURI.** Candidates selected in the 'Provisional Selection List for appointment of BT and BRTE teachers' filed a petition with the district collector, urging the state government to appoint teachers to vacant posts in the School Education Department.

On Monday, about 30 teachers selected by the Teachers Recruitment Board (TRB) for posts of BT and BRTE arrived at the collectorate and filed the petition. T Prakash, a BT teacher said, "After 10 years, the TRB conducted



Teachers' Eligibility Test (TET) in February and after concluding certificate verification in June, they released a 'Provisional Selection List' in July where about 3,192 teachers were selected. While certain departments like Adi Dravidar schools and the Greater Chennai Corporation schools have appointed teachers, the School Education Department has not made any appointment. C Shankar, another teacher said, "Most people who took the exam were employed in private schools before the list was released. After it was announced, private schools asked teachers to resign as they did not want them to leave in the middle of a term. For six months, teachers in the 'Provisional Selection List' are without jobs." Dharmapuri administration officials said, "We will forward the petition to the concerned department and they will take necessary steps. There is nothing we can do in this matter."

**Zeenaat on the run: 130 staff from three states wait and watch to dart the cat**

**A decent opportunity to dart the dispersing cat to relocate it back to Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) appears to be the only option with Zeenaat continuously on the move.**



for the last two weeks. The tigress first moved into Jharkhand forests and was later traced to a jungle in Belpahari range of Jhargram forest division in West Bengal early Friday. Sources said it has now moved to a forested area of Bandwan in Purulia via Lalgurh. The forest officials have made multiple attempts to tranquilise it but in vain.

**BARIPADA/BHUBANESWAR.** As it explored new forest landscape in neighbouring West Bengal, tigress Zeenaat continued to keep staff of three states on their toes while Odisha wildlife wing banked on tranquilising the three-year-old big cat to bring it home.

A decent opportunity to dart the dispersing cat to relocate it back to Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) appears to be the only option with Zeenaat continuously on the move.

About 130 forest personnel including a tiger squad from Mayurbhanj and expert team from Sundarbans have joined the search operation for the tigress that managed to escape the surveillance on multiple occasions, keeping forest officials of Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal on tenterhooks

The forest officials tracking the movement of Zeenaat reportedly faced difficulties as the big cat roamed the landscape, covering about 25 km to 30 km area in a night. Prior to its entry into West Bengal, the tigress had also reportedly covered around 26 km a day. The alleged disruption in transmission of signal from the radio collar is also reportedly making the big cat incommunicado at times.

"The forest team sent to Jharkhand to track Zeenaat was immediately mobilised to West Bengal for constant monitoring in the neighbouring state," said PCCF (wildlife) Prem Kumar Jha. Three teams, two from West Bengal and one from Odisha, are now tracing it and waiting for an enabling environment to carry out the tranquilisation,

he added. The teams from West Bengal include specialists from Sundarbans to assist officials for darting of the tigress, Jha said. The PCCF (wildlife), however, said the disruption in transmission of signals did not persist long and they have been receiving signal about its location on an hourly basis. Similipal field director Prakash Chand Gogineni said a strategy is underway to tranquilise the tigress and bring it back to the

STR. The female tigress, brought to STR from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in Maharashtra, entered Jharkhand after exiting Similipal landscape on December 9. Jamuna, the first tigress relocated to STR from TATR in October, also moved out of STR core and is now roaming in adjoining Kuldha wildlife sanctuary. Jha said their teams are also tracking the movement of the 31-month-old tigress since last Sunday.

**Telangana likely to get rain till December 29**

**HYDERABAD.** The state is likely to experience light to moderate rains till December 29 under the influence of a low-pressure area in the Bay of Bengal. The IMD said the well-marked low-pressure

**→The lowest minimum temperature was recorded at Adilabad at 13.5°C and the city minimum temperature was 17°C in Rajendranagar and Hayathnagar.**



area over Westcentral and adjoining Southwest Bay of Bengal of South Andhra Pradesh- North Tamil Nadu coasts moved west- west-southwestwards and lay over

Southwest and adjoining Westcentral Bay of Bengal off South Andhra Pradesh- North Tamil Nadu coasts and the associated cyclonic circulation extended upto 3.1 km above mean sea level.

It is likely to move west-southwestwards and reach the southwest Bay of Bengal near the north Tamil Nadu & south Andhra Pradesh coasts on Tuesday. The minimum temperature is likely to be above normal by 2°C to 4°C during the next 5 days.

The lowest minimum temperature was recorded at Adilabad at 13.5°C and the city minimum temperature was 17°C in Rajendranagar and Hayathnagar.

**Samagra Shiksha to maintain data of migrant kids**

**COIMBATORE.** Due to rising dropout rates among migrant students, Samagra Shiksha has planned to create a separate common pool in the Education Management Information System (EMIS) portal to maintain their data in order to track them.



This data will help officers understand whether students from TN or other states have higher dropout rates. An official from district Samagra Shiksha department told that details of all dropout students are maintained in a common pool within EMIS

portal. "Based on common pool data, educational officers from Samagra Shiksha and school headmasters will trace students who have dropped out due to migration, child labour, or other reasons through a survey.

Then they can take steps to bring these children back to school," he added.

"However, compared to the children from the state, those from Odisha, Bihar, etc are mostly dropping out of school as per the common pool. Hence, the overall dropout in the common pool is high and when these details are sent out, people think that a number of students from Tamil Nadu are dropping out.

For instance, the common pool shows 9,219 students have dropped out of school from Coimbatore. Through surveys, it was found that 7,162 students are from other states and they migrate with their family for work occasionally. Out of 7,162 students, 889 are Tamil students who have been re-enrolled to government schools, and remaining students studying in private schools have been moved to other states," he further said. Another top official from Samagra Shiksha told that this scenario is in all districts and a separate common pool for students from other states should be created from the next academic year.

**NCC camp shut after nearly 80 students suffer food poisoning**

**KOCHI.** An NCC camp at Thrikkakara was shut down early on Tuesday after nearly 80 students were admitted to various hospitals following food poisoning at the camp, which was attended by around 600 cadets from various colleges in the state. The students were attending the NCC camp at KMM Arts and Science College in Thrikkakara, where they developed symptoms of diarrhoea on Monday evening. They were taken to the Government Medical College, Kalamassery, and two other hospitals immediately on Monday evening.

"Around 600 students attended the camp at the college. Of them, around 70 reported illnesses suspected to be caused by food poisoning. We visited the spot and collected samples of the food and water served at the college. So far, the condition of the students is satisfactory. No complications have been reported," said a health official



from Thrikkakara Municipality. Following the mass hospital admissions, parents and residents of the area held protests at the college. "The parents of the students and a few residents of the area arrived at the college after learning about the incident. They have been protesting in front of the college. The camp was cancelled, and the students were sent back home," said an official from Thrikkakara Municipality. Students from different colleges in the district had been at the college for the past three days. "From our interactions with the students, we

found that they had been suffering from various health issues for the past two days. We suspect that the food served at the college caused the spread. We have sought an explanation from the college management, and the police have started an investigation into the issue," the officials added. Students from St. Albert's College, Ernakulam, Polytechnic College, and other institutions were part of the camp. Meanwhile, as many as 46 people in Kalamassery Municipality have been affected by a Hepatitis A outbreak. Among them, three patients are in ICU care. Ernakulam reported multiple incidents of diarrhoea outbreaks earlier this month. As many as 15 children at Ponnuruni Anganwadi fell ill after food poisoning last week. The Olive Courtyard apartment complex in Edachira had also reported diarrhoea earlier. Twenty-one people were affected by a diarrhoea outbreak in the DLF flat complex in November as well.

**Culinary Academy of India makes 256 square feet chocolate chessboard**



**HYDERABAD.** The Culinary Academy of India (CAI) attempted to set a world record by crafting a 550 kg chocolate chessboard. The creation was a tribute to chess champions, including Viswanathan Anand, D Gukesh, and other icons of the sport.

According to the CAI, this is the

largest chessboard made entirely of edible ingredients—a 16 feet x 16 feet (256 sq. ft.) masterpiece. It featured an extraordinary king piece towering at 3 feet, showcasing exceptional artistry and innovation. The base of the sculpture was constructed from solid chocolate slabs, while the pieces were meticulously

reinforced with armature for stability. Over 50 aspiring chefs and 10 senior chef instructors worked tirelessly for 96 hours straight to create the chocolate structure.

The greatest challenge was maintaining the ideal temperature for the delicate sculptures, as chocolate is highly sensitive to temperature and softens easily in warmer conditions.

The feat was achieved under the guidance of Chef Sudhakar N Rao, Director/Principal of the academy, with support from Chef Akshay Kulkarni, HOD, and Chef Attique, Senior Chef Instructor. Prof Balakista Reddy, Chairman of TGCHS; Prof Sriram Venkatesh, Secretary of TGCHS; and Divith Reddy, Under-8 World Champion in Classical Chess (Italy) and Rapid Chess (Albania), attended the presentation event.

**Kerala HC flays state over dumping of medical waste in Tamil Nadu**

**KOCHI.** Coming down heavily on the state government over the dumping of biomedical waste from Kerala in Tamil Nadu, the Kerala High Court on Monday directed the secretary of the local self-government department to file an affidavit with details of the agencies engaged in collection and disposal of waste from local authorities and other bulk waste generators, including hospitals. The High Court also called for information on the measures initiated to track the mode and the manner in which such agencies dispose of the collected waste. A division bench comprising Justice Bechu Kurian Thomas and Justice Gopinath P issued the order after noticing media reports regarding the illegal dumping of Kerala's biomedical, plastic, food, and other waste in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. "Quite often, we have been indicating to the Kerala government the necessity to keep track



of the mode in which the waste is being disposed of by agencies that collect waste. It is an alarming situation that the waste generated in Kerala is disposed of in the neighbouring state, haphazardly and contrary to legal requirements. Such instances should be avoided," the court said.

**HC demands govt to explain steps taken**

When a suo motu case registered earlier concerning the waste management issue in the state came up for hearing,

the court questioned whether the government was keeping track of the place where the waste was being disposed of. The government consistently claims that it is monitoring the situation. However, it appears that it does not know about the final disposal of waste, it observed. The court stated that it wanted to identify who was at fault in the Tamil Nadu incident and demanded that the government explain the concrete steps it has taken to address the issue.

The New Indian Express had visited the spot in Tirunelveli and brought out the issue. Later, the Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) initiated a suo motu case based on the report of TNIE. The NGT issued an order to the Kerala government to take appropriate action. Based on the order, the officials removed the waste using 16 Kerala-based trucks to transport it back to the state. The court will hear the matter on January 10.

**'Odisha has power to generate 200 GW solar energy'**

**Highlighting the statistics during the Odisha Solar Investor Conclave here, iFOREST said solar power currently accounts for 21 per cent of the state's total 2,938 MW renewable energy capacity.**

**BHUBANESWAR.** Odisha has the potential and resources to generate more than 200 gigawatt (GW) solar energy from different fields including 138 GW from ground-mounted and 33.5 GW from floating resources. This was informed by the International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST) on Monday. Highlighting the statistics during the Odisha Solar Investor Conclave here, the organisation said solar power currently accounts for 21 per cent of the state's total 2,938 MW renewable energy capacity. This includes 508 MW of ground-mounted, 58 MW of rooftop and 42 MW of off-



grid solar capacity.

However, Odisha has vast solar energy potential aggregating to over 200 GW across deployment technologies, it stated adding, the state is blessed with abundant solar resources with over 300 days of uninterrupted sunshine and average solar radiation of about

5.3kWh per square metre. Citing the data of National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE), it stated that Odisha has the potential to generate 138 GW ground-mounted solar power utilising only 7 per cent of the wasteland. Sundargarh, Angul, Balangir, Jharsuguda and Dhenkanal have the highest potential for the same. Around 33.5 GW floating solar potential could be harnessed across 670 sq km of feasible water body area. Odisha's building footprint area can also support up to 10 GW of rooftop solar capacity, the organisation revealed in its findings.

The Investor Conclave deliberated on the 7.5 GW solar capacity that Odisha

aims to achieve by 2030 as part of its larger plan of generating 10.95 GW renewable energy by the period. Speaking at the conclave, deputy chief minister KV Singh Deo said the state will harness the solar potential across all sectors for the progress of its renewable energy sector. "Solar energy is a key driver for the state's growth. Our investment climate is conducive and we also have a robust system in place to harness its potential," he added. The deputy CM further said the conclave is a precursor to the upcoming Utkarsh Odisha 2025 where the state government is hopeful of getting huge investment intent in the sector. Energy secretary Vishal Dev

said Odisha is on the cusp of a transformative energy transition and the conclave is a testament to the state's commitment to clean energy. GRIDCO managing director Trilochan Panda said a large chunk of renewable energy will come from floating solar, rooftop solar and PM Kusum scheme in the coming days. "A lot of incentives have been given by the state to promote renewable energy," he added.

iFOREST president and CEO Chandra Bhushan said the potential of renewable energy will expand in the next five years. It will also help states in developing a low-carbon pathway and encourage green environment and economy.

## Police reform augurs well for Himachal

HIMACHAL Pradesh is set to usher in a change for its police force. The newly introduced Himachal Pradesh Police Amendment Bill 2024 proposes transitioning police constables from a district cadre to a state cadre. This means that instead of individual districts conducting their own recruitments, a state-level Police Recruitment Board will handle this job. This is in line with the practice followed by states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Supporters aver that centralised recruitment insulates the process from parochial pressures and ensures a more uniform and transparent means of selecting police personnel. A centralised exam eliminates the advantage held by candidates residing near district recruitment centres. The arm's length process also opens the door to a larger talent pool to recruit from. Others, though, feel that it does nothing to level the playing field as urban candidates often have the benefit of better education and accessible coaching facilities than rural folk.

The new amendment also allows for the subordinate police to be deployed outside their district anywhere in the state. Normally, they would stay put in the district they had been recruited from. This has always sparked a debate, with both potential benefits and drawbacks for recruitment, ground-level policing and the constabulary itself.

Proponents argue that a single state cadre for police constables allows for more efficient man management. The government can easily transfer officers to address manpower shortages, respond to emergencies and quickly redress vacancies or glut across districts as circumstances demand. Quick and fluid deployment is particularly valuable in a state with seasonal tourist influxes.

On the other hand, there is concern that the much used and abused power to shift biased, corrupt or otherwise 'inconvenient' personnel from one place to another, while touted as being in aid of administrative necessity, will tighten executive and legislative hold over the establishment and tend to increase the chance of politicisation. Nevertheless, the change addresses a long-standing grievance of the constabulary: limited promotion prospects within a district cadre. A state cadre system offers more opportunities for advancement, as constables can compete for promotions anywhere across the state. This could boost morale and incentivise better performance. A side benefit: it may reduce litigation born out of perceived injustice in promotions and the like.

The flip side is the potential disruption to personal lives. Constables transferred to new districts often face challenges finding accommodation and adjusting to unfamiliar cultural environments. This could create a sense of instability and distances can fracture family lives and children's education. However, inter-district transfers are much more prone to the dangers of familial disruption and disorientation in large states than a compact one like Himachal. Unlike in big and heavily urbanised states, some of these risks may be minimal in Himachal's case. Police housing arrangements already involve a mix of Police Lines, government-provided housing and private residences. Housing is more easily available and affordable than in big metropolises. Thoughtful postings that send personnel to districts closest to where their families stay could go a long way in maintaining work-life balance. Concerns also exist about the impact on community policing. Critics argue that constables stationed outside the communities they have been born and brought up in may lack the cultural understanding and local knowledge necessary to effectively engage with new communities. This could hinder trust-building and communication, essential for effective ground-level policing.

To foster better police-public relations, some police stations in Himachal have already initiated community policing forums, elsewhere beat policing in specific areas help establish more stable engagement and frequent awareness programmes. Regular meetings and workshops help dispel misconceptions.

## Manipur conflict not just a local crisis

It is a microcosm of the broader challenges of managing diversity in a pluralistic society

THE conflict in Manipur, now in its 19th month, shows few signs of an early resolution. In his address on Vijay Diwas on December 16, Chief Minister Biren Singh blamed the unrest on 'certain agencies' that are attempting to destabilise the state. He further cited the role of politically motivated and one-sided information as a major contributor to Manipur's instability. He also claimed that misinformation had been conveyed to Central leaders, creating confusion regarding the appropriate course of action.

In evaluating the situation in Manipur, it is helpful to reflect on how the Indian State has effectively managed insurgencies across the Northeast and why Manipur has now diverged as an exception. The Northeast has long been a battleground of ethnic assertions, with armed movements emerging soon after Independence. These movements, primarily fuelled by tribal groups asserting their identities, have raised demands ranging from secession to calls for greater autonomy. The Indian State has adopted a two-pronged approach to address them: overwhelming military force to establish control and sagacious accommodation of ethnic aspirations.

The Army initially adopted harsh measures, like the forcible relocation of villages, large-scale cordon-and-search operations and retributive punishments. The military's role in suppressing insurgencies has often drawn criticism for human rights violations, yet it succeeded in establishing the writ of the State. Alongside, the government displayed great foresight in addressing the concerns of different ethnic identities. The states of Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya were carved out of Assam, while Manipur and Tripura went from UTs to statehood. Articles 371A, 371C and 371G were incorporated in the Constitution, providing special provisions for the tribal communities. Autonomous councils under the Sixth Schedule further empowered ethnic groups like Bodos, Dimasas, Karbis, Khasi, Garos and Chakmas, giving them legislative and administrative control over land and local customs.

A concerted effort was made to get the armed cadre to eschew violence through generous surrender programmes. One criticism of this was that the cadre remained in designated camps and were never absorbed into civil society through rehabilitation and, thus, retained their militant group identity. While not perfect, the dual strategy of control and accommodation was successful in significantly reducing violence in the Northeast, with terror-related deaths dropping from over



1,000 in 2008 to just 13 in 2022. Manipur represents a volatile blend of three major communities — Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis — each with distinct cultural traditions. All groups maintain armed militant factions, often regarded as crucial for safeguarding their identity in a multi-ethnic landscape. The Meiteis, as the majority community residing in the central valley, have traditionally held significant political power in Manipur. However, they lack the constitutional safeguards available to the tribal Nagas and Kukis, such as quotas in education, jobs and land rights. This imbalance has long been a source of tension. Frequent blockades by tribal groups to press their political demands also affected the Meiteis by disrupting daily life, deepening economic woes and worsening inter-community ties.

On the other hand, the tribal communities view the special provisions as essential protections against cultural erosion — protections that they argue are necessary due to their minority status. State and Central governments have sought to balance a complex interplay of differing types of accommodation — political power for the Meiteis and special safeguards for the tribals. While this meant that some grievances of the Meiteis remained unaddressed, a fragile status quo was maintained. In a sensitive ethnic environment, self-aggrandising politicians can exacerbate conflict by using ethnic

identities as a tool to mobilise support, portraying themselves as the protectors of one group while demonising another.

This is what happened in Manipur when the CM's rhetoric against the Kukis became strident. While he justified his actions as acting against illegal immigrants, drug traffickers and encroachers on forest land, they sparked alienation among the Kukis. In March 2023, the state government withdrew from the Suspension of Operations agreements with the Kuki National Army and Zomi Revolutionary Army, signalling an end to negotiated peace efforts.

David Lake and Donald Rothchild, in their seminal work *Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict*, argue that "stable ethnic relations can be understood as based upon a 'contract' between groups. Such contracts specify, among other things, the rights and responsibilities, political privileges and access to resources of each group... ethnic contracts channel politics in peaceful directions." Any perceived imbalance in this contract can ignite conflict.

In Manipur, this imbalance was exacerbated by exploitative politics and ethnic activism that created a deep polarisation between the Meiteis and Kukis. Violence appeared inevitable, and the spark came in May 2023 when the Manipur High Court directed the state government to recommend granting ST status to the Meiteis. Today, the geographical and psychological divide between the Meiteis and Kukis is nearly complete. The state forces appear to be helpless actors as armed civilian gangs from both sides roam the countryside in search of defenceless victims. Amid the civil war in Myanmar and instability in Bangladesh, the situation in Manipur is acquiring a larger national security dimension. We must learn some lessons. Manipur's conflict is not just a local crisis but a microcosm of the broader challenges of managing diversity in a pluralistic society. India's ethnic mosaic is both its strength and a vulnerability. Handling ethnic diversity is not about sharpening differences, but embracing them within the framework of mutual respect and shared aspirations. The Northeast experience shows that peace is possible when governance is inclusive, leadership responsible and ethnic harmony treated as the foundation of a resilient democracy.

## Blow to transparency

### Tweaking of poll rule raises eyebrows

WHEN the Supreme Court declared the electoral bonds scheme unconstitutional in February this year, it emphasised the voter's inalienable right to information — including the right to know the details of individuals and companies making donations to political parties. The landmark verdict also served as a reminder to the Union Government, which had backed the controversial scheme to the hilt, that there should be no compromise on transparency as the integrity of the entire electoral process was at stake. The Centre seems to have conveniently forgotten the SC's ruling. Based on a recommendation of the Election Commission of India (ECI), the Law Ministry has amended Rule 93(2)(a) of the Conduct of Election Rules in order to prevent public scrutiny of electronic documents such as CCTV and webcasting footage as well as video recordings of candidates. The unconvincing argument is that such material, if made accessible to one and all, can be misused



to the detriment of voter safety. Such fears and concerns just don't hold water in the age of

social media. Footage of voters coming out of polling stations is widely available. In many cases, electors themselves share their photos and videos on digital platforms. The CCTV cameras installed at polling stations merely keep an eye on the poll officials — they do not violate the secrecy of the ballot. There is no camera that records the voter pressing a certain button on the EVM. Still, the ECI is losing sleep over this non-issue.

The timing of the amendment is a dead giveaway. It comes in the wake of the Punjab and Haryana High Court's order that all documents related to the Haryana Assembly elections be shared with the petitioner in the 'Mehmood Pracha vs ECI' case, including CCTV camera footage as permissible under Rule 93(2). The ECI would be well advised to lift the veil of secrecy in the best interest of electoral democracy.

## Academic institutions must raise the bar to be future-ready

As foreign universities set up campuses in India, the existing domestic beacons of literacy face many challenges.

THE National Education Policy has offered opportunities for progressive institutions to step into the new dynamics of millennial academics. Subsequent statutes have envisaged an era where collaborative uplift, shared synergies, global partnerships and Vision-2050 shall define the academics of tomorrow. As foreign universities set up campuses in India, partnering with local organisations or embarking on singular forays, the existing domestic beacons of literacy face many challenges. Some institutions of faith had long back acquired significance and developed into arenas of higher learning. They include Banaras Hindu University, Aligarh Muslim University and Khalsa College, Amritsar. Khalsa College did not get the status of a university by default because of its non-cooperative attitude towards the British. Its pro-Independence stance led to its stagnation. That discrimination, however, did not stop in independent India either. Its aspiration of graduating into a university has been stalled at many junctures in its history since 1892.

Meanwhile, the Anglo-Vedic college network of DAV institutions grew at an aggressive pace, delivering sanatan-accented education across the northern region. In 2016, both Khalsa College and the DAV, along with nine other private bodies, were granted university status by the Akali-BJP government in Punjab. However, within months of this development, the subsequent Congress government singled out the Khalsa institution and repealed the Act under which it was set up. By then, it had 180 masters and PhD scholars on its rolls. They had to run helter-skelter to continue their courses. The fact that Khalsa University, independent of the Khalsa College, eventually came into being and was rescinded, was a body blow to the Khalsa College Charitable Society. It had aspired for this honour and nurtured

many other universities from within its campuses. However, in October this year, after a six-year delay, the Supreme Court gave a landmark judgment, setting aside an Act of legislature and adjudicated status quo to the 2017 formation. This victory for academic institutions has laid bare the illogical stance of politics.

Meanwhile, despite these adversities, the Khalsa society had made significant progress in the last two decades. It had set up professional colleges of pharmacy, nursing, law, veterinary sciences, education, engineering and others, while consolidating and increasing the number of students in the legacy institutions. A hospital and medical college is also in the offing.

The role of faith institutions in the field of school education, too, has been colossal. Over 55,000 Christian missionary schools are catering to 25 million children of all faiths in India. It is said that the majority of Indian Prime Ministers have received convent education at some point in their lives. In contrast, there are only around 24,010 madarsas and some 4,500 Vedic gurukuls in the country. In the Sikh community, the Guru Harkrishan Public School movement and SGPC schools number just a few hundred. Various faiths follow an inclusive and secular approach to primary education, while Islamic institutions run on the strict madrasa system with a religious and ideological approach to learning. Though the higher echelons of learning are more transparent, the appetite for openness is limited. The Economic Survey 2024 has highlighted serious gaps in the education system, wherein 52.8 per cent of the graduates were found to be 'unemployable'. This is a telling comment on systemic failure and necessitates introspection. For academic institutions,

especially those with extensive networks, the time has come to either make it in the business of literacy or be left behind. Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar recently termed the quest for overseas education a 'new disease' which has caused a \$6-billion hole in our foreign



exchange kitty. Now, the global village itself is planting seeds of competition in our midst. To stem academic procrastination within India, the Central Government has opened its doors not just to the Cambridges and Harvards of the world, but also any institution that has substantive prowess and history of excellence in the field of knowledge. It has, perhaps, set a purposeful cat among the pigeons. The question, thus, shall be of leadership and educational acumen of institutions. It shall be a test of the managements — whether they can ride the change or will go under. Some faith organisations have built-in

systems of governance to improve their competence and service delivery. Anglo-Vedic institutions have a policy of bringing on board stalwarts like retired Army Generals, judges and government servants.

Christian missionary institutions have incorporated structures to ensure that new blood is nurtured. A case in point is the succession strategy of Christian Medical College. It selects its leadership five years in advance. The person is nurtured for the task at hand and even sent for an executive training programme to the IIM-Ahmedabad to hone his/her skills.

The future of successful enterprises in higher learning, thus, hinges on whether they can forsake nepotistic tendencies, political encumbrances and leadership fatigue. They must adopt a professional approach. The managements will be tested for their wisdom as well as the acumen and dynamism of their executive teams and educators. The latter will need to be open to unlearning and relearning the art of teaching. Their goalpost should be the placement and successful careers of their wards. The alumni base is an unmatched asset of any school. It will also be required to be primed for participation in this onward march. GenNext cannot be given short shift if we are to convert the nation's demography into a dividend. While India@75 has fallen way short of its target of having a fully productive generation, India@100 will require a larger number to be serviced along with more options and opportunities as well. It is the learners who will, henceforth, have the option to choose from a wider bouquet of academic institutions, of faith or otherwise. The deliverer of knowledge will need to compete and be future-ready. Otherwise, it is likely to be in for a future shock.



# 7 ways to keep your kid Stress-free During exams

Your child is appearing for boards, but you're the one popping a stress vessel? 7 ways to keep it together for your kid.

Cuffe Parade resident Poonam Chawla vividly remembers the March of 2013. Her son Rohan was appearing for his 12th standard examination. Rohan aspired to study abroad and much of his hopes were pinned on the exams and the impending results. He dreamt of nothing less than a 90 per cent. Poonam found herself completely engulfed with the idea and took on the mantle to fulfil his desire. It wasn't just the examination that caused her anxiety -the thought of her son's dream of studying abroad crumbling, should his percent not be up to the mark, made her go off the deep end.

Poonam found her solace in Buddhist chanting. Each time she felt her anxiety levels soaring, she would gather with her friends and chant. "I realised I was passing on my anxiety to my son, which would frustrate him," she recalls. "So

much so, each time he would find me getting anxious, he would tell me, 'mama, please go chant'". While examination patterns have evolved, experts claim, parents -when confronted, literally, with testing situations like the pressing board exams -haven't. Nearly a fortnight ahead of the HSC board exam (the first among the many important examinations that will follow), our panel of experts suggest seven ways you can avoid being the nagging monster and be a support system, instead.

### Just stay calm

Displaying your nervousness to the child is quite common with parents. But it doesn't help. In a case like this, either the child turns into a complete rebel and deliberately does not study, or gets so nervous because of their parents' mounting pressure, that he/she will simply not be able to perform. Clinical psychologist, Salma Prabhu shares, "Children often get exasperated, if parents continuously

tell them what to do and how to do it. This not only disturbs them, but also leaves a feeling of anxiety and insecurity regarding the upcoming exams. They may lose their confidence." Your best bet? Keep calm and let your child carry on. If you're unable to, seek counselling.

### Leave your old-school ideas behind

"When I was preparing for my boards more than a decade ago, everyone was concerned about marks," says Azmin Mistry, an English teacher with a south Mumbai school. "But we now realise that these marks don't matter. If we are kinder towards exams, exams will be kinder to us." Enjoy the process. Tell your child to study to expand his/her knowledge. If you only focus on the grades, it puts undue pressure on them. "Besides, those who do well in school may not necessarily do well in life, and the reverse is also true. So, don't base your child's self-worth based on these exams," says former president of the

Bombay Psychiatrist Society, Dr Kersi Chavda. "One is 15 or 16 when appearing for these exams, and parents must understand they have a whole life ahead of them. Doing poorly in an exam is not a sign that they are a failure in life."

### Be a support system

You don't have to put your life on hold for your child's exams. Continue with your job and social activities through the year. It's only around the time of the examinations that you may choose to be home to make things comfortable and easy for them. Be around to keep the house calm and peaceful, keep the fragrance pleasant and speak of only positive outcomes. Ensure that they are sleeping well, eating adequately and exercising daily, as these three factors help alleviate stress levels. Don't simply nag them to study. Learning is about absorbing, and that can only happen if the child is sufficiently relaxed and rested. Trying to memorise and learn new concepts till the end may result in memory loss or tiredness during the time of actual performance. "And know that exams are a bit about luck," points out Dr Chavda. "If your child has studied diligently and is still unable to perform for some reason, spare the rod."

### Know the child's capacity

Many parents feel anxious when their children don't seem to juggle their time well or are a tad tired towards the end of the examination. "This is bound to happen in some cases as children



have been running to different classes and have been solving umpteen number of papers and have been practising a lot," says Prabhu. Parents need not panic and immediately start talking of the worst case scenarios and how this will lead to low scores. "Know that your child has a limit and will only be able to perform to the best of his/her ability. Accept their limitations. As a thumb rule don't compare, not even if their sibling is a class topper." Besides, suggests Prabhu, "avoid talking to too many people on your WhatsApp groups about what to serve your children, where to seek last minute help, ask how much children must sleep. Trust the children and observe what is best for them as every child is different."

Ranjana Guha, a retired junior college professor, explains, "One must instil the idea of self-study, rather than depend on tuitions." Sometimes, coaching classes add pressure and make hogwash promises. This leads to building unreasonable expectations in the parents' minds.

### No talking shop

Focus on the here and now. This is not the time to discuss what stream or career path they shall be taking, or, worse still, speak about a profession you would like them to take up. "In such situations, talking about it leads to low self-esteem and feeling of letting their parents down," says Prabhu. "So do not pressurise your children. If they don't do well, they shall have to opt for Commerce and Arts and not Science isn't helpful at this time."

Be sure, conversations during this time are pleasant and different, rather than the board exam results and its consequences.

### Steer clear of outside pressure

For your child's sake, and yours, avoid those friends, neighbours and relatives who give unsolicited advice and keep asking your kid what they want to be in life. This will create expectations in your mind and your child will only be bogged down by it. This is not the time to let others also come and create a cloud of anxiety and tension. "Playing Mozart and santoor stimulates the right nerves of the brain leading to good concentration and memory," advises Prabhu. "This will not only calm you as a parent but also help the children perform well." Dr Chavda adds, if it's the school which is the defaulter putting pressure, go up to the principal or teacher and have a frank chat. "Just because heshe maybe topping his class doesn't mean that heshe will become board ranker," he says.

### Don't compare

As parents your level of confidence in your children is what boosts their self-esteem and self-confidence. Do not compare them or give examples of relatives and friends who have scored well and have got great admissions, or alternatively who have scored low and have had to settle for mediocre institutes or pay donations. "Parents feel by comparing children to others, they are creating a competitive spirit. However, no one likes to be compared," says Prabhu. "Instead of feeling competitive, many children just give up thinking, my parents are never satisfied and nothing can make them happy, so why bother." Keep reassuring them that you trust them and you love them no matter what they score.

## How to survive a family trip

Getting ready for a trip with your family? Managing kids on the go and also ensuring you stick to your itinerary at the same time is a humongous task.

Here are some ways to help you avoid meltdowns, so that you can take in the sights and sounds without feeling overwhelmed.

### Packing hacks

Getting your suitcase ready is not just about throwing in clothes and essentials according to the duration of your trip. Keep in mind the following to save your sanity.

- Fold the clothes in pairs and put them in a pouch. Once you've worn them, stash them away in the same bag.
- Choose apparels that are wrinkle-resistant. This way, you'll save time trying to iron the creases out.
- Layer clothes with a laundry bag or sheets. Place rolled clothes at the bottom of the suitcase and folded ones next. You will find that removing what you need from the bag is easier this way.
- Stuff socks in your shoes. You can also use your footwear to store neatly folded chargers and cables. Alternatively, you can use socks to store perfumes and other breakable items.
- Use pill bottles and lens cases to group your jewellery and earrings.
- Place a plastic sheet between the bottles of your make-up lotions and foundations and its lids to avoid spilling the content all over your



the window. You can also keep them occupied by narrating anecdotes about your family.

- Keep a stock of snacks (the more colourful, the better); it not only keeps hunger pangs at bay, but also doubles up as a toy with which kids can play 'organising games'.
- If the young ones are

other belongings and ruining them.

- Buy travel-sized utilities, like toothpaste, body wash and shampoos, which can be thrown into dustbins later.

### On-the-move hacks

From screaming toddlers to elders who want to take a loo break, you need to know how to handle them all.

- When on the move, dress your kids in layers. If they spill on themselves, you can simply remove the dress that's on the top instead of hunting for a whole new set in your bag. This also comes in handy when you don't know how the temperature outside will be as you can adjust the layers accordingly.
- When you check in at the counter, make sure seat arrangements are in tandem and the meals are according to your taste.
- Cover the seats with towels. In case your little ones decide to play holi in the car, you will only have to wash the towels and not spend your energy scrubbing the seat covers clean.
- Have board games and books handy. If you want to entertain your children, play simple games like I Spy or narrate a story based on things you spot outside

getting impatient and want to know exactly how long will it be before they reach the destination, ask them to figure it out themselves with a map! Keep tablets and adult munchies in a separate bag so that they're easily accessible when elders ask for them.

- If you are flying, give chewing gums or lol lipops to the children and elders during take off and landing.
  - If you have to make a pit-stop, research beforehand to find out if there are interesting locations like an adventure park or places of historical importance enroute. This way, you can check out newer places and also relax for a while.
  - Have a well-stocked first aid kit. You never know when you might need it!
- ### Hotel room hacks
- If you thought you've survived the trip the minute you plunk on those comfortable beds in your hotel room, sorry to burst the bubble you're just half way into the battle.
- The golden rule is to book in advance.
  - However, keep your agent or the

management informed that you are open to upgrading your tickets. Many airlines and hospitality services offer business class facilities at nominal hikes just before the date of travel. So, don't miss out on the luxury.

- If you have a baby who's just few months hold, then use the hotel room's sink to bathe him/her. Don't risk using the bathroom if you are not sure you can handle it.
- Tape unused sockets and sharp corners with duct tape to child-proof the room.
- If your child is restless and unwilling to go to sleep, build a makeshift fort or tent using pillows and blankets.
- If your stomach grumbles at odd hours, then make instant noodles or eggs in the kettle. You can also use shower caps to cover leftovers and have them later.

Family members insisting on wearing ironed shirt, but can't find an iron in the room? Simply use a hair dryer.

- Invest in wi-fi base stations or download hotspot apps. If internet is not available free of charge, use these gadgets so that entire family can utilise the net by paying just for one connection.
- If you have an early wake up call, then put your phone in a glass; the alarm will sound much sharper.
- You can use a USB cable to charge your phone by just connecting it to the TV's port.
- If you are leaving behind expensive items in your room, then keep the 'do not disturb' sign on. This will ward away people with mischievous intentions.
- In most hotels, power is connected to the room cards. So, if you want to charge your phone or camera while you are enjoying a relaxed breakfast, place a membership card or old bank cards in lieu of your room card in this slot.

## Encourage your child to pick the Right foods

Ask any parent how difficult it is to get their child to finish their meals sans the tantrums, and you will probably get an exasperated look. Children are notorious for their fussy eating habits. And if they have a sweet tooth, it gets even more difficult to veer them towards eating something healthy. The good news, however, is that it isn't difficult to get your child to actually relish healthy items — you simply need to know how to make food more interesting and fun. Here are some simple yet effective tips...

- Don't be sceptical to try new recipes. There are several ways in which you can make food tasty without worrying about it being unhealthy. Make a dip if your kids balk at the sight of vegetables.

- Introduce new dishes slowly so that your child get can used to the taste. Don't overwhelm them by piling their plate with health food all at once.

- Encourage your child to participate in the kitchen. Let them help you while you prepare meals so that they are aware of how much effort and time goes into cooking. Ask them to suggest foods that they enjoy eating and prepare them in different ways every time so that they can enjoy the variety.

- Lead by example. This means that if you're asking your child to resist junk food, you should do the same. Children look up to adults and if they see that you're being careless about your eating habits, they'll end up doing the same.

- Don't cut out all junk food completely. This will lead to cravings and tantrums. Instead, allow them to eat out once a week. This will balance out the equation without them feeling deprived.

- Make a schedule for the week so that you don't struggle when it comes to cooking. Once the menu is planned beforehand, you have time to be innovative and plan in advance.

### Healthy food alternatives

- Instead of frying, bake those fries in some coconut oil.
- If plain dahi is boring, add some fresh fruits to it.
- Paneer bread rolls, oatmeal pancakes and puffed rice upma are tasty and healthy snacks.
- Add a dash of salad dressing to a boring vegetable salad to amp up the flavour.
- Encourage your child to eat a handful of nuts and fruits in-between meals.



# After Free Treatment For Seniors, AAP's Next Poll Promise Is 24-Hour Water

**In the 2020 Assembly elections, AAP secured a landslide victory, winning 62 out of 70 seats. The BJP managed only eight.**

New Delhi. AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal today announced plans to provide a 24-hour water supply across Delhi ahead of Assembly elections next year. Mr Kejriwal said that the 24-hour supply has already begun in the Rajendra Nagar area of the national capital. "Good news. From today, 24-hour water supply is starting in a colony of Rajendra Nagar. Very soon, it will be available in the entire city too," Mr Kejriwal said. This announcement is part of a series of welfare measures unveiled by the AAP recently. The party has announced the Sanjeevani Yojana, aimed at providing free medical treatment to Delhi residents aged 60 and above. Registration for the scheme has already begun in the Jangpura assembly constituency, where the AAP has fielded its former deputy chief minister, Manish Sisodia, as a candidate for the upcoming elections. "Under the Sanjeevani Yojana, if elderly

individuals above 60 years of age fall ill, whether they visit a government hospital or a private hospital, the Delhi government will cover the entire cost of their treatment," Mr



Kejriwal said on Monday. He added that the scheme has the potential to benefit approximately 20-25 lakh senior citizens in Delhi. The former Delhi chief minister also

claimed that there has been a positive response to the Mahila Samman Yojana, a scheme aimed at providing a monthly allowance of 2,100 to women residing in Delhi. According to the Chief Minister, approximately 2.5 lakh women registered for the scheme within hours of its launch. Listen to the latest songs, only on JioSaavn.com AAP recently announced the Dr Ambedkar Scholarship, which aims to support the higher education of Dalit students. However, specific details about the scholarship's budget and implementation remain undisclosed. In the 2020 Assembly elections, AAP secured a landslide victory, winning 62 out of 70 seats. The BJP managed only eight. With the next elections expected in early 2025, both parties are doubling down on efforts to sway voters.

## Popular Delhi restobar Bohca directed to stop serving liquor

New Delhi. The excise department has suspended the liquor licence of Bohca restobar in Delhi's Qutub Hotel and issued a show-cause notice and order, asking the management to explain why the licence should not be cancelled.

Stating that the tourism certificate, on the basis of which an L-16 liquor licence was given to Bohca, had expired in July, the excise department gave the licensee 15 days to explain why the licence should not be cancelled for the lapse.

Messages and calls to the restobar management went unanswered. "...the Licensee (Bohca) has not submitted a renewed certificate from the Tourism Department till date and by non renewal of the certificate...the Licensee has violated the provision of Rule 51 (10) of Delhi Excise Rule 2010, and therefore, the license (of Bohca)...is hereby suspended with immediate effect for the above said lapse," the order dated December 20 said.

"In the meanwhile the Licensee (Bohca) is directed to cease the operation of service of liquor with immediate effect," read the order. It also directed Bohca to submit its reply, pointing out that failing this, it would be presumed that "the licensee is not in possession of certificate from Ministry of Tourism".

## Panchkula hotel shooting: Mitraon village in spotlight again, victims were uncle & nephew, their houses locked

New Delhi. The death of two persons from South West Delhi's Najafgarh in Panchkula's Pinjore, in what police believe is the fallout of a gang war, has brought the spotlight back on the Mitraon village in the area. Police said 30-year-old Vineet was a resident of the village, which has been bloody shootouts in the past.

According to the villagers, the 17-year-old shot dead alongside Vineet was his nephew. The houses of the two, close to each other's, were locked on Monday evening. Speaking about the minor, a neighbour said, "He was a good kid... I heard that he was going to Chandigarh when he died... there's no one at their house." Pointing to her grandson, she added, "They were friends." The boy, silently listening to the conversation, refused to comment. Another neighbour added, "The boy had recently completed class 12. He used to play here in these streets along with others... We got the news in the afternoon. The other victim was his maternal uncle." Villagers said the family had left for their native village of Luksar in Haryana's Jhajjar. At Luksar, three villagers sat under the light of three dim bulbs. They had heard about the incident but said the families had lost touch decades ago. Also, the families of the two victims rarely ever came to Luksar, they added. "There has been some sort of estrangement, so they no longer come here... We also came to know of the incident through WhatsApp messages and YouTube..." said a man stationed at a temple in the village as a night guard. Najafgarh's Mitraon village is no stranger to shootouts or gang wars. Over the past three decades, it has borne the brunt of bloody gang wars.

## Delhi Police arrest 11 people for aiding illegal entry of Bangladeshi immigrants

South Delhi police said the accused, including Aadhaar operators and tech experts, created fake websites to create fake documents for Bangladeshi immigrants.

New Delhi. The Delhi Police have recently arrested 11 people for their alleged involvement in aiding the entry of Bangladeshi nationals into India by forging documents, including Aadhaar cards and voter IDs, the police said. Ankit Chauhan, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South Delhi), said on Tuesday that the accused, including Aadhaar operators and tech experts, created fake websites to create the fake documents, and facilitated the entry of illegal immigrants through forest routes and express trains.

launched a drive for identifying illegal Bangladeshi immigrants on December 11, a day after L-G Secretariat ordered



On Sunday, a senior police officer said that 175 individuals have been identified as suspected illegal Bangladeshi immigrants during an extensive verification drive conducted in outer Delhi. The Delhi Police

a crackdown on such persons residing in Delhi. Ravi Kumar Singh, DCP (South East Delhi), had said that 916 people were verified in South East Delhi till December 13 and eight illegal immigrants had been detained,

including six Bangladeshi nationals. Two of them - Abdul Ahad, 22, and Mohammad Azizul, 32, were arrested on December 10 and 12, respectively, from Hazrat Nizamuddin for illegal stay in India, the officer said.

The police had produced both the men before the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) for deportation proceedings.

The police conducted an operation in the E-44 Jhuggis of New Seemapuri in Shahdara on December 12 to identify illegal immigrants. Prashant Priya Gautam, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Shahdara, had said that police teams visited multiple slums and collected documents of 32 people for further verification.

## Delhi Records Above-Average Minimum Temperature For Second Consecutive Day; Air Quality Remains Near 'Severe' Category

New Delhi. North India is experiencing severe cold weather as temperatures drop across several states. In Delhi, the minimum temperature was recorded at 7 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, with parts of the city covered in a thin layer of fog. On Monday, the city registered a minimum temperature of 8 degrees Celsius, while the maximum reached 20 degrees Celsius. To cope with the cold, residents of Delhi were seen gathering around bonfires, while some sought shelter in night homes as temperatures declined further. Delhi experienced above-average minimum temperatures for the second consecutive day, with cloudy skies contributing to the trend. On Monday, the Safdarjung weather station, which represents Delhi's overall climate, recorded a minimum temperature of 9.9 degrees Celsius, 2.4 degrees Celsius above normal—compared to 8.6 degrees Celsius the previous day. Other areas, like Palam, reported even higher minimum temperatures, with 10.4 degrees Celsius, which is 2.5 degrees Celsius above normal.

Meanwhile, air quality remained close to the "severe" category. At 9 a.m. on Tuesday, the city recorded an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 400 ("very poor"), slightly better than Monday's 24-hour average of 406 ("severe") and Sunday's 409 ("severe"). The maximum temperature on Tuesday is expected to reach around 19 degrees Celsius.

An official from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) attributed the rise in temperatures to persistent cloudy skies. "The heat from the earth's surface is trapped at night due to cloud cover, causing temperatures to rise," the official explained. On Monday, Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 7 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 7 degrees Celsius, according to the IMD. The IMD defines a cold wave as when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or below in plains and 0 degrees Celsius or lower in hilly areas. The IMD has predicted a severe cold wave in Jammu and Kashmir starting December 24. Dense fog and cold wave conditions are also expected in Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and other states from December 23 to 25.

## Kuldeep Sengar's interim bail extended by four weeks, asked to surrender on January 20

NEW DELHI. Kuldeep Sengar, a former BJP MLA serving a 10-year prison sentence for the custodial death of the Unnao rape survivor's father, has been granted an extension of his interim bail.

Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri of the High Court, while considering Sengar's plea for medical relief, noted that a division bench had already extended his suspension of sentence in the related Unnao rape case till January 20. The court order specifies that Sengar must surrender on January 20 following the extension. On December 20, a bench comprising Justices Prathiba M. Singh and Amit Sharma extended Sengar's interim bail in the Unnao rape case.

The court imposed conditions on him, including restricting his movements to his residence, except for medical visits to AIIMS, and prohibiting him from leaving Delhi. The division bench justified the extension by considering Sengar's health issues,



including recovery from eye surgery, and other ailments. It emphasised that this would be the final extension and no further relief would be granted.

Earlier, on December 5, the court had granted a temporary suspension of Sengar's sentence till December 20. In the custodial death case, the single judge aligned with the division bench's decision, extending Sengar's sentence suspension until December 20 and providing him 10 days of interim bail.

Sengar was convicted in December 2019 for raping a minor and sentenced to life imprisonment. He has appealed against the trial court's verdict and sought to overturn the sentencing. The case pertains to a 2017 incident where Sengar allegedly kidnapped and raped the minor survivor. In a separate judgment in March 2020, Sengar was sentenced to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment for the custodial death of the survivor's father, who was arrested on fabricated charges under the Arms Act.

## When the bench inquired about the urgency, the senior counsel highlighted that with elections looming, assembly sessions may not be convened, delaying further action.

NEW DELHI. Seven BJP legislators on Monday filed a petition in the Delhi High Court seeking the immediate tabling of 14 Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports concerning the city's administration before the assembly.

Senior counsel representing the petitioners mentioned the matter before a bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela. The court directed the matter to be listed for hearing in the "normal course." This is the second petition by the legislators about the CAG reports. Despite a prior writ petition addressing the same concern, the Delhi government has yet to present the reports to the assembly, the petitioners' counsel argued. When the bench inquired about the urgency, the senior counsel highlighted that with elections looming, assembly sessions may not be convened,



delaying further action. The petitioners include Opposition Leader Vijender Gupta and BJP MLAs Mohan Singh Bisht, Om Prakash Sharma, Ajay Kumar Mahawar, Abhay Verma, Anil Kumar Bajpai, and Jitendra Mahajan. The group previously

sought intervention over the non-tabling of CAG reports. In the latest plea, filed through advocates Neeraj and Satya Ranjan Swain, the MLAs claimed that the Speaker of the Delhi Legislative Assembly had not received the reports.

"On December 20, 2024, petitioner No. 1 inquired again and was informed by the Speaker that the CAG reports had not been received as of 12:51pm," the petition stated.

The petition alleges that this inaction violates a prior undertaking made by the Delhi government before the court. The BJP MLAs have requested the court to direct the Delhi government, along with the chief minister and finance minister, to forward the CAG reports to the Speaker promptly to ensure necessary actions are taken without further delay. The court has yet to announce a date for the hearing.

## Delhi coaching centre deaths: L-G nod to suspend two fire officers for negligence

On July 27, the basement of Rau's IAS coaching centre in Old Rajender Nagar was flooded within minutes due to rainfall, leading to the death of the three students.

New Delhi. Lieutenant Governor (L-G) V K Saxena has approved immediate suspension of two Delhi Fire Services officers over alleged negligence of duty in connection with the death of three civil services aspirants in a flooded basement of a coaching centre in Delhi in July, his office said on Monday.

Those suspended are Divisional Officer Ved Pal and Assistant Divisional Officer Uday Vir Singh, both Group A officers, facing allegations of negligence in issuing a fire safety certificate to the coaching centre despite knowing that it was illegally using its basement as a library, a note from the L-G office said.

The L-G has directed the suspension of the officers, categorising the action as an initial step toward ensuring accountability. The matter will now be



referred to the National Capital Civil Service Authority for further disciplinary measures against Ved Pal and Uday Vir Singh, the note added.

On July 27, the basement of Rau's IAS coaching centre in Old Rajender Nagar was flooded within minutes due to rainfall, leading to the death of the three

students — Shreya Yadav (25) from Uttar Pradesh, Telangana's Tanya Soni (25), and Nevin Dalvin (24) from Kerala — trapped in the basement of the building, which was being used as a library. "A detailed inquiry conducted by the District Magistrate (Central) revealed that the two suspended officers

had inspected the premises for the issuance of a fire safety certificate... However, they were found to have concealed information about the misuse of the basement as a library and failed to refer the matter to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Consequently, the fire safety certificate was erroneously issued on July 9," the note said. "The investigation also pointed fingers at some MCD authorities, who were found to have neglected their duty to inspect and seal the illegally operating basement library and issued a completion-cum-occupancy certificate in September 2021," it said, adding that strict action is also being initiated against other MCD and Public Works Department officials, responsible for the poor drainage infrastructure in the area.





# Time for some Pet Etiquette

**Pets are adorable but they can get equally annoying if not trained properly. We share some tips to turn your pet into a great companion**

A recent study claimed that dog owners get the same surge of emotions when looking at their pooch as mothers do with their infants. While most of the pet owners will nod in agreement, you may find a few disagreeing. "I love my pet but he's such a nuisance. He will bark his lungs out in the middle of the night, chew on everything he gets his hands on and trouble my guests. I don't know what to do with him," says PR executive Aashish Sen who owns Peddle, a Pomeranian. But you can set aside such worries. Dogs can adapt to human society.

We share with you some useful tips to minimize your pet worries: Exercising pet is a good pet: Your pet needs regular exercise to get rid of his excessive energy. Do not take him out just to litter, let him run, have fun. "This is the only way to release his excessive energy which if not released could make him irritable. It amounts to building stress which will be exhibited through excessive barking and unwanted pouncing," says Delhi-based senior veterinarian.

**No loud business:** When you are feeding or talking to your pet, do not raise your voice. Make him adapt to commands but say it once and say like you mean it. It

should be firm not loud. And if you keep saying it, he won't listen unless you snap at him. "Be careful about the commands and the words you use. Don't confuse them. If you use the command 'Sit' to make him sit, do not use 'Heel' instead," says Chennai based dog trainer J Rangarajan.

**Attention with care:** Some pets are in a habit to bark to grab your attention. They will bark when hungry, while greeting you, wanting to play with you. Says Pet groomer Geetika Nigam, "This habit must be modified simply by not providing positive reinforcement when he is barking for no reason."

**Even your pet needs toys:** If you see your pet chewing furniture or your favourite shoes, don't snap at him. Instead give him alternatives to chew on like pet friendly toys. Spread them all over the floor and if he still goes for your shoes, give him a chewy. Says Delhi-based dog trainer Raju Sinha, "If he still goes, then direct him to a chewy. In a way, your pet is trying to teach you to be more careful with treasured items."

**Never hit him:** Don't hit your pet when you are angry with him. The next time you get angry, first tell him firmly that he's incorrect, ignore him, and nudge him off if he comes to you. This will disorient him and he will know that the behaviour is not acceptable. "Remember, you should never resort to hitting your pet," adds J Rangarajan.

**Eating habits:** Never feed him while you are eating. This might be taken as a cue that he can take food from your plate.

**Make him a social pet:** Don't restrict his exposure just to family else he will get really uncomfortable in front of your guests or might behave awkwardly. And remember never ask your friend if you can get your pet along to a get together or party. If they want him to come, they will say it.

# Garden are occupied life..

found such a partner with which they can move forward. The journey of life they themselves fortunate to be relatively easy experience.

**Ability wife welcome**

Some men came to the position that his wife suddenly started going to work, because the wife felt the need to raise revenue. Leigh was a great event that some of these people, because they were accustomed to seeing the family as the axis. Yet while admitting he needs a creative twist positions and wife welcomed the move. People happy married life has spent so long that he felt the need to change it, he felt no fear. They change as the end of the relationship, not just seen as a situation that was overcome, the strength of the relationship was the most important for them.

**Live with differences**

You are a supporter of the party and supporters of the other spouse. He can not change his political views, you must learn to live with these differences. According to psychologists, "such a little - little things are wrangling Do not burn bridges with your sweat and time. Entangled in the same things you can win jointly. This does not mean that you ignore the important issues. The intent is simply to accept the differences as essential truth of life, the habit of living with them. Do not marry the person with whom one can not live without you, but the person with whom you can live with."

**The notion of stability**

They know that the household is the same as driving, sitting silently on the other is not. He is trying his behalf.

**A - The second focus**

People who spend long experience of married life that now is being given too much emphasis on autonomy and independence. Live with each other - talk is about to get up, but this dependence should not be negative polarity. In such cases they do not understand is no harm in joining them. He felt that the balance of power among themselves - dependent and - other than taking care of the remains.

**Living with each**

Maintaining long term relationships, couples - would feel all the pleasures of being with each other. His Abhirucian and activities are slightly different than usual and had a - to strengthen ties with other partners felt. Even when they live together, one - has considerable interest in the other.

**vein of experience Sey**

The texture is the most important part of the history of the partnership relationships. Couples sharing the same experiences also refers to the future. have increased. To face the future with confidence power. - Second confidence grows and builds strong relationships.

**Consider yourself lucky**

Many couples said their relationships remain major roles such luck. She also felt themselves lucky that they



# Things to discuss with him before Marriage



Tying the knot is definitely a big deal and there are certain things that you should discuss with your would-be before you get married to him.

**Children** One of the biggest things that comes along with getting married is planning a family in the long run. Marriage means starting a family. Before you get married, it is important for the two of you to sit down and talk about whether both of you are ready to have kids or not. Many a times, the woman does not want to become a mother soon after getting married, but the guy wants to.

**Money** Dealing with finance is a problem that every couple face. There is no denying that money is one of the most important things that every couple need to discuss before they get married. Whether it is about having a joint bank account or a separate one, or who is going to be paying the bills — talking about this will save you from unwanted problems later on.

**Family** Discussing things related to your family is also crucial. Whether you would like to stay with them post marriage, or how often will you be able to stay with your parents are things that you should be clear about before you get married.

**Where will you be living** Another thing to consider when it comes to talking to your partner before marriage is to discuss where you would be living. Not to forget, many a times, couples end up fighting over this.

A happy and healthy marital trust each other is the first and foremost condition - to trust each other. People want to feel safe and confident with the elements which it maintains. The belief that someone is always with you and his behavior will not hurt you. Is believed to be the most important long-term relationships.

### GSTR-9 simplified: Filing, features, deadlines and other details

**BENGALURU.** Fintech major Razorpay is awarding employee stock option plans (ESOPs) worth Rs 1 lakh to all its current employees as part of its 10 years celebration. For many employees, this marks their first-ever ESOP allocation.

ESOPs have long been a valuable means of wealth creation in the start-up ecosystem. Razorpay said it believes that employees are the driving force behind its growth, and ESOP allocations show appreciation for their contributions. Its first ESOP buyback was in 2018, and that enabled 140 employees to liquidate their vested shares. In 2022, the \$75 million ESOP buyback benefitted 650 existing and former employees. Over the past decade, it has grown exponentially, and has reached over 300 million end consumers across the country. With an annualised payment volume (TPV) of \$180 billion, Razorpay has launched over 40 products every year. The fintech major powers payments for 80 of the country's 100 unicorns. Harshil Mathur, co-founder & CEO of Razorpay, said, "Back in 2014, when we started Razorpay, we didn't think of it as a start-up, it was a massive customer problem we wanted to fix - the complexity of integrating payment systems intrigued us. That's been the common denominator till now."

### TRAI asks telcos to offer tariff vouchers for calls, SMS

**NEW DELHI.** The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has directed telecom service providers to offer separate special tariff vouchers (STVs) for voice calls and SMS services.

With this change, telcos such as Reliance Jio, Vodafone Idea, and Bharti Airtel are now required to offer tariff plans that include only voice and SMS services, not necessarily bundled with data.

The TRAI has introduced these amendments to the telecommunication tariff order (TTO) and the Telecom Consumers Protection Regulations (TCP). This change will allow consumers to pay only for the services they use, offering greater flexibility in telecom spending. The move is beneficial for rural users and elderly, who may predominantly use voice and SMS services and may not require data services. Introduction of these vouchers aims to cater to users who prioritise voice communication, offering them a cost-effective solution without the need for data features. The TRAI said the change is beneficial for elderly people, especially in rural areas, who do not use data services due to limited understanding of technology. Families with broadband at home may also find it burdensome to pay for data services that they don't require.

Moreover, data collected from telcos indicate about 150 million users still rely on feature phones, highlighting a continuing demand for voice and SMS-only plans, as these users typically require basic telecomm services. The new regulations introduce an extension of the validity period for STVs and combo vouchers. The validity period has been raised from the previous 90 days to 365 days, giving users more flexibility in how they recharge their accounts. TRAI has done away with the colour coding of vouchers, which was earlier used for physical forms, in response to the growing prominence of online recharges.

### Women now represent 20 per cent of HNI investors: Crypto exchange CoinDCX

**BENGALURU.** With increasing adoption of cryptocurrency, women are now representing 20 per cent of crypto exchange CoinDCX's HNI (high net-worth individual) customers. With 28.3 per cent, Delhi, Lucknow (19.16 per cent), and Hyderabad (16.5 per cent) are driving this trend, with ETH, BTC, MATIC, and DOGE, among their preferred tokens, says the crypto exchange in its Annual Report for 2024. The report highlights a significant shift in investor behaviour and how cryptocurrencies are widely being used in tier-2 cities as they accounted for 40 per cent of nationwide crypto activity. Delhi and Mumbai led with a combined 22 per cent.

With over half of investors now holding Bitcoin and Alcoins in their portfolios, the exchange points out that Indian crypto traders are maturing, becoming more strategic in their asset allocation, and embracing the transformative potential of digital assets.

From its all-time high of USD 1,07,000 last week, Bitcoin (BTC) has been fluctuating and on Monday it fell to about USD 96,056.

CoinDCX said that about 51.5 per cent of investors'



portfolios are now held in BTC, and Alcoins, indicating a strong shift toward long-term investment strategies. Alcoins lead with a 34.5 per cent allocation, driven by rising confidence in projects like DeFi, Layer 2 solutions, and decentralized applications. Interestingly, there has been a 253.33 per cent surge in SIP adoption. The crypto exchange also said that post-US election, which is from November 5 to December 10, investments in crypto climbed to USD 1.2 billion in just 34 days, with a daily average of USD 35.3 million. Between January 1 and November 5, total investments reached USD 2.94 billion, averaging USD 9.5 million daily. Tokens like SUI (374.30 per cent) and DOGE (338.60 per cent) led gains among assets with valuations exceeding USD 10 billion. Emerging tokens such as Popcat surged by 14,844 per cent, underscoring the dynamic nature of the market, it pointed out.

## Which Indian insurance companies reject claims the least Report reveals truth

**People don't just put in money but trust when they buy insurance policies to cover for medical emergencies or motor accidents. A report by the Insurance Brokers Association of India reveals how many such claims have been accepted or rejected by insurance companies in 2022-23.**

**NEW DELHI.** People buy general insurance to cover for emergencies so that they do not have to make out-of-pocket hefty payments. They do not just put their money in, but trust while paying premiums. However, not all claims get approved. A recent report reveals that the claim-to-settlement ratio, which shows how many claims were honoured by insurers, in 2022-23 at 86%, which is down from the 87% in FY22. The detailed report by the Insurance Brokers

Association of India (IBAI) from data presented by insurance companies reveals that claims repudiation ratio rose to 6% for general insurance, which includes coverage for motor, health, fire and marine cargo. This is the claim rejected by an insurance company as a proportion of the total claims made by its policy buyers. Public sector insurer New India Assurance has the lowest claims repudiation ratio of 0.2%. Other big private insurers with lower rates of claims rejection are HDFC Ergo, Future Generali, Aditya Birla Health and Shriram. Insurance watchdog IRDAI makes it mandatory for insurance companies to put out settlements and rejection data on their websites. The IBAI has collated the data from insurers and put it in a report, which could help people make informed choices about a company's track record while buying insurance policies. In the Policyholder's



Handbook, the IBAI has classified the general insurers into four categories - Public Sector General Insurers, Large Private Sector General Insurers, Other Private Sector Insurers, and Standalone Health Insurers. In the health insurance category too, New India Assurance came on top among the public insurers with a claim-settlement ratio of 95%. Aditya Birla Health, with a claim settlement ratio of 95%, was the best among standalone health insurers. Ifco Tokio and Bajaj

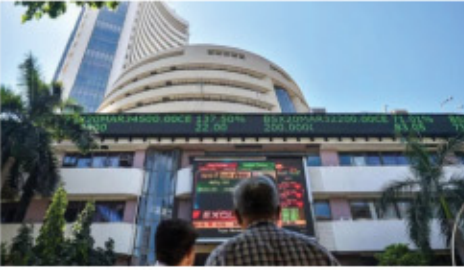
Allianz were among the top large private sector general insurers with the best claims-to-settlement ratio of 90% or more, according to the IBAI handbook.

What has to be remembered in the case of health insurance is that it is combined data for group (corporate) and individual policies. Claim-rejection rates are historically lower in the case of corporate policies. IRDAI does not give data for individual and group claims separately. Why not? Who is it protecting," asked author-influencer Monika Halan. The real picture will emerge when separate claim-settlement data is available for individual health insurance policies. According to experts, incomplete or false disclosure, consciously or unconsciously, at the time of purchase of policies also contribute to rejection of claims. In settling motor vehicle own-damage claims too, New India Assurance was the best public insurer with a claim-settlement ratio of 92%.

## Are stock markets closed on December 25 Check the full 2025 holiday schedule

**NEW DELHI.** The stock markets, including the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and the National Stock Exchange (NSE), will remain closed on Wednesday, December 25, 2024, in observance of Christmas. This holiday marks the last stock market holiday of the year. Along with Indian markets, major global stock exchanges in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and across Europe will also remain closed. Both the BSE and NSE will suspend trading across all segments, including equities, derivatives, and securities lending and borrowing (SLB) on December 25. Furthermore, the commodity markets, including the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) and the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), will also remain shut for both morning and evening sessions. Trading will resume as usual on Thursday, December 26, 2024.

2025 stock market holiday calendar



The stock market holiday schedule for 2025 includes several national and religious holidays. The markets will close on February 26 for Mahashivratri, March 14 for Holi, and March 31 for Id-ul-Fitr (Ramadan Eid). In April, there are closures on April 10 for Shri Mahavir Jayanti, April 14 for Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar Jayanti, and April 18 for Good Friday. Maharashtra Day on May 1 and Independence Day on August 15 are

also holidays. Later in August, the market will be shut on August 27 for Ganesh Chaturthi. October has three holidays, including Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti/Dussehra on October 2, Diwali Laxmi Pujan on October 21, and Diwali Balipratipada on October 22. November 5 is reserved for Prakash Gurburb Sri Guru Nanak Dev. Christmas on December 25 will again mark the final holiday for 2025.

In addition, the markets will hold Muhurat Trading on Tuesday, October 21, 2025, during Diwali. The exact timings for this special trading session will be announced later.

On regular weekdays, the Indian stock market operates from 9:15 AM to 3:30 PM. A pre-opening session takes place from 9:00 AM to 9:15 AM to set the tone for the trading day. The market is closed on Saturdays and Sundays.

## Carraro India IPO: Check GMP, aprice band and subscription status

**NEW DELHI.** The Carraro India IPO, which opened for subscription on December 20, has seen a lukewarm response so far. Only 28% of the issue was subscribed to over the first two days.

The retail investor segment saw the highest response among the subscription categories, reaching 35%, while no category has been fully subscribed yet. The IPO is a Rs 1,250 crore offer for sale (OFS) consisting of 1.77 crore shares. As this is a pure OFS, the entire proceeds will go to the selling shareholders, and the company will not raise fresh capital.

The IPO is priced between Rs 668 and Rs 704 per share. Investors can bid for a minimum of 21 shares in a single lot and in multiples thereafter.

### KEY DATES

The IPO closes on December 24, with allotments expected to be finalised on December 26. Shares are likely to list on December 30.



Investors are advised to evaluate long-term prospects while considering the IPO amid muted initial subscription trends.

### GMP UPDATE

The grey market premium (GMP) for Carraro India shares remains nil, both before and during the IPO, signaling weak demand in the unofficial market.

### BROKERAGE VIEWS

Despite the subdued response in the grey market, analysts have issued positive recommendations for long-term investors. Bajaj Broking noted the company's strong financial performance, robust market presence, and favorable industry trends as key reasons to consider the IPO. "Carraro India's ability to sustain growth, innovate, and adapt to changing market dynamics positions it well for future success," the brokerage added.

## Tata Capital to raise up to \$2 billion from overseas market

**MUMBAI.** Tata Capital, which after the merger with the group company Tata Motor's NBFC subsidiary has become the 12th largest non-bank player in terms of AUM, is tapping the global debt market to raise up to \$2 billion as part of its medium-term notes (MTN) programme. Global rating agency S&P on Monday assigned a BBB- rating to the issue. It is not immediately known when the company will hit the market or how much they are going to raise in the first tranche, but typically a rating comes when an issuer is already in the market. Tata Capital did not respond to an email from TNIE. "We equalized the ratings on the senior secured and senior unsecured notes under the MTN programme with our long-term issuer credit rating on the issuer. This is because the company is prudentially regulated," S&P said in a note. The senior unsecured notes will constitute direct, unconditional, and

unsubordinated obligations of the issuer. They shall at all times rank equally with all other senior unsecured



obligations of the finance company, the rating agency said.

Under the MTN programme, Tata Capital may also issue index-linked notes. Under our rating criteria, we do not rate the notes if principal payments are linked to fluctuations in equity or commodity prices, or equity or commodity indices, the agency

added. Earlier this year, the Reserve Bank had approved the merger of Tata Motors Finance with Tata Capital, forming the 12th largest NBFC in the country. Under the RBI regulations, Tata Capital has to go public by next September. The move by Tata Group is in line with RBI's mandatory requirement for "upper layer" NBFCs to list within three years of being notified, i.e. September 2025. Tata Capital Financial Services, which merged with Tata Capital later in January 2024, is on the regulator's list.

As of March 2024, Tata Capital had a wide funding base from multiple lenders, including non-convertible debentures (NCDs) at 39%, term loans at 42 percent and external commercial borrowings at 7 percent.

For the financial year 2024, Tata Capital had reported a net profit of Rs 2,492 crore on revenue of Rs 13,309 crore.

## GST rate hike: Used car market faces challenges

**Industry experts believe that this increase could slow growth and impact businesses that rely on second-hand vehicles.**

**NEW DELHI.** Used car market is expected to face headwinds following the GST Council's recent decision to increase the tax rate on used vehicles from 12% to 18%. Industry experts believe that this increase could slow growth and impact businesses that rely on second-hand vehicles. "Used cars are the backbone of mobility for millions of Indians, especially in Tier 2/3 cities and rural areas, where they serve as an affordable way to achieve the dream of car ownership. In a country with single-digit car ownership, policies that impact affordability, like the recent GST hike, can unintentionally slow down this progress," said Vikram Chopra, Founder & CEO of CARS24.

The GST revision applies to vehicles sold by businesses that claim depreciation and transact on a margin basis. For example, if a used car platform buys a car for Rs 2 lakh and sells it for Rs 2.4 lakh after refurbishment, the GST will be charged at 18% on the margin (Rs 40,000). Earlier,



GST on such transactions were at 12%. Individual buyers and sellers of used cars will continue to pay 12% GST rate. Sandeep Aggarwal, founder and CEO of Droom, a used car marketplace. Sandeep Aggarwal, founder and CEO of Droom, a used car marketplace. Sandeep Aggarwal, founder and CEO of Droom, a used car marketplace, said businesses that purchase pre-owned cars as capital assets such as certain ride-hailing companies

and e-commerce platforms, will be hit the hardest by the higher tax rates. "In the last few years, due to ride-hailing, quick commerce, and food delivery, automobiles have become a significant asset to make money. For such businesses, buying used cars has now become more expensive," Aggarwal said. The tax hike is mainly concerning for the second-hand electric vehicle (EV) segment. While new EVs are taxed at a reduced 5% to

encourage adoption, the 18% GST on used EVs may dampen demand in the resale market. Businesses reselling EVs will also face rising operational costs, as repair and maintenance services already attract an 18% GST. Last week, Korean automaker Kia had expressed concerns over the hike in GST on used EVs from 12% to 18%, emphasising that such a move could hinder the Indian automotive industry's electrification journey.

NEWS BOX

No pressure on Rishabh Pant, judging him after 3 Tests is not right: Rohit Sharma

New Delhi. India captain Rohit Sharma played down concerns over the form of Rishabh Pant in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, saying the wicketkeeper-batter knows what is expected of him and that he has been working hard in the nets. Rohit backed Pant, highlighting his success with the bat in the recent past and on the previous tours to Australia when he addressed the press ahead of the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne. Rishabh Pant, who was India's hero in the 2020-21 tour, has struggled to live up to expectations, managing just 96 runs in three Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy so far. Pant has been targeted with short deliveries and Australia captain Pat Cummins' ploy has worked against him. "There is no pressure. He has played just three Tests here. He has scored runs in India. He has been in good form. If two or three Tests go up and down, too much of judgement is not right. He knows what he has to do," Rohit said. See, as I told you, all these youngsters - Rishabh, Gill, Jaiswal, all these youngsters are in the same boat. We don't want to complicate what they are doing. They know what they are expected to



do. Border-Gavaskar Trophy: Full Coverage "Our job here is to keep talking them about small, small things like match awareness. I don't think we need to tell them more and complicate stuff." Rishabh Pant knows what he has to do. He himself has a lot of expectations from him. He is working hard. I hope he clicks in the last two matches," Pant added. India's young guns in the batting unit have flattered to deceive so far in the series. While Yashasvi Jaiswal began the series with a second innings hundred in Perth, the opening batter has struggled for consistency. Shubman Gill has managed to get starts, but has not managed to convert them.

**INDIA'S YOUNG IN BGT 2024-25**  
Yashasvi Jaiswal - 193 in 3 Tests at 38.60  
Rishabh Pant - 96 in 3 Tests at 19.20  
Shubman Gill - 60 in 2 Tests at 20.00  
Rohit Sharma, however, backed the youngsters, saying the team management has been keen on not putting pressure on the likes of Pant, Gill and Jaiswal and letting them play freely in the remainder of the series.

Amir Jangoon earns maiden Test call-up as West Indies name squad for Pakistan tour

New Delhi Batter Amir Jangoon has received his first call-up to the West Indies Test squad for the two-match series against Pakistan, set to begin on January 16 in Karachi. Meanwhile, left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie makes his return to the squad after missing the home series against Bangladesh last month.

Shamar Joseph is sidelined with shin splints, which also caused him to miss the ODI series against Bangladesh earlier this month, while Alzarri Joseph is unavailable due to "other engagements," according to Cricket West Indies (CWI).

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Motie rejoins the squad to strengthen the spin attack, while Jangoon's selection is a reflection of his consistent performances across formats in regional cricket and his strong ability to handle spin bowling. "West Indies head coach Andre Coley said. "For the Test series against Pakistan in January 2025, our focus is on building upon our strengths and converting the lessons from 2024 into tangible success." The rest of the squad is largely unchanged. Kraigg Brathwaite will captain the side, with wicketkeeper-batter Joshua Da Silva serving as his deputy. Mikyle Louis, Alick Athanaze, Keacy Carty, and Justin Greaves form the backbone of the batting lineup

ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025: Niki Prasad to lead India's 15-member squad

Niki Prasad will lead India's strong 15-member squad for the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup, scheduled in Malaysia from January 18 to February 2, 2025. Niki led India to a title win at the inaugural ACC U19 Women's Asia Cup in Kuala Lumpur.



New Delhi. India has announced a strong 15-member squad for the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup, scheduled to take place in Malaysia from January 18 to February 2, 2025. Niki Prasad, who recently captained India to victory at the inaugural ACC U19 Women's Asia Cup in Kuala Lumpur, will lead the side. The squad retains 14 players from the Asia Cup-winning team, with Sanika Chalka appointed as the vice captain. The only change sees fast bowler Vaishnavi S replacing Nandhana S, who has been

named on the standby list alongside Ira J and Anadi T. India, the defending champions, have been placed in Group A alongside hosts Malaysia, the West Indies, and Sri Lanka. They will kick off their campaign against the West Indies on January 19 at the Bayuemas Oval in Kuala

Lumpur. The 16-team competition features four groups of four teams each. The top three teams from each group will advance to the Super Six stage, where they will carry forward points, wins, and Net Run Rate (NRR) from their matches against fellow qualifiers.

The Super Six stage will further split the teams into two groups of six:

Group 1: Top three teams from Groups A and D Group 2: Top three teams from Groups B and C Each team will play two matches against teams that qualify from the opposite group. The top two teams from each Super Six group will advance to the semifinals, set for January 31, with the final scheduled on February 2. India is joined by traditional powerhouses Australia, England, South Africa, and New Zealand, alongside Bangladesh, Ireland, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, all of whom qualified based on their participation in the 2023 edition. Malaysia earned automatic qualification as hosts, while Nepal, Nigeria, Samoa, Scotland, and the United States secured their spots through regional tournaments.

India's Group Stage Fixtures  
January 19: India vs. West Indies  
January 22: India vs. Sri Lanka  
January 25: India vs. Malaysia

As the reigning champions and with a blend of talent and experience, India will aim to defend their title and further cement their dominance in U19 women's cricket.

Manchester United boss Amorim questions Rashford camp over new challenge comments

New Delhi. Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim has publicly questioned the decision-making of individuals advising Marcus Rashford, following the forward's comments about being "ready for a new challenge." Rashford's remarks have fuelled speculation about his future at Old Trafford after being dropped for several key matches.

Rashford, 27, made the statement two days after being excluded from United's 2-1 derby win against Manchester City on December 15. The England international has since missed the Carabao Cup quarterfinal defeat to Tottenham and United's 3-0 Premier League loss to Bournemouth, intensifying rumours of a January departure. Speaking to Sky Sports, Amorim expressed his concerns about external influences on the player. "It is a hard situation," Amorim said. "These players have a lot of people around them, making choices that are not always the player's first idea. The interview decision wasn't just

Marcus's." Rashford, who has scored 138 goals in 426 appearances since debuting for United in 2016, has struggled to maintain



consistency in recent seasons. Although he netted 30 goals during the 2022-23 campaign, his form has dipped, drawing criticism from fans and pundits alike. Despite the controversy, Amorim emphasised his commitment to helping Rashford regain form. "I am focused on improving Marcus," he said. "We need a

talented guy like him. I forget the interview now and concentrate on what I see on the pitch." Rashford has three goals since Amorim took over last month, but he was substituted in the 56th minute of their 2-1 Europa League win over Viktoria Plzen on December 12, with fans booing the striker as he departed the pitch.

The Portuguese manager acknowledged the complexity of the situation but stressed that decisions about Rashford's future would be addressed internally. "For now, it's better for me and the club to deal with that when the time comes," he added. United's loss to Bournemouth left them in 13th place heading into Christmas, their lowest position at this stage since 1986. Amorim's side faces a challenging festive schedule, with a Boxing Day trip to Wolves followed by a home match against Newcastle on December 30. The club's precarious position has only heightened the spotlight on Rashford's form and future, with Amorim keen to balance player management and squad performance amid mounting pressure.

No regrets about not captaining India, but would have enjoyed it: R Ashwin

New Delhi Recently retired, R Ashwin stated that he has no regrets about his career, including missing the opportunity to captain the senior men's national team. However, the off-spinner added that he believed he was capable of leading the side and would have enjoyed the responsibility if given the chance. Ashwin captained his state team in age-group cricket and at the first-class level. He also led Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League (IPL) for two seasons—2018 and 2019. However, the spin-bowling great never had the opportunity to lead India in Test cricket. He was not even recognised with the vice-captaincy role in the longest format of the game. "It's interesting. I am smart enough to know what works for me and what doesn't for another person. When I started my career, I got first-class captaincy very early. I have won a few tournaments for my team. I believe I had it in me. But I did not have any regret that I didn't go on to lead my country because these are not things that I can control," Ashwin told Sky Sports Podcast. "I have realised

somebody needs to feel that I am good enough to lead the team, I need to get another 15-20 people to come along with me for me to be able to lead the team. It wasn't meant for me in this particular chapter of my



life. "I don't think this office or corporate felt I was good enough to lead the team. That doesn't mean I am not good enough for leadership. Leadership, you don't need a title to do that because, within me, I was a great leader in that group to be able to contribute to other

people's success. I looked out for zones of contribution. I did it to the best of my ability," he added. I do not have regrets, but I do think it would have been something I would have enjoyed," he added. Ashwin also captained in the Tamil Nadu Premier League and led the Dindigul Dragons to a title as recently as the 2024 season. While Ashwin has retired from international cricket, the off-spinner will feature for the Chennai Super Kings in IPL 2025. Ashwin was bought for Rs 9.75 crore by the Super Kings at the IPL mega auction in November. The off-spinner is expected to play a key role on his homecoming to the Chennai-based franchise.

Ashwin surprised many by announcing his retirement midway through the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. The off-spinner made the announcement after the third Test of the series in Brisbane on 18 December. Ashwin opted not to stay with the team for the remainder of the series and returned home



However, he later missed four Tests in the autumn after sustaining an injury during The Hundred. Stokes' fitness remains a major talking point ahead of the next Ashes, especially with fast-bowling duo Jofra Archer and Mark Wood also battling long-term injuries as they aim to secure spots in Brendon McCullum's red-ball squad. The ECB provided an update on Stokes' condition: "England Men's Test captain Ben Stokes has been ruled out of all cricket for at least three months after further assessments confirmed he has torn his left hamstring. The Durham all-rounder will undergo surgery in January. The injury occurred during the third Test in Hamilton, during England's recent 2-1 Test series victory in New Zealand." The injury forced Stokes to relinquish the captaincy to Ollie Pope during the match after bowling a grueling 37 overs and experiencing discomfort.

3 losses in 14 years: Breaking down Australia's recent record at the MCG

New Delhi. Pat Cummins-led Australia would be raring to go in the Boxing Day Test match against India. Set to be played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the Australian team would like to dish out another strong performance after their dominance in Adelaide and Brisbane. Things will not be easy though, as India have time and again come back from adversities. Take the Brisbane Test for example. After nearly conceding follow-on on Day 4, India hit back with a tremendous bowling performance reducing Australia down to 89/7 in the second innings. India once again showed, even when down they cannot be counted out. And the fiery build-up to the Boxing Day Test match has mimicked that attitude. While Australian players have been shifting between national team and family duties, the Indian stars have been hounded by the home media. Pat Cummins-led Australia would be raring to go in the Boxing Day Test match against India.

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**So, what is Australia's record at the MCG?** Australia have played a total of 116 Test matches on the venue, with the first Test



match being played in 1877. The hosts have won 67 matches out of the 116, lost 32 and drawn 17. In more recent times, since 2010, Australia have played 14 matches, out of which they have won 9, lost 3 and drawn 2 Test matches. And here's where things get a little interesting. In the last 14 years, where they have played one Test match a year, Australia have lost only 3 Test matches. Out of the three, Australia have

lost two games against India - once in 2018, and the other in 2020. Their one loss before that came way back in 2010, when they lost to England by an innings and 157 runs.

INDIA'S MOST RECENT PERFORMANCES AT THE MCG BGT 2014-15

The only drawn MCG Test match in India's last three tours. Bowling first in the game, India was put in trouble by a prolific Steve Smith, who scored 192 runs in the first innings. India replied with twin centuries from Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane, who helped India score 465 runs in response to Australia's 530. After Australia declared for 318/9, India saw Australia off despite panicking early. Kohli and Rahane once again stabilised the Indian innings, after which Pujara, Dhoni, and Ashwin saw India off to a draw.

# Deepika Padukone

## Ranveer Singh Introduce Baby Dua To Paparazzi; Hold A Special Meet And Greet

Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh are proud parents to their three-month-old daughter Dua Padukone Singh. On Monday, the couple hosted a special informal meet and greet for the paparazzi, during which they introduced their baby girl Dua to the paparazzi. The couple also requested photographers to refrain from taking photos of their daughter.



Pictures of Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone from the meet and greet have gone viral on social media. While Deepika looked gorgeous in a beige gown, Ranveer donned an all-white outfit. They were also seen posing with the photographers. Paparazzo Viral Bhayani shared pictures from the meet and greet, and wrote, "Baby DUA who looks as angelic as an angel, is definitely all set to become the cynosure of every eye!" Check out some of the pictures below!

The photographers were reportedly invited to Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's building's clubhouse to celebrate the arrival of their daughter Dua. During the meet and greet, Ranveer expressed how elated he is to have 'Laxmi' in his home. He also requested privacy for Dua, requesting the photographers to not take pictures of his daughter. Soon after, Deepika Padukone also joined the meet and greet, and the couple posed with the paparazzi for pictures. Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone welcomed their daughter Dua Padukone Singh on September 8, 2024. They shared the news of their daughter's arrival through a lovely post on social media. In November, the couple revealed that they have named her Dua, and explained its

significance. "Dua Padukone Singh 'Dua' : meaning a Prayer. Because She is the Answer to our Prayers. Our hearts are filled with Love & Gratitude. Deepika & Ranveer," they wrote. They also shared a little glimpse of baby Dua's tiny feet.

On the professional front, Ranveer Singh has several exciting projects lined up. He will next be seen in Farhan Akhtar's Don 3, alongside Kiara Advani. He also has Aditya Dhar's action thriller Durandhar, co-starring R Madhavan, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal and others. Meanwhile, Deepika Padukone was last seen in Rohit Shetty's Singham Again.



## Anupamaa: Alisha Parveen Removed From Show Because Of Rupali Ganguly? Actress Says 'Maybe, Yes...'



Ever since Alisha Parveen has been ousted from Anupamaa, rumours claiming she has been removed because of Rupali Ganguly have been making headlines. Now, Alisha has also reacted to these rumours. In a recent interview, the actress opened up about her bond with Rupali and shared a cryptic response.

"I too have heard of these rumours and know that these things have been linked up with her. I have read about this in the fan messages too. People said ke unhone hi karwaya hai, it's DKP (Director's Kut Production) behind it, it's Rupali mam behind it. Exactly Kya hai ye main kaise batau ab (People said that they have done it, it's DKP behind it, it's Rupali mam behind it. Exactly what is the case, how can I say). Maybe yes, maybe no, I don't know. Maybe nothing," she told India Forums. Alisha mentioned that she shared a very professional relationship with Rupali and that their dynamics were good.

Alisha used to play the role of Ruhi in Anupamaa. However, earlier this week, she alleged that she was ousted from the show without any notice. "It is shocking and disappointing. I am not sure what exactly happened and why I am being replaced! Today was my last day on the set of Anupamaa. It was a fantastic opportunity and everybody loved my chemistry with Shivam Khajuria. But I have no clue why I was suddenly replaced," she told ETimes. "I had a meeting yesterday and was told about this decision. I am completely clueless but it happens sometimes. I will focus on my future projects now," the actress added.

It should be noted that Rajan Shahi has not reacted to Alisha's exit from Anupamaa as of now. Anupamaa is a popular show that has been ruling the TRP charts for years now. However, in recent times, several actors have left the show due to personal reasons.

## Aadar Jain Passionately Kisses Fiancée Alekha Advani, Celebrates Her Birthday In Thailand



Alekha Advani is celebrating her birthday today, and her fiancé Aadar Jain just made her day even more special! The lovebirds are currently holidaying in Phuket, Thailand, and Aadar has shared some stunning pictures from their vacay to wish her. The first picture shows them sharing a passionate kiss by the beach, and the photo has gone viral! On Monday, Aadar Jain took to his Instagram account to share a series of pictures from his vacay with Alekha.

The first picture shows him holding her close as they shared a kiss at the beach. Alekha is seen in a white bikini, while Aadar donned black shirts as they posed romantically against the backdrop of the gorgeous sunset. They carved out their initials in the sand, with 'A&A' written inside a heart. The next picture shows Alekha sitting on the swing at the beach. "Happy Birthday Fiancé," wrote Aadar, while sharing the pictures. Commenting on Aadar's post, his cousin Karisma Kapoor wrote, "Happy birthday Alekha @alekhaadvani."

Aadar also took to his Instagram stories to share a few glimpses from Alekha's birthday celebration at a beach in Phuket. One picture shows her posing with a chocolate cake. Check out the pictures below!

Aadar Jain and Alekha Advani had their Roka ceremony in November, in Mumbai. The intimate ceremony was attended by members of the Kapoor clan including Kareena Kapoor Khan, Karisma Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor, Ranbir Kapoor, Navya Nanda, and many others. Several photos and videos from the Roka ceremony went viral on social media.

For the unversed, Aadar Jain is the son of Rishi Kapoor's sister Rima Jain, and Manoj Jain. Aadar and Alekha made their relationship Instagram official in November last year. It was in September this year that Aadar proposed to her during their vacay in the Maldives. Sharing lovely pictures from the proposal, Aadar wrote, "My first crush, my best friend & now, my forever." Aadar was earlier in a relationship with actress Tara Sutaria, but they reportedly broke up in January last year.

On the professional front, Aadar Jain has starred in movies such as Qaidi Band, Hello Charlie and Mogul.

# Sophie Choudry

## Enjoys Karan Aujla's Mumbai Concert With Munawar Faruqui, Riyaz Ali

Karan Aujla, the Punjabi singing sensation, set the stage ablaze with his energetic performance on Sunday in Mumbai. The concert, which was a part of the singer's It Was All A Dream tour in India, turned out to be a star-studded affair as the who's who of the entertainment industry attended the grand event. Among all, singer and actress Sophie Choudry had a

stage with singer AP Dhillon by his side. Excited to see the duo, Sophie wrote in the caption, "Epic Epic Epic." A video also featured the trio grooving to Aujla's superhit track Tauba Tauba from the film Bad Newz at the grand event. Sharing the video on her stories, the actress wrote, "This song is just such a banger."

Sophie opted for a black sleeveless top, while Munawar was seen in a red loose-fitted shirt paired with a cap. Riyaz, on the other hand, opted for a T-shirt.

The singer had a two-day stint in Mumbai with his concerts being held on December 21 and 22. Apart from Sophie, filmmaker Karan Johar also attended the event on Sunday night. He was accompanied by actress Neha Dhupia, who also shared a clip showing the director enjoying Aujla's foot-tapping performances. The Kuch Kuch Hota Hai director re-shared Neha's story and wrote, "Tauba Tauba I had a super time at the Karan Aujla concert!!! He's such a showman!!! Thanks Neha."

Actors Vicky Kaushal and Parineeti Chopra not only attended the concert but also joined the singer on stage. The major surprise came in with Vicky and Aujla performing their hit number, Tauba Tauba, breaking the audience into cheers and applause.



blast as she arrived with Bigg Boss 17 winner and comedian Munawar Faruqui and social media influencer Riyaz Ali. Taking to her Instagram stories, Sophie shared a series of pictures and videos from Aujla's Sunday concert in Mumbai. In one of the snaps, she could be seen grooving to the song Ho Gaya Pyaar Ni along with Munawar and Riyaz. "What a night!!!," she wrote in the caption. In another clip, Aujla is seen performing on

