

Jain monk claims he dreamt of DK Shivakumar becoming Karnataka chief minister

A Jain monk's prophetic endorsement and growing supporter rallies have amplified the chorus for Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar to be elevated to the chief ministerial position.



wish. But my party will decide everything. We will work as per the party; party is important. There's no need for me to go in search of any post. I'm doing my duty and there's no urgency for me." The monk's endorsement coincided with a show of strength by Shivakumar's supporters during the Gandhi Bharat Event and Congress convention in Belagavi on January 21. Party workers from various regions including Koppal, Hosapete, Ballari, and Chitradurga rallied for Shivakumar, carrying his portraits and raising slogans declaring him as the next Chief Minister.

president maintained a diplomatic stance. Speaking to reporters at Circuit House in Belagavi on Monday, he emphasised his commitment to party unity: "My only responsibility is to save the party and keep the government stable. I don't have any responsibilities other than this. I don't have differences with anyone." Highlighting his history of party loyalty, Shivakumar said: "I have sacrificed a lot for the party for a long time. I have worked for the party without uttering a word during the coalition government of Dharam Singh and the previous government of Siddaramaiah. Party is more important for me." The growing chorus for Shivakumar's elevation comes at a time when the Congress government in Karnataka is working to maintain stability and implement its electoral promises. The increasing demand that DK Shivakumar be made chief minister prompted responses from the party's high command. AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge sought to quell speculation about leadership changes, stating, "We will take the necessary decisions. There is no need for anyone to interpret or speculate."

He asserted that decisions about appointments and removals would be made "at the appropriate time" by the high command. When questioned about these developments, Shivakumar revealed that party leadership in Delhi had advised him to maintain silence on the matter.

NEW DELHI. A Jain monk publicly endorsed DK Shivakumar for the Karnataka Chief Minister's position, amid growing calls for him to take over from Siddaramaiah. Gunadhar Nandhi Maharaj, at an event in Hubli on Monday, talked about a dream concerning Shivakumar. "I had two dreams," the monk said, "one is there has to be a Jain Development Corporation Board and next is you should become chief minister." Responding to the monk's endorsement the Deputy Chief Minister said: "What can I say when a monk is giving a blessing? I can't control what he says and it's his

Why Chandrababu Naidu is likely to ignore calls to elevate Nara Lokesh

NEW DELHI. In Andhra Pradesh, a seemingly simple demand to solidify the hierarchy in the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP) could send ripples through the state's coalition corridor. But not if Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu could help it. The "innocuous" request that Nara Lokesh be elevated to deputy chief minister was made by TDP politburo member Reddappagari Srinivasulu Reddy. He made the request in presence of party cadre and Naidu himself at an event marking TDP founder NT Rama Rao's 29th death anniversary.



growth at grassroots level. It is true that TDP's membership crossed a crore under a drive spearheaded by Lokesh. Within the party ranks, the demand was seen as symbolic, because it honours the party's legacy and solidifies Lokesh's position in the party hierarchy. However, from the outside, the optics of it is worrisome.

IMBALANCE IN CAREFULLY CRAFTED PARTNERSHIP?

Although expected, the timing of this request is rather startling. That it has come up so soon is surprising: it has been just over six months since the TDP-led coalition government has come to power. And, let's not forget, it is a coalition government, supported well by Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena. Kalyan's rise to the Deputy Chief Minister's position is his 100 per cent success rate, along with his support extended to Naidu when the TDP chief was in jail in 2023.

Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena won both the Lok Sabha seats and all 21 assembly seats it contested as part of the NDA in Andhra Pradesh. Currently, Pawan Kalyan has enough political clout and influence to stave off the equalisation of stature with Lokesh. But for how long? The suggested elevation of Lokesh threatens to disturb the carefully maintained equilibrium, the one that was brokered by Kalyan's hard work.

"Family Planning Now Financial Decision": Arvind Kejriwal's Tax Job At BJP

New Delhi. The middle class is a victim of tax terrorism and has been reduced to the government's ATM, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal said today. Mr Kejriwal, whose outreach to middle class comes two weeks ahead of the February 5 election in Delhi, also listed seven Budget demands from the Centre that AAP MPs will raise in Parliament for the interests of the middle class. "Some poll promises are made for the underprivileged classes, and some for a few industrialists. On the grounds of caste and religion, other parties have created a vote bank. And they need donations from industrialists, so they are the note bank. Between this vote bank and note bank, a large section is sandwiched. This is India's middle class," he said in a video message.



huge taxes, but gets nothing in return. India's middle class has been reduced to the government's ATM. It is a victim of tax terrorism," he said. The middle class, he said, does not have very big demands. "They want a good job or business, a house of their own, quality education for their children. They just want health and safety for their family. He only hopes for a little help from the government. But the government is making neither schools nor

hospitals, it is not creating jobs and not ensuring safety either," he said.

Mr Kejriwal said that if all taxes are added up, a middle class person gives more than 50 per cent of his income to the government. "How can he/she dare to fulfill their dreams amid this tax terrorism? The truth is that for a young middle class couple, family planning has now become a financial decision. Before having a child, they ask themselves if they can afford the upbringing. Where have we reached," he said, adding that people were leaving the country due to high taxes. Mr Kejriwal said the AAP government in Delhi spends the people's money for their welfare. He underlined that Delhi government hiked the education budget, transformed state-run schools and also barred private schools from increasing fees. "We lowered power and water bills to shield you from inflation. Delhi residents get the cheapest power among all major cities," he said. The AAP leader also showcased Delhi government's work in the healthcare sector and said the highest demand for mohalla clinics are in middle-class residential areas.

Telangana, Hyderabad firm sign deal to set up private rocket manufacturing unit

Hyderabad. The Telangana government has signed an agreement with a Hyderabad-based space technology firm Skyroot Aerospace to establish an integrated private rocket manufacturing, integration and testing facility in the state. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and state IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar oversaw the signing of the deal with Skyroot in Davos, where the World Economic Forum is underway. The new project will see Skyroot making an investment of around Rs 500 crore, which will be amongst the largest integrated private sector rocket manufacturing, integration and testing facility.



"I am delighted to see a Hyderabad-based company achieving great success. I welcome their decision to invest in Telangana. This agreement demonstrates how young minds of Telangana are working on every fascinating cutting-edge technology in the world," Reddy said. "The partnership with Skyroot highlights Telangana's strategic focus on the space and aerospace sectors. We will soon make Hyderabad the focal point of private sector space work," he added.

Pawan Kumar Chandana, co-founder of Skyroot, said, "We are delighted to be investing in Telangana under the leadership of Revanth Reddy garu. After a long time, there is great energy and optimism about the state and its future. We want to be part of the Telangana Rising and Hyderabad Rising vision and mission."

'Chinese CCTV Cameras' Latest Flashpoint In AAP, BJP's Delhi Tussle

New Delhi. As the contest for Delhi Assembly polls heats up, BJP candidate from the New Delhi constituency Parvesh Verma accused Aam Aadmi Party chief and former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal of misusing official machinery from Punjab, apart from "Chinese CCTV cameras", in the capital.

"Thousands of vehicles with Punjab registration plates are roaming around in New Delhi. Items like water dispensers, chairs and other materials are being transported to Delhi in trucks belonging to the Punjab government," the BJP leader claimed. He also urged the Election Commission to curb the misuse of resources owned by the Punjab government in Delhi.

Verma claimed Kejriwal fears "imminent defeat" from New Delhi and is getting Chinese CCTV cameras installed in the constituency's slums just for the show with the help of the Punjab government. He further claimed that the Chinese CCTV cameras, installed in a "hurried manner", pose a security threat. He further said Punjab government's teachers and employees are "masquerading as AAP workers" in Delhi, as the election campaigns continue in full swing. Verma also claimed that two teachers hailing from Amritsar were arrested by the police. In response, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said Verma has "insulted" Punjabis and demanded an apology from Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Mann said in a post on X that Delhi is the country's capital and vehicles registered in various states ply in the city. He added that vehicles registered in any state can ply anywhere in the country and there is no restriction on it.



Mann added that Verma's statement is "dangerous, worrisome and insulting for Punjabis", adding that his statement colludes to the assumption that Punjabis are a "threat" to the country's security and sought an apology from Union home minister Amit Shah over it. "Amit Shahji, you are neither able to keep the country's border safe nor Delhi. Thousands of Bangladeshis and Rohingyas are coming to the country, don't you have a problem with them? But you are calling Punjabis coming from Punjab to Delhi a threat to the country. You should apologise to Punjabis," Mann said.

MK Stalin defends governance, slams EPS for financial mismanagement allegations

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin refuted Opposition Leader Edappadi K Palaniswami's (EPS) claims of excessive borrowing by the state government, asserting that loans acquired were being utilised for the benefit of the people. Stalin also criticised the AIADMK's governance record, accusing the party of leaving the state in a financial deficit. Addressing EPS's accusations, Stalin said: "The Opposition leader is only speaking in such a manner because he cannot accept the DMK's accomplishments. As we govern, I present you with statistics. The DMK made 505 poll promises, of which 383 have been fulfilled, while 116 are pending. Only a few schemes per department remain unfinished."

Chennai. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Tuesday refuted Opposition Leader Edappadi K Palaniswami's (EPS) claims of excessive borrowing by the state government, asserting that loans acquired were being utilised for the benefit of the people. Stalin also criticised the AIADMK's governance record, accusing the party of leaving the state in a financial deficit. Addressing EPS's accusations, Stalin said: "The Opposition leader is only speaking in such a manner because he cannot accept the DMK's accomplishments. As we govern, I present you with statistics. The DMK made 505 poll promises, of which 383 have been fulfilled, while 116 are pending. Only a few schemes per department remain unfinished."



Finance Minister in the Assembly said the profit for 2024-2025 is Rs 1.10 lakh crore, of which Rs 17,000 crore could be excess, along with Rs 500 crore. After all expenses, Rs 60,000 crore should remain. Then why are you borrowing Rs 3.53 lakh crore? What new scheme have you implemented with this amount?" Stalin countered the criticism, challenging the AIADMK to release statistics on its own performance during its decade-long rule. "The AIADMK has only made fake promises and destroyed Tamil Nadu. Is the AIADMK ready to publish data on how many of their schemes were implemented and how

- Stalin defends DMK's spending and poll promise record
Challenges AIADMK to release its governance statistics
Mocks EPS's predictions about DMK's 2026 electoral fate

many people benefitted? They converted Tamil Nadu into a deficit state despite being in alliance with the Centre, focusing only on securing posts in Delhi," Stalin remarked. He further accused the AIADMK of leaving Tamil Nadu at the mercy of the Union government's "lackadaisical attitude." "When we came to power, the Union government viewed us as ideological enemies instead of as a state government. Several schemes were curtailed, yet we overcame these challenges and developed Tamil Nadu. Now, the state is also bearing the burden of funding Union

government schemes," Stalin said. Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu, Stalin pointed out, had already detailed how the Union government's policies had adversely affected Tamil Nadu. "The Opposition leader is turning a deaf ear to these explanations and claiming that the government is spending on useless schemes. He should understand the difference between useful and useless schemes. His calculations are entirely wrong," Stalin added. In a final swipe, Stalin mocked EPS for his repeated claims that the DMK government's tenure.

## NEWS BOX

## CBI registers FIRs to investigate Kallakurichi hooch tragedy

CHENNAI. The Special Task Branch (STB) of the CBI, Chennai, on January 21, registered three FIRs to investigate the hooch tragedy in Kallakurichi district, Tamil Nadu, in June last year, where at least 68 people died after consuming illicit liquor. The CBI re-registered the FIRs of Tamil Nadu's CB-CID based on the Supreme Court's directions on December 17, 2024, which upheld the orders of the Madras High Court on November 20, transferring the investigation to the CBI. The key accused were identified by the Tamil Nadu police as K. Govindharaj (Kannukutti), his brother K. Thamodhiran, Govindharaj's wife G. Vijaya from Karunapuram village in Kallakurichi district, M. Ramar from Madhavachery village, P. Chinnadurai, P. Josephraja, and M. Ravi from Sankarapuram taluk in the district. The cases have been registered under IPC sections for culpable homicide not amounting to murder, poisoning a person, and the Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act. The Madras High Court's directive was based on petitions filed by AIADMK legal wing secretary I.S. Inbadurai, leader of the Lawyers Forum for Social Justice K. Balu, BJP's A. Mohandass, former DMDK MLA B. Parthasarathy, and former MLA Dr. A. Sridharan. "We see no reason to interfere



## Special privileges for Bobby Chemmanur: Suspension for prisons DIG, jail superintendent

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. The government on Tuesday suspended Deputy Inspector General of Prisons (Central Zone) P Ajayakumar and Ernakulam District Jail Superintendent Raju Abraham pending an inquiry following complaints that businessman Bobby Chemmanur received special privileges while lodged at the district jail in Kakkannad, Kochi. The suspension order was issued on the basis of an inquiry by DIG Prisons (Headquarters) Vinodkumar M K on the direction of Director General of Prisons & Correctional Services Balram Kumar Upadhyay. The probe was launched following reports that persons of "VIP stature" visited the businessman at the Kakkannad jail. Their names were not recorded in the prison's visitors' diary. Apart from them, DIG Ajayakumar too met Bobby at the jail on January 10. Following reports that Bobby received special consideration, the visitors' diary and CCTV camera



footage were examined. While admitting that he met Bobby at the jail, DIG Ajayakumar had maintained that no special consideration was given to the businessman. Bobby was remanded in the Kakkannad jail for 14 days by the Ernakulam First Class Judicial Magistrate Court on January 9 after he was booked in a sexual harassment case registered on the complaint of actor Honey Rose.

## 14 Maoists killed in Chhattisgarh: Odisha police played a key role in the operations

BHUBANESWAR. Odisha police's precise intelligence inputs, quick dispatch as well as strategic positioning of three teams of the Special Operations Group (SOG) along with a high-resolution drone deployment provided crucial assistance to Chhattisgarh Police in the major anti-Naxal operation in which at least 14 red ultras were killed in last 24 hours.

Sources said Odisha Police had received actionable intelligence on January 18 regarding the movement of a group of over 25 Maoists in neighbouring Chhattisgarh's Kularighat reserve forest area in Gariaband district, which is only five km away from Nuapada border.

Nuapada and Gariaband SPs Gundala Reddy Raghavendra and Nikhil Ashok Kumar Rakhecha respectively, both from of 2019 batch, held detailed discussions before launching the significant anti-Naxal operation on Sunday night (January 19). Sources said three teams of SOG with operational names - SOG 21, 40 and 44 were already camping in Nuapada district and continuously carrying out area domination exercises. Usually, each team of SOG camps in a particular district for a minimum of three to four months. The three SOG teams having 24 personnel each were prepared to be dispatched and engaged



immediately in the joint operation, which witnessed the involvement of Central Reserve Police Force's (CRPF) elite Commando Battalion for Resolute Action On Sunday, SOG teams were accompanied by two teams of Chhattisgarh Police's E-30 Force and five teams of CRPF. A fierce gun battle ensued between the Maoists and the security personnel later in the night and bodies of two women ultras were recovered along with a huge cache of arms and ammunition on Monday morning. Sources said Nuapada SP Gundala Reddy and district intelligence operation cell officers

continuously monitored the high voltage police action against the Naxals. Apart from carrying out combing operation on ground zero, Odisha Police took the aerial survey by deploying an advanced drone, having a range of up to 15 km and worth about Rs 1.5 crore, to get a bird's eye view. Police noticed the movement of Naxals on Monday night which was not far from the spot where the two women rebels were earlier neutralised. The security personnel then launched a controlled firing and recovered the body of Jayram alias Chalapathi, a member of the Maoists' central committee, carrying a bounty of Rs 1 crore. Sources informed that CRPF too deployed its own drone. So far, security forces have recovered bodies of nine male and four female members of the outlawed CPI (Maoist). One SOG jawan sustained injury during the exchange of fire. He was rushed to a hospital and is out of danger. "It was a major joint operation and huge cache of arms and ammunition including IEDs, one self-loading rifle and INSAS rifle each, two .303 rifles, four magazines, eight country made weapons, 10 live rounds and other incriminating articles were seized," said DGP, YB Khurania.

## Munambam residents oppose Waqf Board bid to complete mutation of land

KOCHI. The Munambam residents, under the aegis of the Munambam Land Protection Council, on Tuesday alleged that a move is on to enable the Waqf Board to complete the mutation process of the land it has illegally registered. Residents expressed their opposition to a digital survey in Munambam. The residents expressed their angst at the covert movement even as the C N Ramachandran Nair Commission, constituted to find a lasting solution to the Mumambam issue over land ownership, continues deliberations with the parties involved. "Strike out the Waqf registration of Munambam land. If that is done we have no objection to the digital survey," said Joseph Benny, convener of the Munambam Land Protection Council. According to him, the very fact that the Waqf Board has been unable to



carry out the mutation of the land highlights the absurdity of its claims. covertly carry out the survey," he added. As part of highlighting their plight, the residents under the aegis of the

council have written letters to all political parties in the country and also all the MPs. "We will be celebrating our Republic Day soon. But the Waqf Act puts a question mark on the secular fabric of this country. The issue is a very serious one. Munambam is just the start. We want the people's representatives to come together and amend the dangerous clauses in the Waqf Act. These clauses threaten the secular fabric of our country! How can a country have two laws? How there be a law above the country's law?" said Sebastian Rocky, chairman of the council. The Land Conservation Committee is addressing letters to political parties nationwide and Members of Parliament from Kerala, urging amendments to Sections 3, 36, 40, 52, 83, 84, 107, and 108 of the Waqf Act.

## Thief arrested for stealing from shops, malls across Jagatsinghpur, Biridi, Cuttack

JAGATSINGHPUR. A thief involved in multiple thefts across shopping malls and shops of Jagatsinghpur, Biridi, and Cuttack city was arrested by police on Tuesday. Sub-divisional police officer Jagatsinghpur Rashmiranjan Sahoo told mediapersons that accused, Sarbeswar Pradhan, a resident of Badapokharia under Khurda district, was behind the series of thefts. After committing the crime in Cuttack town and Biridi, he was staying at a hotel in Jagatsinghpur town since December 20 last year. Police said Pradhan specialised in breaking into shopping malls and shops by climbing onto rooftops and opening locks of iron gates. The case came to light after Tusharkant Bhatt, manager of V-Bazaar in Jagatsinghpur town, lodged an FIR with Jagatsinghpur police station. He reported that miscreants had broken the locks on the rooftop iron gate of the mall and stolen goods. A special team was formed to track down the thief. During a raid, police seized various stolen items, including cosmetics, dry fruits, dress materials, air bags, trolley bags, shoes, slippers, house-breaking tools, with



the total value of recovered goods amounting to Rs 50,000. Pradhan had earlier committed thefts in Biridi police jurisdiction. Police recovered additional stolen items including electric irons, table fans, chargers, dress materials, induction cooktops, and other goods worth over Rs 1 lakh.

## Maradu demolition sites suited for new construction: KCZMA

KOCHI. Five years after four apartment complexes in Maradu were razed, displacing 300 flat owners, the Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority (KCZMA) has stated in a report submitted to the Supreme Court-appointed amicus curiae that it is feasible to construct new buildings at the same sites. The amicus curiae, Gourav Agarwal, will submit the report to the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

Four waterfront apartment complexes - Holy Faith H2O (19-storey building with 91 apartments), Alfa Serene (17-storey building with 67 apartments), Jain Coral Cove (17-storey building with 128 apartments), and Golden Kayaloram (17-storey building with 40 apartments) - were demolished on January 11 and 12 in 2020 following a Supreme Court order for violation of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)-2 norms. According to the KCZMA report, which was submitted to the amicus curiae on Monday, the entire 1,859 square metre area where the Golden Kayaloram once stood is now feasible for construction under CRZ-2. For Holy Faith H2O, 2,985 sq m out of 3,741 sq m is eligible for new construction. Jain Coral Cove can use 4,159 sq m out of 4,612 sq m and Alfa Serene can use



6,511 sq m out of 7,027 sq m for new construction, the report said. On Golden Kayaloram, KCZMA said its inspections recognised a road that was constructed 36 years ago between the plot and the water body. The 'Chambakkara Theeradesa Road' between the high tide line and the flat owners' property can be treated as authorised since it was constructed before 1996. "The building in the petitioner's (flat owners) property can be constructed beyond the road, towards the landward side," the report said. Commenting on the report, C M Varghese, president of the Golden Kayaloram Residents' Association, said, "This means the apartment

building did not violate CRZ-2 norms at the time of demolition.

"Regarding Alpha Serene, Holy Faith H2O, and Jain Coral Cove, though the report says that the absence of 'authorised structures' required to draw an accurate building line indicates that permissibility cannot be ascertained entirely, the data provided by the municipality gives the details of area per square feet feasible for the construction of buildings in each of the three properties.

The CRZ-2 norms had specified that the construction of high-rise buildings were not permitted within 200 metres of water bodies, which the four buildings violated.

## Special council meet discusses waste woes in Thiruvananthapuram

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. The special council meeting held on Wednesday to discuss waste management issues and illegal dumping of waste in Tamil Nadu turned stormy over the absence of BJP district president and Poojappura ward councillor V V Rajesh from council meetings. Heated arguments were exchanged between LDF and BJP members when LDF parliamentary party leader and deputy mayor D R Anil pointed out that, despite submitting a signed letter for a special council meeting, V V Rajesh was not present. Mayor Arya Rajendran accused V V Rajesh of

irresponsibility and lack of commitment towards people. She alleged that Rajesh has been skipping council meetings for a long time and attends only one out of every three council meetings. The arguments happened when the issues of frequent seizure of vehicles transporting waste illegally to Tamil Nadu were brought up for discussion. The state capital generates around 423 tonnes of waste daily, out of which only 234.5 tonnes of waste are scientifically processed. The opposition demanded clarity on what happens to the remaining waste. The opposition alleged that the source-level



waste management projects implemented previously had miserably failed and that there is widespread corruption in the project. In the last council also, the opposition objected to the decision of the ruling council to give the contract to the same tainted company

involved in the failed project for implementing the biocomposter project. The opposition also hurled corruption allegations at the ruling council for giving monopoly for a single service provider involved in the illegal dumping of medical waste in Tamil Nadu. The BJP councillors alleged that the district doesn't have that many pig farms to handle the food waste generated in the state capital. In response to the allegations, health standing committee chairperson Gayathri Babu said that the shortcomings in the management of kitchen bins will be addressed.

## Telangana govt to restructure KLIS loans, informs Ghose panel

HYDERABAD. Special Chief Secretary (Finance) K. Ramakrishna Rao informed the Kaleshwaram Commission of Inquiry on Tuesday that the state government was attempting to restructure the loans taken for the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme. Depositing before the commission, the senior IAS officer stated that the government had paid Rs 6,519 crore towards interest and Rs 7,382 crore towards the principal amount in this financial year on the loans taken for the irrigation project. When commission chairman Justice P.C. Ghose asked about the borrowings, Ramakrishna Rao stated that the rate of interest ranged from 9 to 10.5 per cent for the Kaleshwaram loans. That was why the government was trying to restructure the loans, he explained. When the commission asked what the responsibility of the Finance department would be if the government was required to discharge the loans raised by the Kaleshwaram Irrigation Project Corporation Limited (KIPCL), Ramakrishna Rao said that the government was the guarantor and had to service the loans. Ramakrishna Rao explained that in 2020-21, the Union government changed the 'accounting treatment' and considered all the loans taken by the special purpose vehicles (SPVs), whose loans were serviced by the government, as state borrowings. When asked whether the KIPCL prepared its balance sheets or accounts for each financial year, Ramakrishna Rao said that, as far as he was aware, the KIPCL must have prepared them. Ramakrishna Rao, who has been working in the Finance department since February 2014, submitted his affidavit to the commission on 1 August 2024 concerning Kaleshwaram. When the commission asked certain questions about the clauses mentioned in GO 144, Ramakrishna Rao said that it was initially conceived that there would be a dedicated source of revenue from the sale of water to industries.

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# New flyover to link Shahberi, Crossings Republik

**Noida.** A detailed project report (DPR) is underway for a flyover connecting Shahberi village in Greater Noida West with Crossings Republik in Ghaziabad. A team from the Central Road Research Institute (CRRI) has completed the initial site assessment for the project, which aims to resolve chronic traffic congestion. The institute will now prepare the DPR. The 1km-long road that currently links Shahberi to Crossings Republik is 15m wide. Apart from linking these two places, the road caters to an additional volume of traffic as commuters use it to reach the Delhi-Meerut Expressway as well as the Noida link road from Ghaziabad. The stretch frequently experiences heavy traffic jams, causing significant inconvenience to commuters. Haphazard parking and encroachments by local furniture shop owners only exacerbate the problem.

Once constructed, the flyover is expected to address these problems. AK Singh, general manager (projects) of the Greater Noida Authority, added, "Due to heavy traffic on the road from the densely



populated Shahberi village in Greater Noida West to Crossings Republik, traffic jams occur frequently on both sides of the road. With CRRI, we conducted a physical inspection of the proposed work site for a permanent solution to the traffic

issues. The institute carried out a traffic survey and has been directed to prepare a feasibility-cum-detailed project report. Rs 19 lakh was paid to CRRI for this purpose. "CRRI, in its draft report, suggested two designs for the elevated

road through Shahberi village to ensure a seamless commute. One design proposes a 14-metre-wide, 800-metre-long elevated road, while the other suggests a 16-metre-wide, 800-metre-long elevated road," he added. The CRRI is expected to submit the DPR next month. The report will include the budget, exact dimensions, and construction schedule. Once the DPR is submitted, the GNDA will review it and present it to the board for approval. After receiving board approval, the project will be forwarded to the Uttar Pradesh govt for final clearance. Once the state govt approves the project, the authority will issue tenders to hire a construction agency to execute the project. Abhishek Kumar, president of the Noida Extension Flat Owners' Welfare Association (NEFWA), said, "Residents have long been demanding the construction of a flyover to address the persistent traffic issues. On Monday, I was stuck on this stretch for over an hour, even though it normally takes just 10 minutes to cross. At times, school buses get caught in traffic for so long that children end up missing school."

## Old school building razed, new one is not ready yet, so where're their classes Under a tree

**Faridabad.** For over a year now, around 120 students of the govt primary school in Mangar, Faridabad, have been forced to either sit under trees at the village community centre (chaupal) or on the veranda of a nearby panchayat building in extreme weather conditions, after their school building was demolished due to structural safety. The new school building is likely to take another six months to complete, so there's no reprieve till then. Lack of infrastructure, however, is one of its many problems. Currently, the school has just three teachers. So, on good days, classes are merged in the one room allotted to the school at the local community centre or the two rooms in the panchayat building. If classes get too cramped, the teachers prefer to take the lessons out on the veranda or simply under a tree. If it is too cold, rainy or warm, classes are simply called off. "Last monsoon, around 100 children, including my two boys, had to be evacuated from the



community centre where the classes had shifted after rains damaged the school building. We had to use tractors to take the kids out safely from the flooded building. There have been no repairs since then and I am scared that this monsoon will be no different," Sandeep Singh, who is planning to put his sons in a private school in the new academic session, said. The trend is not new, teachers said. The school has seen fewer admissions in this academic year too — just nine in Class I. "We are operating out of three rooms. Mostly classes are merged to keep the school running. This is not just affecting the quality of education but also putting immense on us," Rajveer Singh, who

teaches students of classes 2 and 4, said. Manju Kumari, who teaches students of class 3, the school requires at least six teachers and an overall in charge to function properly. Recently, sarpanch Abtar reached out to the deputy commissioner and education department seeking additional teachers and funds for the primary school. "Funds to reconstruct the school building were delayed, so we are yet to complete the building. We are hoping that it will be completed in two months. We were told that the government would release funds in March or April. We are trying to raise funds to get the building completed as soon as possible," he told TOI.

District education officer Ajit Sheoran agreed that a teacher-pupil ratio of 40:1 was far from ideal. "We will appoint one more teacher to the school soon. As for the construction of the school's building, I will need to look at why the funds are delayed," he said.

## Fintech city to Korean zone, YEIDA set to acquire 5,000 hectares for various projects

**Noida.** YEIDA has initiated the process of acquiring land across 10 new sectors in the Yamuna region to support various projects including a fintech city and dedicated space for Japanese and Korean cities.

Officials said that a proposal for acquiring over 3,500 hectares of land was sent to the GB Nagar district administration. Additionally, a letter was written to the Aligarh administration, requesting the initiation of a social impact assessment (SIA) for over 1,600 hectares of land earmarked for a logistics park and industrial development in the Tappal-Bajna Urban Centre. Officials explained that the SIA—a process of evaluating the potential social effects on a community when land is acquired for a development project—will identify mitigation strategies and ensure fair compensation for affected farmers. The assessment will soon be conducted by Gautam Buddha University. At present, teams are being formed to carry out surveys in both districts, with the work expected to commence next week. An official from YEIDA shared that these projects are part of a larger plan to spur residential and industrial development in the region. The 10 new sectors for which land will be acquired are Sectors 4A, 5, 5A, 6, 7, 8, 8D, 9, 10, and 11.

## News portal founder, 2 reporters held for extortion, police link him to gangster Ravi Kana

**Noida.** The founder and editor of news portal Tricity Today and two of its reporters were arrested on Monday in an investigation into alleged extortion of businessmen by threatening to run fake news against them. The complaint police have cited to take Pankaj Parashar, who worked with several frontline Hindi publications before starting the portal in 2021, into custody was filed by a real estate dealer. In a note released after the arrests, police linked Parashar, Dev Sharma and Avdesh Sisodiya to the notorious Ravi Kana gang, claiming they were using Kana's name to intimidate and extort affluent businessmen and others. Kana, a scrap-rebar trader who amassed a fortune from extortion in the Gautam Budh Nagar region, was arrested last year. Parashar's wife rubbished the allegations in social media posts, attributing the arrests to news articles critical of the police commissioner. According to the complaint, on Nov 8 last year, the trio reached out to Manoj Kumar—a property dealer—and asked him to come to Pari Chowk in Greater Noida "on the pretext of conducting an interview with him". Later, they identified themselves as Kana's associates and demanded Rs 3 lakh from him. They threatened to malign his image on the news portal and even warned of fatal consequences if he did not pay up, an officer said.

Parashar and the two reporters are accused of ratcheting up the demand to Rs 10 lakh when they learnt that Kumar had informed police. Police said they are looking at transactions in 15-20 bank accounts linked to the trio. The source said police had proof from phone records that the three were in regular touch with Kana to carry out extortion. The trio used the gang's illegal funds for business activities and provided 'protection' to Kana and his associates, according to the police note. Saad Miyan Khan, DCP (Greater Noida), said an FIR was registered against Parashar and the others under Section 308 (5) of BNS for extortion and threats. Some Rs 6.3 lakh in cash, two luxury vehicles, registration certificates of 14 cars belonging to Kana, along with 12 photographs and signed documents were recovered from the three, police said. Parashar's wife Anika Gupta wrote on social media he was picked up by a police team without any explanation. She stated in her post—to which she added a letter to the CM seeking his intervention—that her husband and Avdesh were apprehended around 2pm while they were on their way to the press club. Gangster Kana and his associate Kajal Jha were arrested from Delhi airport on April 26 last year following their detention in Bangkok. On Dec 30, 2023, Kana and three others were charged with the gang rape of a 25-year-old woman at Gardens Galleria mall's parking lot.

## Air quality improves but remains 'moderate' in Noida, Ghaziabad

**Noida.** The air quality marginally improved but remained in the 'moderate' category in the city and neighbouring Ghaziabad on Tuesday. Noida recorded an AQI of 151, Ghaziabad was at 150, while Greater Noida's reading landed at 165. All stations in Noida and Ghaziabad recorded 'moderate' AQIs. Noida's Sector 1 was at 163, while readings at sectors 116 and 125 were 124 and 111. Data from the air monitoring station in Sector 62 was not available. Greater Noida's Knowledge Park III recorded a reading of 128, and Knowledge Park V was at 171—both in the 'moderate' category. Meanwhile, AQI of Ghaziabad's Vasundhara was 158, Sanjay Nagar at 156, Indrapuram at 154 and Loni's at 125—all 'moderate'. Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) said the predominant surface wind came from northwest with a wind speed of less than 14 kmph till Tuesday evening. It increased thereafter, dropping to less than 6 kmph during the night. It said on Wednesday, the wind is likely to be from the north with a wind speed of less than 6 kmph during morning hours. Smog and moderate fog are very likely during early morning hours, with dense fog in isolated places. On Tuesday, Noida's minimum and maximum temperatures were recorded at 14 degrees Celsius and 25 degrees Celsius. Currently, the Commission for Air Quality Management's GRAP Stage II is in place in Delhi-NCR.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as Kri Bhawana Pant alias Bhawana D/O Dinesh Chandra Pant W/O Devendra Kumar, R/O H. No. C-5/76, Yamuna Vihar, DELHI, North East, Delhi 110053, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Bhawana.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as Pawan Kumar S/O Tilak Ram, R/O 25A, dhira block, South Ganesh Nagar, East Delhi, Delhi-110092, have changed the name of my minor daughter Kashmeera aged 13 years and she shall hereafter be known as Aradhya Prajapati.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, Rahela Begum W/O Satar Ali R/O H.No-160, Plot No-6, Bharat Vihar, Kakrola, PO N.S.I.T Dwarika, Dist South West Delhi-110078 declare that name of my minor son has been wrongly written as Prince Kumar in my minor son namely Akidul Hoque aged 17 year in his Aadhar card No. 60101076 2938. The actual name of my minor son is Akidul Hoque which may be amended accordingly.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, Yogender Singh S/o Azad Singh R/O H.No-240/41 Gali No-19 Metro Pillar No-210 he samrae Shadi Pur, Central Delhi, Delhi-110008 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Yogender Singh in my Driving Licence No-P04032005426646. The actual name of mine is Yogender Singh.

**CHANGE OF DATE OF BIRTH AND NAME**  
I, PARVATI is Mother of No. 28018108 Rank-HAV Name- GAWADE KISHOR MAHADEV RO VILL-AMBOLI POST-AMBOLI, TEH-SAWANTWADI, DIST-SINDHUDURG STATE MAHARASHTRA, PIN 416510 have changed my name from PARVATI to PARVATI MAHADEV GAWADE and date of birth from 18/01/1982 to 01/01/1982 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 21.01.2025 before Public Notary Delhi.

**CHANGE OF DATE OF BIRTH AND NAME**  
I, MAHADEV is father of No. 28018108 Rank-HAV Name- GAWADE KISHOR MAHADEV RO VILL-AMBOLI, POST-AMBOLI, TEH-SAWANTWADI, DIST-SINDHUDURG STATE MAHARASHTRA, PIN- 416510, have changed my name MAHADEV to MAHADEV GANU GAWADE and date of birth from 18/01/1957 to 01/01/1948 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 21.01.2025 before Public Notary Delhi.

**CHANGE OF DATE OF BIRTH AND NAME**  
I, RADHABAI is Mother of No. 28019922F Rank-CHM, Name-DESAI BABALI KRISHNA R/O VILL-TALKAT, POST-TALKAT, TEH-DODAMARG, DIST - SINDHUDURG STATE MAHARASHTRA, PIN 416511, have changed my name from RADHABAI to RADHABAI KRISHNA DESAI and date of birth from 19/01/1952 to 20/07/1960 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 21.01.2025 before Public Notary Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Jasleen Kaur W/O Jaspreet Singh R/O 23 Mansarovar Garden, B-Block, Ramesh Nagar, New Delhi-110015 have changed my name to Jasleen Kaur Bhamra.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SHIVAJI S/O BASU DEV MISHRA R/O House No.-5A BAHARALI UPRAHAR, ALLAHABAD, PRAYAGRAJ, UTTAR PRADESH- 211012 have changed my name SHIVAJI MISHRA for all future Purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Mohammad Rahnuddin Choudhry S/O Atiq R/O House No.580, Gali No. 8, Rajiv Gandhi Nagar, New Mustafabad Delhi -110094 have changed my name to Rahnuddin s/o Atiq for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, MRS ASHISHI Wife of No-16118930F Rank-HAV Name-RAMU R/O VILL-GARATHIYA, PO-BANDOL, PS-BANDOL, TEH-SEONI, DIST-SEONI, MADHYA PRADESH-480882 have changed my name from MRS ASHISHI to ASHISHI for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 22/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NISHA KAUSHAL Wife of JC-433155H Rank-SUB Name-JAWAHAR SINGH KALTA R/O VILL-SHIMLA, PO-DHADI, GHUNSA, TEH-RORHU, DIST-SHIMLA, HIMACHAL PRADESH-171206 have changed my name from NISHA KAUSHAL to NISHA for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 21/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, ALKA Mother of No-4585810Y, LNK JORVAR RAVINDRA BHASKAR Presently residing at VILL-KHIRDI, PO-BANGOAN, TEH-SIL-NANDGOAN, DIST-NASHIK, MAHARASHTRA-423106, have changed my name from ALKA to ALKABAI BHASKAR JORVAR vide Affidavit dated 22/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, PREETI SINGH CHOJHAN Wife of No. 14679908H Rank-HAV Name-SIDHANT SINGH Presently residing at VPO-BALODA, TEH-SURAJGARH, DIST-JHUNJHUNU, RAJASTHAN-333033 has changed my name from PREETI SINGH CHOJHAN to PREETI CHOJHAN for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 22/01/2025 before Executive Magistrate, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, KAMLESH W/O DIWAKAR MISHRA R/O H-NO-102/E1 FIRST FLOOR, SECTOR 11 DLF, FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121006 have changed my name to KASHIKA MISHRA for all future purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, JC-333748A Rank-SUB Name-SABLE SANJIV TEJRAO S/O TEJRAO NAMDEO SABLE Residing at VILL-PREMNAGAR, KRISHNAPURI, TEH-SIL-PACHORA, DIST-JALGAON, MAHARASHTRA-424201 have changed my name from SARLA to SABLE SARLA SANJIV for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 22/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, No-429583M Rank-NV Name-LOVESH YADAV S/O RAMHET YADAV Residing at VILL-DEORI, PO-CHIMLAWANI, TEH-SIL-VIJAYPUR, DIST-SHEOPUR, MADHYA PRADESH-476332 have changed my mother's name from LEELA DEVI to LEELA YADAV for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 18/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Smt. Monika Bhanthay Owner of the Residential Dwelling Unit bearing no. 2018, on Ground floor, AWHQ, Arun Vihar Sec 37, Noida., District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. Smt. Monika Bhanthay have lost Original Allotment letter Army Welfare Housing Organization (AWHO), in favour of Smt. Sunil Kuthubhan Makkar and Original Transfer Memorandum issued by NOIDA dated 05.01.2006 in favour of Mr. Sanjay Bhanthay, for which complaint lodged to the police. That any person's/Authority etc. if finds the misplaced Allotment Letter and Transfer Memorandum aforesaid said Person may come forward and inform the undersigned within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, Madan Lal Meena S/O Khem Chand R/O C-1/44, KRISHNA VIHAR, SULTANPURI, North West Delhi, Delhi-110086, declare that name of my wife has been wrongly written as Rita Meena in my PPO NO. 7235895. The actual name of my wife is Rita Devi, which may be amended accordingly.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, MOHD AJMUDINI S/O SARFUDDIN, R/O B-341 GALI NO-5 SHRI RAM COLONY DELHI-110094, declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as SHARUDDIN in my 10th & 12th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of my Father is SARFUDDIN which may be amended accordingly.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that the owner of Residential Plot of Land area measuring 100 sq. yds., out of Kharsa No. 27/47m, situated at Khushal Park, in the area of Village Loni (out of Chakrabarti), Paragana Loni, Tehsil Loni, District Ghaziabad, U. P. vide Sale Deed dated 02.07.2024, doc. no.12380, executed by Mrs. Tuba Aftreeh Saifi. All persons are hereby informed that above owner wants to mortgage the said property and any person who has any objection against the said property, if anybody has any objection upon the ownership of above owner over the said property, its mortgage/legislation, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present notice.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, KUMARI POOJA D/O KAMAL SINGH R/O RZ- 803 GALI NO-5, SHANKAR PARK WEST SAKGARPUR SOUTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110045. I have changed my name from KM POOJA TO KUMARI POOJA for all future purpose.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform you that Mr. Rachit Bansal & Mrs. Sumangla Saxena intends to purchase the Entire Ground Floor portion of Property No. H-35, measuring 200 sq. yards, located at Jungpura Extension, New Delhi-110014, from Mr. Harsh Bangwal. The entire property was purchased by Mrs. Friends Associates through a Conveyance Deed dated 03.03.2003 from POI through L&DO. Thereafter, Mrs. Friends Associates sold the property to Mr. Pradeep Lal Dhingra via a Sale Deed dated 27.03.2003. Mr. Pradeep Lal Dhingra subsequently executed a Will on 26.03.2021 in favor of Mr. Badri Prasad Anthwal. Unfortunately, Mr. Pradeep Lal Dhingra passed away. Following his death, the Will holder, Mr. Badri Prasad Anthwal, sold the property to Mr. Harsh Bangwal via a Sale Deed dated 29.07.2024. This same property is being financed by Bajaj Housing Finance Limited, Branch - Unit No.806, 807 & 808, 9th Floor, KM Trade Towers H-3, near Radisson Hotel, Kaushambi, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201010. If any person(s) has/have any objection regarding the subject property, then kindly may submit his/her objection within 07 days from the date of the Notice in writing. The said objection may be kindly sent to the undersigned by way of the Registered Post on the address given below and by E-mail, failing which the claim as per aforesaid shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, Madan Lal Meena S/O Khem Chand R/O C-1/44, KRISHNA VIHAR, SULTANPURI, North West Delhi, Delhi-110086, declare that name of my wife has been wrongly written as Rita Meena in my PPO NO. 7235895. The actual name of my wife is Rita Devi, which may be amended accordingly.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, MOHD AJMUDINI S/O SARFUDDIN, R/O B-341 GALI NO-5 SHRI RAM COLONY DELHI-110094, declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as SHARUDDIN in my 10th & 12th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of my Father is SARFUDDIN which may be amended accordingly.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that the owner of Residential Plot of Land area measuring 100 sq. yds., out of Kharsa No. 27/47m, situated at Khushal Park, in the area of Village Loni (out of Chakrabarti), Paragana Loni, Tehsil Loni, District Ghaziabad, U. P. vide Sale Deed dated 02.07.2024, doc. no.12380, executed by Mrs. Tuba Aftreeh Saifi. All persons are hereby informed that above owner wants to mortgage the said property and any person who has any objection against the said property, if anybody has any objection upon the ownership of above owner over the said property, its mortgage/legislation, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present notice.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform you that Mr. Rachit Bansal & Mrs. Sumangla Saxena intends to purchase the Entire Ground Floor portion of Property No. H-35, measuring 200 sq. yards, located at Jungpura Extension, New Delhi-110014, from Mr. Harsh Bangwal. The entire property was purchased by Mrs. Friends Associates through a Conveyance Deed dated 03.03.2003 from POI through L&DO. Thereafter, Mrs. Friends Associates sold the property to Mr. Pradeep Lal Dhingra via a Sale Deed dated 27.03.2003. Mr. Pradeep Lal Dhingra subsequently executed a Will on 26.03.2021 in favor of Mr. Badri Prasad Anthwal. Unfortunately, Mr. Pradeep Lal Dhingra passed away. Following his death, the Will holder, Mr. Badri Prasad Anthwal, sold the property to Mr. Harsh Bangwal via a Sale Deed dated 29.07.2024. This same property is being financed by Bajaj Housing Finance Limited, Branch - Unit No.806, 807 & 808, 9th Floor, KM Trade Towers H-3, near Radisson Hotel, Kaushambi, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201010. If any person(s) has/have any objection regarding the subject property, then kindly may submit his/her objection within 07 days from the date of the Notice in writing. The said objection may be kindly sent to the undersigned by way of the Registered Post on the address given below and by E-mail, failing which the claim as per aforesaid shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, KUMARI POOJA D/O KAMAL SINGH R/O RZ- 803 GALI NO-5, SHANKAR PARK WEST SAKGARPUR SOUTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110045. I have changed my name from KM POOJA TO KUMARI POOJA for all future purpose.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform you that Mr. Rachit Bansal & Mrs. Sumangla Saxena intends to purchase the Entire Ground Floor portion of Property No. H-35, measuring 200 sq. yards, located at Jungpura Extension, New Delhi-110014, from Mr. Harsh Bangwal. The entire property was purchased by Mrs. Friends Associates through a Conveyance Deed dated 03.03.2003 from POI through L&DO. Thereafter, Mrs. Friends Associates sold the property to Mr. Pradeep Lal Dhingra via a Sale Deed dated 27.03.2003. Mr. Pradeep Lal Dhingra subsequently executed a Will on 26.03.2021 in favor of Mr. Badri Prasad Anthwal. Unfortunately, Mr. Pradeep Lal Dhingra passed away. Following his death, the Will holder, Mr. Badri Prasad Anthwal, sold the property to Mr. Harsh Bangwal via a Sale Deed dated 29.07.2024. This same property is being financed by Bajaj Housing Finance Limited, Branch - Unit No.806, 807 & 808, 9th Floor, KM Trade Towers H-3, near Radisson Hotel, Kaushambi, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201010. If any person(s) has/have any objection regarding the subject property, then kindly may submit his/her objection within 07 days from the date of the Notice in writing. The said objection may be kindly sent to the undersigned by way of the Registered Post on the address given below and by E-mail, failing which the claim as per aforesaid shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as Nousheen Malik D/O Noushad R/O 226, Gali No-3, Old Mustafabad, Dayalpur, North East Delhi, Delhi-110094 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Nausheen.

**LOST & FOUND**  
I, Om Parkash s/o L. Sh. Bhim Singh R/O H. No. 457-A-Bawana, Delhi-110039, have lost original allotment of alternative plot under the scheme of Large Scale acquisition Development and Disposal of Land in Delhi-1961 Sr. No. 002270 (measuring 150 sq. Yards) at 04-07-2014, while shifting house in Nov. 2024 (on 10-11-24). If anybody finds it, Please inform my client at his above said address and Mobile no.9891123769

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, ARUN KUMAR son of Shri JAINATH RAM, residing at B6/129, 3rd Floor, Rohini, Near Chotol Ram Park, Rohini, Sector-5, North West Delhi, Delhi-110085, have changed the name of my minor son RANU KUMAR aged 14 years and he shall hereafter be known as ARSH KUMAR.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, DEBI SHANKAR son of Shri SESH MANI, residing at A-2/40, Block-A/2, Saldajung Enclave, South West Delhi, Delhi-110029, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as ANIL KUMAR DUBEY.

## SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of rail passengers, Railways have decided to run the following **Reserved Special Express Trains** as per details mentioned below:-

04014/04013 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Sabarmati - 02		Delhi Sarai Rohilla Reserved Special Express Train		Trips	
Train No. 04014	STATIONS	Train No. 04013	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.
Arr.	Dep.	Delhi Sarai Rohilla	23:00	Arr.	Dep.
00:30	--	Sabarmati	--	05:30	--

Days of Run: 04014 Ex Delhi Sarai Rohilla on 24.01.2025 (Friday) and 04013 Ex Sabarmati on 25.01.2025 (Saturday)  
Accommodation: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier & AC 3 Tier.  
Stoppages: Delhi Cantt., Gurgaon, Rewari Jn., Alwar Jn., Jaipur Jn., Kishangarh, Ajmer Jn., Beawar, Marwar Jn., Falna, Abu Road & Palanpur Jn. Stations

04064/04063 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Sabarmati - 02		Delhi Sarai Rohilla Reserved Special Express Train		Trips	
Train No. 04064	STATIONS	Train No. 04063	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.
Arr.	Dep.	Delhi Sarai Rohilla	23:00	Arr.	Dep.
00:30	--	Sabarmati	--	05:30	--

Days of Run: 04064 Ex Delhi Sarai Rohilla on 25.01.2025 (Saturday) and 04063 Ex Sabarmati on 26.01.2025 (Sunday)  
Accommodation: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier & Sleeper.  
Stoppages: Delhi Cantt., Gurgaon, Rewari Jn., Alwar Jn., Jaipur Jn., Kishangarh, Ajmer Jn., Beawar, Marwar Jn., Falna, Abu Road & Palanpur Jn. Stations

For any kind of information, passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways Website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTEAS App.

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**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SANJAY YADAV S/O Ghaneshwar, R/O A-4/43, Mangal Park, North West Delhi, Delhi-110083, declare that name of my wife and my minor daughter has been wrongly written as PRIYANKA and SONALI YADAV, aged 13 years in her School Record. The actual name of my wife and my minor daughter are PRIYANKA YADAV and SONALI YADAV

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as POONAM TALWAR alias POONAM BAGH D/O RAMESH TALWAR W/O SANTOSH BAGH residing at 384-F, DDA Flats Pocket-2, Mayapuri Vihar, Phase - I, East Delhi, Delhi-110091 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as POONAM BAGH.

**CHANGE OF DATE OF BIRTH AND NAME**  
I, KRISHNA is father of No. 28019922F Rank- CHM, Name- DESAI BABALI KRISHNA R/O VILL-TALKAT, POST-TALKAT, TEH - DODAMARG, DIST - SINDHUDURG STATE - MAHARASHTRA, PIN-416511 have changed my name KRISHNA to KRISHNA BABALI DESAI and date of birth from 19/01/1946 to 28/09/1951 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 21.01.2025 before Public Notary Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as SAKSHI GARG alias SAKSHI JAIN D/O SANJAY JAIN residing at 1/7170, Gali No. 3, Shivaji Park, Shahdara, Shahdara, East Delhi, Delhi-110032 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SAKSHI GARG.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Aarti W/o-Sandeep Makhija R/O A-1883/139, Ganesh pura Tri Nagar, onkar Nagar north west delhi-110035 have changed my name from Aarti to Aarti Makhija for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Tomina Rose Joseph W/O Late Indra Bhushan, R/O Jawahar Navodaya vidyalaya, Main Chhainsa Road, Motuhka, Moduka, Faridabad, Haryana - 121101 have changed the name of my minor son Manas Christo Joseph alias Manas aged 17 years and he shall hereafter be known as Manas Christo Joseph.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Tomina Rose Joseph W/O Late Indra Bhushan, R/O Jawahar Navodaya vidyalaya, Main Chhainsa Road, Motuhka, Moduka, Faridabad, Haryana - 121101 have changed the name of my minor son Manas Christo Joseph alias Manas aged 17 years and he shall hereafter be known as Manas Christo Joseph.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, PULKIT SINGH S/O PARDEEP SINGH R/O H-48-1591, SECTOR-15 FARIDABAD -121007 HAVE CHANGE MY NAME TO PULKIT SINGH THAKUR FOR ALL PURPOSE.

## NEWS BOX

## Alien-Looking 'Supergiant' Sea Bug Named After Star Wars Villain Darth Vader

**WORLD.** Scientists have discovered an alien-looking, 'supergiant' sea bug species in Vietnam and named it *Bathynomus vaderi* after Darth Vader from the Star Wars franchise, due to its head resembling the Sith Lord's iconic helmet. This "supergiant" isopod, part of the *Bathynomus* genus, can grow to a length of up to 32.5 cm (12.8 inches) and weigh over a kilogram, according to a study published in *ZooKeys*.

The discovery was made while scientists were exploring culinary trends in Vietnam, where these giant sea bugs, known locally as "bo bein," have become a delicacy, with people comparing the quality of the meat to lobsters. "Smaller eating establishments keep the isopods in ice boxes to be cooked when asked, while large restaurants have dedicated tanks with chilled water to keep and display the animals," the study highlighted.

The scientists do not have complete information if *B vaderi* was available elsewhere but dealers and fishermen informed that they obtained these creatures from deep waters near the Spratly Islands - a contested archipelago located in the South China Sea. Apart from the Darth Vader-like head, *B vaderi* has a pronounced depression in its hip bone and a distinctive bony ridge protruding from its coracoid bone, setting it apart from other supergiant isopods. Appetite for the supergiant bug

In 2017, the price was up to Rs 6,854 (2 million Vietnamese Dong) per kilogram. However, by 2023 the price dropped to around Rs 5,100 (1.5 million Vietnamese Dong) per kilogram and by early 2024, it was about Rs 3,400 (1 million Vietnamese Dong) per kilogram as the demand for the bug increased, leading to more fishing.

"In 2017, specimens had to be pre-ordered, and diners had to wait up to a month to collect their *Bathynomus* specimens in seafood outlets in Hanoi. Today, some seafood markets in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang City keep up to 30 individuals in their chilled water tanks for customers to buy," the researchers noted.

## Softbank, Oracle, OpenAI To Build \$500 Billion Worth AI Infrastructure In US

**Washington, United States.** President Donald Trump on Tuesday announced a major investment to build infrastructure for artificial intelligence led by Japanese giant Softbank, cloud giant Oracle and ChatGPT-maker OpenAI.

The venture, called Stargate, "will invest \$500 billion, at least, in AI infrastructure in the United States," Trump said in remarks at the White House.

"This monumental undertaking is a resounding declaration of confidence in America's potential," he said, a day after his swearing in for a second term.

OpenAI's chief executive Sam Altman, SoftBank's chief Masayoshi Son and Oracle founder Larry Ellison attended the announcement. Their project is committed to invest an initial \$100 billion and up to \$500 billion over the next four years in the project, according to Son. The venture comes as big tech players are scrambling to meet AI's voracious computing needs, as well as find the electric power necessary to expand the new technology.

Trump said Stargate will be building the physical and virtual infrastructure to power the next generation of advancements in AI, including the construction of "colossal data centers." OpenAI later said in an X post that the project "will not only support the re-industrialization of the United States but also provide a strategic capability to protect the national security of America and its allies." It added that SoftBank and OpenAI were the lead partners for Stargate, with SoftBank having financial responsibility and OpenAI having operational responsibility. The post also said that MGX, a technology fund from the United Arab Emirates, was a fourth investor, while "Arm, Microsoft, NVIDIA, Oracle, and OpenAI are the key initial technology partners."

## Panama Complains To UN Over Donald Trump's Threat To Seize Canal

**Panama City, Panama.** Panama has complained to the United Nations over US President Donald Trump's "worrying" threat to seize the Panama Canal, even as it launched an audit of the Hong Kong-linked operator of two ports on the interoceanic waterway.

In a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the government in Panama City referred to an article of the UN Charter precluding any member from "the threat or use of force" against the territorial integrity or political independence of another. The missive distributed to reporters Tuesday, urges Guterres to refer the matter to the UN Security Council, without asking for a meeting to be convened. Trump, in his inaugural address Monday, repeated his complaint that China was effectively "operating" the Panama Canal through its growing presence around the waterway, which the United States handed over at the end of 1999. "We didn't give it to China, we gave it to Panama. And we're taking it back," Trump said. The Panamanian comptroller's office that oversees public entities then announced "an exhaustive audit" would be launched "aimed at ensuring the efficient and transparent use of public resources" at the Panama Ports Company. The company, part of Hutchison Ports, a subsidiary of Hong Kong-based conglomerate CK Hutchison Holdings, operates the ports of Balboa and Cristobal on either end of the canal. The comptroller's office said the aim was to determine whether the company was complying with its concession agreements, including adequate reporting of income, payments and contributions to the state. Panama's President Jose Raul Mulino has denied that any other nation was interfering in the canal, which he said was operated on a principle of neutrality. "The canal is and will remain Panama's," Mulino said in response to Trump's threats.

# Indian-American lawmakers oppose Trump's executive order limiting birthright citizenship

**WASHINGTON.** Indian-American lawmakers have opposed the executive order by US President Donald Trump on changes in birthright citizenship, a move likely to hit not only illegal immigrants from around the world but also students and professionals from India. On Monday, in the opening hours of his second term as president, Trump signed an order declaring that future children born to undocumented immigrants would no longer be treated as citizens. The order would extend even to the children of some mothers in the country legally but temporarily, such as foreign students or tourists. Trump's executive order asserts that the children of such noncitizens are not "subject to the jurisdiction of the United States," and thus are not covered by the 14th Amendment's longstanding constitutional guarantee. Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna said changes in birthright citizenship as done through the executive order would impact newborn babies of not only illegal and undocumented immigrants

but also those staying in this country legally like on H-1B visas. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. "Trump's order removes birthright citizenship for children born in the US not just to undocumented parents but to 'lawful' immigrants who are temporarily on a student visa, H1B/H2B visa, or business visa. So much for the pretence that the Republicans are for legal immigration," Khanna said. Indians are the main beneficiaries of the H-1B visas, which bring in the best of the talent and brains from across the world.

Highly skilled professionals from India walk away with the overwhelming number of H-1B visas - which is Congressional mandated 65,000 every year and another



20,000 for those who received higher education from the US.

"No matter what Donald Trump says or does, birthright citizenship has and will be the law of the land. I will fight to protect it at all costs," Indian American Congressman Shri Thaneedar said. Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal described it as unconstitutional.

"Plain and simple this is unconstitutional and cannot be done with the stroke of a pen. If enacted, it would make a mockery of our country's laws and the precedents set in the

Constitution," she said. A coalition of immigration rights groups has challenged this in court and said that this is unconstitutional. As per the executive order, the US would not give automatic citizenship to newborn babies after February 19, 2025, if one of the parents is not a US citizen or lawful permanent resident. Also, attorneys general from 22 states sued President Trump in two federal district courts on Tuesday to block the executive order that refuses to recognise the US-born children of unauthorised immigrants as citizens, the New York Times reported. Eighteen states and two cities, San Francisco and Washington, DC, challenged the order in the Federal District Court in Massachusetts, arguing that birthright citizenship under the 14th Amendment is "automatic" and that neither the president nor Congress has the constitutional authority to revise it. Four other states filed a second lawsuit in the Western District of Washington.

## At least 76 have been killed in a hotel fire at a ski resort in northwestern Turkey

**ANKARA.** A fire raged through a 12-story hotel at a popular ski resort in northwestern Turkey early Tuesday during a school holiday, killing at least 76 people - at least two of them when they jumped from the building to escape the flames, officials said.

At least 51 people also were injured in the fire at the Grand Kartal hotel in Kartalkaya, in Bolu province's Koroglu mountains, some 300 kilometers (185 miles) east of Istanbul, said Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya. The fire occurred near the start of a two-week winter break for schools, when hotels in the region are packed.

"We are in deep pain. We have unfortunately lost 66 lives in the fire that broke out at this hotel," Yerlikaya told reporters after inspecting the site.

Atakan Yelkovan, a hotel guest staying on the third floor, told the IHA news agency there was chaos on the upper floors as other guests tried to escape the fire, including by trying to climb down from their rooms using sheets and blankets. "People on the upper floors were screaming. They hung down sheets ... Some tried to jump," Yelkovan said. Yerlikaya said 45 of the



76 people killed have been identified while efforts to identify the other victims were continuing.

Health Minister Kemal Memisoglu said at least one of the injured was in serious condition, while 17 other people were treated and released. The hotel had 238 registered guests, Yerlikaya said. The fire was reported at 3:27 a.m. and the fire department began to respond at 4:15 a.m., he told reporters.

The government appointed six prosecutors to lead an investigation into the blaze, which is believed to have started in the hotel's restaurant section. Nine people have been detained as part of the investigation into the fire, Yerlikaya said. Earlier, Justice Minister

Yilmaz Tunc said the hotel's owner was among the people detained for questioning in the probe.

At least two of the victims died when they jumped from the building in panic, Gov. Abdulaziz Aydin told the state-run Anadolu Agency earlier. Those killed included Nedim Turkmen, a columnist for Sozcuk newspaper, his wife and two children, the newspaper announced.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced a day of national mourning to be observed on Wednesday. All flags at government buildings and Turkish diplomatic mission abroad would be lowered to half-staff, he said. Necmi Kepcetutan, a ski instructor at the hotel, said he was asleep when the fire erupted and he rushed out of the building. He told NTV television that he then helped some 20 guests out of the hotel. The hotel was engulfed in smoke, making it difficult for guests to locate the fire escape, he said. "I cannot reach some of my students. I hope they are OK," the ski instructor told the station.

## How Safe Are India's Nuclear Reactors What Global Watchdog Chief Said

**Davos.** India's nuclear reactors are "absolutely safe" as it applies the highest levels of safety standards to its civil nuclear programme, the chief of global nuclear watchdog International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has told NDTV. In an interview on the sidelines of Davos 2025, IAEA director general Rafael Mariano Grossi was asked how safe India's nuclear reactors are. "Absolutely safe. India applies to its civilian nuclear programme the highest levels of internationally agreed and IAEA established nuclear safety standards and security guidance," he replied. On India's fast-breeder nuclear reactor programme, the first of which is being developed at Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu, Grossi said, "It could be an interesting add-on to its fleet."

India has imposed a voluntarily moratorium on nuclear explosive testing since the Pokhran tests in 1998.

Asked if New Delhi would be within its rights to test if China or Pakistan went ahead with nuclear tests, Grossi replied, "Our position and the position of the international community is that we should move to a general ban on nuclear testing so we hope that there won't be a need for further testing, neither in the subcontinent nor elsewhere."

To a question on whether India should be a part of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which currently has 48 countries as its members, the IAEA chief said, "I have been President of the Nuclear Suppliers group and I interacted very actively in trying to bring this to an equitable solution, including with other countries which had similar aspirations. My interactions, even with Foreign Minister S Jaishankar, were extremely useful. We were very close at the time to a good outcome." "Of course, there is a bigger, wider political scene which

enters into the situation when it comes to that. This is for the members to decide," he added. To a question on whether the India-US civil nuclear deal is set to achieve its full potential as Washington DC tries to negotiate the liability clause that will enable it to build reactors in India, Grossi said it was for India and US to decide. What I can say is that the Indian civil nuclear programme is among the biggest and most diverse worldwide. "India has every [nuclear] technology and masters every technology in a very good way. I believe that with the current expansion and interest in nuclear energy, we are the best position to see those levels of cooperation and trade grow," he said. The IAEA chief also took questions on the situation in Ukraine and said there were several occasions when the watchdog feared a nuclear accident.

## Trudeau says Canada will respond to US tariffs as Ontario's premier says Trump 'declared war'

**TORONTO.** Canada's outgoing prime minister and the leader of the country's oil rich province of Alberta are both confident Canada can avoid the 25% tariffs President Donald Trump says he will impose on February 1. Justin Trudeau and Danielle Smith will argue that Canada is the energy super power that has the oil and critical minerals that America needs to feed what Trump vows will be a booming U.S. economy. But Doug Ford, the premier of Ontario, the manufacturing and automobile hub of Canada, said a trade war is 100% coming. "Trump declared an economic war on Canada," Ford said in an interview with The Associated Press. "And we are going to use every tool in our tool box to defend our economy." Trudeau said Canada will retaliate if needed but noted Canada has been here before during the first Trump presidency when they successfully renegotiated the free trade deal. Ford said as soon as Trump applies tariffs he will instruct Ontario's liquor control board to pull all American-made alcohol from shelves. We are the largest purchaser of

alcohol in the world. And I'm going to encourage all the premiers to do the exact same," Ford said, adding there will be a dollar-for-dollar tariff retaliation on American goods entering Canada.

"We are going to target Republican held areas as well. They are going to feel the pain. Canadians are going to feel the pain, but Americans will feel the pain as well," he said. "A message to the countries around the world: if he wants to use Canada as an example you are up next. He's coming after you as well." Ontario Premier Doug Ford, wearing a 'Canada Is Not For Sale' hat, speaks as he arrives for a first ministers meeting in Ottawa. Photo | AP/Trump pledged in his inaugural address that tariffs would be coming in a speech in which he promised a golden era for America. He later said Canada and Mexico could be hit with the tariffs as soon as Feb. 1, though he signed an executive order requesting a report coordinated by the Secretary of Commerce by April 1. Trump said Tuesday that the 25% tariffs that he intends to place on Canada and Mexico as soon as Feb. 1



would have "nothing to do" with renegotiating the existing trade pact among the three countries. For him, the tariffs are all about stopping unauthorized migration and the flow of any illicit drugs. The U.S. president told reporters at the White House that, in his opinion, the amount of fentanyl coming through Canada and Mexico is "massive." U.S. customs agents seized just 43 pounds of fentanyl at the Canadian border last fiscal year, compared with 21,100 pounds at the Mexican border. About 60% of U.S. crude oil imports are from Canada. Despite Trump's claim that the US doesn't need Canada,

nearly a quarter of the oil America consumes per day comes from Canada. America's northern neighbor also has 34 critical minerals and metals that the Pentagon is eager for and is also the largest foreign supplier of steel, aluminum and uranium to the U.S. Nearly \$3.6 billion Canadian dollars (\$2.7 billion) worth of goods and services cross the border each day. Canada is the top export destination for 36 U.S. states. "Trump wants to usher in a golden age for the U.S.," Trudeau said at a Cabinet retreat in Quebec called to deal with Trump's threats. "If the American economy is going to see the boom that Donald Trump is predicting they are going to need more energy, more steel and aluminum, more critical minerals, more of the things that Canada sells to the United States every single day." On Tuesday, Mexico President Claudia Sheinbaum stressed the need to keep "cool heads" and look at the wording of what Trump signed, rather than listen to the discourse surrounding it.

## NEWS BOX

## 13 killed, more than 25 injured in two separate accidents in Karnataka

**YELLAPURA.** Nine people lost their lives, and 16 others sustained serious injuries when a lorry on its way to the weekly market plunged into the Ghats in Uttara Kannada district. The tragic incident occurred near a petrol pump after Arbail Ghats, en route to Ankola. The lorry, carrying more than 40 passengers and loaded with vegetables, was traveling from Hubballi to Kumta for the weekly market. According to police reports, nine individuals died on the spot, while over 16 others suffered severe injuries. The injured have been rushed to the government hospital in Yellapur for treatment. Authorities fear that the death toll may rise as some of the injured are in critical condition. The accident reportedly happened when the driver lost control of the vehicle, causing the lorry to overturn. In another accident in the state, at least four persons including three students were killed and ten others injured when the vehicle they were travelling in overturned in the wee hours of Wednesday in this district, police said. The vehicle was carrying students of Mantralaya Sanskrit Pathashala were on a pilgrimage to Hampi to offer prayers at Narahari Temple. Police said the accident occurred near Araginamara Camp in Sindhanur. Deceased students have been identified as Aryavandan (18), Suheendra (22) and Abhilash (20). Driver Shiva (24) too lost his life in this accident. The 10 injured people have been admitted to a local hospital. The Sindhanur police visited the spot, shifted the bodies to the mortuary.

## Merugu demands completion of pending Ambedkar statue works

**VIJAYAWADA.** Former Minister Merugu Nagarjuna has urged the coalition government to complete pending works at the Dr BR Ambedkar Statue in Vijayawada's Swaraj Maidan, calling it a vital symbol of social justice. On the statue's first anniversary, Nagarjuna reminded the public that the monument was established under former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's leadership to inspire future generations. Nagarjuna, who led the statue's construction committee, expressed concern over the halt of essential projects, including a convention centre and a compound wall, despite allocated funds. He criticised the TDP government for failing to complete the monument and praised YS Jagan



Mohan Reddy for finishing the project. The former minister also highlighted the government's neglect of the site, delays in staff salary payments, and lack of support for visitors. He questioned if political motives were behind the neglect, suggesting that the government might fear credit going to Reddy. Nagarjuna called for immediate resumption of works and fair treatment of the monument.

## Inter practicals: Pupils, parents equally worried

**VIJAYAWADA.** Parents are concerned about the Intermediate practical examinations, which are scheduled from February 10 to 20, as they are of the view that students are not properly equipped to face them. A majority of junior colleges, which lay emphasis on entrance tests, have ignored training students in Science practicals. On January 8, Board of Intermediate Education Secretary Kritika Sukla announced significant reforms to improve the standards of junior college education. The reforms include emphasis on both theory and practical examinations. Students are also a worried lot as they seem to be not prepared well for practicals. "We have barely had any practical session in our college. We are now expected to do well in practicals. It is unfair to ignore since practicals as they are crucial for APEAPCET," said Ravi Kumar, an MPC student from Poranki. Practical exams hold significant weightage in Intermediate education, particularly for students appearing for EAPCET in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. For MPC students, 30 marks each are assigned for Physics and Chemistry practicals. For BiPC students, the total marks assigned for practicals is 120, 30 marks each for Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology. The move to conduct the practical exams under CCTV surveillance has also put pressure on Intermediate Science students. Speaking to TNIE, G Ramasundari, a private school teacher from Gudivada, said, "None of the colleges where our children study, has conducted a single practical session. When we ask about our children's future in the wake of greater emphasis on science practicals.

## Committee to resolve TNUHDB residents' woes has not met even once since May '22

**CHENNAI.** The Chennai City Habitat Development Committee (CCDHC), constituted by the government to address persistent concerns of residents of Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board (TNUHDB) and other urban poor through effective coordination with all departments concerned, has not met for nearly three years after its first and only meeting in May 2022.

CCDHC, along with district habitat development committees (DHDCs) in all districts, were constituted by the Housing and Urban Development department through a government order on March 2, 2022, with senior officials from various departments, elected representatives and civil society organisations as members. As per the order, while the committee for Chennai city, which houses the vast majority of TNUHDB tenements, should meet every two months, DHDCs should meet every three months.

The commissioner of Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) is the chairman of CCDHC, the Greater Chennai Police commissioner is the vice-chairman, and the MD of TNUHDB is the convenor. While the constitution of the committee gave hope for swift redressal of a variety of infrastructure and livelihood related issues frequently raised by TNUHDB residents, the residents alleged that their worries remained and even worsened in the past few years with the committee failing to meet not even once after its initial meeting. Mercy M, a resident of Perumbakkam TNUHDB tenements, said that



though people like her were resettled in Perumbakkam eight years ago, many of them still struggled to even get their addresses changed in government identity cards. "This has resulted in many being excluded from welfare schemes. There are children who even dropped out of school. Address change camps are conducted for just one or two days without prior information, and that too only when the media highlights these problems," she alleged. Vanessa Peter, the founder of Information and Resource Centre for the Deprived Urban Communities that works for the rights of poor, said there are several unresolved issues like poor quality of houses, inadequate facilities, and non-issuance of sale deeds and pattas in many settlements covered under different schemes.

However, the delay in convening the committees

for nearly three years is an act of omission and these committees must be convened and the minutes of the meetings should also be shared with the members," she said. Officials also confirmed that no meeting was conducted since its inaugural meeting.

Speaking to a senior official of TNUHDB said while such meetings are regularly conducted in the districts, the same had not happened in Chennai.

He said TNUHDB attempted to conduct the meeting twice, but it got cancelled due to Lok Sabha elections and the transfer of GCC commissioner around that time. He added that the meeting will be organised soon. A senior official from GCC also said that efforts will be made to convene a meeting shortly.

## Bengaluru: SMVT station to open ticket booking office

**BENGALURU.** To decongest Sir M Visvesvaraya Terminal (SMVT), the Bangalore Railway Division will open a massive ticketing office adjacent to the existing concourse area. This will not be air-conditioned like the fully air-conditioned station, and will have a seating capacity for 500 people. At present, the station handles 77 trains on an average, including daily, weekly and biweekly ones. Many long-distance trains, particularly those heading to the East and North East operate from here. The footfall averages between 35,000 and 40,000 per day. Additional Divisional Railway Manager, Administration, Parikshith Mohanpuria told TNIE, "Now, anyone can enter the terminal area to book tickets. This is congesting the space. With patronage increasing here with every passing day, we need to make it comfortable for passengers. Hence, we have decided to open a new ticketing office where reserved, general and platform tickets can be booked."



The work has been sanctioned and the tendering process is on. "Work will begin shortly. It will be convenient for the public to book tickets here," he added. In another major effort to decongest the station, officials have begun making announcements for the public on departing trains an hour before the actual departure to help passengers board trains comfortably. "The announcement is generally done just 20 minutes before the departure of any train in most stations,

but as a special case we have begun announcing it 60 minutes in advance here," he said. "Many passengers arrive from different parts of Karnataka here and wait for 12 hours for their train. When the announcement is made about a specific train, there is a huge rush in the direction of the train, creating overcrowding at specific points," he explained. Among other passenger-friendly steps, the station has streamlined the Access Control Parking system which encountered numerous challenges earlier, launched app-based car services and additional BMTC buses from here to provide better connectivity. Chief Traffic Manager, Operations, BMTC, GT Prabhakar Reddy said, "We have added ten new buses on three routes from SMVT. Due to public demand, seven Volvo buses have been introduced between Kempegowda bus station and SMVT."

## Bengaluru couple booked for burning daughter's body after suicide fails to report incident to cops

**BENGALURU.** A couple has landed in trouble for burning the body of their minor daughter, who died by suicide, without reporting the matter to the police. The victim, Dhriti G, was a resident of Basevanahalli in Solur of Magadi taluk. She had died by suicide between 4 pm and 5 pm on Saturday when her parents were not home. Her father Gangadharaiah, an agriculturist, and mother, had gone shopping for the wedding of a relative. Dhriti, who was studying PU I came home from college around 3.30 pm. She called her father asking for the keys and collected it from the neighbour's house. When her parents returned at 5 pm, they did not get any response from her as the doors were locked from inside. They then saw her hanging inside a room. "The victim was their only daughter. Since she had exams, her parents refused to take her shopping. They did not want the body to be sent for post-mortem thinking that the body would be cut into pieces. They had burnt the body in their agricultural field on Sunday morning. Head Constable Nagaraju of Kudur police station, who had gone to Basevanahalli on rounds, found out about the incident. He then reported it to his seniors. A complaint was registered in the evening. The parents are not yet arrested as they have certain rituals to complete," said the police. The victim was upset after her parents did not take her for shopping for her cousin's wedding and hence took the extreme step.



## Mathilakam records' safety a bone of contention

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.**

Even as concerns are being raised about preservation of the Mathilakam documents - the historic palm leaf documents on Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple - the Central Archives officials and historians have ruled out such fears. Mathilakam Rekhakal, sheds light on centuries of history, administration, and cultural heritage of Modern Travancore and proclamations of Travancore rulers. Over the decades, these documents continue to attract researchers and historians. The over 300-year-old documents are currently housed in the Central Archives at Kottakkam. Recently, former minister V S Sivakumar expressed concerns over a decision to relocate the research facility from the main building to a small room approximately 100 m away, stating that transporting these delicate documents will expose them to environmental hazards like moisture and dust, potentially leading to their deterioration.

He urged the government to stop actions that could jeopardise the preservation of Mathilakam records. Any damage to



these invaluable records would result in an irreplaceable loss to the state's heritage, he said. The Congress leader shared the concerns with Archaeology and Archives Minister Kadannappalli Ramachandran. Meanwhile, Director of Archives S Parvathy said there is no reason for concerns. Beside the museum on the ground floor, there is a hall that provides access to researchers, while the repository housed upstairs maintains optimal storage conditions for these fragile documents.

The Archives Department has plans to further expand preservation efforts by establishing an International Archives and Heritage Centre (IAHC) in

## 'Probe' excuse over, decks cleared for Cusat amphitheatre renovation

**KOCHI.** With chargesheet being filed in the Cusat stampede case, decks have been cleared for the renovation of the amphitheatre where four youngsters lost their lives on the evening of November 25, 2023. The ensuing investigation had found that unscientific additions to the amphitheatre on the Cusat campus in Kalamassery led to the tragedy.

"We hope to start work in a month or two. The tender will be floated soon," Cusat Vice-Chancellor M Junaid Bushiri told. Earlier, the university authorities had cited a lack of clearance from the police investigation team as the reason behind the delay in beginning renovation. The VC said the technical committee, which was tasked with inspecting the amphitheatre, had submitted its report and suggested many structural changes.

The university had also set aside an amount of ₹10 lakh in its budget for the renovation," he pointed out.

The construction of a ramp, installation of proper lighting and CCTV cameras and entrusting electrical works with a licensed operator are among the recommendations, the VC said. "Removing additional barriers that restrict free movement, displaying all safety information prominently, installing a proper fire-fighting system, and strict adherence to the guidelines issued by the state government when organising a programme on the campus are the other suggestions made by the committee," Junaid said. Earlier, the university had been taken to task by the Kalamassery municipality for making unapproved alterations to the amphitheatre. The local body had sent a notice to Cusat pointing out the illegalities.

On Sunday, the police submitted the chargesheet in the case more than a year after the stampede. The police have named three individuals as accused: former Principal Deepak Kumar Sahu and teachers Geesh Kumar and N Biju. These names were also part of the FIR filed shortly after the incident.

The chargesheet, however, excluded the former registrar of the university despite allegations that the authorities failed to implement the safety measures necessary.

Kariavattom. "Although only one floor of the proposed three-storey building has been completed, with timely funding, the entire facility can be ready within a year and a half. The new centre will provide modern conservation tools and access facilities to enhance the experience for researchers and visitors," said S Parvathy. Uma Maheswari, whose work Mathilakam Rekhakal speaks volumes about the relevance of these ancient texts, said the palm leaves, some of which are over 700 years old, are preserved with care and expertise. "The archives contain the largest collection of palm-leaf manuscripts in Asia. They remain an unparalleled resource for anyone interested in pre-settlement land revenue systems, royal proclamations, or temple histories," she noted.

"The Mathilakam Rekhakal" is currently preserved at the Central Archives in Kottakkam. Established in 1887, it remains a treasure trove housing over one crore records. In 2017, with the help of C-DIT (Centre for Development of Imaging Technology), the Mathilakam Rekhakal underwent a digital transformation.

## Bagchi Karunashraya palliative care centre inaugurated in Bhubaneswar

**BHUBANESWAR.** Bagchi Karunashraya Palliative Care Centre is the best example of humanism and a great reflection of charity, kindness and compassion, said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Tuesday. Inaugurating the centre at Info Valley - II on the outskirts of the city, the chief minister praised its founders and said such selfless contribution in the field of social service is rarely seen these days. The palliative care centre is a collaborative effort of Bangalore Hospice Trust (BHT), Karunashraya and renowned tech entrepreneur and philanthropist Subroto Bagchi for which the Bagchi family had pledged Rs 130 crore. "The Bagchi couple is a role model for Odisha. Their initiative will definitely inspire others to serve the society. The treatment of cancer is very costly and with the death of the patient due to the disease, the family also faces financial hardship. The centre will

alleviate the suffering of poor patients," he said. The 110-bed centre will provide free specialised medical care to cancer patients who can get relief from pain and other symptoms of end-stage disease. The Odisha government has provided land and other related facilities for this centre at a subsidised rate. Union Education minister Dharmendra Pradhan said Karunashraya is the greatest model of public service in India and reflects what sacrifice, compassion and empathy mean to some great souls. He expressed gratitude to the Bagchi couple on behalf of the people of Odisha for establishing the centre and a cancer hospital in the state. Health and Family Welfare minister Mukesh Mahaling said the institution has been established with the noble intention of providing services to cancer patients who are fighting death. The government will provide all support to the



centre, he assured. Speaking on the occasion, Bagchi said cancer affects the entire family along with the patient. "For this, there is a need for compassion along with treatment. Cancer treatment cannot be left to the

government alone. We all have to extend out cooperation," he said. Chief secretary Manoj Ahuja and managing trustee of BHT Gurmeet Singh Randhawa were present among others.

## An India-Indonesia convergence

It is both timely and appropriate that the newly elected leader of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto, has been invited as the chief guest to India's Republic Day celebrations. Seventy-five years ago, at the country's first Republic Day on January 26, 1950, Indonesia's first President Sukarno was the chief guest. This was not only a reflection of the close bonds the people of the two countries had forged during their respective struggles against colonial rule, but also their shared belief in the resurgence of Asia as a major force for peace and development in an already deeply divided post-World War II international order.

It is this political convergence which led to the convening of the Afro-Asian Bandung Conference in 1955, with India and Indonesia as its chief architects. Today, the world is again in the grip of a dangerous polarisation; this time Asia, not Europe, is the likely crucible of confrontation and even conflict. On the other hand, one cannot preclude the possibility of tactical collusion between the two contending centres of power, the US and China — a so-called G2 — which limits the room for manoeuvring for countries like India and Indonesia. The promise of a multipolar Asia, in which the hegemonic impulses of the two most powerful countries can be constrained, depends for its realisation on countries like India and Indonesia leading the way. Asia is already home to a cluster of established regional powers such as Japan, South Korea and Australia. If one adds emerging powers like India and Indonesia to a loose countervailing coalition, Asia may finally enjoy the agency in Asian and global affairs that it has always aspired for. Countervailing is different from containment. It demands engagement with and resistance to, in almost equal measure, to threats as well as blandishments of the most powerful centres of power. It recognises that neither confrontation nor collusion between the two leading powers are in the interest of creating and sustaining a multipolar Asia. I believe that India and Indonesia have powerful strategic convergence in this respect, which can drive their relations to a new level altogether.

Indonesia's criticality to constructing a multipolar Asia is obvious. It is an archipelagic state of over 17,000 islands stretching over the waters joining the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. Its Exclusive Economic Zone is over 6 million sq km. India to its west and Australia to its east are like two book-ends framing the country. It is with good reason that former President Widodo described his country as a "maritime fulcrum". It is in India's interest to declare its support for this initiative. But to serve as a fulcrum, Indonesia must have the capacity to police and administer this vast space. The scale of resources required for this is simply not available at the country's current level of economic and military capabilities.

This is where India has the opportunity to forge a strong and cooperative maritime partnership with Indonesia, going beyond the current joint naval patrols of their adjacent waters. India has greatly expanded its maritime domain awareness capabilities, thanks to its own satellite and long-range airborne surveillance capabilities and technological collaboration with the US. This can support Indonesia's own growing capacities. There is a trilateral consultative forum involving India, Indonesia and Australia. This can enable India and Australia to collaboratively enhance Indonesia's maritime capabilities. This will enable a strong crescent of surveillance, information-sharing and constraint to be put in place in the Indo-Pacific. Indonesia is the largest as well as economically and militarily the most powerful member of the 10-nation Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). But it is sometimes a reluctant leader in the ASEAN. It has all along been conflicted in pursuing a leading ASEAN role and in aspiring to a larger international role consistent with its size, population and growing GDP. It has a 290-million population, the fourth largest after India, China and the US. Its GDP of \$1.3 trillion has registered a steady 5 per cent annual growth over the past decade and more. Projections are that it may well emerge as the world's fourth largest economy after the US, China and India by 2050.

## Budget shouldn't disappoint as economy is on an even keel

The govt still has to keep financing capital investment and infrastructure. It should give up the thought that it can step back so that the private sector can take over.

THE Union Budget looks ahead for several key pointers: signals for key sectors of industry and agriculture; public investment in foremost infrastructure sectors like electricity, roads and railways; how the fiscal scene (the government's own finances) is likely to fare during the year; and, of course, the average citizen's keenness to find out if the income tax burden will go up or down.

With inflation under control and growth going steady at 6 per cent plus, there is no serious concern over the economy and the tax collection. There are, however, some imponderables. Will we be able to keep buying Russian oil at a decent price with US sanctions being tightened?

But the overarching concern and the greatest imponderable is the way in which the country and the world will cope as the planet gets hotter and extreme climate events like drought and floods keep coming. And what it will do to agriculture, from which many poor people eke out an existence. The expectation is that the fiscal deficit in the coming financial year will be pitched lower at 4.5 per cent from the likely deficit in the current fiscal of 4.8 per cent. This will bring the number in line with the medium-term fiscal goal. From this, it is clear that we are looking at a small realignment and not a serious overhaul.

As against this, a sharper change will be sought and expected in capital expenditure, seeking to take it up by 12-13 per cent to Rs 11 lakh crore. This is because where the capital spending goes matters a lot to roads, highways and railways. Plus, there is an expectation that interest-free loans for capital expenditure will continue to be passed onto the states so as to raise regional infrastructure growth. Capital expenditure will be delivered because the revenue part will be expected to coast along evenly. This will be enabled by indirect taxes growing at 8.8 per cent, with the GST (goods and services tax) expected to grow by 10.5 per cent, reflecting a resilient domestic consumption. Direct tax revenue, in good part from taxes paid by companies out of their profits, will grow healthily at 11.8 per cent as the base of companies will grow, with the economy growing healthily and corporate profitability remaining stable. With the economy expected to remain on an even keel, let us examine what individual industries have mentioned in their wish lists as they have met government representatives so as to build a castle firmly anchored in the ground and not in the air. Technology moves forward with funding and incentives for research and development (R&D). The tech sector, which is rolling in money, still seeks government support as hugely important new sectors are emerging, like artificial intelligence, block chain and quantum computing. These can transform daily life as well as businesses and enable future growth. Right behind is the healthcare sector, without whose robustness the people will not be healthy or



well can go and live in towns where better jobs are offered. In sum, the government still has to keep financing capital investment and infrastructure. It should give up the thought that it can step back so that the private sector can take over. Here, the Budget will have a critical role to play. In the old days, the Budget presentation, through which the country came to know about it, was overblown. The country stopped to pause to hear or see the Finance Minister through radio or TV and the media spent endless hours trying to highlight a few aspects of the Budget. This gave the minister a chance to do a good bit of grandstanding. Today, the Budget papers are released online, allowing the media, analysts and corporates to pore over the numbers quickly to come to their conclusions. But some of the mystique still remains, particularly for the layman, who wants to know whether he will have to pay more or fewer taxes and turns to the tax accountant to find out if his tax bill will go up or not. The layman forgets that since the time when Manmohan Singh, as Finance Minister, transformed the economy, incomes tax rates for individuals have gone down. But the layman does not notice it as he sees his tax bill going up and forgets that his income has gone up much more.

What he also does not notice is that the present dispensation has introduced the revolutionary GST regime, which has lowered taxes that consumers have to pay through sales tax and excise duty; he thinks he is paying a lot more as GST, when, in fact, he is consuming a lot more.

## Middlemen & bribes

Haryana's corrupt patwaris under scrutiny

The exposure of corruption in Haryana's Revenue Department has laid bare a systemic rot. A government report implicates 370 patwaris and 170 middlemen in widespread bribery, with demands ranging from Rs 200 to Rs 10,000 for essential services like land partition and property mutation. Kaithal, Sonapat and Mahendragarh districts lead in the number of corrupt officials, while Gurugram is home to the highest number of unauthorised middlemen who exploit citizens for profit. The September 2022 findings in Panipat exemplify the extent of the problem. Over 1,500 applications were found pending during a surprise inspection, unauthorised individuals were managing official work and infrastructure deficiencies were glaring. Similarly, a patwari in Kurukshetra was discovered with disproportionate assets, a reflection of unchecked graft in the system.

The Supreme Court's December 2022 judgment in



Neeraj Dutta vs State (NCT of Delhi) offers a glimmer of hope. By lowering the bar for evidence in corruption cases, it empowers agencies to secure convictions even when witnesses turn hostile. This landmark ruling should embolden the Haryana authorities to take decisive action against those

involved in the revenue scandal. Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini's reiteration of a zero-tolerance policy must be matched by concrete action. Reforms like digitising land records, introducing biometric attendance systems, installing CCTV cameras in offices and conducting regular audits are critical. Moreover, swift punitive measures, coupled with citizen awareness campaigns and effective grievance redress systems, are essential to curb exploitation and build accountability. India's 93rd rank in the 2023 Global Corruption Index underscores the urgency for reforms. Corruption in public offices erodes trust and tarnishes governance. Haryana must seize this opportunity to revamp its revenue administration, inspired by the Supreme Court's robust stance. Restoring public trust is not just a goal but a necessity for ensuring a fair and transparent system.

## Challenges galore for Trump

Retaining global edge in science and technology his main concern, not immigration

As he takes the presidential oath today, for the second time, Donald Trump has the potential to become one of the most influential holders of the world's most powerful political office in recent history. He not only won the electoral college but also a majority of the votes cast nationwide in the election. His Republican Party controls the Senate and the House of Representatives, though only with a thin margin. The conservative majority in the Supreme Court, in an important decision on presidential immunity, has made the office stronger. Trump's conviction on felony charges has done no political damage to him, either domestically or abroad. In the light of these factors and his unorthodox ways, the world waits with anticipation and apprehension, some fuelled by his comments since his victory in November, on how he will use his authority to address domestic and US foreign and security policy issues as well as the existential crises faced by humankind. Trump made illegal immigration one of the leading issues of his campaign. Hence, it will be essential for his credibility to send some illegal immigrants out of the US to their home countries at the earliest. He will also increase his rhetoric against illegal immigration. But the fact is that despite Trump's electoral posturing and the rhetoric which may come henceforth, the US economy needs both low-level workers and high-end technical professionals. It will, therefore, be compelled to eventually become pragmatic, but not before Trump causes turbulence domestically and externally on this issue.

In the long term, though, it is not immigration that is the major internal issue for the US but manufacturing and retaining a decisive global edge in the frontier areas of science and high technology. There is consensus in the US on remaining the leading country in science and digital technology innovation. That led the Biden

administration, in its dying days, to announce "controls on advanced computing chips and certain closed artificial intelligence (AI) model weights, alongside new licence exceptions and updates to Data Centre Validated End User authorisation".

The obvious intention is to deny China capacities in advanced AI innovation, though it's capabilities in sophisticated tooling cannot be effectively curtailed. How will Trump handle this important aspect of US efforts to retain its primacy in science and technology, with China having become a "scientific power" with growing technological competence? This will be Trump's challenge for his entire term because of the great speed in the development of digital technology. Trump's announcement of wishing to acquire Greenland bears the mark of the first-term Trump making outrageous remarks, unconcerned with the canons of conventional diplomacy. His approach to the Ukraine war will attract great media attention worldwide.

However, the real geopolitical challenge before Trump lies in managing the continuing rise of China. That has been the main foreign and security policy issue for all US presidents since the closing years of the first decade of this century. By then, it had become clear that China's rise had been far deeper and wider and rapid than US calculations. With Xi Jinping becoming China's undisputed leader and showing a firm determination to take on the US, Obama, Trump 1.0 and Biden have had to handle his ambitions. He is relentlessly pushing forward. It is not clear if Trump will seek to bluntly thwart Xi's ambitions or try to reach an accommodation with him. Trump's choice of Cabinet colleagues who have a hardline approach on China gives one indication, but his inviting Xi to his inauguration marks a softer touch. Naturally, the chance that Xi would have personally accepted the invitation

instead of sending a representative was never there. Indeed, the basic dynamics of the US-China Great Game will inevitably lead to even greater competition. It will need great statesmanship in both countries to ensure that this does not lead to conflict. Trump wanted the Gaza war to end and issued dire threats to Hamas and, no doubt, behind-the-scenes pressures on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The Israel-Hamas ceasefire will lead Trump to claim how effective he will



be on all issues. It is too early to predict how the ceasefire will pan out. Hamas has not been finished. Outgoing Secretary of State Anthony Blinken has noted: "Indeed, we assess that Hamas has recruited almost as many new militants as it has lost." What can be assessed, though, in the context of the larger West Asia is that Trump's implacable opposition to Iran will continue. What is not clear is how much of an

investment he will make in addressing the basic Arab-Palestinian issue. The chances are that it will have a low priority for him. Trump will continue with the Indo-Pacific approaches developed during his first term and taken further by Biden. He will seek to strengthen Quad. India is an essential component of the grouping. But that will not diminish the pressures he will put on India, especially on trade issues. But he will avoid raising human rights concerns with India. On the India-Pakistan front, he will remain indifferent, unless there are chances of a major conflict. Where Trump will show little or no interest is in addressing the existential issue of our times: climate change. He is a climate sceptic who took the US out of the Paris pact. Extreme weather events, too, have not changed his outlook. This is particularly a major negative for the global fight against climate change at a time when world temperatures are breaking the 1.5°C threshold. Trump is unlikely to back off from his decision to allow drilling for hydrocarbons or seek to reduce its proportion in the energy mix.

However, whatever an incoming US President may consider to be his agenda, it has often been seen that he has had to amend it to address unforeseen challenges.

George W Bush had to confront the tragedy of 9/11; he responded with a global war on terror. Barack Obama had to face the consequences of the global economic crisis of 2008, which began with the collapse of the Wall Street. Trump 1.0 faced the Covid pandemic and did poorly, while Biden had to face the Ukraine and Gaza wars. What unforeseen development(s) will Trump 2.0 have to deal with?

The multi-faceted country of UK has something for everyone. In Bath, I found a little piece of Rome...In Windsor, the true Brit royalty complete with all its grandeur... and in Brighton, the undying party spirit that you would see in Ibiza, the party capital of the world!



But let this not put a damper on the spirits of the more sober - for Brighton has much more to offer than the crazy night life.

# Brighton

## The party never stops



photo spots, thrilling rides and tons of deck chairs to bask in the sun. The pier makes you enjoy a summery afternoon even in the winter! At the centre of the pier lies a casino with fun and games for all ages.

### The Royal Pavillion

The Royal Pavillion was built as a residence for the Royal Family for when they visit Brighton. However, Queen Victoria was not very approving of this building as her residence and it was sold to Brighton city in the 1800s and was eventually turned into a museum. Bang in the heart of the city, it is hard to miss this fine amalgamation of Chinese, Indian and Islamic architecture. When inside the gates of this building, spend time examining and appreciating the curves and folds of the building and strolling through the lush green lawns. The property is open to buskers, some of whom are extremely good performers and end up having a sizeable audience sitting in the lawns watching and listening to them.

### The Lanes

Spelt slightly differently as 'Laines', this area can probably be called the energy centre of Brighton. Divided into the North Laines and South Laines, Brighton wouldn't be the same without these.

North Laines - Think shopping - fun, crazy, exciting shopping - from clothes and shoes, to quirky gift items and bags to tattoos, designer jewellery and fancy dress shops, the North Laines are a great haunt for the wandering window shopper as well as the serious buyer! And the Laines spread out in four directions from a little square with a fountain in the centre - you feel like you've been transported into a fairytale world inhabited by hobbits. South Laines - Think food and drinks - lip smacking, finger licking, delectable food! From streetside bars, to organic food restaurants to quaint little coffee shops, the South Laines have it all. Step in to Casa Don Carlos for authentic Spanish fare complete with Sangria and

Tapas. Do not miss the 'Naked' coffee shop. With corporate looking sofa seating on the ground floor and large throw pillow floor seating on the first, the tea and coffee shop provides a space for meetings as well as lounging. The hot chocolate topped with cream and marshmallows is to die for, as are the gluten free breads and homemade cakes. Way to go organic food!

### How to get there By rail

There are plenty of trains out from London getting in to Brighton. The Southern Railways operate between London Bridge and Brighton with trains almost every two hours. Alternatively the First Capital Connect trains operate out of Waterloo. The train journey from London to Brighton and back can cost anything between 20 and 40 GBP depending on how lucky or unlucky you are (the luck factor usually applying only if like me you land up at the station to buy your ticket). It is however advisable that you purchase the ticket in advance or book online. The journey takes just a little over an hour.

### By road

The journey by road can be completed in under an hour. In fact Brighton is less than half an hour away from London Gatwick. It is said to be a fairly good journey traveling south on the M25.

**Climate**  
Definitely one of the warmest parts of the UK, Brighton is located comfortable on the Southern coast of the country and is blessed with more sunshine than is rewarded to the rest of UK. With high humidity and coastal winds, Brighton has easy weather for all except 3 months of the year - the peak winter months - Dec, Jan and Feb. And then too it is not entirely impossible to take a walk on the sea front or enjoy a cuppa out on your balcony.

**Food**  
The other thing I got lucky with this trip was Food. I happened to be there during the Brighton and Hove Food Festival and it was a complete delight. With food stalls around the market area as well as in the main square, the streets were abuzz with people. From cupcakes and organic muffins to salt water taffy and pies, the smells wafting our way were divine.

When in Brighton, if you're a real party animal, you'll drink more than you'll eat. Head to 'Yates' for great music and 'The Victory Inn' for a range of brews. This is the oldest pub in Brighton - started in 1766. For Britain's famous fish and chips, have lunch at Harry Ramsdens which is known to have the best fish and chips. The

restaurant is located on the seafront Brighton.

### Shopping

Other than the North Laines, Brighton's main square where you'll find all the most global brands. High end designer labels are located next to each other in a row which forms the high street bang opposite which are some very famous diners. You can also purchase some lovely street art in Brighton.

### Places of interest

#### The Seafront

Different from other beaches in that it has pebbled shores contrary to most white sandy beached coastal towns, Brighton has a large and beautiful coastline accompanied by a walking path as well as a bicycling track. A walk straight down from the Brighton and Hove station will bring you to the beach which is covered with tiny white, cream,

red and brown pebbles. In the summer there are dozens of shacks, ice cream vendors and pubs open all day across the length of the beach. Surprisingly even nearing the end of September, a lot of these are open for business.

The wind ruffled our hair, gusted in our ears and at times almost made us feel like we would be swooped up with it Wizard of Oz style. Closer to the winter, be sure to wear ear muffs as you stand and gaze at the threatening yet gripping view of the waves.

### The Brighton Pier

A leisurely walk down the beach will bring you to the Pier - vibrant, colorful and fun, this spot allows for hours of entertainment and relaxing. With trinket shops, bars, restaurants, funny



## Midnight rides at

# Boat

## St. Petersburg



The curly haired guide on the motorboat I am jumping into from a pier near Zaharevskaya, in Saint Petersburg, shoots unflattering looks. Is it just the strange Russian temperament I've encountered on this trip or can she actually be annoyed at me for arriving two-and-a-half minutes later than 11.30 pm, the reporting time, I wonder. It is only after our twilight cruise zips through narrow canals and reaches

the imposing Neva river that I infer her reaction - the bridge we're beholding has begun to creak open from the middle as traffic on both sides and that of click-happy visitors underneath has paused itself.

By ten minutes after midnight, its illuminated ends open fully, dramatically posing against a still-blue sky. Subsequent bridge sightings and sips of 'champanska' make me feel like I'm in a

fine coffee table book. Also, note to self: in this far-west Russian city, sunset will happen well past midnight (or won't happen at all one month every year), bridges will creak open at the stroke of midnight and tourist boats will leave just before midnight.

With dozens of channels of St Petersburg serving as arteries to the Neva, it's only fair that one takes the water way to explore it. After Peter the Great discovered this swampland in 1703 and planned it with careful imaginations of Vienna, London and Paris, the result was a heady ode to Europe, which today also bears a silent Tsarist hangover. And the 'kanals' have inspired articulate bridges (539 to be precise, highest in the world) so make sure you tag your architect friends in your Facebook pictures.

### Take my weird for it

Always a sucker for history or culture walks, I went into overdrive at St Pete's. Judging by one of the day cruises I took, this city feels like one huge gleaming museum, with its onion-domed churches, lavish palaces and former homes and working spaces of Russia's greatest artists including Pushkin, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. However, it didn't need me a guide to spot the reasonable share of Soviet blandness here, for just around corners sculpted with Greek Gods, I'd run into an odd-looking apartment or a defunct prison from the Cold War.

These reminders of the city's military history can be eerie for some, and the lack of English signs or the locals' shy demeanour could only confuse matters. But then, there are sights of the most opulent buildings (St Isaac's Cathedral, Mariinsky theatre, Winter Palace) which make up for the above and swoop you to the time when St Pete's was Leningrad and further back, when it was the capital of imperial Russia. Throw in some stern-looking, big-nosed modern Russian characters (cabbies, shop attendants, waiters et al) and you'd have a blog-ful of anecdotes.

### Eat, play, love

The cuisine is perhaps where Peter's idea of this city being the 'window to Europe' seems to have worked. Most of St Pete's eat streets look Parisian by ambience, feel German for their love of beer and sound Spanish with their live gigs. While it would be callous to ignore the pastas and tapas, it'll be criminal to miss local hits such

as the blini (stuffed pancake), kartoshka (huge potato filled with all the vices you can think of) and Baltika beer (the city is a proud home to Eastern Europe's most popular brew).

And wait, after having had 'Russian' salad in fast food joints or the Stroganoff in aspiring European restaurants back home, it was worthwhile tasting the real deal here. Especially the latter, whose original beef version comes from the noble kitchen of the Stroganovs, prominent art collectors of this city!

I hit upon a couple of 'surprise entrants' though; in finding a sushi place more easily than a traditional Russian place (yes, Japanese is the 'Chinese' here). Secondly, it felt foolhardy to expect locals downing vodka like we down nimbu pani. Turns out it's more of a have-at-home poison, especially during the bitter winter.

If, however, you like them drinks mixed with music and in the company of damsels, Nevsky Prospekt is what you should mark on your map.



Not to give you yardsticks, but here are the takeaways of my weekend here:

1. After extensive pub crawls here, I figured that there's much to experience in both the hole-in-the-wall and the 'closed-footwearonly' categories of bars (snooker with drunk middle-aged men and grooving to David Guetta respectively, for instance).
2. The absolute mayhem on the streets with loud, drunk revelers spilling out and loitering till breakfast hours, is enjoyable and free of moral police.
3. Beer's cheaper than water and can be picked

up at convenience stores (FYI, President Medvedev signed a bill which acknowledged beer as 'alcoholic' only this year!)

4. Many Sharapova-esque damsels are drop-dead stunning, but unless you have a Rapidex Russian booklet or some prolific gestural skills up your sleeve, you wouldn't get close to scoring with any. All this said, if there's one reason why you must take your partner or children to this ex-Tsarist kingdom, it's for the charm you'd find after getting over its 'weirdness'. Many would credit this to its proximity to Europe (an hour's ride from Helsinki), but its hometown appeal shouldn't be overlooked. The petunias which dot the lampposts, the violinists who fill sidewalks with Kalinka or just the sharp, stylish locals you spot on the other side of unending subway escalators - you could either find all this strange or fascinating. But then it would just take a river cruise down the Neva on a white night for you to decide on the latter.

### Getting there

-There are direct flights to St Petersburg from Delhi. Stopover at Moscow and spend at least 3 days exploring. Spend 2 days in Tashkent.

-The best months to visit Russia - May and October, ideally June for its stunning white nights. Some brave travellers would even vouch for St Pete's freezing winter charm.

### Costs

-On the lower side by European standards, St Pete's costs are remarkably lesser than Moscow's.

**-Beer pint:** 150 Roubles in bars. About 50 Roubles outside (Rs 80)

**-Main course:** 250 Roubles (Rs 414) » Budget hostel: 800 Roubles - 1000 Roubles (Rs 1300-Rs 1500)

**-Flights:** Return fares from Mumbai-Moscow during non-winter times range from Rs 42,000 - Rs 55,000. A second-class A/c train ride to St Pete's costs approx 2700 Roubles (Rs 4,500).

**-Web:** www.saint-petersburg.com

# SC extends stay on court-monitored survey of Shahi Idgah mosque complex in Mathura

**The bench said in the meanwhile the interim order of the Allahabad High Court staying the court-monitored survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque complex will continue to operate.**

**NEW DELHI.** The Supreme Court on Wednesday extended its stay on the Allahabad High Court's order that permitted a court-monitored survey of the Shahi Idgah Mosque complex in Mathura. The complex is located adjacent to the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple, a site of significant religious importance for Hindus. A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and justices Sanjay Kumar and KV Viswanathan said it will defer the hearing on the plea of the Committee of Management of Trust Shahi Masjid Idgah against the court-monitored survey of the mosque complex in the week commencing April 1. The CJ said there were three issues pending now with the apex court and they are the issue of an intra-court appeal (against consolidation of lawsuits filed by the Hindu litigants), the other one is the Act (challenge to the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991) itself. List in the week commencing April 1. The bench said in the meanwhile the interim order of the Allahabad High Court staying the court-monitored survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque complex will continue to operate.



The top court, on January 16 last year, had first stayed the operation of the December 14, 2023 order of the high court. The high court had allowed a court-monitored survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque complex and agreed to the appointment of a court commissioner to oversee it. The Hindu side claims the premises hold signs suggesting that a temple once existed at the site. Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, appearing for the Hindu parties, had said the appeal of the mosque committee was filed against the December 14, 2023 order of the high court and connected orders in the matter had become

infructuous. "All these petitions have become infructuous as the high court has pronounced its order later," he said. Jain referred to the subsequent order of the high court by which it rejected a plea of the Muslim parties challenging the maintainability of 18 cases related to the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah dispute in Mathura, and ruled that the religious character of the mosque needs to be determined. The high court had dismissed the Muslim side's contention that the suits filed by the Hindu litigants relating to the dispute over the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple and the adjacent mosque violated the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act of 1991 and therefore were not maintainable. The 1991 Act prohibits changing the religious character of any shrine from what existed on the day of the country's Independence. It exempted only the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute from its purview. In Mathura, a suit was filed in the court of Civil Judge Senior Division (III) for shifting the Shahi Idgah mosque, claiming that it was constructed on a part of the 13.37 acre land of the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Trust.

## Top Maoist Leader Evaded Cops For Decades. Selfie With Wife Cost Him His Life

**New Delhi.** Jayaram Reddy, a senior Maoist leader also known as Chalapati, escaped security forces for decades until a selfie with his wife, Aruna alias Chaitanya Venkat Ravi, cost him his life. He was among 20 Maoists killed in a joint operation by central and state police forces along the Chhattisgarh-Odisha border this week. Chalapati carried a reward of Rs 1 crore and was the mastermind of the February 2008 attack in Odisha's Nayagarh district, in which 13 security personnel lost their lives. He ensured the Maoists could successfully escape from Nayagarh after robbing the police armoury, a senior officer involved in anti-Maoist operations told the news agency PTI on Wednesday. He also ensured that police reinforcements could not enter Nayagarh when the attack on the armoury was underway and the Maoists had blocked all roads leading to the town with massive tree trunks, the officer said. He stayed incognito for years but a selfie with his wife Aruna, a 'deputy commander' of the Andhra Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee (AOBSZC), helped security forces identify him. The picture was found in an abandoned smartphone that was recovered in May 2016 following an encounter between Maoists and security forces in Andhra Pradesh. A bounty of Rs 1 crore was then announced on his head, forcing him to travel with a security detail comprising 8-10 personal guards.

A resident of Andhra Pradesh's Chittoor -- where Maoist activities have ended now -- Chalapati was a senior member of the central committee of the Maoists, which is the highest decision-making body within the group. He was mainly active in Chhattisgarh's Bastar but relocated his base a few months ago due to the increasing frequency of encounters in the area. He shifted near the Odisha border, seeking a safer operational zone. He was considered an expert in military tactics and guerrilla warfare, officials said. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who has vowed to eradicate Maoists by March 2026, called the encounter "another mighty blow to Naxalism". Our security forces achieved major success through building a Naxal-free Bharat. The CRPF, SoG Odisha, and Chhattisgarh Police neutralised 14 Naxalites in a joint operation along the Odisha-Chhattisgarh border," he posted on X.

## Delhi Assembly polls: BJP promises free education for the needy from KG to PG

**NEW DELHI.** Days after unveiling the first phase of Sankalp Patra, the BJP came up with the second one on Tuesday, with a slew of promises aimed at students and marginalised communities. The manifesto, presented by BJP leader Anurag Thakur, included free education from Kindergarten (KG) to Post-graduation (PG), Rs 1,000 monthly stipend for students from the SC community, besides others. The former Union minister said that once the BJP forms the government, it will address problems related to transportation, water, electricity, education, and healthcare. "Once voted to power, we will provide youngsters with Rs 15,000 to help them prepare for better institutions. We will cover their travel expenses,



and application fees will also be reimbursed for up to two attempts. This is the guarantee from Modi Ji. We announce the allocation of Rs 1,000 as a stipend under the Dr BR Ambedkar Stipend Scheme for ST students studying in technical courses at ITI and Skill Centres in Delhi," Thakur said. Thakur also promised to set up an Auto-Taxi Welfare Board and provide life insurance of up to Rs 10 lakh and accident insurance of up to Rs 5 lakh for drivers. "We will also offer scholarships for the children of auto-taxi drivers pursuing higher education." Highlighting achievements of PM Swamitva Yojana, Thakur claimed that if BJP comes to power, four lakh street vendors will benefit.

**Why CAG report not tabled?** Questioning why the CAG report was not tabled in the Assembly, Anurag Thakur said once the BJP forms the government, an SIT will be set up to investigate the scams of AAP dispensation

## 'We find no merit': Delhi HC rejects appeal against EVM in elections

**NEW DELHI.** The Delhi High Court on Tuesday dismissed an appeal challenging the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in elections across various constituencies. The petitioner had argued that Section 61-A of the Representation of the People Act mandates the Election Commission of India (ECI) to provide specific justifications for using EVMs in each constituency.

The bench, comprising Acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela, rejected the appeal, stating, "We find no merit in the present appeal, and the same is dismissed." The petitioner sought a directive for the ECI to comply with Section 61-A before conducting elections using EVMs. He contended that the ECI should evaluate the necessity of EVM usage based on the unique circumstances of each constituency and provide detailed justifications accordingly. However, the court noted that the provision allows the ECI, under its discretion, to implement EVMs as prescribed.

The ECI had already issued directives, specifying the constituencies where EVMs would be employed, and these were placed on record. The petitioner insisted that the ECI must individually justify EVM usage for each constituency. However, the bench concluded that the language of Section 61-A does not mandate such specificity and dismissed the appeal. Previously, in July 2024, a bench led by Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav had dismissed a similar plea, noting that the issue had already been settled through prior judicial decisions.

The bench found no substantial grounds for further intervention. The petitioner, Ramesh Chander, had sought a court directive for the ECI to adhere to Section 61-A of the Act before proceeding with elections using EVMs. He expressed concerns over the lack of detailed reasons for EVM deployment in individual constituencies, which the court ultimately found unsubstantiated.

## CBI opposes Bengal government's appeal for death penalty in RG Kar case

**NEW DELHI.** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday opposed the West Bengal government's appeal before the Calcutta High Court against the life imprisonment sentence to Sanjay Roy. Roy was convicted of the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at RG Kar hospital in Kolkata last year.

"Only the prosecuting agency can challenge the sentence on grounds of inadequacy," CBI told the Calcutta High Court saying that the state cannot file an appeal in the matter since the matter has been probed by the CBI.

During the hearing before a division bench comprising Justices Debangshu Basak and Md Shabbir Rashidi, the CBI said that only the prosecuting agency in the case has the authority to challenge a sentence. The probe agency asserted that since the

case was investigated by them, the state government lacks the jurisdiction to file an appeal in the matter. The Advocate General, appearing for the state, countered CBI's claim, and said



that the initial FIR in the case was filed by the state police and the matter was only later transferred to the CBI. "Law and order is under the state's jurisdiction," added the Advocate General. The high court bench said that

it would consider submissions from the CBI, the victim's family, and Sanjay Roy before deciding on whether to admit the state government's appeal. The case will now be heard further on Monday (January 27).

### KOLKATA RAPE MURDER CASE

A Kolkata court on January 20 sentenced Sanjay Roy, the convict in the rape and murder case of a trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, to life imprisonment until death. The court also ordered Roy to pay a fine of Rs 50,000. Sanjay Roy, a civic volunteer, was convicted by the court on Saturday under Section 64 (rape), Section 66 (punishment for causing death), and Section 103 (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The case sparked protests and outrage among thousands of people nationwide.

## SC stays construction of Vallalar International Centre in Vadalur

**NEW DELHI.** The Supreme Court has stayed the construction of the new Vadalur Vallalar International Centre in the Peruvelli area of Cuddalore district.

An interim order in this regard was passed by a division bench comprising Justices Sudhansu Dhulia and Vinod Chandran. The bench was hearing a petition filed by Vinodh Raghavendran challenging the state government's project, claiming it went against Vallalar's principles and wishes. Counsel for the petitioner said the construction of an international centre

at the Vadalur Vallalar temple is not only illegal but also against the wishes of Vallalar. A spiritual place cannot be



commercialised claiming betterment of the poor and the court should consider this, the counsel argued.

Ordering a stay on any new construction, the apex court said, "A status quo would remain until the hearing on the matter is completed." The Supreme Court also issued a notice to the state government to respond to the appeal and posted the matter for further hearing on February 28. Earlier, in Chennai, a case was filed in the Madras High Court against the permission granted to set up the centre at the Vallalar Sathya Gnana Sabha located in Vadalur (Cuddalore district) and to construct a nursing home, a Siddha hospital, and other constructions on land one km away from the temple, by converting an agricultural land.

# Saif Ali Khan's security guards were asleep when attacker entered house: Cops

**The Mumbai Police said that both the security guards of the building where Saif Ali Khan resides were asleep when the attacker entered the building by scaling the compound wall.**

**New Delhi.** The Bangladeshi national who has been arrested for stabbing Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan entered the actor's building on January 16 by scaling its compound wall, and found the security guards sleeping at that time, police said. The intruder, Shariful Islam

Shehzad alias Vijay Das (30), entered the building from the main entrance where no CCTV cameras were installed, a police official was quoted as saying by news agency PTI. When he found that both the security guards in the building were sleeping, he entered it by crossing the boundary wall. Shehzad then removed his shoes and kept them in his bag to avoid any noise and also switched off his phone, the official said. "During the probe, the police found that there are no CCTV cameras installed in the building's corridor. The investigation revealed that one of the two security guards was sleeping in the cabin and the other near the gate," he was quoted as saying. The Mumbai Police recreated the crime scene at the actor's 12-storey residence in Bandra

with the accused on Tuesday. The police spent about an hour inside the actor's residence, while trying to understand how the attacker, Shehzad, carried out



the crime with the intention of committing a robbery. Shehzad entered the 54-year-old actor's house on January 16 reportedly with the intention of committing theft.

However, the situation escalated when he was spotted by a house help in the room of Saif's younger son, Jeh. The staff raised an alarm, prompting Saif to confront the intruder. During the altercation, the actor was stabbed multiple times, including a serious wound near his spine. Saif was rushed to Lilavati Hospital, where doctors performed immediate surgery to take out a piece of knife lodged in his back, as well as to stop leakage of spinal fluid. He was discharged from the hospital on Tuesday, five days after the incident. Meanwhile, the police said that the accused, who was arrested from Thane on January 19, entered the country illegally seven months ago and used a West Bengal resident's Aadhaar card to procure a SIM before moving to Mumbai.





monastery have been discovered. Towards the west of the village, visitors can see a well preserved portion of the monastery's a long narrow hall surrounded by pillars. There is an image of Mayadevi near the site and an inscription on the back of it refers to 10th century AD.

**Padmasambhava Mahavihara Monastery**

Amidst the verdant surroundings in Jirang near Chandragiri of Gajapati district, stands the beautiful Padmasambhava Mahavihara monastery, reportedly the largest in eastern India. The colony which houses the monastery is Buddha Vihar (the land of happiness and plenty) and area is popularly known as a mini Tibet in Odisha. It is a part of the Rigon Thubten Mindolling monastery that was part of the Tibetan settlement near Chandragiri. The monastery is named after Acharya Padmasambhava, who was born in Odisha and is believed to have spread Buddhism to Tibet in 7th century. Driving through the roads of Jirang, visitors are welcomed to the Buddha Vihar with Buddhist flags on both sides of the road. Inaugurated by Dalai Lama in 2010, it has been built as per the 'Atanpuri style of Nalanda' and in the assembly hall, a 23-foot-high idol of Lord Buddha along with his two disciples have been installed. On the right side of the Buddha's idol is the 1000-armed, 1000-eyed Avalokiteswar. While on the left, is the large idol of Guru Nangsi Zilnon. The five-storey monastery has its interiors richly decorated with traditional religious paintings of Tibetan culture. The 70-feet-high monastery can house over 200 Lamas. Apparently, Jirang is considered one of the earliest Tibetan resettlement villages in the country; the Tibetans had arrived here on May 1, 1963. Visitors can also experience maize cultivation in the village, which is the main avocation of the Tibetans. Jirang can be approached by road through Berhampur.

**Kuruma**

Located 10 km south-east of the popular Sun temple in Konark, is the ancient lesser known Buddhist site of Kuruma. It is said that a Buddhist monastery flourished in the area, remnants of which were found during excavations by the State Archaeology wing. In fact, in the pages of history, this monastery has been mentioned by Hiuen Tsang. The origin of the site is dated to be between 8th and 9th century AD.



At the site currently, there is a small temple which houses three Buddhist images: crowned Buddha seated in Bhumisparsa mudra, Padmapani Avalokitesvara and Revanta. These three images are jointly worshipped as 'Yamadharma' by Kuruma villagers. These images were found near a water tank called Dharma Pokhari (tank of Dharma), located at one end of the village, by a school teacher Brajabandhu Dash in the 70s. Later on, the archaeological wing started excavating the site. Historians say the length and width of the monastery is 34 m each and it also houses a shrine chamber, cells for Buddhist monks and a large courtyard, which is in the shape of 'Swastik', denoting tantric Buddhism (Vajrayana or Tantrayana). Visitors can hire taxis from either Puri or Konark to reach Kuruma.

# The Buddhist heritage of Odisha

Even though Lord Buddha had never visited Odisha during his lifetime, the state has a rich heritage of Buddhism. In fact, Odisha is home to more than 200 Buddhist sites, scattered across its length and breadth. Here, Buddhism flourished from the 6th century BC to at least 15th to 16th century AD. After the death of the Buddha, his followers were divided into two sects: 'Hinayana' and 'Mahayana'. The latest Buddhist phase is 'Vajrayana' which is believed to have been originated from Odisha. According to the Buddhist scholars of Odisha Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies, Biraja (modern Jajpur) was a sacred land of Buddha Padmaprabha and the cradle of 'Mahayana'. The presence of 'Mahayana' antiquities, stupas and relics in Jajpur district are a testimony to this. Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang visited these Buddhist sites in Odisha in the 7th century and between 8th and 10th century. Buddhism was the religion under the Bhaumakaras clan. The tantric form of 'Mahayana' Buddhism started during this period. One of the most popular Buddhist destinations in Odisha is the Diamond Triangle comprising Ratnagiri, Udayagiri

and Lalitgiri in Jajpur district. There are several places in the state where Buddhism is still practiced today. Here's a look at the sites that would interest travellers on exploring Buddhist heritage of Odisha.

**Langudi**

Explore the remains of a Buddhist centre of learning that flourished till 11th century at Langudi Hill, located 90 km away from Bhubaneswar. The site is situated in Salipur village of Jajpur district. There are a series of 34 rock-cut Buddhist stupas and several early medieval Buddhist monuments and shrines atop the hill. The most popular of these rock-cut stupas is the 7th century 'Smaudra Mudra' image of Lord Buddha. Historians say the hill also has the remains of Pushpagiri University or Puspagiri Mahavihara, a major Buddhist centre of learning that flourished from 2nd century BC to 10th century AD. Excavations by Odisha Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies revealed that the structures found on Langudi Hill are even older and larger than other Buddhist centres of learning like Nalanda and Vikramashila. The remains indicate that it was a centre

of the Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana sects of Buddhism. The northern part of the hill houses the country's oldest Ashoka stupa. Besides images of Buddha in various postures, there are sculptures of Hindu goddesses on the hill. Flowing below the hill is river Kelua, a tributary of river Brahmani. This is a centrally protected site by the Archaeological Survey of India.

**Buddhist sites in Balasore and Bhadrak**

The districts of Balasore and Bhadrak have a significant number of smaller Buddhist sites. Numerous Buddhist relics, both small and big, lie scattered in Balasore district. There is a museum in Santikanan area which contains images of Khasarpana, Lokeswar, Avalokiteswar, Buddha and Tara. At the 11th century Marichi temple in Ajodhya area of Balasore district, the idols of Goddess Durga (Mahayana Goddess Marichi) and Lord Buddha are worshipped together. Besides these main idols, there are other smaller idols related to Tantric cult and Jainism. There is a small Buddhist stupa on the temple premises. Images of Buddha can also be found at Khadipada and Soro. The ideal base to visit these places is through the town of Balasore with the help of a taxi. Surrounded by hills on three sides, lies a quaint village called Kupari in Bhadrak district (67 km away from Balasore), where remains of an old Buddhist temple and a

# The wonders of Leh and Ladakh



If you are scouring for a comprehensive guide for the places to visit in Leh and Ladakh, here is some help. Check out Pangong Tso that is the undisputed highlight of the region and everything you wanted to know about it. Choose from the ancient monasteries of Lamayuru and Diskit, drive off to the high and mighty Khardung La Pass, wonder in awe at the first sight of Potala Palace's lookalike - Thiksey Monastery or go searching for the elusive Changpas when you visit Tso Moriri. Head out to the Himalayas for a lifetime's experience. Leh and Ladakh have wonders waiting for you.

**Leh Palace**

Quite an impressive replica of Lhasa's Potala Palace, the Leh Palace is a major attraction in Leh. A nine storey structure in

dun colour, it was the erstwhile home to the royals of Ladakh, built at the behest of King Sengge Namgyal in the 17th century. The Leh Palace rises up against the backdrop of the lofty Himalayas, looking more like a painter's muse. Built mostly of mud, rocks and wood, it is grand in its simplicity. The palace also houses a rich collection of traditional dresses and crowns, thangka paintings and some impressive traditional ornaments. The best part about Leh Palace is its terrace for you can pore over Leh, Stok Kangri and the Zaskar range from it. This one cannot be missed for it looms high in the skyline of Leh, standing guard over this Himalayan kingdom.

**Stok Palace**

Stok Palace is the less majestic yet more famous of the palaces in Ladakh. At some 14 km from Leh, it was the once summer palace

of Ladakh's royal family. Built over 200 years ago, Stok Palace houses some rare ancient paintings of Buddhist deities Shakyamuni, Avalokiteshwara, Vajrapani, Tara, Amchi etc. The palace museum also houses some 100 plus volumes of Buddhist teachings and a giant statue of Avalokiteshwara. Some interesting artifacts like the jewel-studded crown of Ladakh's erstwhile queen are also housed in the palace. The palace also has a cafe on its terrace and some rooms open for visitors. Prior booking has to be made in case you wish to stay here. Stok Palace is a major pit-stop if you are eager to hit some impressive treks in the Himalayas around.

**Pangong Tso**

While no words can be apt enough to describe Pangong Tso, words like 'magic' and 'surreal' can be put to good use here. This astonishing, blue-water body at 14,270 ft is guarded by looming mountains. One of the most stunning lakes of the world, Pangong Tso covers 134 km and touches India and Tibet. Also important as a major wetland, it sees flocks of migratory birds in summers. Visiting it in winters is, of course, an out of this world experience for it is completely frozen at that time. The lake lies in the Changthang region of Ladakh at some 170 km from Leh, and has just one cemented stay facility nearby. Foreign nationals need Inner Line Permit to visit the lake; thus it's advisable to check for visitor's guidelines beforehand.

**Lamayuru Monastery**

Lamayuru, fondly referred to as the Moon Land, is a major stopover on the Leh-Kargil Road. Hidden in the folds of the mountains of this mystical land is the Lamayuru Monastery. One of the oldest gompas in Ladakh and Spiti, this monastery is perched atop a cliff. Going by the legends, this region was once under a lake that was made to dry up by a holy man. The



main sanctum of the monastery has a cave where Mahasiddha Naropa meditated for years. The entire region is considered sacred owing to the monastery's presence and a visit is believed to liberate people from all their sins. Other than its religious significance, the place looks like a picture postcard that has turned real.

**Tsemo Fort**

This fort cum monastery stands guard over the city of Leh and is a major landmark, visible from everywhere in the city. Built by King Tashi Namgyal, it sees elaborate Buddhist ceremonies in morning and evening. Take the trail leading to the monastery from Leh to witness the interesting rituals. It also houses a three-storey tall statue of Maitreya Buddha, its face made out of solid gold. Also a vantage point for photographers, its terrace gives a bird's eye view of the whole city. Visit it early in the morning to escape the scorching heat, witness the rituals as well as click great shots in the almost golden light that lights it up.

**Stok Kangri**

Stok Kangri is the highest mountain peak in the Stok range of the Himalayas. At 20,500 ft, it is also the highest trekkable summit in India. It has always been a great lure for trekkers from all over the world and is quite popular since it requires

relatively less trekking skills. Ideally done between 6-10 days, it is one of the must have Ladakh experiences. You need to be properly acclimatised to the high altitude conditions before attempting this one. It is advisable to make a summit attempt if you have prior experience of scaling some 14,000 ft peaks. A lot of mental fitness also goes into this one, for weather can take sudden turns on the trek to Stok Kangri. Still, it is a must do if adventure is your calling and you harbour a secret wish to scale a world-famous Indian peak.

**Shanti Stupa**

Another one for the shutterbugs and the ones interested in culture and Buddhism. A stark white stupa (chorten) standing tall (4276 m) against a backdrop of the barren brown mountains, the Shanti Stupa is nothing less than fascinating. It was built by monks from Ladakh and Japan in 1983 to mark 2500 years of Buddhism in the region and promote world peace. The stupa houses Buddhist relics, placed here by the 14th Dalai Lama. A popular meditation site, it also has a simple cafe which makes up for the hard 15-minute climb up the stairs. Photographers must mark it in bold on their itinerary, for it's a perfect place to shoot time lapse sequences.

## Zomato shares down over 23% in a month. Should you buy or avoid

**NEW DELHI.** Shares of Zomato fell for the third straight session, continuing its poor run on Dalal Street after reporting Q3FY25 results. Zomato's stock price has fallen 14% in the previous two sessions and over 23% in the past month. The fall in Zomato's share price comes after a period of strong gains as its profit in the third quarter dipped sharply to Rs 59 crore. While analysts did acknowledge the drop in net profit in Q3FY25, they remain bullish about the company's quick commerce division, Blinkit.

### SHOULD YOU BUY OR AVOID?

Despite the fall in Zomato's share price, brokerage firms remain optimistic about the company, albeit with rising competition. As mentioned earlier, most of the brokerages remain bullish on Zomato's long-term performance due to Blinkit, which they say is well-positioned to retain a top spot in the quick commerce space. Brokerage firms such as Nomura, Jefferies, and Bernstein are all optimistic about Zomato's long-term growth potential. However, most of the brokerages said the near-term losses may be higher due to the rapid expansion of dark stores.

It is also worth noting that brokerages such as Nuvama Institutional Equities and Jefferies have trimmed their target price on Zomato's stock. ZOMATO Q3 PERFORMANCE

In the third quarter, Zomato reported a 57% decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 59 crore, compared to Rs 138 crore in the year-ago period. Its revenue from operations rose 64.39% to Rs 5,405 crore in the quarter, compared to Rs 3,288 crore in the year-ago

## Sensex, Nifty open higher driven by a rally in IT sector stocks; Wipro gains 2%

**New Delhi.** Benchmark stock market indices gained in early trade to open higher on Wednesday after witnessing a crash in the last session. The market was driven by gains in information technology (IT) stocks. The S&P BSE Sensex was up 246.41 points to 76,084.77, while the NSE Nifty 50 added 62.15 points to 23,086.80 as of 9:26 AM.

Dr. V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services said, "President Trump's orders and announcements, so far, have been disruptive. He is doing tough talking initially to send the message that more stern measures are in the offing. Trump's threat to impose 100% tariffs on BRICS if they attempt dedollarisation is a repeat of his election campaign rhetoric. It appears that the markets took this threat too seriously." The India VIX index which rose significantly in the last session, settled lower with a gain of 0.42%. Nifty Smallcap100 and Nifty Midcap100 both saw declines, falling 1.92% and 1.72% respectively.

Only FMCG and IT sectoral indices remained to stay positive, with all others trading in red. IT index gained 0.87% while FMCG was up 0.35%.

Wipro led the IT sector stocks with a healthy gain of 2.11%, followed by Infosys which rose 1.58%. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) advanced 1.42%, while Tech Mahindra gained 0.95%. Coforge moved up by 0.60%, and HCL Technologies added 0.50%. Mphasis showed a modest increase of 0.08%.

However, some IT stocks faced pressure, with Persistent Systems declining 5.77%, L&T Technology Services dropping 0.90%, and LTI Mindtree falling 0.52%. Real estate sector saw the biggest decline, falling 3.36%. "Nifty is down around 12% from September highs. The correction provides a good opportunity for long-term investors to buy quality stocks, which are now available at fair valuations. The key to success will be patience," added Vijayakumar.

## 'Trump's energy policy may lead to higher oil supplies from US'

**NEW DELHI:** Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Purisaid that there is potential for increased US energy exports to India, following the Trump administration's plans to maximise oil and gas production. Speaking on the sidelines of the third International Symposium on Thriving Eco-Energy in Mobility, organised by the auto industry body SIAM, Puri said India's oil suppliers have increased from 27 to 39, and that more suppliers are always welcome.

Crude oil volumes from the US could rise significantly from April 2025 onwards, as the Trump administration moves to remove export barriers and authorises natural gas quotas, according to officials. Reports suggest that US shale oil may become an alternative to India's current reliance on Russian crude, which is under sanctions. On Tuesday, Donald Trump declared a national energy emergency, granting himself sweeping powers to ease environmental restrictions on energy infrastructure and projects, as well as to streamline permitting for new transmission and pipeline developments.

He also signed an executive order to resume processing export permits for new LNG projects. A staunch supporter of fracking and increased crude oil production, Trump has signalled plans to raise US oil exports to record levels, with the proceeds aimed at reducing the national debt.

Trump's policy shift is seen as a positive development for India's energy security, particularly in relation to its crude oil imports, according to officials from the Ministry of Petroleum. The US is well-positioned to expand its crude oil exports to India. Despite the Biden administration's emphasis on transitioning to cleaner energy, the US has remained the fifth-largest crude supplier to India for two consecutive years, though its ranking has dropped since FY22," an official said.

# Budget 2025: Raghuram Rajan says tax cuts won't solve India's fiscal problems

**Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan said that he is not worried about the reduction in tax rates but instead about the need for more effective government spending, particularly in human capital development.**

**New Delhi** The Budget is just a week away and salaried taxpayers are hoping for some income tax relief to cope with high inflation and the cost of living. However, Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan said that he is not worried about the reduction in tax rates but instead about the need for more effective government spending, particularly in human capital development. Speaking to India Today News Director Rahul Kanwal on the

sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Rajan expressed concerns about India's fiscal situation. "It's not so much the tax rate I would worry about. I think our fiscal situation, though the government has spent a lot of time trying to keep it on track, is not that sound," the former RBI governor said, while highlighting that fiscal situations have worsened globally. Rajan said that with current nominal growth rates, debt becomes a concern when considering the combined state and central fiscal deficits.

"Our debt starts becoming an issue with the kind of combined government and state and central fiscal deficit. Right now, those numbers are very comparable. We don't have much room to expand spending without seeing debt grow much faster than we want. So I would say at this point, it's not so much on cutting taxes, as on spending in a more effective way," he said. Instead of tax cuts, Raghuram Rajan



advocated for more targeted and effective government spending, particularly in developing human capital.

"When we spend in a more effective way, I would say that focusing on increasing the quality of our human capital at every level - whether it's the health of our children, reducing malnutrition, or improving the quality of primary schools, improving the

quality of our universities," he said.

The former RBI chief highlighted the importance of human capital in India's development journey. "If we invest, we have a chance in the new economy of the future. If we don't invest, I think we're going to reach the point where we want to be a developed country without the human capital to do it," he added. Former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan on Tuesday expressed strong concerns over newly-appointed US President Donald Trump's proposed tariff hikes. Rajan described the tariff hike plans as a "big source of uncertainty" that could disrupt global economic stability.

These comments come ahead of the upcoming Union Budget, where experts have suggested the possibility of income tax rate cuts to boost consumption, which will induce growth.

## Denta Water IPO opens for bidding: Should you subscribe? Check latest GMP

**New Delhi.** The initial public offering of Denta Water and Infra Solutions Limited opened for bidding on Wednesday aiming to raise Rs 220.50 crore through a fresh issue of 75 lakh shares. Denta Water and Infra Solutions Ltd. (DWISL) specialises in the design, installation, and commissioning of water management projects, with a primary focus on groundwater recharge solutions.

Established in 2016 and based in Bangalore, Karnataka, DWISL also undertakes construction projects within the railway and highway sectors, leveraging its expertise to deliver high-quality infrastructure solutions.

### DENTA WATER IPO REVIEW

The price band for the IPO of Denta Water has been set at Rs 279-294 per share with retail investors required to invest a minimum of Rs 14,700. The minimum lot size for an application is 50. For sNII, the minimum investment requires 14 lots, which equals 700 shares and amounts to Rs 2,05,800. On the other hand, bNII investors need to

invest in at least 69 lots, or 3,450 shares, which comes to Rs 10,14,300. The 3-day bidding process for the IPO will close on January 24, 2024.

The public listing of Denta Water IPO has already raised Rs 66.15 crore from



anchor investors.

### SHOULD YOU SUBSCRIBE?

The Indian water and wastewater treatment market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 6.20% in terms of value to reach \$24 billion in 2033 from USD \$11 billion in 2023. "At the upper price band of Rs 294, Denta is available at a P/E of 16.2 (FY25 Annualised), which is at a discount compared to its listed peers. The company's focus on water management projects and growing

market opportunities present prospects for the company's future growth. With a robust order pipeline and consistent financial performance featuring industry-leading margins, the company is set for future success. We recommend subscribing to this issue for short- to medium-term investment," said an IPO report from Geojit. Proceeds from the IPO will be used by the company for general corporate purposes and to manage working capital. LATEST GMP OF DENTA WATER IPO The grey market premium (GMP) for the IPO of Denta Water has gone up in the last couple of days in the unofficial/unregulated grey market.

As of the latest update on January 22, 2024, the public listing commands a GMP of Rs 165 which translates to an expected listing gain of over 56%. The expected listing price as per the GMP is Rs 459 for the IPO. Allotment of shares for the IPO will be finalised on January 27, 2025. Denta Water IPO is expected to make its market debut on Wednesday, January 29, 2025.

## Reliance Consumer to acquire SIL, gears up to challenge HUL, Tata in FMCG

**New Delhi.** Reliance Consumer Products is set to acquire packaged foods brand SIL Food India, which offers a range of products including cooking pastes, jams, mayonnaise, baked beans, and Chinese sauces. The acquisition formalities have been completed, according to a report by The Economic Times.

Pune-based company SIL Food India primarily operates in the Western and Southern markets, and Reliance Consumer Products Ltd (RCPL) plans to expand its distribution nationally to compete with FMCG majors like HUL, Tata Consumer, and Cremica. Strategic acquisition The acquisition involves Reliance Consumer Products acquiring SIL brands from its current owner, Food Service India. SIL operates manufacturing facilities in Pune and Bengaluru, as listed on its website. SIL Food India, originally known as James Smith & Co, was first acquired by Marico Industries in 1993. Marico later sold the business to Scandic Food India, a subsidiary of Denmark's Good Food Group. In 2021, Food Service India, a company that supplies seasonings, spices, and condiments to the hospitality industry, acquired SIL Foods. Competitive strategy Reliance Consumer Products plans to continue its strategy of pricing its products lower than competitors, offering higher trade margins to retailers and reviving legacy brands. The acquisition will involve SIL brands, but not the company or its manufacturing facilities. The Economic Times report mentioned. This deal is part of RCPL's broader acquisition strategy, which in recent years has included Ravalgaon and Toffeeman confectioneries, Campa soft drinks, Raskik beverages, Soso carbonated drinks, and Lotus chocolates. RCPL's growth in FY25 Reliance Consumer Products Ltd (RCPL), a fully owned subsidiary of Reliance Retail Ventures (RRVL), has shown impressive growth, reporting a top line of Rs 8,000 crore for the first nine months of FY25. During its December quarter earnings, RRVL announced that its Campa and Independence brands are projected to reach Rs 1,000 crore by the end of FY25. The company also witnessed nearly 300 per cent year-on-year growth in its distribution network and merchant outlets between October and December 2024. Packaged foods market

Recent market activity in the packaged foods sector includes Samara Capital-backed Agro Tech Foods acquiring a 100 per cent stake in Del Monte Foods, valued at Rs 1,300 crore. Additionally, Compass India Food Services, a subsidiary.

## Insurers want GST to continue on term plans

**NEW DELHI.** At a time when the ministerial panel on GST rationalisation is seeking to ensure that the benefits of lower tax are passed on to consumers, life insurance companies have petitioned against exempting term insurance policies from the levy. The life insurance industry has argued that the move will result in withdrawal of input tax credit (ITC) benefit for taxes paid on goods and services and services used by them and will increase costs for them. Estimating that ITC adds up to 11%, the companies have told the group of ministers, led by Bihar deputy chief minister Samrat Chaudhary, as well as officials at the Centre that at least 12% GST should be imposed. Besides, they want the full benefit of ITC to be

available to offset any cost disadvantage. Life insurance companies have suggested that in the case of a reduction below 12%, there should be a reduction in the rate for insurance commission services too. One option will be to allow for zero rating, which means that while exempting GST on the output, there is no bar on availing of credit for taxes paid on inputs used for providing the service. "Due to this additional burden (ITC withdrawal), life insurance companies will be compelled to increase the premium which will not fully meet the objective of govt to provide life insurance product at affordable price. Additionally, GST exemption on renewal premiums (for

policies sold in previous years) would make it onerous and unviable," the companies have said in a representation. While exempting term insurance plans and health insurance up to a certain limit and for seniors was on the agenda of the last month's GST Council's meeting in Jaisalmer, the ministerial panel was asked to look at them once again. One of the reasons for the decision being postponed was that insurance regulator Irdai had not sent its comments on the issue, which is expected in the coming weeks. Given that the insurance industry has taken up the issue of ITC with the finance ministry and the regulator too, Irdai may flag it before the group of ministers.

## Foreign investors sell \$5 billion of Indian stocks as profit view dims

**Global funds pulled out \$5.4 billion from Indian equities on a net basis in January after a respite last month, set for the worst start to the year**

**NEW DELHI** Stocks in India look set for further declines as foreign investors resumed selling shares amid persistent worries over company earnings growth and sluggish consumption.

Global funds pulled out \$5.4 billion from Indian equities on a net basis in January after a respite last month, set for the worst start to the year. While inflows into mutual funds remain robust, the persistent selling by foreigners have countered much of that support.

Worries about India's growth trajectory are intensifying as the latest data suggests the country is headed for its slowest economic expansion since the pandemic. The benchmark NSE Nifty 50 Index fell to its lowest since June on Tuesday, taking its drop from the

September peak to 12 per cent, as weak corporate results so far this season dashed hopes of a near-term revival. The exodus of foreign money from India may continue due to an earnings crunch and slowdown in parts of consumption," said Nitin Chanduka, a strategist at Bloomberg Intelligence in Singapore. Foreign investors have mainly sold financials, energy and sectors vulnerable to slowing growth, he said.

Global funds have withdrawn over \$17 billion from the South Asian nation's equities since October, when the foreign exodus began. About a fortnight into the December-ending quarter's results season, only three of the 10 NSE Nifty 50 Index members that have reported so far have beaten estimates. Investor focus Wednesday will be on earnings reports, including Hindustan Unilever Ltd., for clues on a demand recovery. The seller of Dove soap and Bru coffee will likely see subdued volume and revenue growth in the three-months through December as



urban demand — which accounts for two-thirds of the total — has lagged levels seen in rural areas for three quarters. Rising expectations of a rotation toward China after US President Donald Trump delivered a softer tariff approach may also hurt foreign demand for Indian assets. While Trump said his threat to impose 10 per cent tariffs on Chinese goods was still being considered, it is lower than the

potential levies of 60 per cent. "There is some hope of a rotation to China from markets like India given Trump's reconciliatory tone on tariffs and Tiktok so far," said Kok Hoong Wong, head of institutional equities sales trading at Maybank Securities. "Perhaps China may be able to strike some deal" with the US, he said.

Indian shares remain among the world's most expensive despite the slide, trading at close to 19 times forward earnings. Investor focus is now turning to the federal budget announcement on Feb. 1, where they hope for measures to stimulate consumption and provide a boost to growth. "India remains off the investors' radar with most participants seeing further decline in the equity markets," Banko

## NEWS BOX

## Alex Hartley reveals getting 'cold shoulder' from England team after fitness comment

New Delhi. Former England spinner Alex Hartley has opened up about feeling ostracized by England players during the Women's Ashes. The World Cup-winning cricketer-turned-pundit shared her disappointment at being "given the cold shoulder" by some of her former teammates, including Sophie Ecclestone, who reportedly declined an interview request. Hartley believes the backlash stems from remarks she made about the team's fitness following their premature exit from the T20 World Cup. After England's unexpected loss to the West Indies last October, Hartley publicly criticized certain players for their physical conditioning, suggesting that it had negatively impacted the team's performance. Her comments, which called for greater accountability, seem to have struck a nerve within the squad.

Speaking about the issue on BBC's TMS



podcast, Hartley clarified that her criticism wasn't meant to alienate anyone but to spark improvement. As a commentator for the BBC and other broadcasters in Australia, she emphasised that her goal was to see the team raise its standards and succeed in major tournaments. Sophie Ecclestone refused to do a TV interview with me today... "I've been hung out to dry by the England team: none of them will talk to me on the boundary edge," Hartley said. "The reason I said that they were not as fit as Australia is because I want them to compete with Australia, I want them to be better than Australia, and I want them to win Ashes and World Cups. I'm giving my opinion, and I've been given the cold shoulder from the England team ever since," she added. England's performance in the ongoing Women's Ashes has only added fuel to the conversation. A string of four consecutive defeats has seen them lose the Ashes with games still to play. The team's struggles have included dropped catches and missed opportunities, echoing the shortcomings from their T20 World Cup campaign. "Not all of them have given me the cold shoulder. I don't want to say that they've all been the same, because they haven't. Some of the players have been absolutely outstanding: I've spoken to them in the street, at the ground, wherever. But a few individuals - coaches, players - they literally haven't looked at me," she added.

## India coach Gautam Gambhir visits Kalighat temple ahead of first T20I vs England

Kolkata. India head coach Gautam Gambhir paid a visit to the renowned Kalighat Kali Temple in Kolkata ahead of the team's opening T20I clash against England on January 22 at Eden Gardens. This spiritual gesture by Gambhir comes as India embarks on a critical five-match series, which will play a key role in their preparations for the upcoming Champions Trophy. Gambhir's ties to Kolkata run deep. During his playing career, he captained the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the Indian Premier League (IPL) from 2011 to 2017, leading the franchise to two memorable titles. In 2024, he returned to guide KKR to their third championship as a coach. His connection with the city extends beyond cricket, as he often takes moments like this to immerse himself in its cultural and spiritual heritage, particularly before crucial tours. The T20I series against England carries immense



significance, especially after India's disheartening 1-3 loss to Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. This series serves as an opportunity to reset and regain form ahead of the all-important Champions Trophy. India's hopes will be buoyed by the return of seasoned pacer Mohammed Shami, who was last seen in action during the ODI World Cup final against Australia in November 2023, underwent surgery for a heel injury that sidelined him for months. He made his competitive return during the Ranji Trophy for Bengal late last year, showing promising signs of recovery. His presence in the squad brings much-needed experience and reliability to India's bowling unit.

Under the leadership of Suryakumar Yadav, India will aim to rediscover their winning ways in this series. The five matches against England provide an ideal platform for fine-tuning strategies and building confidence ahead of the Champions Trophy.

# Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma's form important for India to win in Dubai: Mohammad Kaif

← **Mohammad Kaif believes Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's experience and batting prowess will be crucial for India's success in the Champions Trophy, urging fans to trust their ability to bounce back from recent struggles and deliver on the big stage.**

New Delhi. Former India cricketer Mohammad Kaif has expressed strong belief in Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's ability to lead India to victory in the upcoming Champions Trophy in Dubai. Addressing concerns about their recent dip in form, Kaif urged fans not to discount the duo's potential to deliver under pressure, emphasising their track record of rising to

the occasion in critical moments. In his recent YouTube video, Kaif highlighted the crucial role both players have played in India's ODI success, pointing to their performances in the 2023 ODI World Cup as evidence of their ability to thrive on the big stage. Despite Rohit and Kohli experiencing rough patches, Kaif remains confident that their experience and skill will be pivotal in India's Champions Trophy campaign.

"You need Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli for the Champions Trophy. One is 37 years old, another is 36 years old. They are not going to play longer. Whatever they play, give them your blessings because they are great players of white-ball cricket who won't play too long," Kaif said. "They will contribute. If they play well, then only you'll be able to win matches in Dubai. Rohit provides the start by batting faster in the beginning and Virat Kohli uses that start to bat till the end and scores there. Give them your love," he added.



## Kohli's Inconsistent Form and Resilience

Kohli's recent performances have been underwhelming, particularly during India's 1-3 series loss to Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Although he started the series with a century in Perth, his form tapered off, managing just 95 runs in the subsequent matches. Kohli's susceptibility to deliveries in the off-stump corridor became a recurring issue, with eight of his 10 dismissals coming from edges to the slips or wicketkeeper.

However, Kaif pointed out that Kohli's 2023 ODI World Cup performance speaks volumes about his ability to bounce back. The star batter amassed a tournament-high 765 runs in 11 matches at a staggering average of 95.62, proving he can still deliver when it matters most.

Rohit Sharma's Consistency in ODIs While Rohit has also faced criticism for his recent performances, his ODI stats offer a different narrative. In 2023, he accumulated 1,255 runs in 27 matches, showcasing his ability to anchor innings and provide explosive starts. His contributions were instrumental during the 2023 World Cup, where he finished as the second-highest run-scorer with 597 runs at an average of 54.27, including one century and three fifties. Kaif stressed that both players have the experience and skill to handle the pressures of international tournaments. With the Champions Trophy looming, India will rely on the proven match-winning capabilities of Rohit and Kohli to spearhead their batting efforts.

## Australian Open: Swiatek sets up semi-final vs Keys after crushing Navarro

New Delhi. Polish tennis star and World No. 2 Iga Swiatek showcased her dominance at the Rod Laver Arena on January 22, comfortably defeating American Emma Navarro 6-1, 6-2 in a one-sided quarter-final clash. With this victory, Swiatek has set up an exciting semi-final against another American, Madison Keys. Swiatek's precision and power were on full display as Navarro struggled to counter the Polish star's relentless returns. From the very start, Swiatek asserted control, leaving Navarro scrambling to respond effectively. The first set was a testament to Swiatek's form, with the World No. 2 exploiting every opportunity to secure points. Navarro had minimal chances to mount any resistance, as Swiatek broke her serve five times out of nine break points. The set concluded swiftly, 6-1 in Swiatek's favour. Although the second set saw a slightly more competitive



Navarro, she couldn't capitalise on her brief moments of advantage. Swiatek quickly regained her rhythm, nullifying any hopes of a comeback for the American. The set ended 6-2, sealing Swiatek's place in the semi-

finals and reaffirming her reputation as a title favourite. Keys vs Svitolina: A Thrilling Comeback In the earlier quarter-final on the same court, Madison Keys battled past Elina Svitolina in an intense three-setter. Keys overturned an initial deficit to win 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, securing her place in the semi-final. Svitolina started strongly, leveraging her precision and power to dominate the opening set. However, Keys adapted brilliantly, shifting the momentum in her favour. By increasing the pace and targeting Svitolina's weaknesses, Keys turned the tide. Her resilience and tactical adjustments earned her a hard-fought victory. With both players in impressive form, the women's singles semi-final promises to be a thrilling encounter. Swiatek's consistency and power will meet Keys' adaptability and determination in what is set to be one of the highlights of the tournament.

## Mohammed Shami recalls injury ordeal: There was a sense of fear even while running

New Delhi Indian speedster Mohammed Shami recalled the tough times he went through while being out of competitive cricket for nearly a year due to injury concerns. After the ODI World Cup against India back in November 2023, the pacer will don the national jersey for the first time in the upcoming T20I series against England, starting January 22 at the iconic Eden Gardens in Kolkata. During this while, Shami missed plenty of bilateral series and couldn't play in the Men's T20 World Cup 2024 and the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024. On Wednesday, the BCCI uploaded a video where Shami can be seen flying a kite and talking about how he managed to recover from his injury. "Doesn't matter if it is flying a kite, bowling or driving a car, if you are strong and believe in yourself, then, I don't think you will find any difference. Look even after 15 years, I am able to fly this kite. Hence, confidence is very important for any task," Shami said.

'If you work hard, you will get the result' Shami has also been picked to play the Champions Trophy to be held in Pakistan and



## India vs England, 1st T20I, Predicted XI: Will dew affect team combination in Kolkata

Kolkata. After a long season of Test tours, both home and away, the focus once again shifts to white-ball cricket as India starts their T20I series against England on Wednesday. After disastrous losses to both New Zealand and Australia, head coach Gautam Gambhir will hope for some redemption against his old teammate from Kolkata Knight Riders, Brendon McCullum.

McCullum, who will begin his tenure as the all-format coach of England, has already promised entertainment—akin to his Bazball approach in red-ball cricket. McCullum brings with him an energetic young side, filled with bright prospects such as Harry Brook and Jacob Bethell.

Gambhir's main challenge, however, may not be the England think tank or the squad itself. It could be the baggage he carries from the tour of Australia. Gambhir faced criticism for his team selection and approach during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, and that scrutiny will be revisited once again in the upcoming 8-match white-ball series against England. Fortunately, Gambhir finds himself on familiar turf. Few visiting players know Eden Gardens and Kolkata as well as he does. In the 2024 IPL, the season in which Gambhir took over as the mentor of the team, one of the KKR fans cried his heart out



in a meet and greet with Gambhir, begging the former skipper to remain with KKR forever.

Although that didn't happen and Gambhir joined Team India, his stint at KKR puts him in an advantageous position against an ultra-aggressive England team. India vs England: Team News

India captain Suryakumar Yadav confirmed a couple of things in the pre-match press conference. First, Suryakumar re-confirmed Sanju Samson's position in the side, stating that the wicketkeeper-batter was the preferred choice for this team in the T20I format. Suryakumar also said that his Mumbai teammate Tilak Varma was going

to come out at No. 3, ahead of him. It is an interesting choice by the Indian skipper and the team management, given Suryakumar became a world-beater batting at that position, and one wonders if this change was really necessary?

## India vs England: Pitch and Weather Conditions

The Eden pitch was an absolute road to bat on in the Indian Premier League 2024 season. Last season, Punjab Kings created history by chasing down 262 runs against KKR with 8 balls remaining. In fact, Rajasthan Royals also triumphed over KKR in the same edition of the tournament, chasing down 224 runs. The pitch is expected to play the same, and things could be even more accentuated by the fall of dew in the evening. It is winter across India, and dew is expected to make life difficult for the bowlers in the second innings of the match.

## India vs England: Team Combinations

With dew falling in the second innings, India might opt to pick only defensive spinners in the side. Given that Axar Patel has been promoted to vice-captain, he is assured of a position in the line-up. And the second person that is sure to get a nod is Varun Chakravarthy, who not only knows Eden well but was also in sensational form against South Africa in the last T20I series.

## IND vs ENG, 1st T20I: Shami, Gambhir-McCullum tussle in focus in battle of powerhouses

← **England's young rising star Harry Brook has been named as vice captain of the white-ball formats ahead of the series against India.**

New Delhi Fit-again pacer Mohammed Shami returns to the India jersey after a long injury layoff as Suryakumar Yadav's young Indian squad faces a well-matched England in a five-match T20I series. This is also India's first series after the Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) had to step in with strict directives on team discipline. India have redefined their T20I approach, securing series wins over Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and South Africa under captain Suryakumar Yadav and coach Gautam Gambhir. Meanwhile, England captain Jos Buttler is

excited to work with new white-ball coach Brendon McCullum and a revamped T20I side packed with power-hitters. This series will also mark a new chapter for vice captain Axar Patel. The young all-rounder was rewarded for heroics in India's T20 World Cup-winning campaign last year. Axar came up with a superb batting cameo in the final against South Africa, scoring a crucial 47 off 31 balls and claiming nine wickets across eight matches at an impressive average of 19.22.

## GAMBHIR vs MCCULLUM

It will also be a battle between the two coaches—Gautam Gambhir and Brendon McCullum at Eden Gardens, a venue both are familiar with. While Gambhir's influence and bold decisions in T20Is have yielded successful results, the Indian coach is still recovering from the Test team's disastrous tour of Australia. This makes a strong performance from the T20 side crucial for his coaching tenure. Gambhir is under immense pressure, especially following India's ODI



series loss to Sri Lanka and Test series defeats to New Zealand at home and Australia away during his tenure. On the other hand, McCullum, renowned for transforming Test cricket with his aggressive 'Bazball' strategy, now aims to bring similar success to England's limited-overs setup.

The McCullum era starts after England surrendered 50-over and T20 World Cup titles during a challenging seven-month stretch in 2023-24. England will be without key players Reece Topley, Sam Curran, and Will Jacks, but 21-year-old Jacob Bethell, who impressed in the ODI series against the West Indies last year, will be eager to make his mark. McCullum has promised to focus on entertainment on the expected lines in the India series. "I'm desperate for us to play a really watchable brand of cricket," McCullum told the reporters. "With the talent we have, there's no reason why we can't. We've got a batting line-up which is as powerful as any batting line-up in the world. We've got gun spinners, very good fielders and guys who bowl absolute rockets with the ball, so you've got options there to be able to entertain and give yourself the greatest chance of success." This eight-match white-ball contest provides an ideal platform for both coaches to experiment with team combinations ahead of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025.



**Kajol Shares Photo With 'Partner In Crime' Daughter**

**Nysa Devgn**

**Latter Reacts 'You Literally Told Me...'**

**K**ajol is very active on social media and often shares updates of her personal life with fans. Recently, the actress shared a candid photo with her daughter, Nysa Devgn. The photo immediately went viral and fans were also seen reacting to it. But it was Nysa Devgn's reaction that grabbed everyone's attention. It looks like she is not happy with the photo. Taking to her Instagram handle, Kajol shared a photo in which she and Nysa are seen sitting in a restaurant. They are posing with a chopstick as they wait for their food. "Two peas in a pod or two chopsticks in a box #unbreakablebond #partnerincrime." Soon Nysa reacted and wrote, "u literally told me u would never post this." One of the fans wrote, "Beautiful the both of you." Another wrote, "Nysa is always a very beautiful young girl, a mixture of mom and dad."

Kajol was last seen in Do Patti with Kriti Sanon. The film was released on OTT and received positive response. She will be seen in Sarzameen in which Saif Ali Khan's son Ibrahim Ali Khan is also making debut. Kajol praised him and said that it would be interesting to see him onscreen. It is to be noted here that nothing has been made official about Sarzameen till now. In an interview with Variety, Kajol spoke about Sarzameen for the first time. She will be seen with Prithviraj and Ibrahim Ali Khan. "I've worked with Prithviraj [Sukumar] for the first time and he's absolutely wonderful to work with and so was Ibrahim [Ali Khan], so I think it's going to be quite interesting to see both of them on screen," Kajol said. Kajol will be soon seen in Maharagni - Queen of Queens, with Prabhu Deva. This action-packed thriller marks the long-awaited reunion of these actors after nearly three decades since their collaboration in Rajiv Menon's 'Minsara Kanavu' (1997). Steering this cinematic endeavor is director CharanTej Uppalapati. Recently, Ajay Devgn unveiled the teaser. The teaser highlights Kajol's dynamic character engaging in intense battles, displaying remarkable skills and flair. Alongside, the film boasts a stellar lineup including Naseeruddin Shah, Samyuktha Menon, Jisshu Sengupta, and Aditya Seal.

Kajol and Prabhudeva shared the screen in the acclaimed 1997 Tamil film "Minsara Kanavu" directed by Rajiv Menon. This cinematic gem, alongside Arvind Swamy, captivated audiences and emerged as a smashing success. Its Hindi-dubbed adaptation, "Sapnay," introduced to the masses the beloved track "Chanda Re."



**Veer Pahariya Opens Up On His Parents' Divorce For The First Time: 'It Was Very Uncomfortable'**



**V**eer Pahariya, who is all set to make his acting debut with the Sky Force, has opened up about his parents' separation for the first time. Veer's parents, Smruti Shinde and Sanjay Pahariya married in 1993. However, the two started living separately in 2005 and filed for divorce in 2007.

In a recent interview, Veer discussed being in the limelight for several reasons, including his parents' separation. The young actor recalled how newspapers covered the news when his parents decided to part ways and admitted that it was very "uncomfortable" for him as a child.

"Since childhood, things about life has been in the public domain. My parents had a very public split and in 2006 that came everywhere. There was no social media but that time it was all over the papers," he told Times Now.

"It was a very uncomfortable place to be as a child but that was always written about. So, whenever I would enter a room, whoever I would meet they would know that because that was the only medium at that point," he added.

Veer further talked about the judgments about him and his brother and shared, "After that I think a lot of about my personal life and my relationships and all was written in 2015 onwards and then it was talked about. I chose to be respectful about it. I never gave a statement I never put anything on my social media. It's not my place and that time I was not in public life."

"A lot of people will have a lot of judgment about me my brother, what background we come from, who we are as people but you will not know until I tell you," he stated. Veer Pahariya is currently gearing up for the release of his debut movie, Sky Force. The film also stars Akshay Kumar, Nirmat Kaur and Sharad Kelkar among others in prominent roles. Sky Force is set to release globally on January 24, 2025, during the Republic Day weekend.

**Shraddha Kapoor, Shakti Kapoor Purchase Rs 6.24 Crore Luxury Apartment In Mumbai? Here's What We Know**



**S**hraddha Kapoor is riding high on the success of Stree 2. The film, released in 2024, has shattered all records at the box office. Now a report is coming in that she and her father Shakti Kapoor have purchased a luxury apartment worth ₹6.24 crore in Mumbai. The property is located in the prestigious Piramal Mahalaxmi South Tower and the registry was done on January 13, 2025.

The Times of India has mentioned in its report that the apartment spans a carpet area of 1042.73 sq ft, which includes two balconies, and the per square foot rate of the apartment is Rs 59,875. The seller of the property is Glyder Buildcon Realtors Private Limited, actors and the real estate developer have not commented till now. Piramal Mahalaxmi South Tower is known for its stunning views of the race course and the sea and it offers both 2- and 3-bedroom apartments. The development has become a highly sought-after address in Mumbai's luxury real estate market.

The actress recently revealed that she is in no hurry to sign back-to-back films. In a recent interview with Elle, Shraddha Kapoor explained that her choices are guided by intuition, and that she is simply following her heart. "I do what I want to do. I'm not in a rush to sign films back-to-back... following my heart is what keeps me grounded," she said. In the same interview, she also reflected on her early days of her acting career. She recalled that her journey hasn't been smooth, and that she believes failure is an integral stepping stone towards success. She also recalled how she was replaced in films even after being finalized, and how it demotivated her.

Amid this, recently filmmaker Nikhil Dwivedi shared a script of Nagin. Looks like the film is all set to go on floors. Speaking with India Today, he revealed Shraddha's role as a shape-shifting snake. Nikhil shared that she was his first and only choice for the part, stating, "She was excited. She was the first one to come on board. I approached her first with the idea, and she was sold. She can't wait to start the shoot, now that the script is ready."

In 2020, Shraddha Kapoor took to X and wrote, "It's an absolute delight for me to play a Naagin on screen. I have grown up watching, admiring, and idolising Sridevi ma'am's Nagina and Nigahen and have always wanted to play a similar role rooted in Indian traditional folklore."

**Chunky Panday Didn't Watch**

**Ananya's**

**Call Me Bae For 3 Days: 'It Wasn't My Kind Of Show' | Exclusive**

**R**ight since the beginning of her career, Ananya Panday has been at the receiving end of relentless trolling by many who felt that she has received opportunities on a platter for being a nepo kid. But last year on Netflix's Fabulous Lives vs Bollywood Wives, her father Chunky Panday remarked that he's a product of 'reverse nepotism'. He went on to share that he's reaping the benefits of the success his daughter has been witnessing. Now, in an exclusive chat with News18 Showsha, Chunky reiterates the same and admits that while he doesn't always agree with Ananya, he's always supportive of her



decisions and script choices. "I'm a proud father but also a very nervous father. I'm nervous because I understand how important it is to keep your head straight and be accepted every time you do something different. It's always a hit and a miss. Ananya and I've a lot of conflict. I feel she should do a certain kind of films but she wants to something else," the Begum Jaan and Saaho actor tells us. Interestingly, the only time that the father-daughter duo worked on a film together was

Liger. And in a recent interaction, Ananya quipped how she has stopped paying heed to her father's suggestions, especially after the debacle of the film co-starring Vijay Deverakonda. Reacting to her words, Chunky chuckles and says, "I'm old school and I feel heroes and heroines should sing their songs and do their dances and the male lead should be do his fights. But she thinks differently. But I guess her thought process is very Gen-Z. As they say, to each his own! I hope she's right and so far, she has been right."

Speaking how their tastes and preferences don't align most of the times, Chunky recalls how he didn't watch Ananya's OTT debut, Call Me Bae, for the first few days after its release, as he didn't understand the mood of the series. "Call me Bae wasn't my kind of a show. In fact, I didn't watch it for three days. But once I put it on and watched the first three episodes, I binge-watched it. I thought it was so good! I went on to watch the entire season twice. I really enjoyed it," he states.

However, his opinion changed soon after, so much so that he began questioning where Ananya got her 'acting genes' from. "For the first time, I thought, 'God, is this my daughter! Where did she learn to do this? I didn't teach her.' I've never done stuff like what she did in Call Me Bae. It's different and difficult to shoulder so many episodes by a single actor. But she's a hard-working girl. The best compliment an actor can receive is that yeh role toh iske liye likha gaya tha.

But let me tell you, she isn't like Bae in real life. So, when people say that a certain role is tailor-made for an actor, it means that they've done a good job," Chunky smiles.

