

Rahul Gandhi finds special mention in AAP's list of dishonest people

For the first time, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's picture appears on one of AAP's posters, with the party terming him "dishonest" alongside PM Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Delhi BJP leaders.



Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Delhi BJP leaders. However, the inclusion of Rahul Gandhi signalled that the gloves are off for AAP.

NEW DELHI. The Aam Aadmi Party on Saturday escalated its poster war ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, taking aim at rivals Congress and the BJP. For the first time, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi was featured prominently in the Arvind Kejriwal-led party's campaign posters. The poster, which bears the provocative tagline "Kejriwal's honesty will outweigh all the dishonest people" also features photos of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Uttar Pradesh Chief

Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Delhi BJP leaders. However, the inclusion of Rahul Gandhi signalled that the gloves are off for AAP. The broadside comes after the Gandhi scion hit out at AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal over his governance track record, claiming that he cannot match the achievements of former Delhi Chief Minister and Congress leader Sheila Dikshit.

"Delhi now wants the real development model of former chief minister Sheila Dikshit and not the false propaganda and PR model of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal," Gandhi said at a rally on Thursday. Gandhi had previously alleged that Kejriwal was following PM Modi's "strategy of propaganda

and false promises" while failing to address rising pollution, corruption, and inflation in the capital. On another occasion, he charged that both the Prime Minister and the AAP chief do not want marginalised groups, such as Dalits and tribals, to receive their due. Congress leader Ajay Maken, who previously labelled Kejriwal "anti-national," and Sandeep Dikshit, the son of Sheila Dikshit contesting against the AAP supremo in the New Delhi constituency, also appear on the poster. The BJP also released a new poster on social media, renewing its 'aapda' (disaster) attack on the ruling party in Delhi. "On 5th February, people of Delhi will teach a lesson to AAP-da gang of big thugs full of goons and criminals!" it captioned the post. The Delhi Assembly election, scheduled for February 5 with results on February 8, is shaping up to be a triangular contest. Despite being allies in the INDIA opposition bloc, AAP and Congress are contesting the polls separately. AAP leaders have dismissed Congress as "irrelevant" in Delhi's political landscape, accusing it of colluding with the BJP. With the stakes high, Kejriwal's party has sought to frame the election as a battle between its "honest governance" and what it calls the failures of both national parties.

Vande Bharat train's 1st trial run on world's highest rail bridge in J&K

Indian Railways conducted the first trial run of Vande Bharat train from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra station to Srinagar station on Chenab Bridge.



Srinagar. India's prowess in railway technology was on full display on Saturday as it conducted the first trial run of Vande Bharat train from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra station to Srinagar station on Chenab Bridge, the world's highest railway bridge. The train will also pass through Anji Khad Bridge, India's first cable-stayed railway bridge.

Climate adaptability has also been factored in while designing the train, keeping in mind the comfort of the passengers when it comes to travelling in cold climatic conditions of the Valley. The train can operate at a temperature as low as -30 degrees Celsius.

The chair-car train boasts advanced heating systems to keep water from freezing and bio-toilet tanks.

In a big boost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Make In India' initiative, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw had pointed out earlier that several other nations have expressed their interest in getting semi-high speed Vande Bharat trains from India. Vande Bharat trains, seen as a 'Make In India' success story by many, has improved safety features like the Kavach technology and state-of-the-art amenities, including accessible toilets for persons with disabilities and integrated Braille signage.

What did Pawar do as agri minister for 10 yrs, asks Shah

MUMBAI. Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday attacked NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar, saying he failed to do anything for the cooperative sector during his 10-year tenure as the agriculture minister in the UPA government at the Centre. Shah said the soldiers and farmers are important for the country, adding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi created the cooperatives department for the development of farmers. "Farmers are now being developed through the cooperative department. Sharad Pawar was the agriculture minister at the Centre for 10 years, what he did for the country? He could not even make a separate cooperative department for the farmers," Shah said while inaugurating a soil-testing centre for farmers at Ajang in Nasik.

"What did Mr Pawar do for sugar factories, farmers, cooperatives? He only marketed himself as a leader of the co-operative sector. But what did he do for this sector? It's easy to become a leader through marketing, but you have to work on the ground. PM Narendra Modi is working to connect farmers with multinational companies and develop them," he said.

"Lal Bahadur Shastri had given the slogan 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan'. Modi gave the slogan 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan and Jai Vigyan'. Agriculture becomes profitable if cooperation and science are combined. When Modi started soil testing, farmers understood which crops to grow on which soil. They get information about the pH level of water, whether to add sulfur or not...Agriculture and science together will usher prosperity and better livelihood to farmers," Shah said.

"The money generated by selling agricultural products by establishing an organic corporation will go to the farmers' accounts," Shah said, appealing to farmers to produce products with organic certificates. Amit Shah said, "Modi created the cooperative department after 75 years of Independence. The beautiful definition of self-reliance is cooperation. This is what makes farmers prosperous. I saw the ponds with a storage capacity of 73 crore litres of water."



Atishi says Delhi working to fulfil freedom fighters' vision of equal opportunities for all

NEW DELHI: BJP candidate from New Delhi Parvesh Verma immersed an effigy of former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in the murky water of the Yamuna over his unfulfilled promise to clean the river so that people could take a dip in it.

AAP spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar hit back at Verma, accusing

him of "stooping to such an antics" in an attempt to gain publicity.

NEW DELHI: BJP candidate from New Delhi Parvesh Verma immersed an effigy of former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in the murky water of the Yamuna over his unfulfilled promise to clean the river so that people could take a dip in it.

AAP spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar hit back at Verma, accusing him of "stooping to such an antics" in an attempt to gain publicity. "Despite having 11 long years of power and spending Rs 8,000 crore, the AAP government failed to deliver on its promise of cleaning the Yamuna.

HC upholds order against petition seeking AIMIM's de-registration

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court has upheld the dismissal of a petition seeking quashing of the registration granted by Election Commission of India (ECI) to All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Musalimeen (AIMIM) as a political party.

A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela rejected the appeal moved by Tirupati Narashima Murari challenging the dismissal of the plea by a single judge in November last year.

Before the single judge, Murari had challenged a circular issued by ECI in 2014 granting recognition to AIMIM as a State level party in the State of Telangana.

Upholding the single judge order, the division bench rejected Murari's contention that AIMIM does not fulfil the conditions laid down under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. It was submitted by Murari that the object of the party was to further the interest of only one religious community. It was also contended that AIMIM does not espouse secular values and, therefore, grant of registration was violative of the Section 29A of the RP Act. The Bench said that AIMIM had amended its constitution to conform to the provisions of Section 29A(5) of the RP Act and thus, Murari's argument did not survive. "We find no infirmity with the conclusion of the learned Single Judge that the requirements of Section 29A(5) of the Act are fully satisfied. Therefore, there is no ground to de-register AIMIM as a political party on the ground that its constitution does not conform to Section 29A(5) of the RP Act," the Court said.

Committed to promoting Closer Cooperation with India: Indonesian Prez On His State Visit

New Delhi : Prabowo Subianto, the President of Indonesia, was formally welcomed at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on January 25, 2025.

His visit marks his first State Visit to India since assuming office in October 2024, and he is the Chief Guest for India's 76th Republic Day celebrations. The ceremonial welcome highlights the significance of the visit and sets the stage for enhanced diplomatic discussions between India and Indonesia.

Prabowo met with Indian President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Their meeting focused on strengthening the bilateral relationship between the two nations, with discussions on political, security, defence, and trade cooperation.

During his visit, President

Prabowo expressed his gratitude and highlighted the longstanding friendship between the two countries. He said, "...Indonesia considers India a very great friend. India was one of the first countries, maybe the first country to recognise our independence, to support us in our struggle for independence, we will never forget what India did to help us. I am very honoured today and I am doubly honoured that tomorrow I will be the chief guest at your Republic Day parade...I'm committed to promoting closer cooperation, closer partnership with India. That is my determination."

This State Visit, from January 25 to 26, 2025, is an opportunity for both countries to review their bilateral relations and discuss regional and global issues of mutual concern. Indonesia, a Comprehensive Strategic Partner of India, plays a

vital role in India's "Act East" policy, aimed at strengthening relations with East Asia and enhancing India's influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

India and Indonesia share a rich history of cultural and commercial ties dating back over two millennia. The exchange of Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim traditions from India to Indonesia has shaped the cultural landscape of both nations, fostering strong and enduring ties.

The political relationship between the two countries was solidified during their shared struggles for independence. Indonesia's first Republic Day guest, President Sukarno, was honored in 1950, and both countries have supported the independence movements of Asian and African nations, exemplified by their roles in the Bandung Conference and the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement.

HAPPY REPUBLIC DAY 26th JANUARY. "Heartfelt greetings to all the residents of Delhi on 76th Republic Day! Let's unite to strengthen democracy and contribute to the nation's progress. Honour the Constitution and fulfill our duties as responsible citizens." Jai Hind! Directorate of Information and Publicity, Govt. of NCT of Delhi

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NEWS BOX

Kerala ration traders to hold indefinite stir from January 27

KOCHI. Lakhs of ration card holders are likely to miss out on their January quota of food items, as ration traders in Kerala gear up for an indefinite strike from January 27 demanding revised wage package and in protest against the Centre's direct payment system. The strike is expected to worsen the already-dwindling stocks in most ration shops across the state, which have been impacted by a three-week-old strike by



contractors distributing essential items. The Ration Traders Coordination Committee took the decision after talks with Finance Minister K N Balagopal and Food and Civil Supplies Minister G R Anil failed. Its members said the current wage package, approved in 2018, was unviable and was not reviewed despite the chief minister's suggestion to do so within six months.

N Shijeer, the organising secretary of the committee, said the current commission structure for ration shops, formulated in 2018, ensures a monthly commission of Rs 18,000 for selling 45 quintals of food grains. "This breaks down to Rs 8,500 in government support and Rs 220 per quintal. Despite repeated requests, the commission structure has not been revised in six years," he said.

GSLV-F15/NVS-02 to launch on January 29: ISRO

BENGALURU. The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV)- F15/ Navigation with Indian Constellation-2 Satellite (NVS-2) Mission will launch from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota on January 29 at 6.23am. Researchers from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said that the satellite was flagged off to Sriharikota on January 5, 2025.

This is the 17th flight of India's GSLV and the 11th flight with indigenous cryostage. It is also the eighth operational flight of GSLV and with an indigenous Cryogenic stage and the 100th launch from the India's Spaceport



Sriharikota. GSLV-F15 payload fairing is a metallic version with a diameter of 3.4 meters. ISRO also took to X- platform to announce the date announced that people can register through its online platform to view the launch from the Sriharikota centre. The GSLV-F15 will place NVS-02 satellite into a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit. The NavIC is an independent regional navigation satellite system designed to provide accurate Position, Velocity and Timing services. The NVS-02 uses a combination of indigenous and procured atomic clocks for precise time estimation. ISRO shared, the NVS-02, is the second satellite in the NVS series and is configured with Navigation payload in L1, L5 and S bands in addition to ranging payload in C-band like its predecessor NVS-01.

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Kala Ghoda arts fest to gallop full throttle into its 25th year

Mumbai. A quarter-century in, and the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival (KGAF) in association with The Times of India is still going strong, proving that some things only get better with age. The street festival born with the intention of developing Mumbai's Art District to give it a distinct identity both culturally and visually has not just survived the test of time but thrived, going from a small gathering of like-minded individuals to Asia's largest multicultural street arts extravaganza. This year's silver jubilee edition promises to be a spectacular celebration of everything that makes this festival one where the art never stops, and neither does the energy.

This year, expect the unexpected in every corner, as over 25 venues open their doors to 400 events and over 100 visual installations from Jan 25 to Feb 2. Festival director Brinda Miller couldn't be more thrilled. "For 25 years, KGAF has brought out the best of Mumbai's creative spirit, giving all kinds of artists and art forms the platform and freedom to express, engage and inspire. The silver jubilee edition stands testimony to the incredible past and present of the festival, and an even greater future for our shared heritage and culture."

It's only fitting that the festival opens with a performance that mirrors this very spirit: the 'KGAF Silver Sitaare Fusion'—a showcase of 25 dance styles from the electrifying hip-hop, jazz and Lavni to the graceful ballet, Manipuri and kathak, performed by over 50 artistes and institutions that have been integral to KGAF's legacy. There's also something brand new to look forward to this year.



A fresh 'lifestyle' vertical will make its debut, focusing on fashion, sustainability, wellness, and youth engagement with discussions on mental health and eco-conscious fashion to mindful living. As part of the silver jubilee celebrations, a coffee table book titled 'Spirit of Kala Ghoda' will be unveiled featuring contributions from Rahul Mehrotra, Abha Narain Lambah, Ranjit Hoskote, Sabyasachi Mukherjee and others.

The festival will also unveil a brand new anthem composed by Shantanu Moitra. Sung by Shaan, Rahul Deshpande, Kaushiki Chakraborty, Kavita Seth, Usha Uthup, Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash to name a few, the anthem will capture the spirit of KGAF's 25-year journey.

KGAF's grand finale will return to the iconic

Asiatic Library Steps—one of Mumbai's most historic and picturesque settings—where one can enjoy music performances under the open sky, including a tribute to Ustad Zakir Hussain and live concerts by Sachin-Jigar and Shalmali Kholgade. This year, new venues like Elphinstone College Courtyard, Regal Cinema and the restored David Sassoon Library join familiar spots like the CSMVS Museum and Asiatic Library Steps. Meanwhile, the Kala Ghoda Association, which has played a key role in preserving Mumbai's architectural landmarks like the Ruttonjee Muljee Jetha Fountain, the Knneset Eliyahu Synagogue, and Asiatic Library Steps to their former glory, will continue its efforts to ensure the city's cultural heritage remains intact for generations to come.

NIT-Calicut suggests upgrades for Akkulam Glass Bridge

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. The controversial Akkulam Glass Bridge—touted as the longest bridge in the state—is all set to get more safety upgrades with the National Institute of Technology-Calicut (NIT-C) submitting recommendations after a safety assessment. It is learned that the safety assessment report has recommended to provide beadings for glass panels to enhance the safety of the glass bridge. The bridge constructed at a cost of Rs 1.2 crore was expected to be thrown open for the public in March last year.

However, the opening of the bridge was delayed inordinately after the glass bridge developed cracks raising serious concern over the quality and safety standards of the infrastructure. The recurrence of cracks in the glass bridge had put the tourism department in the dock.

The adventure tourism activities at the Akkulam Tourist Village are jointly implemented by Vattiyoorakavu Youth Brigade Entrepreneurs Cooperative Society (VYBeCOS) and the



District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC). The glass bridge was constructed by VYBeCOS under the BOT (Build Operate Transfer) model. The 45-metre-long glass bridge has been constructed at a height of 75 feet. An official source said that the NIT submitted the report two days back.

"The report with recommendations has been handed over to VYBeCOS. They have already initiated steps to execute the recommendations.

After the implementation of the safety upgrades one more expert agency will review the safety and then only the government will open the bridge for the public," an official source said. A series of controversies erupted following the incident on the previous experience and expertise of the agency executing the project. According to VYBeCOS, after safety upgrades, they are hoping to hand over the bridge to the tourism department within two months. "There are no issues with the structure and the NIT has only given recommendations for safety upgrades.

We have started the preparations and the work will be completed very soon," said Ratheesh C S, president of VYBeCOS. Meanwhile, the DTPC is planning to introduce nightlife in the tourist village. "Tourism Clubs are already active at the park and we are planning to hold more cultural events during the evenings to keep the visitors engaged and spend more time in the village.

Six kids injured in Anganwadi ceiling collapse in Telangana

SANGAREDDY. As many as six children were injured when a piece of the roof collapsed at an Anganwadi centre in Venkatapur, Narayanakhet mandal on Friday. Among them, two girls sustained serious injuries. According to sources, about 15 children were playing inside the Anganwadi centre when pieces of the roof suddenly fell. Panicked and confused, the children started crying and ran out of the room. The staff rushed the injured children to the government hospital for treatment. All of them were below five years of age. Harika and Mounika received head injuries, while Ankitha, Pranay, Avinash and Rayanika received minor injuries. Upon learning about the incident, Collector Valluri Kranthi and MLA Dr Sanjeeva Reddy visited the hospital to meet the children and their parents. The collector immediately ordered an inquiry into the incident and warned of strict action against those found



responsible. SANGAREDDY: Taking serious note of the incident, Collector Valluri Kranthi suspended the in-charge Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) Sujatha and Anganwadi teacher Ambika with immediate effect. The collector also instructed the District Women and Child Welfare Officer to submit a detailed report on the condition of Anganwadi centres across the district and ensure that such incidents do not recur.

ROURKELA. Researchers at National Institute of Technology-Rourkela (NIT-R) have developed an AI-based multi-class vehicle detection (MCVD) model and light fusion bi-directional feature pyramid network (LFBFPN) tool to help improve traffic management. Led by associate professor in department of Electronics & Communication Engineering (ECE) Santos Kumar Das, the research team has leveraged an intelligent vehicle detection (IVD) system, which uses computer vision to identify vehicles in images and videos.

To address the challenges of Indian road conditions with complex and mixed traffic, Das and his team have developed a new MCVD model which uses video de-interlacing network (VDnet) to efficiently extract key features from traffic images, even when vehicles vary in size and shape. They have used LFBFPN to further refine the extracted details. Das said, "What makes LFBFPN unique is that it uses a simpler method, reducing the complexity of the model without sacrificing its accuracy. The system then processes the details through another tool called modified vehicle



detection head (MVDH), which helps accurately detect and classify vehicles in all kinds of traffic situations."

The MCVD model demonstrates an improved accuracy compared to existing methods. The team tested the model using the heterogeneous traffic labelled dataset (HTLD) which includes data from several cities across India available for public use.

The model's real-time performance was also evaluated on edge computing device Nvidia Jetson TX2 where it maintained strong speed and accuracy even under challenging weather conditions and with low-resolution images. "By overcoming the limitations of older models and addressing the unique challenges of mixed traffic, the MCVD model offers a scalable option for real-time vehicle detection in

developing countries. Its use could help improve traffic systems, reduce congestion and enhance road safety," said Das.

A research paper on the findings co-authored by Das and his team of research scholars Prashant Deshmukh and Krishna Chaitanya Rayasam along with Prof Uendra Sahoo from ECE, NIT-R and Prof Sudhan Majhi from

IISc Bangalore has been published in the prestigious journal IEEE Transaction on Intelligent Transportation Systems.

According to Das, the traditional IVD model including sensor systems such as radar and light detection and ranging (LiDAR) work well for developed countries with organised traffic. However, these systems face challenges in developing nations with mixed traffic comprising bicycles, two-wheelers, cars, trucks, rickshaws, animal carts and pedestrians often operating in close proximity, and struggle in adverse weather condition besides being too expensive, he added. The research team is further working on developing a traffic control system based on this idea and also planning to commercialise it through a start-up.

Rooftop solar promoter invited for R-Day event

Mumbai. Vikas Sharad Chandra Pandit, a Borivli resident and Tata Power Mumbai Distribution consumer, will attend the 2025 Republic Day Parade at Kartavya Path, New Delhi, as a guest. Selected by the MNRE as one of 800 distinguished guests nationwide, Pandit will be honoured for adopting a 3 kW rooftop solar system under the PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana. His journey toward energy independence and zero electricity bills exemplifies India's commitment to renewable energy goals, said a senior Tata Power official to the media on Thursday.

Pandit told TOI: "My 2.7 kW rooftop solar system facilitated by Tata Power has been extremely beneficial for my family. In just six months, it saved Rs 24,000 for us and produced approximately 25 units of clean energy daily. I am grateful to Tata Power and MNRE for recognising my effort and

inviting us to the Republic Day celebrations. The entire process for PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana was seamless, transparent, and online and was made easy by the Tata Power Mumbai Distribution team for us to adopt solar energy. I highly recommend rooftop solar to everyone, including my neighbours, many of whom have sought my guidance after seeing our installation. This is a step toward a sustainable future, and I appeal to everyone to adopt rooftop solar and set an example for others to follow."

He further added that the installation at his bungalow, since June last year, helped reduce 2000 kg CO2 emissions. "We are proud that one of our esteemed consumers from Borivli has been invited to attend the 2025 Republic Day Parade. His 3 kW rooftop solar system, installed in June 2024 through Tata Power Mumbai Distribution,



enabled him to achieve energy independence while ensuring zero electricity bill, facilitated by the company's efficient net metering facility," a senior official from Mumbai said. Tata Power has implemented the PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana across Mumbai, with more than 40 residential buildings and housing societies already embracing the initiative, contributing to a cumulative rooftop solar

capacity of approximately 24 MW. The company facilitated these installations whilst ensuring direct financial benefits to its consumers, with subsidies amounting to Rs 85 lakh credited thus far. "The PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana has been revolutionary for Mumbai residents, offering an opportunity to harness solar energy and reduce electricity bills substantially. Mr. Pandit's journey exemplifies the success of this initiative, which aligns with India's ambitious renewable energy goals," the official said. The company has over 40,000 green customers in its Mumbai Distribution and remains steadfast in its commitment to providing green energy solutions through its utility-scale renewable plants, rooftop solar, EV charging, and home automation businesses, an official added.

Commission appointment on Munambam land issue 'looks like an eyewash': Kerala High Court

KOCHI. The Kerala High Court on Friday observed orally that the appointment of a commission headed by Justice C N Ramachandran Nair to inquire into the Munambam land issue looks like an eyewash. "There is no proper application of mind in the order appointing the commission. Looks like an eyewash. What is the state government's authority to appoint the inquiry commission? In a matter that has already been concluded by a civil court judgment, and affirmed by a High Court in the appeal, can a commission of inquiry come up and arrive at a different conclusion," asked Justice Bechu Kurian Thomas. The court made the observation when a petition filed by the Kerala Waqf Samrakshana Vedhi, Ernakulam, seeking to quash the order appointing the commission, came up for hearing. The court adjourned the hearing to January 29. A civil court had earlier ruled that the land was Waqf property and the High Court later upheld it.

"It is a settled proposition that once the title or right of a property is settled, no other court, including the High Court, can interfere with it," the court said, adding that if the commission is going to consider the title of the property, then it is "intruding into the rights already settled". The commission cannot say that despite the land being Waqf property, the government can pass an order cancelling the titles of the property. If the commissions arrive at a different conclusion, "it would open a Pandora's box", the court stated. The court said the government did not exclude the waqf property from the notification. It also noted that the Waqf Commission had gone into the issue of waqf land in 2010 and its findings were approved by the government. "None of these matters had been considered while appointing the new commission. The terms of reference of the Commission did not say that the inquiry would be confined to the land other than the Waqf property. As such, the appointment of a commission to inquire into the waqf property will affect the rights of the parties concerned.

NMC remains silent on action against 198 medical colleges for stipend violations

NEW DELHI. The National Medical Commission (NMC) has refused to share the action it has taken against 198 medical colleges and institutions that have not paid stipends to undergraduate interns, postgraduate residents, and senior residents. Interestingly, the NMC issued show-cause notices to these 198 government and private medical colleges and institutions last November, which this paper first reported, for non-submission of the details of stipends paid to undergraduate interns, PG residents, and senior residents or PGs in super-speciality colleges and institutions.

The majority of medical colleges and institutions violating the norms are in Telangana, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala.

In an RTI reply, when asked what action it had taken against them, the NMC stated that "... as per available information, the

matter is sub judice." Speaking with this paper, Kerala-based RTI activist Dr. K. V. Babu said, "The NMC has a track record of shielding private medical colleges, which are not complying with the NMC regulations regarding stipends for

their website if it was sub judice? How will disclosing the stipend paid to interns and PGs affect the court proceedings? Even otherwise, the NMC itself has instructed the medical colleges to upload the details of stipends paid during the 2025 academic year onwards," he added.

Dr. Babu had filed an RTI on December 12, 2024, seeking details of the stipends submitted by 115 government medical colleges and 83 private medical colleges based on the show-cause notice issued by the NMC on November 28, 2024; action taken based on the notice and colleges' replies; and file notings.

In its reply on January 13, the NMC stated, "The matter has been transferred to the legal section UGMEB, NMC, and as per available information, the matter is sub judice." The Undergraduate Medical Education Board (UGMEB) determines standards of medical education at the undergraduate

interns/PGs. Otherwise, how can they stonewall an RTI application about stipends paid to interns and PGs by invoking sub judice issues?"

"Why did they disclose the show-cause notice issued to 198 medical colleges on



Man shot dead in spat over Rs 800 he lost in gambling last year, 2 held

Ghaziabad. A 34-year-old man was shot dead in a chilling revenge plot on Wednesday night in a dispute over a sum of just Rs 800 that the victim lost in gambling but failed to pay eight months ago. Two men were arrested on Thursday for the murder of Chanchal Kumar, a labour contractor who worked in Uttarakhanda. He was shot outside his house in Nandgram.

DCP (city) Rajesh Kumar said Chanchal had come home to celebrate his 15th wedding anniversary when he was attacked around 10pm on Wednesday. "Two bike-borne assailants opened fire at him. Our team immediately reached the spot and rushed the victim to a nearby hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival," he added.

According to Kumar, four police teams were formed to apprehend the assailants. The breakthrough came on Thursday, when a police team spotted two men on a motorcycle near Morti Gate SG Grade society.

"When cops waved at them to stop, they attempted to flee but were caught. During questioning, they confessed to shooting Chanchal Kumar the previous night," Kumar said. The two who were arrested were Arun Kumar



(23), a resident of Madhuban Bapudham, and Anuj Gautam (23) from Bulandshahr. Police are also looking for Nitin Kumar, who is Arun's brother. The two arrested accused led a police team to an abandoned room

behind Krishnakunj society, where they had hidden the gun used to fire at Chanchal.

"However, when they retrieved the firearm, they shot at the cops. Our officers fired in self-defence, hitting the accused in their legs. They were admitted to a hospital and are now in stable condition," the DCP added.

Eight months ago, Chanchal had lost Rs 2,000 in gambling, but could pay only Rs 1,200. A fight broke out over the remaining Rs 800, during which Chanchal allegedly assaulted Arun and his brother Nitin. On Wednesday, when Nitin saw Chanchal around his house in Nandgram, he alerted Arun. "The brothers then planned their revenge. Arun, accompanied by Anuj, shot Chanchal twice with a country-made pistol," Kumar said. An FIR was registered against them under sections 103 (murder) and 109 (attempt to murder) of BNS, and relevant provisions of the Arms Act.

Max temp touches 23.7°C, foggy weather leads to flight delays in Delhi; moderate AQI recorded

The weather department has forecast clear skies for Saturday with predominant surface winds expected from the northwest direction.

NEW DELHI. The city woke up to a thin layer of fog on Friday morning as the foggy weather again led to extended flight delays at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, causing inconvenience to air travellers.

Meanwhile, Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 23.7 degrees Celsius, according to the weather department, IMD. The minimum temperature stood at 9.8 degrees Celsius, 2.3 degrees above average, with humidity levels fluctuating between



90 and 58% during the day. Delhi weather conditions are likely to remain the same in the next two to three days, with persistent fog conditions during the morning hours. The IMD has predicted foggy weather conditions and a nominal reduction in the temperature for the next four days. The weather department has forecast clear skies for Saturday with predominant surface winds expected from the northwest direction. Moreover, the 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded in the 'moderate' category at 199, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

ISRO's Milestone 100th Rocket Launch Mission From Sriharikota On Jan 29

New Delhi. ISRO is all set to launch GSLV-F15 mission -- the 100th from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on January 29, the space agency said.

The GSLV-F15 rocket with indigenous cryogenic stage will place NVS-02 satellite in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit. "Mark your calendars! The Launch of GSLV-F15/NVS-02 Mission is scheduled on January 29, 2025 at 06:23 hrs IST from SDSC SHAR, Sriharikota," ISRO said, in a post on social media platform X.

The Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV) was the first rocket to liftoff from Sriharikota on August 10, 1979. Nearly 46 years later the Department of Space is ready to hit a century.

The GSLV-F15 is the 17th flight of the GSLV rocket and the 11th flight

featuring an indigenous cryogenic stage. The NVS-02 is part of the second-generation satellites for the Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) system -- India's own navigation system. The navigation satellite system is designed to provide



accurate Position, Velocity and Timing (PVT) service to users in India as well as to regions extending about 1500 km beyond Indian land mass.

The new NVS-02 satellite comes with new features such as supporting the L1 frequency band, which will improve its services and reliability.

"The NVS-02 satellite is the second generation of NavIC satellites, featuring a standard I-2K bus platform.

It will have a lift-off mass of 2,250 kg, power handling capability of around 3 kW, navigation payload in L1, L5, and S bands, ranging payload in C-band and will be positioned at 111.75 degree E, replacing IRNSS-1E," ISRO said. NavIC will provide two types of services, namely, Standard Positioning Service (SPS) and Restricted Service (RS). NavIC's SPS provides a position accuracy of better than 20 meters and a timing accuracy of better than 40 nanoseconds over the service area.

Not Mere Handouts, They want to break free



NEW DELHI: Chahat's voice drops to a whisper as she recalls the day her friend rushed out of Delhi Metro general coach on seeing a male passenger indulging in a lewd act. "No one reacted to what was happening in the open," she said, her words expressing the vulnerability women feel in Delhi every day. All this happens despite women being a potent electoral force, as evidenced by how every party in the Feb 5 fray is vying to win them over. Numbering around 72 lakh of the city's 1.6 crore voters, women make up over 46% of the electorate. The parties are banking on schemes aimed at

empowering women with cash transfers emerging as a popular method. AAP, having already provided free bus rides and cuts in power and water payments, has announced a Rs 1,000 monthly cash transfer for women, pledging to increase it to Rs 2,100 if returned to power. Congress assures women of a monthly Rs 2,500 under its 'Pyaari Didi Yojana'. BJP proposes similar financial aids, including a Rs 2,500 monthly transfer, Rs 21,000 for pregnant women and higher pension for widows. "Everyone talks about empowerment, but don't

their aspirations expected to play a decisive role in the elections, women voters want the focus to shift to the resolution of everyday issues.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as SANJAY S/O RAM BHADUR SINGH R/O H.No. - 1/2108, STREET No. - 19, EAST RAM NAGAR, SHAHDARA, EAST DELHI - 110032 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as **RANJAN KUMAR SINGH**.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as DILIP RAVIDAS S/O SHIVNARAYAN RAVIDAS residing at 171, D-Block, Second Floor, J J Colony, Khayala, Vishnu Garden, West Delhi, Delhi 110018 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as **GARIB DAS**.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as KRISHNAKUMARI W/O RAM KRISHNA R/O A-10, T HUTS, INDIRA COLONY CAMP, ROHITAK ROAD, DELHI - 110035 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as **RAM KUMARI**.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as KUMARI RANJU W/O AJIT BHARTI residing at House No. E-227, Sanjay Colony, Okhla Phase-2, Okhla Industrial Estate, South Delhi, Delhi - 110020 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as **MEERA BHARTI**.

NAME CHANGE
It is for general information that I, PRYANSHU SHISHODIYA S/O SANJEEV KUMAR RANA R/O C-59 Sector - P-3 Greater Noida, Rampur Jagir, District Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201306, declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as SANJEEV KUMAR in my 10th and 12th educational documents. The actual name of my father is SANJEEV KUMAR RANA which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE
It is for general information that I, AMAN D/O BADAL, R/O C - 424, Katpuli Colony Pandav Nagar, Patel Nagar S.O, Central Delhi, Delhi - 110008 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as ANJU in my PAN Card No. BZGPA8331N. The actual name of mine is AMAN which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE
I, NEETU KUMARI W/O SAGAR KUMAR R/O House No-244, I-Block, J J Colony, Shakur Pur I Block, North West Delhi, Delhi - 110034 have changed the name of my minor Son ANKIT alias ANKIT KUMAR aged 10 years and he shall hereafter be known as **ANKIT KUMAR**.

NAME CHANGE
I, Mrs. ESHEY DOLMA W/O TSERING NAMGIAL R/O TARCHIT, UT, LADAKH-194101 have changed my name to Mrs. **ISHEY DOLMA** for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE
I, KM SHEBA MEHARBAN W/O MUHAMMAD RASHID QURESHI Residing at H NO-A-624 GALI NO-3 NEAR INSHA ALLAH MASJID, CHAUHAN BANGER SEELAMPUR, NORTH EAST, DELHI 110053 have changed my name to SHEBA RASHID for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE
I, RUCHIKA RASTOGI W/O GAURAV RASTOGI residing at SA - 181, Shastri Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh - 201002 have changed the name of my minor Daughter ANNIE RASTOGI alias PEARLL RASTOGI aged 14 years and she shall hereafter be known as **PEARL RASTOGI**.

NAME CHANGE
I, No-17004462H Rank-NK (AUTO TECH B VEHI) Name-NARENDRA KUMAR Residing at VPO-SIKAN-DARPUR KARAN, TEHSIL-UNNAO, DIST-UNNAO, UTTAR PRADESH-208081, have changed my mother's name from SAVITRI DEVI to SHAKUNT-LA AWSTHI for all future purposes and in my service records my mother's date of birth wrongly mentioned as 02/08/1960 instead of the correct date of birth as 08/09/1958 vide Affidavit dated 25/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, PRAMEELA SHARMA Mother of No-8036259Y Rank-HAV Name-DHAR-MENDRA KUMAR SHARMA Presently residing at VILL-KHANUA, PO-VIDYAPATTI NAGAR, DIST-SAMASTIPUR, BIHAR-848503, have changed my name from PRAMEELA SHARMA to PARNILA SHARMA for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 25/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, SHEELA DEVI Mother of No.-15233758F Rank-NK Name-BUJAY PAL Presently residing at VILL-SHAHAJHNPUR, PO-CHANDPUR (190), DIST-FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121101, have changed my name from CHANDER SINGH to SHEELA for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 25/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, CHANDER SINGH Father of No.-15233758F Rank-NK Name-BUJAY PAL Presently residing at VILL-SHAHAJHNPUR, PO-CHANDPUR (190), DIST-FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121101, have changed my name from CHANDER SINGH to CHANDRA PAL for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 25/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, No-17004462H Rank-NK (AUTO TECH B VEHI) Name-NARENDRA KUMAR Residing at VPO-SIKAN-DARPUR KARAN, TEHSIL-UNNAO, DIST-UNNAO, UTTAR PRADESH-208081 have changed my father's name from SONELALAWASTHI to SONE LAL for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 25/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, AFRREEN W/O NASEEM SAFI Residing at H NO-S-21 MAIN ROAD BRAHAMPUR NEAR MAZAR, GALI TAMPURI SEELAMPUR, NORTH EAST DELHI 110053 have changed my name to AAFRIN for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE
I, MUSTAQEEM S/O SHAREEF AHMED Residing at H. NO-A-49 A-BLOCK MAIN ROAD, SHASTRI PARK, DELHI 110053 have changed my name to MUSTKEEM AHMED for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as Gian Chand S/O Bakshi Ram R/O B-358, 1st Floor, Sudeshan Park, Ramesh Nagar, West Delhi, Delhi-110015 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as **Gyan Chand**.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as Ravi Kumar S/O Ram Kishore R/O 7284 Prem Nagar, Shakti Nagar, Malka Gari, Delhi North Delhi, Delhi-110007 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as **Birtooo Gupta**.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as Dhan Bahadur alias Dilip Birgha S/O BIRU BIRGHHA, R/O B-42, GAUTAMPURI PHASE-2, Badarpur, South Delhi, Delhi - 110044, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as **Dilip Birgha**.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto know as Kavya Sharma S/O Manoj Kumar R/O House no-2, Ward NO-31, Near Atm Property, Sec-2, Huda, Patiala, Haryana - 121104, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as **Tanuj Sharma**.

News box

Noida sees this year's first 'satisfactory' air

Noida. Air quality in Noida and Ghaziabad improved from 'moderate' to 'satisfactory' on Friday. Noida recorded an AQI of 80 from 135, Greater Noida 99 from 189, and Ghaziabad 92 from 164 compared to the previous day. It marks the first time in Jan that both the cities recorded a 'satisfactory' AQI. Before this, Noida and Ghaziabad recorded 'satisfactory' AQI readings of 100 and 83, respectively, on Dec 30 and Greater Noida (90) on Dec 28. The AQI at Noida monitoring stations in sectors 125 and 116 was 80 and 79, respectively. The details of stations at sectors 62 and 1 were not available.

In Greater Noida, Knowledge Park V recorded 111 (moderate), and Knowledge Park III recorded 88 (satisfactory). Of the four monitoring stations in Ghaziabad, only Indrapuram recorded a 'moderate' AQI (105). The AQI at Loni (96), Vasundhara (92), and Sanjay Nagar (76) remained satisfactory.

According to a bulletin issued by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), the predominant surface wind from the northwest prevailed at less than 12kmph until evening before plummeting below 8kmph on Friday night. Residents may witness shallow fog in the morning on Saturday, with the predominant surface wind from the northwest at a speed of less than 8kmph. Wind speed will gradually increase thereafter, becoming 12-14kmph from the northwest during the afternoon.

MCD offers discounts to voters: Hotels, cinemas, and eateries join push to boost Delhi poll turnout

NEW DELHI. In an attempt to boost turnout, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has come up with more sops and announced a series of offers and discounts for casting votes. These are being offered by various different zones of the civic body in partnership with the hospitality and business sectors.

The Shahdara South Zone has partnered with PVR Cinemas, hotels, and restaurants to offer discounts to voters.

Hotel Holiday Inn in Mayur Vihar has announced a 30% discount on dining bills exclusively on polling day for those with the voting ink mark. Other establishments in the zone have also joined in to celebrate the festival of democracy. The Central Zone has launched the "Incentive-Based I Voted" campaign, which will provide discounts of up to 20% on meals and other products from February 5-9. To avail of these offers, voters simply need to present their ink-marked finger as proof of voting. Hotels and businesses have pledged to promote the initiative through social and digital media platforms to maximize awareness. Market associations have also stepped in, encouraging traders to offer discounts during the same period to incentivise voter participation.

In the Keshavpuram Zone, a similar initiative "Democracy Discount" will see malls, restaurants, and eateries providing exclusive offers to those who cast their vote. The MCD's Karol Bagh and Rohini zones had earlier announced incentives offering 5-25% discounts in in over 50 markets. The polling for all the 70 Assembly seats in the capital will be held on February 5, with the votes set to be counted on February 8.

Election Commission's independence 'severely compromised' by PM-HM duo: Congress

NEW DELHI. The Congress hit out at the Election Commission on Saturday, saying the 'self-congratulation' on National Voters' Day would not obscure the fact that the poll panel as it has been functioning makes a 'mockery' of the Constitution. The party also said that it is an insult to the voters themselves.

NAME CHANGE
I, Jyoti W/O Amit Kumar R/O House No-54, Near Old Shri Mandir, Singhu, North West Delhi-110040 have changed the name of my minor son Praansh alias Kavish aged 5 years and he shall hereafter be known as Kavish.

NAME CHANGE
I, RAMESH KAUSHIK S/O Lalgudi Mahalingam Ramamurthy, R/O, 1001, Hillsaples Pashan Bank Link Road, Pashan, PUNE - MAHARASHTRA, 411021, have shifted my name KAUSHIK from given name to Surname. AS RAMESH KAUSHIK for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE
It is for general information that I, BABITA KUMARI W/O HARSH KUMAR GULERIA R/O Flat No. - 189, Pk-C, DDA Janta Flats, Hasauli, Utam Nagar, PO, D.K. Mohan Garden, Dist- West Delhi, Delhi-110059, declare that name of my minor daughter has been wrongly written as SIMRAN in my minor daughter namely SIMRAN GULERIA, aged 13 year in her School Record. The actual name of my minor daughter is SIMRAN GULERIA respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Mr. Brian Felix Fernandes and Mrs. Monica Fernandes Owner of the Residential Flat/Dwelling Unit No. 122, on 1st Floor in Tower F, having a total super area 1067.5 sq. ft., in the "Supertech Eco-Village III" built on Plot No. GH-06, situated at Sector-16B, Greater Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. Mr. Brian Felix Fernandes and Mrs. Monica Fernandes have lost Original page no 6 to 16 of Allotment Letter dated 31/08/2015 issued by M/S Supertech Ltd in favour of Mr. Brian Felix Fernandes and Mrs. Monica Fernandes, for which complaint lodged to the police. That any person(s)/Appropriate authority etc. if finds the misplaced Allotment letter aforesaid said person may come forward and inform the undersigned within 15 days from the date of Publication.

RAHUL KUMAR GUPTA ADVOCATE
43B, Third Floor, Patparganj Village, MayurVihar, Phase-1, Delhi, M-NO-7252922875

NAME CHANGE
It is for general information that I, SONIYA KHATOON W/O MOHAMMAD GUDDU R/O H.No. - E-45, GALI No.-11, Swami Shardhanand Colony, Mangal Bajar Gola Chowk, Bhalawa Dairy, Libas Pur, Dist North West Delhi - 110042 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as SONI in my minor Daughter namely SHAMA PARVEEN aged 15 year in her school record. The actual name of mine is SONIYA KHATOON which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE
I, SONU AGGARWAL S/O CHHEDI LAL AGGARWAL residing at H.No. - A150, Kikolan Village, South Delhi, Delhi - 110014 have changed the name of my minor Son NAVYA AGGARWAL, aged 15 years and he shall hereafter be known as **NIKHILAGGARWAL**.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Mr. Nitin Goel Owner of the Residential House no 1307, Block - B, in the residential colony Known as Ansal's Patam Vihar Gurgaon Teh. and Distt. Gurgaon, Haryana. Mr. Nitin Goel have lost Original Allotment Letter issued by M/s Ansal Properties and Industries (P) Ltd. In favour of Mrs. Saroj Gargi Goswami, for which complaint lodged to the police. That any person(s)/Appropriate authority etc. if finds the misplaced Allotment letter aforesaid said person may come forward and inform the undersigned within 15 days from the date of Publication.

NAME CHANGE
It is for general information that I, SONIYA KHATOON W/O MOHAMMAD GUDDU R/O H.No. - E-45, GALI No.-11, Swami Shardhanand Colony, Mangal Bajar Gola Chowk, Bhalawa Dairy, Libas Pur, Dist North West Delhi - 110042 declare that name of mine and my husband have been wrongly written as SANABEGAM GUDDU in my minor daughter namely RUKSAR KHATUN aged 13 years in her School Record. The actual name of mine and my husband are SONIYA KHATOON and MOHAMMAD GUDDU respectively which may be amended accordingly.

NEWS BOX

Yoshitha Rajapaksa, son of former Sri Lankan president, arrested on corruption charges

COLOMBO. Former Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa's son Yoshitha Rajapaksa was arrested by police on Saturday on corruption charges in a property purchase case. Ex-navy officer Yoshitha was arrested from their home territory of Beliatta over the investigation of alleged misconduct in the purchase of the property during the term of his father's presidency prior to 2015.

Yoshitha is the second among Mahinda Rajapaksa's three sons. His uncle and former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa was also quizzed by the police last week on the same property - a holiday home in the southern religious resort of Kataragama. The arrest came as Mahinda Rajapaksa filed a fundamental rights petition on Friday in the Supreme Court seeking its intervention to reinstate his security, which was significantly reduced by the government last month. Since the formation of a new government led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in November last year, Mahinda Rajapaksa's eldest son and legislator Namal Rajapaksa was quizzed by the police over another property case alongside an employee of Mahinda Rajapaksa. The new government in the run-up to elections had vowed to arrest everyone accused of wrongdoing during Mahinda Rajapaksa's presidency between 2005 and 2015.

Polio Returns To Pakistan, Afghanistan As Vaccinations Stall

World Poliomyelitis was responsible for paralysing and killing up to half a million people every year before the development of the poliovirus vaccine in 1955. By 2000, through mass vaccination campaigns of oral polio vaccines, the world had almost eradicated poliovirus barring a few regions. However, the global fight against polio has encountered a significant setback, as cases of the disease have begun to rise again in Pakistan. Despite being on the brink of eradication in 2023, with only six reported cases of the wild form of the virus, the number of cases has surged to 73 in 2024. This alarming trend has prompted concerns among health experts, who point to the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan as a major factor contributing to the spread of the disease. Per data from the WHO, infectious diseases such as pneumonia, dengue fever and measles have also been on the rise in Afghanistan since the last six months. Zulfiqar Bhutta, a renowned expert on child immunisation strategies in conflict zones, said that the genetic strains of wild poliovirus in Pakistan are all from Afghanistan, per a report on Deutsche Welle. Bhutta, who has worked extensively in the region, attributes the resurgence of polio cases in Pakistan to the spillover of the virus from Afghanistan. "It has spread to all districts of Pakistan. We've snatched defeat from the jaws of victory," Bhutta lamented. "It's a virus that does not want to be eradicated, so give it an inch and it will take a yard," Bhutta said. The challenges facing polio eradication efforts in the region are multifaceted. Bhutta cites the Taliban's restrictions on female health professionals, poor sanitary conditions, and regional insecurity as significant obstacles. The lack of reliable data on poliovirus cases in Afghanistan further complicates efforts to combat the disease.

Ex-Sri Lankan President's Son Arrested By Police Over Corruption Charges

Colombo. Former Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa's son Yoshitha Rajapaksa was arrested by police on Saturday on corruption charges in a property purchase case. Ex-navy officer Yoshitha was arrested from their home territory of Beliatta over the investigation of alleged misconduct in the purchase of the property during the term of his father's presidency prior to 2015. Yoshitha is the second among Mahinda Rajapaksa's three sons. His uncle and former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa was also quizzed by the police last week on the same property - a holiday home in the southern religious resort of Kataragama. The arrest came as Mahinda Rajapaksa filed a fundamental rights petition on Friday in the Supreme Court seeking its intervention to reinstate his security, which was



significantly reduced by the government last month. Since the formation of a new government led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in November last year, Mahinda Rajapaksa's eldest son and legislator Namal Rajapaksa was quizzed by the police over another property case alongside an employee of Mahinda Rajapaksa. The new government in the run-up to elections had vowed to arrest everyone accused of wrongdoing during Mahinda Rajapaksa's presidency between 2005 and 2015.

Israel, Hamas are set to swap more hostages for prisoners in another test of the Gaza ceasefire

The conflict began with a cross-border attack led by Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023, when Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 others, hostage.

DEIR AL-BALAH. Israel and Hamas were expected to swap more hostages for Palestinian prisoners on Saturday, the second such exchange since a ceasefire began in the Gaza Strip last weekend and another test for the deal. The truce is aimed at winding down the deadliest and most destructive war ever fought between Israel and the militant group. The fragile deal has so far held, quieting airstrikes and rockets

and allowing for increased aid to flow into the tiny coastal territory. When the ceasefire started Sunday, three hostages held by the militants were released in exchange for 90 Palestinian prisoners. On Saturday, four hostages are expected to be freed for 200 prisoners, including 120 who are serving life sentences after being convicted of deadly attacks on Israelis. They will likely be released into Gaza or sent abroad. The four Israeli soldiers, Karina Arie, 20; Daniella Gilboa, 20; Naama Levy, 20; and Liri Albag, 19, were captured in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack that ignited the war.

They were taken from Nahal Oz base near the border with Gaza when Palestinian militants overran it, killing more than 60 soldiers there. The female abductees had all served in a unit of lookouts charged with monitoring threats along the border. A fifth female soldier in their unit, Agam Berger, 20, was abducted with them but not included in the list. After the swap, Israel is expected to begin pulling back from the

Netzarim corridor — an east-west road dividing Gaza in two — and allowing displaced Palestinians in the south to return



to their former homes in the north for the first time since the beginning of the war. Palestinians will only be allowed to move north on foot, with vehicular traffic restricted until later in the ceasefire. What happens after the deal's initial six-week phase is uncertain, but many hope it will

lead to the end of a war that has leveled wide swaths of Gaza, displaced the vast majority of its population, and left hundreds of thousands of people at risk of famine. The conflict began with a cross-border attack led by Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023, when Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 others, hostage.

More than 100 hostages were freed in a weeklong truce the following month. But dozens have remained in captivity for over a year with no contact with the outside world. Israel believes at least a third of the more than 90 captives still inside Gaza were killed in the initial attack or died in captivity. Israel's air and ground war, one of the deadliest and most destructive in decades, has killed over 47,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who do not say how many were militants. They say women and children make up more than half the fatalities.

What Americans think about Trump and Musk's plans for the federal government

WASHINGTON. Americans see the federal government as rife with corruption, inefficiency and red tape — but they're less sure about whether Elon Musk is the right person to fix it.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows that only about 3 in 10 U.S. adults strongly or somewhat approve of President Trump's creation of an advisory body on government efficiency, which Musk is helming. About 4 in 10 disapprove, while the rest were neutral or didn't know enough to say. (The poll was conducted before Vivek Ramaswamy announced he would no longer be involved in the group.) The goal of the advisory body, the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, is to expose fraudulent and wasteful spending across the federal bureaucracy, and its leaders have floated a range of possible ways to cut costs, including eliminating entire agencies. But although most agree that the federal government is facing major problems, many Americans also have an unfavorable view of Musk and are hesitant about the Republican president relying on billionaires for advice about

government policy. As the plans take more concrete shape, the poll shows that Americans are ambivalent about some of the changes that Trump and his team have mentioned in the past few months — including eliminating large numbers of federal jobs and moving



federal agencies outside Washington. Substantial shares don't have an opinion, indicating that there's plenty of room for opinion to shift in either direction. A return-to-office policy for federal workers — which was one of Trump's first executive actions on Inauguration Day — is fairly popular.

Americans see a broken federal government — but aren't as concerned about the 'deep state' as Trump sweeps into his second term with promises to cut regulations and reduce the role of government bureaucrats, most Americans think the federal government has serious problems. About two-thirds of U.S. adults say corruption and inefficiency are "major problems" in the federal government, and roughly 6 in 10 say the same about red tape, such as government regulations and bureaucracy. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to think these are major problems — but a majority of Democrats still agree that corruption and inefficiency are significant challenges for the government.

But despite Trump's claims that career federal workers resisted his policies during his first term, concern about civil servants who are unwilling to implement the president's agenda is not as high. Only about one-third of Americans say this is a big problem in the government.

Hamas names the four hostages it plans to release on Saturday in latest Gaza ceasefire exchange

TELAVIV. The Hamas militant group on Friday published the names of four hostages it said it would release the following day as part of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. There was no immediate confirmation of the names from Israel. The hostages are to be freed on Saturday in exchange for the release of dozens of Palestinians imprisoned or detained by Israel. Relatives of hostages still being held by militants in Gaza had earlier Friday called on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to ensure that all remaining captives are freed, while also appealing to U.S. President Donald Trump to continue pressing for their release. As a fragile six-week ceasefire between Israel and Hamas entered its sixth day, Israelis were waiting anxiously for the names of the next four hostages who will be released from among the more than 90 still held in Gaza. In the Palestinian

enclave, civilians in the central and southern part of the Gaza Strip faced an agonizing wait before they can return to the remnants of their home in the battered north. Israel believes about a third, or possibly as many as half, of the more than 90 hostages still in Gaza have died. Hamas has not released definitive information on how many captives are still alive or the names of those who have died. "Dear President Trump, first of all we want to say thank you for the happy moments we felt this week. But we want to tell you we still have 94 hostages, we need them all at home," said Ayelet Samerano, whose son Yonatan Samerano is among those still being held. "Please do not stop. Please continue to press and do everything so that all the 94 hostages will come home immediately." In the first phase of the ceasefire deal, 33 hostages are expected to be released gradually in return for

hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. The first three Israeli hostages were freed in exchange for 90 Palestinian prisoners on Sunday, the first day of the ceasefire that has halted the 15-month war that has devastated Gaza. Wide swaths of the territory have been destroyed, while more than 47,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to Gaza health authorities, who do not differentiate between combatants and civilians but say more than half are women and children. According to the deal, on Friday Hamas was to announce the names of the next four hostages to be released on Saturday, after which Israel will also release a list of which Palestinian prisoners will be freed. The hostages were among about 250 men, women and children captured by militants who burst across the border into Israel on Oct.



experienced officials who would normally be considered for the job. He has pledged to focus the military on "lethality" and to bring back "warrior culture" to the Pentagon. In confirming him, Republicans brushed aside his lack of experience leading an organization anywhere near the size of the Defense Department — the country's largest employer with some three million personnel. They also approved Hegseth despite allegations of financial mismanagement at veterans' nonprofits where he previously worked, reports of excessive drinking, and allegations that he sexually assaulted a woman in California. Asked during his confirmation hearing last week about criticism he has faced, Hegseth said there was a "coordinated smear campaign" against him, and that he is "not a perfect person, but redemption is real." Trump has stood by him, telling reporters Friday: "Pete's a very, very good man."

The US intends to leave the World Health Organization. What happens next

World The US intends to leave the World Health Organization. What happens next? Donald Trump's plan to withdraw the United States from the World Health Organization (WHO) has been met with dismay in the public health field. Some have called one of the US president's first executive orders "a grave error" and "absolutely bad news".

What does the WHO do? The WHO is a United Nations agency that aims to expand universal health coverage, coordinates responses to health emergencies such as pandemics, and has a broad focus on healthy lives. It does not have the power to enforce health policy, but influences policy worldwide, especially in low-income countries.

The World Health Organization plays an essential coordinating role in surveillance, response and policy for infectious and non-infectious diseases. In fact, infectious diseases have the most pressing need for global coordination. Unlike non-communicable diseases, infections can spread rapidly from one country to another,

just as COVID spread to cause a pandemic. We have much to thank the WHO for, including the eradication of smallpox, a feat which could not have been achieved without global coordination and leadership. It has also played a leading role in control of polio and HIV.

Why does the US want to withdraw? The reasons for withdrawing include: the mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic ... and other global health crises, its failure to adopt urgently needed reforms, and its inability to demonstrate independence from the inappropriate political influence of WHO member states. The executive order also cites the disproportionately higher payments the US makes to the WHO compared to China. In 2024-25, the US contributed 22% of the organization's mandatory funding from member states compared to about 15% for China. President Trump initiated withdrawal from the WHO over similar concerns in 2020. But this was reversed by President Biden in 2021. What happens

next? The withdrawal may take a year to come into effect, and may need approval by the US Congress. How this will play out is unclear, but it seems likely the WHO will lose US funding. The US withdrawal may also be the final nail in the coffin for the WHO Pandemic Agreement, which faltered in 2024 when member states could not agree on the final Trump's executive order states all negotiations around the pandemic agreement will cease. However, the order hints that the US will look at working with international partners to tackle global health. The US Centers for Disease and Control (CDC) already has such international partners and could feasibly do this. It already convenes a global network of training in outbreak response, which could provide a model. But to move in this direction needs finessing, as another objective of the new US government is to reduce or cease international aid. The WHO also convenes a range of expert committees and networks of reference laboratories. One among many

network of laboratories is for influenza, comprising more than 50 labs in 41 member states. This includes five "super labs", one of which is at the CDC. It's unclear what would happen to such networks, many of which have major US components. With the threat of bird flu mutating to become a human pandemic these global networks are critical for surveillance of pandemic threats. WHO expert committees also drive global health policy on a range of issues. It is possible for the WHO to accredit labs in non-member countries, or for experts from non-member countries to be on WHO expert committees. But how this will unfold, especially for US government-funded labs or experts who are US government employees, is unclear. Another potential impact of a US withdrawal is the opportunity for other powerful member nations to become more influential once the US leaves. This may lead to restrictions on US experts sitting on WHO committees or working with the organisation in other ways.

NEWS BOX

'Convert Red Fort into medical museum'

CHENNAI. The 1965 batch of Madras Medical College alumni has requested that the state government convert the 128-year-old red-brick heritage structure known as 'Red Fort' into a medical museum. Built in 1897, the structure was later classified as a Grade I heritage building by the Justice E Padmanabhan Committee on Heritage Structures. The alumni said that though the government earlier said the structure would be converted into a museum once restoration work was over, it has not been done even eight years since completion of work. Dr J Balasubramanian, a member of MMC Heritage Committee and an alumnus, said the red-brick structure constructed by the British in Indo-Saracenic style housed the Department of Anatomy for several decades.

The doctors said that MMC is the second oldest college in the country, the first being the Kolkata Medical College. The heritage committee members have preserved some old medical equipment and photographs, including 120-year-old group photos of students with British doctors.

The alumni said these can be displayed at the museum along with other rare specimens. Dr N A Jayavelan, another member of committee, said Rs 1.97 crore was allotted in December 2017 by the then state government for the heritage structure's renovation. The work was completed in 2018. The 1965 batch alumni said the museum can be thrown open to the public and students so that they can learn about the evolution of modern medicine in the country and the history of the institution.

Metro rail signs MoU with EVZIP for last-mile connectivity in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD. In the next five 5-10 years, Indian cities will be sitting on a powder keg due to rapid urbanisation and a huge increase in the number of vehicles. The only solution is to have a rail-based mass rapid system with multi-modal integration, and first and last-mile connectivity, Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited (HMRL) Managing Director NVS Reddy said.

On Friday, he participated in the signing of an MoU between L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad) Limited (L&TMRHL) and EVZIP. "Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has a grand vision for Hyderabad and wants to make the city a one trillion dollar economy. Presently, the wealth of Hyderabad is about 250 billion dollars with three existing cities, Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Cyberabad.

The CM is planning to build a fourth city in the south of the Airport and call it Future City which will house top-notch transport facilities to reduce the use of private vehicles," he explained. He further said the metro rail is being expanded in all directions and the plan is to expand to the stretch of 200 km from the initial length of 69 km.

HAML has distributed 170 cheques and paid Rs 80 crore as compensation for properties acquired on the 7.5 km stretch from MGBS to Chandrayangutta. This comes after obtaining consent from 270 property owners out of 1,100 identified for demolitions to widen the roads in the area. EVZIP is introducing a women-driven two-wheeler taxi service, exclusive for women commuters.

Karnataka to formulate bill to rein in microfinance firms

BENGALURU. The state government is planning to formulate 'Karnataka Microfinance Institutions (Regulation of Money Lending) Bill' to rein in microfinance companies. This is in view of the increasing number of complaints accusing such companies of harassing those unable to clear loans taken from them.

Disclosing this to reporters here on Friday after a cabinet meeting, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and other central finance agencies are not able to control microfinance companies. "We are tabling the Karnataka Microfinance Institutions (Regulation of Money Lending) Bill at a meeting convened by Chief Minister



Siddaramaiah on Saturday," Patil said. The meeting will discuss measures to be taken to stop such lending companies from harassing borrowers, especially farmers, in rural areas, he said. Asked if finance companies can't be controlled under existing laws, Patil said they are not strong. Police have limited powers to handle such cases. "We have to plug the loopholes," he added. He said the state government has taken the issue seriously and a special law is expected soon to control such lending companies.

New land acquisition model puts Kochi Seaport-Airport Road development on track

KOCHI. The second phase development of the Seaport-Airport Road — involving a 14.3km stretch from the HMT Road in Kalamassery to the Kochi airport in Nedumbassery — had been in the cold storage for over two decades, before receiving a new lease of life last year.

What has paved the way for unlocking the land acquisition deadlock, especially that of the land belonging to HMT, is a new model put forward by the state government, under which the government would deposit the cost of the disputed land (Rs 37.90 crore) with the court to proceed with land acquisition. The court had permitted the government to remit the cost in a nationalised bank. The much-touted project — a 25.7km road from Irumpanam near Tripunithura to Nedumbassery — is expected to provide easier access to the airport and is being implemented in two phases. The implementing agency, the Roads and Bridges Development Corporation of Kerala (RBDCK), had completed the first phase — an 11.3km stretch from Irumpanam to Kalamassery — in 2003. However, the work on the second phase got delayed. The government had provided land to HMT at Kalamassery for free to facilitate its industrial activities. But HMT demanded compensation when the state wanted it back for the road project. The government took a stand that the land was given for a purpose and can be taken back if it was not used for that. HMT challenged the same in the court. While a single



bench ruled in favour of HMT, the government moved the division bench, which pronounced a verdict in the latter's favour. HMT then went to Supreme Court, which stayed the land acquisition proceedings. "To take the project ahead, the state government filed an affidavit before the apex court stating that it will deposit the disputed amount (land value demanded by HMT) before the court first and then proceed with land acquisition. Later, the amount can be given to HMT or returned to the state as per the final verdict. The court accepted the same and directed the government to deposit the amount in a nationalised bank in the name of High Court Registrar. We've handed over the amount to the tahsildar who now has to deposit the same in the Registrar's name. After that, we can acquire the said land," a senior RBDCK official told

TNIE. An amount of Rs 37,90,96,662 needs to be deposited. The state recently allocated Rs 19.39 crore for the purpose, as a sum of Rs 18.75 crore was already there in the tahsildar's account. The second phase includes three sections — HMT Road-NAD Junction to Mahilalayam Junction, Mahilalayam Junction to Chowara, and Chowara to Airport Road. In the 2.7km stretch from

Kalamassery to NAD, construction has been completed on the land available (1.5km) while the land belonging to NAD is yet to be acquired. "The NAD land is ready for acquisition. We've handed over the required amount (Rs 23.06 crore) to the tahsildar, who will now issue award enquiry notes to landowners. As they produce the documents, the land will be acquired by handing over the compensation," the official said.

The authorities hope to complete the acquisition of HMT land on a war-footing. "The NAD-Mahilalayam stretch has over 400 landowners. It will take at least six months to complete the process, but we can start acquiring the entire HMT land after depositing the amount required as there is only a single landholder," the official pointed out.

Six kids injured in Anganwadi ceiling collapse in Telangana

Upon learning about the incident, Collector Valluri Kranthi and MLA Dr Sanjeeva Reddy visited the hospital to meet the children and their parents.

SANGAREDDY. As many as six children were injured when a piece of the roof collapsed at an Anganwadi centre. Taking serious note of the incident, Collector Valluri Kranthi suspended the in-charge Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) Sujatha and Anganwadi teacher Ambika with immediate effect. The collector also instructed the District Women and Child Welfare Officer to submit a



detailed report on the condition of Anganwadi centres across the district and ensure that such incidents do not recur. Additionally, she directed officials to relocate Anganwadi centres operating in dilapidated buildings and to conduct monthly inspections of Anganwadi centres in

Venkatapur, Narayanakhet mandal on Friday.

Among them, two girls sustained serious injuries. According to sources, about 15 children were playing inside the Anganwadi centre when pieces of the roof suddenly fell. Panicked and confused, the children started crying and ran out of the room. The staff rushed the injured children to the government hospital for treatment. All of them were below five years of age. Harika and Mounika received head injuries, while Ankitha, Pranay, Avinash and Rayaanika received minor injuries. Upon learning about the incident, Collector Valluri Kranthi and

MLA Dr Sanjeeva Reddy visited the hospital to meet the children and their parents. The collector immediately ordered an inquiry into the incident and warned of strict action against those found responsible.

Amaravati works to begin in February

VIJAYAWADA. Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MAUD) Minister P Narayana has revealed that tenders for all Amaravati constructions will be finalised by the end of January, and works will begin in February. The TDP-led NDA government is committed to completing the construction of capital within three years, he asserted. Inspecting the ongoing works at Nelapadu on Friday, he said tenders for 40 projects worth Rs 38,571 crore were issued earlier, and mentioned that pending legal challenges have now been resolved, he said. Recalling the 2015 land pooling initiative of the previous TDP government, he said farmers provided 34,000 acres for the capital construction in just 58 days. The capital development projects included iconic structures like a 48-storey GAD Tower, an 8-storey High Court building (20.32 lakh sq ft), and a 250-metre-high Assembly (11.22 lakh sq ft), along with 4,053 flats for officials. Narayana



alleged that the YSRCP government halted these projects, leaving the foundations of structures submerged in water. The proposed development projects will be executed strictly as per quality standards suggested by IIT experts. Additionally, two pending rental instalments owed to farmers have been cleared, he explained. Underlining the need for an effective law and order system to attract industrial investments, the minister alleged that the previous YSRCP regime ignored governance.

Workers of Mission Shakti oppose govt's restructure plan, stage massive protest

BARIPADA. Thousands of women on Friday staged demonstration outside the Mayurbhanj collector's office protesting the state government's decision to restructure Mission Shakti executive committees. Over 6,000 members of Mission Shakti's executive committee of Mayurbhanj from 26 blocks of the district participated in the protest.

The agitators first took out a rally from the Grand Road near Haribaldev Jew temple and marched to the collector's office raising slogans against the government. Some of them later tried to forcefully enter the collectorate but were prevented by police. As collector Hemakanta Say was not in Baripada town, the agitators staged demonstration outside his office.

Chairperson of the district unit of Mission Shakti Bishnupriya Das said thousands of workers in Mayurbhanj will be deprived of jobs if the government restructures the executive committees. "Many Mission Shakti workers have already availed interest-free loans and purchased scooters on EMIs. If the government removes them from their jobs, they will not be able to repay the loans," she said. Other agitators said during the tenure of the previous BJD government, the Mission



Shakti wing was very active in Mayurbhanj district. However, it is now in a dormant state. "In the last five years till March 2024, the Mission Shakti department allocated Rs 100 crore assistance to the district.

But in the seven months after the new BJP government came to power, no funds have been allocated to Mayurbhanj's Mission Shakti wing," they alleged. The

In a milestone, Kidwai logs 1k robotic surgeries

BENGALURU. Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology (KMIO), the first government hospital in the state to adopt robotic technology with the advanced Da Vinci robotic surgical system, has achieved a historic milestone by successfully completing 1,000 robotic surgeries. Commending Kidwai's achievement, Medical Education Minister Dr Sharan Prakash Patil on Friday said, "The hospital offers world-class cancer treatment at no cost or at affordable rates to patients. Adopting innovative medical technologies has enabled Kidwai to deliver high-quality care promptly."

Over the past nine years, the use of robotic technology has made 1,000 surgeries possible, marking a historic achievement. Kidwai remains at the forefront of patient care, establishing itself as a leading cancer treatment centre in India and globally. The institute's efforts and achievements are noteworthy, Patil said in a press release.

Under the Ayushman Bharat Arogya Karnataka scheme, Kidwai has emerged as the hospital providing the highest number of treatments.



Kidwai is also recognised as the only super-specialty hospital offering extensive inpatient care. Additionally, it houses Karnataka's sole bone marrow transplant (BMT) unit, where both allogeneic and autologous bone marrow transplants have been successfully performed, the release said adding that to ensure convenience for patients, the institute operates a 24/7 pharmacy.

A separate committee has been established to reduce treatment costs for families lacking BPL benefits or facing financial constraints. Kidwai has also decided to offer cashless treatment for KSRTC employees.

Hyderabad: Many missing links in Meerpet woman's murder

HYDERABAD. Rachakonda Police Commissioner G Sudheer Babu on Friday said that they would take help from experts from other parts of the country to crack the gruesome murder of a woman at Meerpet allegedly by her husband. Ex-serviceman Gurumurthy, 39, allegedly killed his wife Putta Venkatamadhavi chopped her body into pieces and boiled the parts in a pressure cooker before dumping the remains at an undisclosed location. The police are looking for police officials with expertise in solving similar cases across the country to use their experience in nailing the accused.

A source revealed that the ex-serviceman carried out the macabre operation of cutting the victim's body into pieces and boiling it between 10.30 am and 6.30 pm on January 15. "Later, he supposedly stuffed the remains in a bag and took them away somewhere for disposal without anybody noticing him," the source added. Meanwhile, a police official who is

monitoring the case said that whatever Gurumurthy claimed appeared false. "Because even a person with past experience in carrying out such gruesome murders cannot do what the ex-serviceman claims to have done," the official added. Even investigators are baffled at the dexterity with which the ex-serviceman carried out the whole operation without leaving much evidence. "It is astonishing that he left no stains on any object in his house after murdering her. It appeared that he washed away all the blood stains only with water," the source mentioned.

The major challenge before the officials is that they are yet to find the remains of the body of the woman though Gurumurthy has already been picked up. Addressing a press conference, the Rachakonda Commissioner said the issue is



still being treated as a "missing case". "She (the victim) was not seen for some time. So a case has been registered. Since she has been missing and later on this kind of information came to us, we are working on that. So far

nobody has been found. So there is a different way of investigating the case.

As of now, it is a missing case. We are investigating the case and we are involving experts not only from our state but also other parts of the country," he said. While some horrified tenants in the building where the alleged murder took place at New Venkateshwar Colony at Jillelaguda, vacated others have moved out temporarily.

As per the FIR registered on January 18, Madhavi had left home after a quarrel with Gurumurthy. The source said that the police were collecting evidence by using infrared (IR) light and other modern technology to build a watertight case. A forensic team reportedly found hair and blood samples from the bathroom. "The officials found blood stains on the bathroom flush," the source said.

Why India's good economics is corrupted by bad politics

Three current events in Delhi reveal widening cracks in the 'liberal' ideology that has ruled the country's economics since the 1991 economic reforms: the upcoming elections in Delhi; the national Budget; and the Central government conceding, reluctantly again, that it must negotiate with farmers objecting to the imposition of 'free market' agriculture reforms and demanding that the government ensure they get fair prices for their produce. The strategy of all political parties competing in the Delhi elections is to promise more 'freebies' to citizens. This may be good politics, but it is bad economics, lament economists advising the Finance Minister, who must balance the Budget without increasing taxes on corporations and the rich.

The government finds it hard to agree with the framers because their demands run counter to the ideology of liberalisation of the economy, which is minimum government and maximum governance by the 'invisible hand' of capitalist markets.

The government's overall strategy to make India a 'developed country' by 2047 is to increase the GDP more rapidly, with the expectation that the top line growth of wealth of the rich will trickle down to the bottom line of incomes for people in the lower half of the economic pyramid.

Before pressing harder on the liberal reforms' accelerator to boost the GDP, the policymakers must pause and objectively examine how well the Indian economy has done since the 1991 economic reforms. Economists on the liberal right side defend their theories by comparing the performance of the pre-1991 'socialist' economy with the post-1991 'liberated' economy. By this yardstick, liberal economists of both the UPA and the NDA can agree that the economy has been on the right track since 1991. They disagree only about whether employment and incomes increased faster whenever their side was in power, a contest they are trying to settle with dubious statistics. A scientific way to settle the ideological debate about the best economic strategy for India is by a comparison of how much growth of the GDP has increased incomes of the poorest people in other developing economies since the 1990s. Compare India and China, two countries with over a billion citizens, both of whom were very poor until the 1980s, both opening their economies around the same time to increase foreign trade and private investments. And Vietnam, which was even poorer in the 1980s, and has now emerged as another Asian tiger, competing with India to draw away investments from China, where labour costs have increased with its remarkable economic success.

The box above illustrates the comparative growth in GDP per capita of China, Vietnam and India from 1989 to 2023. It shows that Vietnam and China experienced significantly higher increases than India during this period. Why have China and Vietnam's economies done six times better than India's in lifting incomes at the bottom over the same period? India's economy reformers should examine this scientifically and non-ideologically.

For one, China and Vietnam did not give up the communist-socialist moorings of their economic policies after the collapse of the communist Soviet Union in 1991, when the Washington Consensus around liberated financial capitalism swept the world. Russia was persuaded by US economists to switch from communism to capitalism with a 'big bang', with disastrous consequences. Crony capitalists gouged the country's wealth, became extremely wealthy, bought mansions in London and yachts in the Mediterranean and corrupted Russian politics. China and Vietnam joined the global economic system on their own terms in the 1990s. Deng Xiaoping adopted 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics', incorporating features of capitalism into central planning to enhance the welfare of the people. US economists complain China cheated when it was admitted into global markets because China did not give up socialism and state planning. It protected its public sector and nurtured private sector giants, now being sanctioned by the US — the champion of free markets — which is destroying multi-lateral trade and financial institutions.

Our Constitution an ode to consensus

Its framers pursued the exemplary path of respectful listening and accommodating others

During times of peace, it is relatively easy to be democratic; the test arises when we are faced with social and political turmoil. By the end of 1948, rocked by the Partition and the ensuing communal violence, anxieties about social fragmentation and separatism were tangible within the Constituent Assembly and outside it. In this demanding situation, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel set a new benchmark for what a democracy is and should aspire to be. As the chairman of the special sub-committee set up to re-examine political safeguards for religious minorities, he said: "I was anxious that the representatives of the minorities on the Committee should have adequate time both to gauge public opinion among their people, and to reflect fully on the amendments proposed, so that a change, if affected, would be one sought voluntarily by the minorities themselves", and "not imposed on them by the majority community". Patel's words echoed the framers' commitment to democracy. A high-powered committee, with Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, KM Munshi and BR Ambedkar as its members, had recommended the withdrawal of separate representation for religious minorities. The Sikh representatives were reluctant to accept this recommendation and wanted more time to consult and reflect on the proposed changes.

The political stature of the members of the sub-committee should itself have elicited compliance. But this did not happen. There was political urgency to settle the issue. Yet, Patel, along with the committee members, did not force a consensus. They heard and respected the wishes of even this small group of representatives. To give Sikhs more time, he adjourned the meeting. The majority of the representatives, including members of other minorities, had accepted the recommendations of the special sub-committee. Even most of the Muslim representatives agreed that separate representation for religious minorities be abandoned. It was the need of the hour. Under these conditions, the sub-committee could easily have ignored a few Sikh voices. After all, numbers were on their side. They could also have appealed to national interest. But this did not happen. Despite the extenuating circumstances and the weight of the numerical majority with them, Patel offered a political reasoning that defined what it means to be

democratic. He did not want a major decision to be imposed upon a community. This was a spectacular lesson in what democracy entails. Today, democracy is associated with elections and rule by elected representatives. For analysts, leaders and students of political science, elections are the peg around which democracies are anchored. A few other elements — separation of powers, rule of law, respect for human rights — are thrown in for good measure, but it is winning or losing elections that matters the most.



Probably because we believe that winners decide the course of things to come: they determine the policies that will be formulated. The future rests in their hands. Against this myopic vision of what democracy is, Patel and the leadership of the sub-committee presented a grand alternative. They did not simply espouse an ideal of deliberation, they stood by it and acted upon it; showed us that democracy requires the willingness to trust and walk the mile to meet those who disagree. The moral power of this gesture compelled the other side (the dissenting voices) also to take the committee's reasoning seriously, and they too agreed to accept the recommendations. Eventually, the sub-committee on minorities voluntarily accepted the decision to withdraw separate representation for religious minorities.

The members of the Constituent Assembly functioned with exemplary patience in a situation of extreme political urgency. They listened to each other, to similar, and at times, the same arguments, being

presented again and again, in a sub-committee, then in the larger body, when specific provisions were being discussed, and again when the entire draft of the Constitution was discussed. In doing so, they taught the world what it means to live in a democracy and live by the idea of democracy.

The issue before the special sub-committee was political safeguards for minorities. Hence, in his statement, Patel alluded to religious minorities. However, his reasoning addressed all of us: future generations of leaders, assemblies of representatives and each of us in our individual capacity and places of work and collective existence. Differences and disagreements are unavoidable, and if we stand committed to a democratic way of life, we need to make space for them, listen to them and work to build a consensus. The Constituent Assembly left us with this thinking at a time when theories of deliberative democracy were not on the scene and ideas of a well-functioning democracy few and far between. America was seen at best as a polyarchy, and Carl Schmitt's advice that real politics requires a distinction between friends and foes resounded in Europe. In this environment, the political leaders who shaped our republic and framed the Constitution stood alone and stood tall. They may have toured various countries and read their constitutions and laws closely, but they shaped the process of deliberation and decision-making in accordance with their convictions about the value of democracy. Individual clauses and provisions were the product of negotiations and sometimes even compromise. In that too, they taught us that democracy requires this willingness to move away from our initial position and find a way to take everyone along. Even though there have been several amendments to the Constitution, it still remains a precious document, reminding us that the process matters and it gives substance to the idea of democracy. As we celebrate 75 years of our republic, it's for each of us to see if we have lived up to the standards the framers of our Constitution set for us and our democracy. They pursued the exemplary path of respectful listening and accommodating others. What better way can there be to remember them and commemorate the momentous event of giving India her Constitution than to follow their path.

Sustaining hope

Rekindle the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao spark

WHEN the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) programme launched in Haryana in 2015, it was a beacon of hope for states like Punjab and Haryana, long plagued by gender imbalances. A decade later, the initiative boasts successes, but the enthusiasm of its early years seems to have waned. Haryana's sex ratio at birth saw a commendable rise from 871 girls per 1,000 boys in 2015 to 910 in 2024. Yet, this progress has been uneven, with districts like Gurugram and Faridabad lagging below 900. Punjab tells a similar story, especially in rural areas where early marriages and school dropouts continue to derail girls' futures. While institutional deliveries have increased, a deeper societal change remains elusive. The scheme's first few years thrived on community-driven efforts and robust campaigns. However, as enthusiasm dimmed, so did its transformative potential. A glaring issue was the heavy allocation — 78 per cent of



funds between 2016 and 2019 — towards media advocacy instead of long-term investments in education

and healthcare. Slogans like "Beti Khilao" following Haryana's success in sports sparked hope, but the lack of sustained support for girls' higher education and careers has left aspirations unfulfilled. What's needed now is a revival of that early spark. Punjab and Haryana must look beyond awareness campaigns and tackle patriarchal mindsets head on. Gender-sensitisation programmes in schools, involving men as allies in the fight for equality, and providing vocational training for girls can breathe new life into the programme. Accountability through better fund utilisation and district-level monitoring is crucial. BBBP began as a movement of hope. To keep that hope alive, it must evolve into a relentless push against gender inequity — one that uplifts not just numbers but also lives.

Trump hits WHO where it hurts

America's withdrawal has far-reaching implications for global health security

Among the executive orders signed by Donald Trump soon after taking over as the US President is the one about America pulling out of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The order says that the decision follows the WHO's "mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic that arose out of Wuhan, China, and other global health crises, its failure to adopt urgently needed reforms, and its inability to demonstrate independence from the inappropriate political influence of WHO member states". The order adds that America has been supporting the WHO "far out of proportion" compared to countries like China — which has a population of 1.4 billion but pays a tiny sum. Trump's decision has far-reaching implications not just for America but for global health security. Trump's disdain for the WHO was obvious during his first term when the world reeled under the impact of the Covid pandemic. He squarely blamed the health agency for its so-called mishandling of the situation. Trump suspended America's contributions to the agency as it battled the worst global health emergency in a century. He also initiated the process for America's eventual withdrawal from the agency, but before it could happen, he was voted out. His successor, Joe Biden, reversed the order and restored America's financial support to the WHO. The executive order issued now means America will cease its financial support to the agency in a year. At present, America contributes about 18 per cent of the WHO's overall funding. The agency's budget for two years (2024 and 2025) is \$6.8 billion. The WHO was formed as a specialised UN agency after World War II to address important matters of health and diseases. It was mandated to act as a technical agency with an international network of scientists, medical experts and health policymakers. One of its key functions was to launch

coordinated action on new infections emerging through surveillance and sharing of information. The WHO provides technical assistance to poor countries and helps build their capacity to tackle health challenges. Over the decades, the agency's work has led to the eradication and control of diseases such as smallpox, yaws, yellow fever, leprosy and polio. The global action on HIV/AIDS through a new agency, UNAIDS, too was noteworthy. Now, its focus is on ending tuberculosis. The agency's work has come into sharp focus since 2000 with the emergence of new infections and re-emergence of old ones — SARS, bird flu, MERS, Ebola, Mpox and Covid-19. In a globalised, hyper-connected and interdependent world, health security is intertwined with the economy. The decision to withdraw from WHO is bad for the US as well as the global community. It will deny America access to critical data on disease outbreaks and health emergencies that the WHO shares with all member states. Several US pharmaceutical companies and laboratories depend on the 'WHO Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework' for information on new influenza virus samples for research and development. The decision also entails America's withdrawal from ongoing negotiations for the global pandemic treaty and other mechanisms like the International Health Regulations. Dozens of American experts working with the WHO will also be recalled and reassigned. Two American institutions — the Centre for Disease Control and the National Institutes of Health — engage with the WHO on critical issues. The ending of such partnerships will be mutually harmful.

For the WHO, the loss of its biggest donor comes as a severe blow at a time when national contributions from governments are already dwindling. After

America, the next largest national donor is Germany, contributing around

3 per cent of the agency's funding. In recent years, contributions from some non-state donors to the WHO have gone up substantially. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation tops this list, followed by the European Commission and the World Bank. The Gates Foundation supports work in areas like polio eradication and vaccines. If national funding to the WHO does not go up after America stops its financial

the WHO should devise objective criteria and parameters for declaring a public health emergency like Covid-19. Other countries have made similar demands. Being a UN body, the WHO is open to criticism and there are platforms to pursue the idea of reforms, but disbanding it or starving it of funds is not the solution. Responding to the demand for reform, the WHO has said that it has implemented the largest set of reforms in its history, covering "accountability, cost-effectiveness and impact in countries". Besides disrupting global health security, Trump's reckless move — together with his decision to withdraw from the Paris climate change agreement and appoint a vaccine sceptic as the Health Secretary — severs public policies from evidence-based science and erodes the influence of science. Like the WHO, climate change treaties have been a favourite punching bag for Trump.



help, the WHO's dependence on donors like Gates might rise. This is not such a good thing for the independent functioning of the UN agency. Critics have pointed out that private funding comes with strings attached, which, in turn, influences the global health agenda. The call for reforming the functioning of the WHO to make it far more efficient, transparent and responsive is valid. In the wake of the pandemic, India also raised the issue at multilateral fora like the G20 and BRICS summits in 2020. It suggested that

its support to the fossil fuel industry is bound to exacerbate climate change and result in an adverse impact on public health as well as livelihoods, among other things. His decisions on the WHO and climate change show that Trump is questioning the value of evidence and science while undermining multilateralism. These are not just internal policy matters of America but can have global implications, as already witnessed in the last round of climate talks where industrialised countries used Trump's re-election to stall further climate action. Health security and climate change are interlinked, and if the world is going to scale down its response to both, it will be a disaster for the health of the planet and humankind.



Republic Day 2025

“स्वर्णिम भारत - विरासत और विकास”



Republic Day - The day the Constitution of India came into effect

Republic Day is celebrated every year on 26 January to commemorate the date and moment when the Constitution of India came into effect. Although India attained independence on August 15, 1947 but till 1949 it didn't have a permanent constitution of its own and instead were functioning under the laws enacted and implemented by the British. And after many amendments the Constitution was approved and accepted on November 26, 1949 that came into force in a full-fledged fashion from on 26 January, 1950. Thus, Republic Day celebration is the moment to remember the coming of the Constitution into effect.

India celebrates its Republic Day in colourful and exciting ways. To mark Republic Day in a memorable and significant way, every year in New Delhi, capital of India, a grand parade is held that starts from the Raisina Hill in the neighborhood of the majestic Rashtrapati Bhawan and passes along the Rajpath thus ending at India Gate. The President, Prime Minister and other high rank officials of India on this occasion make their presence at Rajpath to celebrate the occasion. The President unfolds the National flag as soon

as the National Anthem is played and also addresses the nation with Republic Day speech. Furthermore, the Republic Day parade also includes lively displays and

exhibits India's rich and colourful culture and also brings the entire nation together. The parade concludes with the flypast by Indian Air Force jets.

On Republic Day, martyrs and heroes who showed courage and bravery for country's sake without bothering their

own lives is also remembered and conferred prestigious and significant awards including Kirti Chakra and Ashok Chakra are conferred on the event by the President. Since 1950, for Republic Day celebrations India has been inviting guests of high dignitaries of another country as the state guest of honour.

Not only in New Delhi, but other states also celebrate Republic Day with great enthusiasm and in numerous innovative ways. The Republic Day 2015 will be observed on Monday (26 January) and the public offices and schools will remain closed to celebrate the significance of the day.

The patriotic fervor of the people is witnessed not only in the programmes and activities but also in the inspirational Republic Day SMS and Republic Day messages. On this day people send warm wishes about Republic Day to their dear ones that lend a festive ambience to the historic occasion. Short and lovely text messages are also a wonderful way to spread the importance of the Republic Day.

The festivity of Republic Day concludes officially with the intriguing Beating Retreat ceremony on the evening of 29th January. This enthralling ceremony is performed by the military, the Indian Air Force, India Navy and India Army in the Raisina Hills, New Delhi, in front of the President of India as the Chief Guest.

Signs, enclosures to guide Republic Day

Parade visitors



Every year, visitors to the Republic Day parade walk for nearly two kilometres to reach the three connecting roads to Rajpath from where police direct them to their seating enclosure. As a result, most of them have to walk for another kilometre.

The traffic police have decided to install directional signs of the enclosures near the parking areas and alighting points to guide the visitors directly to their enclosure. "We have briefed our staff to assist the pedestrians to park near the alighting points and direct them to shortest routes," said Taj Hassan, special commissioner (traffic).

Earlier, the road markers would not show the position of the seating enclosures and the visitors had to find out about their seats, a senior traffic official said. "We want to make things easy for pedestrians as it is difficult to walk down Rajpath to find a seating enclosure," said a senior cop. Markers will now be provided along the routes to direct the pedestrians. "If someone has a seat in enclosure number 1, he will be directed towards the Vijay Chowk from the Tughlaq Road," said a senior official.

Meanwhile, the traffic police have also made arrangements for parking vehicles on the lawns behind the Rajpath. "We have issued triangular stickers for parking at the south of the Rajpath while vehicles to be parked on the north lawns will have square stickers," said Anil Shukla, additional CP, traffic.

Police officials added that they will close down Central Secretariat, Udyog Bhawan, Patel Chowk and Race Course Metro station during the parade.

Music concert to commemorate Republic Day

The 11th edition of annual 'Freedom Jam, an annual music extravaganza supported by the department of tourism will be held on January 25 and 26 at three different venues as part of Republic Day celebrations. Puducherry Tourism and Development Corporation's Seagulls Restaurant at the southern end of Rue Dumas will present different styles of rock, pop, blues and metal and the stage next to Tourist Information Centre on Beach Road will present classical Carnatic and Hindustani as well as fusion music from sunset onwards on January 25 and 26.

The stage next to Le Cafe on Beach Road will present folk and Indipop varieties after sunset on January 26. This year's best guitarist at IIT Saarang, Jesh Murjani will mesmerize the audience at the Seagulls stage on January 25 followed by rock remixes of old Tamil MGR and Shivaji film songs by music bands Crossroads and Spirit of Madras. Local musicians such as the Swaha Blues Band from Auroville and Frooti for Pappu from Pondicherry institute of medical sciences will also perform the same evening. Bengaluru heavy metal band that won the national Channel V Launchpad talent hunt last year, DeSat will perform on January 26. Foxy Lady as well as Wild Things Federation from Chennai will present classic rock. Tourist Info Centre stage will stage Hindustani bansuri flute concert by Bryce Gringlington accompanied by Arnab Chaudhuri on tabla on January 25.

Republic Day evening will witness a special performance by popular fusion music by the 20-member Rhythmic Energy brass ensemble orchestra from Bengaluru. This will be followed by classical music by senior artistes Kovai Usha on violin and Tata Bhanumathi on Veena on January 26. Le Cafe stage will feature the Arul Mani troupe performing local folk music followed by Ullasa Paravaigal rendering indipop. The music fest has been attracting followers from neighbouring metros Chennai, Bangalore and other parts of India.



Centre Cracks Down On Spoofed International Calls, 20 Carriers Blocked

Further, the government asked Indian Telcos to initiate drive against foreign carriers or aggregators who are handing over spoofed international calls, and they have blocked more than 20 such carriers to date.

New Delhi. An indigenously-developed system to identify and block international spoofed calls that display Indian mobile numbers has significantly brought down such calls to about 4 lakh per day, the government has informed.

Further, the government asked Indian Telcos to initiate drive against foreign carriers or aggregators who are handing over spoofed international calls, and they have blocked more than 20 such carriers to date.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) recently launched an indigenously-developed International Incoming Spoofed Calls Prevention System, along with all telecom service providers (TSPs). The tool proved to be a formidable barrier that blocked 90% of all the incoming international calls which were identified as spoofed calls - approximately 1.35 crore, in just 24 hours, indicating that the system's success in tackling the issue of cyber-crimes using spoofed calls from abroad.

Fraudsters were earlier using international



spoofed calls that displayed Indian mobile numbers (+91-xxxxx) to deceive Indian citizens and carrying out cyber-crimes and financial frauds. Though these calls appear to originate from within India, they are actually made from abroad through manipulation of the Calling Line Identity (CLI), commonly referred to as phone number.

With the successful implementation of the system, scammers abroad changed their modus operandi and now they have started spoofing using international numbers. To counter this, DoT has asked telecom service providers to

display "International Calls" on all calls coming from outside India.

This helps the citizen to understand that since the incoming calls is an "International Call", it cannot be from organisations like DoT, TRAI, police, RBI, customs, UIDAI etc. One of the major service providers has already implemented this in its network and others are in process of doing so, according to Ministry of Communications. In order to further tackle the menace of international spoofed calls from reaching Indian citizens, DoT has asked telecom service providers (TSPs) to block traffic from such international carriers, which are repeatedly sending spoofed CLI call traffic to India. Providers like Airtel and BSNL have blocked more than 20 such carriers/aggregators who were handing over spoofed international calls. "The recently launched Sanchar Saathi App has placed the convenience of reporting fraudulent calls at the fingertips of the citizens. It immensely enhances the ease of reporting any suspected fraud communications by allowing citizens to report such incidents directly from their mobile phone call logs," said the DoT.

India says keeping an eye after Pakistan sends ISI agents to Bangladesh

New Delhi. Pakistan sending its top army officials and spies to Bangladesh have put New Delhi on alert. India on Friday said that it is closely monitoring the recent developments and "will take appropriate steps" when it comes to national security. "We keep an eye on all activities around the country and in the region, as well as all activities affecting national security, and the government will take appropriate steps," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a weekly media briefing.

These remarks come right after a high-profile delegation from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), led by Major General Shahid Amir Afsar, concluded its four-day visit to Bangladesh on Friday. The visit follows the recent trip made by top Bangladeshi military officials to Pakistan where they had met with the three service



chiefs. Since the turmoil following former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ouster, Muhammad Yunus-led Bangladesh has grown comfortably closer to Pakistan, raising a red flag in India. Bangladesh's decision to grant a visa to any Pakistani citizen without security clearance has raised eyebrows, with experts warning of an increase in ISI and Jamaat activities in India's backyard. "There have been recent reports of eased travel restrictions for Pakistan ISI and Jamaat elements to Dhaka," a security analyst had earlier told. However, India has been ready to put its differences aside and work towards a "democratic, progressive and inclusive" Bangladesh. "We support a democratic, progressive and inclusive Bangladesh. We want to strengthen our ties so that the people of India and Bangladesh can prosper," Jaiswal further said at the media briefing. On Bangladesh raising objection to India's border fencing along the border, Jaiswal said that it is aimed at stopping the illegal movement of humans and cattle.

French men cycling to Nepal take Google Maps shortcut, get stranded in Bareilly

New Delhi. Two French tourists en route to Nepal on their cycles were left stranded in a village in Uttar Pradesh at around midnight as they took a wrong shortcut suggested by Google Maps, police said on Friday. "They had to go to Kathmandu in Nepal via Tanakpur from Pilibhit... Google Maps showed them a shortcut via Baheri in Bareilly, due to which they got lost and reached Churaili Dam," said a police official.

After tourists Brian Jacques Gilbert and Sebastian Francois Gabriel were spotted by some villagers cycling at night, they were, subsequently, taken to the police outpost in Bareilly district's Churaili.

"When the villagers saw both the foreigners roaming on bicycles on a deserted road at 11 pm on Thursday, they could not understand their language.

To avoid any incident with the two foreigners, they took both of them to the Churaili police outpost," a police official told news agency PTI. After hearing about their ordeal, the police took the cyclists to the village Pradhan's house to stay there for the night.

When senior police officer Anurag Arya was informed about the situation, he visited the French tourists and spoke with them. He, then, directed the police to guide them.

In the morning, the police sent Gilbert and Gabriel on their way with proper directions. Gilbert and Gabriel flew from Paris to Delhi on January 7.

Power outage during surgery at Punjab hospital stirs row, AAP responds

New Delhi. A power outage in the operation theatre (OT) of the government-run Rajindra Hospital in Patiala during a surgery has sparked a row after a video filmed by a doctor went viral on social media. In the video, the patient lies unconscious on the surgical bed as the doctor explains that power fluctuations persisted for 15 minutes, causing the ventilator to stop during the surgery. While raising the concerns for the patients' safety, the doctor said that this was not one of the incidents. The video also revealed that, contrary to official claims, the hospital's emergency ward was not connected to a dedicated power hotline.

Punjab Health Minister Balbir Singh shrugged off the incident, saying on his official X handle, "The power backup systems at Rajindra Hospital, Patiala, are multi-level (3 hotlines) and functioning without issue. On Friday, a local fault led to a momentary loss of electricity. The UPS and generator backup functioned seamlessly, and the surgery was conducted without issue. The patient is recovering well. Unfortunately, a junior doctor panicked and recorded a video. Medical staff must remain focused on patient care at all times."

Slamming the government over the health model of Punjab, former Health Minister Balbir Singh Sadhu, on his official X handle, said, "Extremely shocking. One of the premier hospitals of Punjab is facing an electricity issue. Bhagwant Mann Ji has made patients' lives a joke! This health model is not what Punjab voted for." "Instead of focusing on the issues of Punjab, Bhagwant Mann and the Health Minister are more focused on the upcoming Delhi Elections," he added.

Fed up with abusive husbands, 2 women marry each other in UP's Gorakhpur

New Delhi. Distraught with their alcoholic and abusive spouses, two women in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur left their homes and married each other. Kavita and Gunja, alias Bablu, tied the knot at the Shiva Temple, famously known as Choti Kashi, in Deoria on Thursday evening. They first connected with each other on Instagram and quickly became friends. They stayed in touch for six years before deciding to get married. Both women said they suffered domestic violence at the hands of their husbands. At the temple, Gunja took on the role of the groom, placing vermilion (sindoor) on Kavita's forehead. The women also exchanged garlands and performed the seven vows (pheras).



One woman said her husband, an alcoholic, assaulted her daily. She has four children and decided to return to her parents' home after enduring repeated violence. The other woman claimed her husband also drank excessively and falsely accused her of infidelity, leading her to leave him. "We were tormented by our husbands' drinking and abusive behaviour. This pushed us to choose a life of peace and love. We have decided to live in Gorakhpur as a couple and work to sustain ourselves," Gunja was quoted as saying by news agency PTI.

The women said they were determined to stay together and would not let anyone separate them. Although they currently do not have a permanent home, they plan to rent a place to live. Uma Shankar Pandey, the temple priest, said the women bought garlands and vermilion, completed the rituals, and departed quietly.

US Supreme Court clears extradition of 26/11 accused Tahawwur Rana to India

New Delhi. The US Supreme Court has approved the extradition of Tahawwur Rana, convicted in connection with the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, to India.

Rana, a Canadian citizen of Pakistani origin, is sought by Indian authorities for his alleged role in the attacks that targeted multiple locations in Mumbai.

Rana, 63, has been held in a Los Angeles prison. The FBI arrested Rana in Chicago in 2009. He is linked to Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, also known as "Daoud Gilani," a key figure in the attacks, and is accused of aiding him and others in Pakistan to support the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in carrying out the attack. Headley became an approver in the case and is serving a 35-year prison

sentence in the US for his involvement in the attack.

Weeks after challenging his extradition in the US Supreme Court, Tahawwur Rana's appeal has been dismissed,

on charges related to the Mumbai attacks. He also stated that he could be sent to India for a second trial on the same charges, facing the possibility of a conviction and death sentence.

Rana had earlier approached the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco after losing legal battles in lower and federal courts.

On December 16, US Solicitor General Elizabeth B Prelogar urged the Supreme Court to reject Rana's petition. His lawyer, Joshua L. Dratel, responded on December 23, opposing the government's position and requesting the Supreme Court to hear the case. The Court declined the



clearing the way for his extradition to India.

In his plea, Rana argued that he was tried and acquitted in federal court in the Northern District of Illinois (Chicago)

plea. Rana is accused of involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, which killed 166 people, including six Americans.

Fire breaks out in two parked vehicles near Mahakumbh mela venue in Prayagraj

New Delhi. A major fire engulfed two parked vehicles in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj during the early hours of Saturday. The incident occurred on the main road leading to Mahakumbh Mela, stirring panic among the locals. Choking clouds of smoke were seen rising from the cars. Several firefighters reached the spot and brought the flames under control. No casualties or injuries have been reported.

Speaking with news agency ANI, UP Fire officer Vishal Yadav said, "Devotees have come from far-flung areas and have parked their vehicles here. The fire broke out due to the extreme heat. Fire engines have reached the spot, and

the fire has been controlled. The Eriga car is completely burnt, and the Venue car is partially burnt. There were no casualties in the incident, and everyone

tenders were dispatched to the scene, where the fire was swiftly brought under control, he added.

This incident took place a week after a fire broke out at the Mahakumbh venue, which, according to the police, was caused by a cylinder explosion.

Vivek Chaturvedi, the Additional District Magistrate (ADM) for the Mahakumbh Mela, stated that the fire occurred on January 19 in the Gita Press camp. Around 70 to 80 huts and eight to 10 tents were destroyed.

Following the incident, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav called for urgent action and urged authorities to take steps to prevent similar accidents in the future.



is safe." The fire broke out around 6:30 am, Yadav told news agency PTI. In response, six fire brigades and water

Top Court reserves treasurer post in Bengaluru advocates body for women lawyers

New Delhi. Exercising its plenary powers, the Supreme Court on Friday reserved the post of treasurer in Bengaluru advocates association for women lawyers. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh exercised its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution observing the election for the bar body was scheduled on February 2 and the nomination process was over. "We deem it appropriate to invoke our powers under Article 142 of Constitution and direct as follows - (i) the post of treasurer shall be exclusively earmarked for women candidates," it held.

The court invoked its powers saying it was "high-time" to provide women reservation in different elected bodies of advocates and there were no express provisions in the memorandum and by-laws earmarking seats for women candidates of the association. The bench directed the high-powered committee constituted to oversee the election and

the chief returning officer for the bar body polls to extend the date for inviting nominations and, if required, the election to be deferred for a few days.

However, such a decision will be at the discretion of the committee and the chief returning officer, it added.

The top court ordered the committee and the returning officer to also consider adequate representation of the women advocates in the governing council of advocates' association of Bengaluru to ensure at least 30 per cent of elected members of the council were women candidates with 10 years of practice experience. The top court was hearing a plea filed by a woman lawyer who sought the implementation of directions of women reservation issued in case of Delhi High Court Bar Association, where the court last year directed for reserving seats for women lawyers including the post of treasurer.



Senior advocate Lakshmy Iyengar, appearing in the matter, requested the bench to relax the 10-year experience criteria to allow more participation from young lawyers in the governing council. The bench acceded to the request and ordered a similar arrangement - relaxing 10 years experience criteria - like the one in Delhi High Court Bar Association elections case should be implemented in the Advocate Association of Bengaluru, which completed its term on December 19. The top court further issued and sought a response from the Bengaluru

advocates association. The bench observed the Karnataka High Court had noted there were no express provisions in the memorandums and by-laws of Advocate Association Bengaluru for reserving seats for women lawyers and said the apex court, which was dealing with similar issues could pass appropriate orders. It said there was no legal impediment in providing reservation to women lawyers. The top court recently directed reserving the treasurer's post and 30 per cent seats for women lawyers in the executive committee of Delhi Sales Tax Bar Association and Delhi Tax Bar Association. On January 20, the top court directed 33 per cent seats would be reserved for women lawyers in the election of the National Green Tribunal bar association. The top court in December last year directed reserving three posts for women lawyers in the DHCBA election.

Paint your house Green this winter



Love plants, but not sure if you can maintain them with ease? Ashok kumar mundetiya tells you how to add an extra edge to your balcony garden and interiors this season...

The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just on the body, but the soul. With space being a rarity these days, it is difficult to dream of a garden space — more so, if you are staying in a small apartment. But fear not! For terrace garden — big or small — is a wonderful way to add colour to your otherwise dull life. You can just sit there, listen to music, read books or simply pull up a couch to lie down and soak in the natural beauty. Low space in metros and big cities has also compelled plant lovers to grow vegetables on their balconies. It is not only a great stress-buster, but the benefits of consuming home-grown vegetables also compensate for the time spent on pruning it. But wait... Before you start painting your house green, a few things should be taken into account, because no matter how much you care, your plants aren't going to thrive if you are ignorant of their specific needs. CT provides the

basic guidelines to beginners...

Know your plants

Before adding a plant to your potted collection, it is advisable to ask an expert at a nursery about the conditions the plant needs. "It's usually much easier to grow plants that do well in

your region, temperature and soil. For instance, don't try to grow a flower like a rose — which requires six hours in the sun — on a porch that gets sunlight only for an hour in the morning. While it's important to maintain a

steady temperature for indoor plants, a terrace garden needs adequate sunlight. Again, if you notice your plant becoming thin and reaching out toward the light, it needs to be closer to sunshine," informs AB Karmakar, executive/administrator for The Globe Nursery on Lindsay Street.

Maintenance of indoor plants

- Most indoor plants do best in partial shade, which works out well since indoor areas don't usually get direct sunlight. Keep this in mind before you decide to put a potted plant in a place where it will get hours of direct sunlight; you may end up exposing it for too long.

- One must select the right size of the pots. For indoor plants, go for pots either 4 inches or 6 inches in size. Allow enough space for the roots to grow. Make sure the pots are light and strong, so as to hold the plant for a long time.

- Place plastic saucers under the pots to avoid soil and water spillage.

- Ficus Elastica, Areca Palm, a variety of philodendron or dracaena are best suited for indoors. These plants can do without sunlight for 7-10 days with minimum requirement of water.

Water the plants carefully

"Water the plants as and when required. Many first-time gardeners or potted plant owners water plants more than necessary, believing that the more water the plant gets, the better they grow. While it holds true for certain plants, it can kill others," suggests Dr SL Rahman, consultant at Agri-Horticultural Society of India.

Kitchen garden in pots

- If you thought a kitchen garden only works in bigger houses, you are highly mistaken. Get creative. Don't throw away buckets, containers etc. Use them along with hanging baskets for smaller plants. You can even grow vegetables in the little balcony of your apartment.

- Do not use soil from the garden. It can be filled with weed seeds, insects, and fungal diseases. It is better and easier to buy readymade potting soil (a mixture comprising clay, bone dust, vermicompost, neem cake and mustard cake) from the local nursery. You can also go for coco peat, which are made from coconut husks and is a medium for growing plants.

- Get various seedlings from the nursery. Remove the plants from its nursery container. Never pull a plant out by its stem. If it is stuck, tap the sides of the pot to loosen it. Gently tease the ends of the roots free before planting it in the bigger pot.

- For the proper growth of vegetables in your balcony, the pot size should be between 8-10 inches.

- Make one or more drain holes in the pot. Place small chips right over them so that they don't clog and excess water can pass through.

- Do not pile soil on top of the plant; make sure the stem is completely above the surface. Leave about an inch between the soil surface and the rim of the pot.

- All vegetable plants need constant moisture. Some plants need water on a daily basis.

Veggies for beginners

Coriander: How many times did you get sad looking at half-dried coriander leaves (dhania) in the market? Coriander is something that is used in everyday cuisine to spice it up. And that makes it a must-grow for every kitchen garden. The seed is technically a fruit containing two seeds in it. When split, it increases the germination rate since it scarifies the seed. Take a tray with potting mix filled up to half inch from the top. Then make rows by drawing a line with your index finger or a stick. Simply sow the split coriander seeds in each row. Once done, water them and wait! It starts germinating between 5-7 days.

Potatoes: Plant potatoes during late February and March. When the green shoots begin to appear above the soil, cover them with more compost. You only need remember to water them. After 10 to 20 weeks, dig around in the soil to collect your home-grown potatoes!

Peas: It's a trouble-free crop that enjoys cooler weather. Sow them in the pots between March and June. Erect some sticks or posts for support. You'll be amazed at how good fresh peas taste and the more that you pick them, the more they produce!

Tomato: With a little water and a lot of sun, tomato plants are quick to grow. Roots of a tomato plant grow deeper into the soil. So, choose a bush variety like 'Cherry Cascade' that can be planted in hanging baskets and window boxes. Just cut a tomato into four pieces and bury it about 1/2 an inch into the soil. Wait for 3-4 weeks for the seeds to start sprouting.

Cucumber: These grow best when the soil is warm. Cucumber plants tend to sprawl all over. Provide your plants with ample space to stretch their roots. Again, since these are climbers, you must get a proper support. Go for smaller varieties if there's less space.

Green chilli: These are good companion plants for tomatoes and coriander. Just take two or three dried red chillies. Slit them open and sprinkle the seeds in a pot filled with soil and a little manure, available in the nurseries. Ensure the seeds don't go too deep. Cover it with little soil and water it. It takes about a week or so for the seeds to sprout. If the pot is not large enough, you can replant the sprouts into a bigger pot. You may need to tie up the chili plant to a pole to let it grow and avoid bending.

Winter blossom

- According to Nirupom Sen, secretary-cum-CEO, Agri-Horticultural Society of India, if you have a garden without flowers, you have got to do something about it. So, before deciding where to plant your flowers, you should know when the best time to grow flowers is. "During winter, the best flowers to grow in Indian climate are Petunia, Cockscomb, Antirrhinum, Cineraria, Zinnia, Calendula, Chrysanthemum, Marigold and Dahlia," he says.

- Flower plants need up to 5 inches deep soil. So take an earthen pot of 6-8 inches in height. Dig a hole in the potted soil. Bury the seed about 2 inches deep. Flowers do not need to be smothered with the soil. Do not bury them too deep. After 6 weeks, you will see the seeds sprout into saplings.

- The after-care is very essential. Sprinkle water as and when required.

Terrace talk

- As the main element of a terrace garden comprises watering of plants and keeping the soil wet, it is important that the best quality water-proofing material is selected.

- One has to bear in mind that the area selected to build a terrace garden should have a slight slope, so that it can drain water easily and has the capacity to bear the load.

- It is always advisable to pick plants which don't grow big in size.

- You can install a separate tank to store water or have a mechanical watering arrangement. But most often, people love to water their garden themselves and see the plants grow.

Preparing the potting mixture & sowing seeds

"These days, one can easily get exotic and hybrid seeds of capsicum, chilly, cabbage, broccoli, coriander, tomatoes, brinjal, basil and parsley. The potting mixture should have 20% of leaf mould, 40% sand and 40% soil. You can add mustard cake and cow dung cake as fertilizers. After the seeds are sown, one should cover the soil with a layer of fine sand. Sand makes the soil porous and helps the roots grow. Keeping insects away

"Use neem-based organic pesticides. Or you can take 100 gram of chillies, 4-5 cloves of garlic and a few bulbs of turmeric, paste it and mix it in 1 litre of water. Pour the liquid in a container and simmer it till it is reduced to half. Refrigerate it and use it whenever necessary. All you need to do is take out about 20 ml or the concentrated paste, mix it in a litre of water and sprinkle it on the plants. However, if insects or diseases do strike your plants, go for the safest botanical or microbial pesticides!"

- For the proper growth of vegetables/ flowers, the pot size should be between 8-10 inches. Make one or more drain holes in the pot

- Place small chips right over them so that they don't clog and excess water can pass through

- Do not pile soil on top of the plant

- Get various seedlings from the nursery

- Carefully remove the plants from its nursery container. Make sure the stem is completely above the surface

- Leave about an inch between the soil surface and the rim of the pot

5 easy ways to organize your Wardrobe



Getting organized is one basic step to maintaining your wardrobe perfect. So, you always land in that proverbial mess when you discover at the end of every weekend when you find complete chaos inside your wardrobe and you can't find your favourite shirt from the mess that you have created. Here's how to organize your wardrobe for easy accessibility

Arrange according to priority: If formal wear is what you want to access first,

arrange things accordingly by placing all the formals at an easily accessible compartment. Accordingly, keep the related accessories in nearby shelves so that you don't have to look around.

Keep sections separate:

Keep different sections for different types of wear. For examples, all your sarees should be at one place, and the related stuff like petticoats, blouses should be in the same vicinity arranged in and around the same shelf or compartment.

Jewelry and accessories:

Precious jewelry and accessories should be kept in a section that has a lock. Stock all the accessories that you are going to use on a day to day basis in that locker section.

Don't load it to the brim: Give your wardrobe a decluttered look. Do not pile up all the clothes in



it. Only take the best ones and the ones you are going to frequently use and stack them in your wardrobe.

Always revise your wardrobe: Make sure to arrange and rearrange your wardrobe at least once in a fortnight. It will help you remember where exactly you have kept a particular attire or accessory.

Embrace marsala colour for home decor

From sprucing up the furniture with cushions and pillows to painting an entire wall of a room in this colour, there are plenty of ways to incorporate marsala, the hottest shade of the season, in your home space. It will lend an elegant yet natural earthiness to your abode.

The vintage wine red colour was announced as 'The Colour of the Year' by Pantone Color Institute last month.

FabFurnish.com, an online Indian furniture and interior decoration retailer, has given tips on ways to use the hue in the colour palette of your homes. Here's how:

- Go for decoratives such as vases, candle holders and photo frames in marsala. This way, you'll be able to use this colour to give the perfect definition to your interiors. A lamp shade or even a clock in this colour will add the right amount of warmth and charm to any space.

- Marsala makes for an excellent choice for an accent wall, especially in the dining room. It has an organic air and is known to be a stimulant for the appetite. Alternatively, a dining table cover

in marsala can also do the trick. The colour also exudes sophistication enough to be the ideal backdrop for a night of entertaining friends.

- A bright marsala-kissed rug or curtains can heighten the visual appeal of an otherwise simple room. Marsala goes very well with bronze or walnut-coloured bedposts and night tables. Curtains or rugs in marsala with subtle gold embroidery will drape

your room in elegance and style.

- The kitchen is another great place to play around with marsala because of its nurturing and fulfilling appeal. Appliances, kitchen slabs or cupboards in this wine-kissed colour can completely transform the look of the happiest room of the home. If you want only a minimal touch of the trendy shade, go in for a marsala kitchen splashback.

- When it comes to home decor, colours such as grey, golden yellow, cobalt, turquoise and lighter hues of green can be paired creatively with marsala. To add opulence and fashion in one solid statement, create a beige or dull-gold theme with marsala across the interiors of your home.



Biggest-ever India contingent at World Economic Forum

MUMBAI. With Union ministers Ashwini Vaishnaw, CR Patil, D Kumarswamy, Chirag Paswan, and Jayant Chaudhary leading the central delegation along with the chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Telangana and senior ministers from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bengal and Uttar Pradesh participating in the World Economic Forum meet, the country made the biggest-ever presence at Davos this time. The chief ministers present at the summit include Andhra's Chandrababu Naidu, Maharashtra's Devendra Fadnis, and Telangana's Revanth Reddy while the rest of the states were represented by industry ministers and officials. As per government sources, this year's summit that began on January 20 was the first time-ever that all the state pavilions were aligned with India Pavilion and held joint press conferences. As per Vaishnaw, the idea of 'One Team India and One India Pavilion' came from the prime minister Narendra Modi.

DentCare dental lab selling 10 per cent equity to fund expansion plans: CMD John Kuriakose

KOCHI. DentCare Dental Lab, Asia's largest and world's second-largest dental lab, plans to acquire labs in the United States and open units across India in an effort to become the world leader in its field.

The company, valued at Rs 1,500 crore, is seeking to sell 10% equity to fund the proposal, chairman and managing director John Kuriakose said.

"We have decided to sell 10% equity to fund the expansion project. After 18 firms expressed interest in the stake in the initial stage, we have short-listed ICICI Capital, Wipro and Axis Bank. We will finalise our choice by February 10. Presently, we have five units in the country and we want to increase our presence to 30 centres. We have two units in the US and efforts are on to acquire some labs there.

The plan is to grow into a Rs 5,000 crore company by 2030, after which we will go for an IPO," John said.

Headquartered in Muvattupuzha, DentCare is associated with 40,000 dentists across the country and makes 5,000 products a month. Powered by a dedicated research and development wing, the company has production units in the United States, UK, UAE, Australia and New Zealand and extends services to 12 other countries. With a state-of-the-art laboratory spread over 3 lakh sqft, and 4,200 employees, DentCare produces a range of 450 dental products. Facing acute shortage of trained dental technicians, John established DentCare Institute of Dental Technology, which offers three-year bachelor's degree courses. The company absorbs 50% of the students for its labs.

Government E-Marketplace Surpasses Rs 4 Lakh Cr GMV Within 10 Months This Fiscal

New Delhi. Setting a new benchmark, the government e-Marketplace (GeM) has surpassed last year's gross merchandise value (GMV) of Rs 4 lakh crore within 10 months this fiscal (FY25).

The GeM clocked a GMV of Rs 4.09 lakh crore as on January 23, which marks a growth of nearly 50 per cent over the corresponding period last fiscal, according to Ministry of Commerce and Industry. In terms of segment-wise GMV, the services segment accounted for Rs 2.54 lakh crore (62 per cent of the total GMV), whereas product segment accounted for Rs 1.55 lakh crore (38 per cent of the total GMV). The growth of the services



segment on GeM in FY25 has significantly fuelled the portal's upward growth trajectory. With an emphasis on expansion of bouquet of services offerings on GeM, 19 new service categories have been introduced on the portal in FY25, according to the ministry. Notably, services segment has grown by almost 100 per cent in comparison to the corresponding period in previous fiscal.

"By facilitating procurement of specialised services like printing of debit cards, bulk email services, dark fibre leasing, operations management of data centres and more, the platform has enabled government entities to source from reliable vendors resulting in significant efficiency gains," said the ministry. With an emphasis on expansion of bouquet of services offerings on GeM, 19 new service categories have been introduced on the portal in FY25, according to the ministry. Notably, services segment has grown by almost 100 per cent in comparison to the corresponding period in previous fiscal. "By facilitating procurement of specialised services like printing of debit cards, bulk email services, dark fibre leasing, operations management of data centres and more, the platform has enabled government entities to source from reliable vendors resulting in significant efficiency gains," said the ministry.

Start-ups expect simplified tax regime

Experts call for strengthening SIDBI's Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS).

BENGALURU. With the abolition of angel tax in the previous budget, the country's start-up ecosystem saw a boost in early-stage investments, and now in the upcoming budget, they expect tax reforms, simplification of ESOP (employee stock option plans) taxation and extended tax holidays.

India, which has the third largest start-up ecosystem in the world, boasts over 1.59 lakh start-ups that are recognised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) as of January 15, 2025.

Ashwani Singh, MD of 35 North Ventures, an early-stage AIF focused on empowering start-ups, said that the current taxation structure, taxing ESOPs at time of vesting and the high tax



burdens on capital gains for angel investors, hinder progress in the employee retention and funding landscape. He anticipates tax reforms in the upcoming budget to tackle these hurdles – simplifying ESOP taxation, streamlining capital gains tax structure across asset classes or introducing tax exemptions for angel investors and aligning them with global standards to encourage greater inflows of private

capital into the start-up ecosystem. Apoorva Ranjan Sharma, co-founder & MD of Venture Catalysts, said, a simplified tax regime for start-ups could be of great help, mainly for enterprises in Tier 2 and 3 cities. "A reduction in compliance burdens and extended tax holidays could provide the necessary impetus for these start-ups to scale rapidly," he said. Experts call for strengthening SIDBI's

Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS). "The FFS program has been instrumental in catalysing start-up growth, but further enhancements are needed. Renewing SIDBI's allocation with an additional Rs 10,000 crore will ensure continued support for start-ups," said Anirudh A Damani, Managing Partner, Artha Venture Fund.

He said that beyond FFS, the country requires a sovereign-backed fund of funds anchored by SIDBI, which allows contributions from banks, insurance companies, and global sovereign wealth funds. "A \$5 billion to \$10 billion anchor fund, with SIDBI contributing 20%, could unlock significant start-up capital, fostering long-term partnerships and global investor confidence," he added. The current DPIIT start-up classification limits eligibility to companies under 10 years of age or with revenue below Rs 100 crore. Experts call for including start-ups registered up to 20 years old and revising the revenue cap.

SC stays order in Tiger Global treaty abuse case

NEW DELHI. The Supreme Court on Friday stayed a Delhi High Court order granting Tiger Global fund relief in a treaty 'abuse' case. The Supreme Court in its order said that the issue has pan-India implication and needs thorough attention. In August 2024, the Delhi High Court delivered a judgment in favour of Tiger Global International III Holdings, a Mauritius-based entity, concerning the applicability of the India-Mauritius Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) to capital gains arising from sale of shares. This ruling had overturned an earlier decision by the Authority for Advance Rulings (AAR), which had denied treaty benefits to Tiger Global.

Tiger Global, a Mauritius-based entity, had sought tax exemption in India on gains from selling shares in Flipkart Singapore under provisions of India-Mauritius tax treaty. The Mauritius-based entity had contended that the

shares, acquired before 1 April 2017, were exempt under India-Mauritius tax treaty. However, the Indian tax authorities denied the exemption, claiming Tiger Global was a 'conduit'



company established solely for tax avoidance. The high court ruled in favour of Tiger Global, stating that the India-Mauritius treaty provides a grandfathering provision, exempting capital gains tax in India for shares acquired before April 1, 2017. Since Tiger Global's investment occurred

prior to this date, the court held that the capital gains from the 2018 sale were exempt from taxation in India.

The HC held that Tiger Global's investments were legitimate as it had been investing in Flipkart Singapore since 2011, well before the amendment of India-Mauritius DTAA in 2017, and that these investments were commercially driven.

As per tax experts, there are several key areas which could possibly need a thorough attention ranging from the interpretation of tax treaties in cases of indirect transfer cases, clarity on what constitutes a conduit company and what is the economic substance as well as how relevant are the people sitting in that entity for proving the substance since investment entities need not necessarily have employees sitting there in that jurisdiction.

ESIC Adds 16.07 Lakh Employees In Nov, 47 Per Cent Are Youngsters

New Delhi. The payroll data of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) reveals that 16.07 lakh new employees were added in November last year out of which over 47 per cent are young employees up to the age group of 25 years, which is a good indicator of new jobs being created in the economy. As many as 20,212 new establishments have been brought under the ambit of the ESIC Scheme in the month of November 2024 thus ensuring social security to more workers, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Further, the year-on-year analysis shows a growth of 0.97 per cent in net registrations compared to November 2023. The statement highlights that out of the total 16.07 lakh employees added during the month, 7.57 lakh employees amounting to around 47.11 per cent of the total registrations belong to the age group of

up to 25 years. A gender-wise analysis of the payroll data indicates that the net enrolment of female members was 3.28 lakh in November 2024. Besides, a total of 44 transgender employees were also registered under the ESIC Scheme during



the month, as part of the policy to extend benefits to every section of society, the statement said. The payroll data is provisional since the data generation is a continuous exercise and a revision can be made with more figures coming in. The ESIC data

matches the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) figures released this week which showed a net addition of 14.63 lakh members in November 2024, which represents an increase of 9.07 per cent over the corresponding figure for October.

Further, the year-on-year analysis reveals a growth of 4.88 per cent in net member additions compared to November 2023, reflecting increased employment opportunities and heightened awareness of employee benefits, as per the official statement. EPFO's payroll data shows a 5.86 lakh increase in the number of persons for the age group 18-25 for November, reflecting an increase of 7.96 per cent compared to the previous month of October. This is in consonance with the earlier trend which indicates that most individuals joining the organised workforce are youth, primarily first-time job seekers.

Adani Group denies cancellation of Sri Lanka wind power project

The Sri Lankan government has decided to review the 484 MW project amid local opposition, environmental concerns, and a bribery probe against the group.

NEW DELHI. The Adani group has refuted reports that the Sri Lankan government has cancelled the 484 MW wind power projects in Mannar and Pooneryn. As per local media reports, Sri Lanka's Cabinet, led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, has decided to revoke the power purchase agreement with the Group. Report citing officials from Sri Lanka's Ministry of Energy said the government has cancelled the deal and established a panel to review the entire project.

An Adani Group spokesperson said the project has not been cancelled and the government's decision to review the



process is part of a "standard review process. It said the company remains committed to investing \$1 billion in Sri Lanka's green energy sector, driving renewable energy and economic growth. The decision to cancel the pact comes amid ongoing bribery probe by the US authorities against Adani Group. On 19 November 2024, the group faced charges in the US for allegedly making

bribe payments and concealing transactions from US investors. The group has dismissed these allegations as baseless. The government, under then President Ranil Wickremesinghe, in May 2024 signed a pact with the Group to procure electricity at a rate of \$0.0826 per kWh.

The Group had planned to build a 484 MW wind power plant in coastal areas of

Southern states fall behind in fiscal health; Andhra, Kerala at the bottom

NEW DELHI. Most South Indian states have been performing poorly in managing their finances, Niti Aayog's Financial Health Index 2025 showed. Three states – Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu – in particular have been performing the worst among southern states as they scored below 30 out of 100 in the Index.

These states were not among top 10 states in terms of the fiscal performance. Andhra Pradesh and Kerala were among worst performers along with Punjab and West Bengal – each of them, according to Niti Aayog, is facing major fiscal challenges. Kerala and Punjab struggle with low quality of expenditure and debt sustainability, while Andhra Pradesh has high Fiscal deficits, noted Niti Aayog. Tamil Nadu has a better score when it comes to state own revenue/total expenditure, but it has fared poorly on quality of expenditure and fiscal deficit. In case of Tamil Nadu during 2022-23, committed expenditure as percentage of the revenue expenditure was 52%. "The upward trend on Committed Expenditure since 2018-19, which grew at an annual rate of 9.9%, may have left the Government with lesser flexibility for developmental spending," noted



the Aayog. Subsidies form a high proportion of non-committed expenditure for the state. Karnataka rank dropped from 3 in 2014-15 to 2021-22 to 10 in 2022-23, primarily due to subdued performance under Quality of Expenditure and Debt Sustainability. Among the Southern states, Telangana was the best among the Southern states due to better revenue mobilization and fiscal prudence. The Fiscal Health Index (FHI) evaluates states on expenditure quality, revenue mobilisation, fiscal prudence, debt index and debt sustainability. The composite fiscal health index for 18 major states has been calculated using the data from the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). The period of the analysis is Financial Year 2022-23. Odisha excels in the fiscal health Index with the highest overall index score of 67.8. Chhattisgarh and Goa follow, with scores of 55.2 and 53.6, respectively.

Mannar and Pooneryn. Local reports say the project faced major opposition in Sri Lanka due to concerns over pricing. The rate set by the Group was much higher than what local bidders had offered, fuelling criticism of the deal. Environmental groups, including Wildlife and Nature Protection Society and Environmental Foundation, voiced strong objections, citing concerns over potential harm to migratory birds and an inadequate Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Local communities, led by Bishop of Mannar, protested, warning that the project could disrupt local industries and threaten livelihoods. President Dissanayake had pledged during his election campaign to cancel the deal, promising to invite global tenders for wind power development in Sri Lanka. Though the original pact was under review by the SL Supreme Court, with a hearing scheduled for March 2025, revocation removes the matter from judicial review.

NEWS BOX

Australian Open: Aryna Sabalenka favourite in finale, but Madison Keys no pushover

New Delhi. Sometimes you are like, I do not know, I am just walking around the court because I feel like she was playing a PlayStation."

Paula Badosa was left stunned after Aryna Sabalenka showed absolutely no mercy on her best friend in the semi-final of the Australian Open women's singles on Thursday. Since winning the Australian Open in 2023 after taking down 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina, the Belarusian hasn't looked back. She has grown in stature, heading into a season as the World No. 1 for the first time in her career in 2025. The 6-4, 6-2 win against Badosa was an absolute statement, showing how brutal she has been on hard courts in the last two years. The top-ranked star is now a step away from becoming the first woman since Martina Hingis in 1997-99 to win a hat-trick of titles at Melbourne Park. Sabalenka will now be up against Madison Keys in a final



where she will be the firm favourite. On Saturday, January 25, at the Rod Laver Arena, it should not raise eyebrows if Sabalenka eases past Keys within a blink of an eye. It's easy to predict a one-sided final given the form Sabalenka has been in.

But can one undermine Keys? Maybe not. Keys wasn't at her best in the semi-final against Iga Swiatek. Let's admit it. After making 40 unforced errors, seven double faults and dropping her serve six times, the American stuttered at various stages of her match against the Pole. She even faced a match point in the third set, but somehow managed to hold her nerve in the thrilling 10-point tie-break. Given how she played against Swiatek, although she won, it's tricky to bet on Keys to come up trumps in the summit clash against Sabalenka, who has taken down anyone and everyone who has come in her path. But having played in majors for over a decade, having gone through several ups and downs, Keys cannot be taken lightly by any stretch of the imagination. Keys has also returned to Grand Slam finals since losing to Sloane Stephens in the US Open final back in 2017. Ranked No. 14 in the world, Keys has a golden chance to add a Grand Slam title to her name and add to her nine trophies. Having beaten Swiatek, who has four majors to her name, Keys will be brimming with confidence and will be looking to carry it into the final.

Ranji Trophy: Rohit Sharma gives pep talk to Mumbai after Shardul Thakur heroics

NEW DELHI. Rohit Sharma might not have scored enough on his return to domestic cricket, but the India captain played the role of a team man to perfection for Mumbai against Jammu and Kashmir. Ahead of the final innings of the Ranji Trophy match at the Bandra Kurla Complex, Rohit gave a pep talk to his teammates after Mumbai set Jammu and Kashmir a target of 205 runs. At the change of innings, it was Rohit, rather than captain Ajinkya Rahane, who was seen addressing the team. His teammates, including Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shardul Thakur, listened to the India captain with rapt attention. Rohit appeared in good spirits as he took his place in the slip cordon, with Mumbai hunting for early wickets. Once Jammu and Kashmir's chase began, Ajinkya Rahane took charge of proceedings, standing



in the mid-on and mid-off regions, constantly engaging with Mumbai's bowlers. Mumbai had been in danger of losing the Ranji Trophy match at home as early as the second day. They were reduced to 101 for 7 in their second innings, with a lead of just 21 runs at that stage. However, Shardul Thakur and Tanush Kotian rescued the hosts, stitching together a crucial 184-run partnership for the eighth wicket. Shardul Thakur smashed his second first-class hundred and celebrated it with unrestrained emotion at BKC on Friday. Kotian contributed with 62, as both batters remained unbeaten at Stumps on Friday.

However, neither Shardul nor Tanush was able to add much to their tallies on the following day, getting out for 119 and 62, respectively. Jammu and Kashmir's pace trio of Umar Nazir, Auqib Nabi, and Yudhvir Singh kept things tight, restricting Mumbai to 290.

Rohit Sharma, playing his first Ranji Trophy match in nine years, was dismissed for just 3 in the first innings. He managed 28 in the second, showing glimpses of his silky strokeplay. However, another half-hearted shot cut short his stay at the crease after 35 balls.

IND vs ENG, 2nd T20I: Deflated England set for another trial by spin in Chennai

India vs England, 2nd T20I

preview: After struggling against spin in Kolkata, England face another stern test in Chennai, known for its spin-friendly conditions. India are sweating over the fitness of opener Abhishek Sharma, who twisted his ankle during training on Friday.

New Delhi. India will aim to continue their T20I juggernaut when they face England in the second match of the ongoing five-match series in Chennai on Saturday, 25 January. Since winning the T20 World Cup last year, India have doubled down on their aggressive brand of cricket, and it has yielded significant dividends. The transition following the retirement of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli from the format has been seamless. After defeating Bangladesh at home and overcoming the South African challenge, the Suryakumar

Yadav-led side was expected to face a stern test against England, renowned for their power-hitting prowess. However, the much-anticipated opening T20I of the series turned into a one-sided contest, with England struggling against India's spinners. The visitors were bowled out for just 132 in 20 overs, and India chased the target with ease, taking only 12.5 overs to secure victory on Thursday. England will look to put in a stronger all-round performance, but their batters face another trial by spin in Chennai. Vice-captain Harry Brook, addressing the press on Friday, attributed England's struggles against spin in Kolkata to visibility issues caused by smog. Chennai is expected to offer clearer conditions, presenting a true test of skill for England's batters on a pitch that traditionally favours spinners at the MA Chidambaram Stadium. England's vulnerability against spin is no secret. In last year's T20 World Cup clash, they were bowled out for 103 while chasing 172, with Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav sharing six wickets between them.

More Varun threat in Chennai? In Kolkata, it was Varun Chakravarthy who dismantled England's middle order alongside Axar Patel and Ravi Bishnoi. The three spinners conceded just 67 runs in

12 overs and took five wickets collectively. Varun will be eager to repeat his heroics, this time in front of his home



crowd in his first-ever T20I at Chepauk. The Kolkata Knight Riders spinner acknowledged the challenge England pose but emphasised his preparedness.

"The first thing is preparation—studying the batter, understanding their go-to shots, and checking if they've added any new strokes to their repertoire. I definitely do that research. Based on that, and the pitch conditions, I make certain calculations. Some shots work on certain pitches, while others don't, so I plan accordingly," Varun said, highlighting his combination of homework and instinctive decision-

making. England, known for their all-out aggressive approach, need to show adaptability, especially when early wickets fall in the powerplay. Both Brook and Liam Livingstone were guilty of poor shot selection in Kolkata, throwing away their wickets when England were attempting to rebuild after Arshdeep Singh's early strikes. Team News: India vs England, 2nd T20I All eyes will be on Mohammed Shami, who missed the first T20I despite being declared fit for international cricket for the first time since the 2023 World Cup. Shami underwent heel surgery and later suffered a knee injury during the final phase of his recovery. He missed the Border-

Gavaskar Trophy but was included in the T20I squad ahead of the ODIs against England and the Champions Trophy. His absence in Kolkata raised a few eyebrows, but the Indian camp have not indicated any fresh injury concerns. It remains to be seen whether Shami will make his much-anticipated return in Chennai. Meanwhile, India are sweating over an injury scare to the in-form Abhishek Sharma. The flamboyant opener, who smashed 79 off 34 balls, twisted his ankle during a catching drill on Friday.

Local boys Sundar and Varun recall fond Chennai memories ahead of 2nd T20I vs ENG

New Delhi. India spinners Washington Sundar and Varun Chakravarthy reminisced about their fond memories in Chennai ahead of the 2nd T20I against England in the city at the MA Chidambaram Stadium. Chakravarthy expressed excitement ahead of playing his first game in Chennai as he recalled his memories of playing at the venue, while Sundar also took a nostalgic trip down memory lane. Both Sundar and Chakravarthy began their cricketing journeys in Chennai playing age group cricket and eventually realised their dream of playing for India. In a video released by the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) on their social media handles, Sundar recalled his early days of playing cricket at the Chepauk and mentioned how he used to pester his father to get tickets for the matches to watch the legends of the game play. "Chepauk is the place where I sort of started playing cricket as well. My dad used



to practice in the other ground, which was used to be called Mac B. I used to pester my dad to get me tickets just for us to be able to come to the stadium and watch some of the legends play over here. It's a very, very special and it's a great moment for all of us to sort of experience," said Sundar. Furthermore, Chakravarthy also revealed how he left cricket after school and tried his hands at architecture, movie making and other activities before finally making a

comeback again. I wanted to leave cricket, but cricket didn't leave me: Chakravarthy

"I've played a lot of initial selection matches that I never used to get selected, so. Yeah, it's been, one hell of a ride because after school, I completely stopped cricket and I went into different parts, architecture, movie making, and all those different parts. And finally I came back to cricket, as they say, I wanted to leave cricket, but cricket didn't leave me. So that's what happened. And it feels good to be back here and to play in front of my family for India. Definitely, I feel very excited," said Varun Chakravarthy.

Chakravarthy was adjudged Player of the Match for his sensational spell in the series opener against England in Kolkata as he scalped 3/23 in four overs dismissing Jos Buttler, Harry Brook and Liam Livingstone. He will look to emulate his performance in the second game as well in front of his family.

Harbhajan Singh points out India's major selection blunder for Champions Trophy

NEW DELHI. Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh feels India have done a major selection blunder by not selecting Yuzvendra Chahal in their squad for the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy 2025. The selectors named a spin-heavy 15-member squad for the mega event as they included Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar and Ravindra Jadeja. However, wrist spinner Chahal was nowhere to be found having last represented the country in the 50-over format back in January 2023 during the ODI series against New Zealand. Since then, he hasn't played the format and was also ignored for the ODI World Cup held the same year. Recently, Harbhajan questioned Chahal's absence from the squad and mentioned how selectors could've picked him in the team to add variety to the spin attack as Jadeja and Patel are similar kind of bowlers. "Sanju isn't there. Yuzvendra Chahal isn't there, too. You've picked four spinners, two of them are left-armers. You could've included a leg-spinner for variation, too. Chahal is a superb bowler. I don't know what wrong he did, that



he doesn't fit in this team," Harbhajan told Switch. In 72 ODI matches played in his career so far, the 34-year-old has picked 121 wickets at an average of 27.13 and an economy of 5.26 with two five-wicket hauls to his name. Chahal was last selected in the Indian team for the T20 World Cup 2024, where he unfortunately warmed the bench for the entire tournament with Axar Patel, Ravindra Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav being preferred over him in the playing XI. Furthermore, the former off-spinner also expressed dejection at Sanju Samson's snub

from the team and argued that his batting suits the format, mentioning his stellar numbers in ODIs.

Sanju Samson scores runs but he is dropped: Harbhajan "Truly, I feel bad for him. He scores runs but he is dropped. I know you can only select 15, but I feel his batting suits the format. He has an average of 55-56, but he isn't even there as a second wicketkeeper. When we talk about selecting him, people ask, in whose place? Places can be made," he added. Samson has been in remarkable form of late, having scored three centuries in his last six T20I innings. He also slammed a brilliant ton in his last ODI outing against South Africa in December 2023. The 30-year-old boasts an average of 56.66 after 14 innings in ODI cricket with 510 runs to his name at a strike rate of 99.60. He has registered one hundred and three fifties in his career so far, but still his performances haven't been enough to impress the selectors, with Rishabh Pant getting preference over him.

magnificent debut.

"I think they will pick Konstas and I think they should pick Konstas. He is the one they have identified, he has hit the ground running here in his first innings as well. He provided a lot of entertainment and a lot of buzz around that whole series. I think they need to play him, to be honest. It is a hard place to play and a hard place to win," Ponting was quoted as saying by the Sydney Morning Herald. Furthermore, the former captain acknowledged the threat Sri Lankan pitches will pose to the Australian batters and mentioned that it will be a great learning experience for young Konstas. It will be a great learning experience for Konstas: Ponting "It will be a hard place to bat for all of our guys, but especially some of the younger guys who have not experienced those conditions much in the past. But I think they should pick him, it will be a great learning experience for him. I would be picking him if I was a selector," he added. Australia have already qualified for the ICC World Test Championship (WTC).



Ricky Ponting wants Australia to continue with Sam Konstas on Sri Lanka tour

New Delhi. Legendary Australia cricketer Ricky Ponting wants the team management to pick Sam Konstas as an opener for the upcoming Test series against Sri Lanka. Australia are set to take on Sri Lanka in a two-match Test series beginning from January 29 in Galle. Ahead of the rubber, Ponting has backed Konstas to continue as an opener after his remarkable debut against India in the fourth Test of the recent five-match series. The 19-year-old caught everyone's attention with his attacking knock of 60 (65) on debut as he took on India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and reverse scooped him for boundaries. Ponting said that Konstas deserves a chance to get selected in the playing XI after his

New Zealand pip Bangladesh to seal last direct spot for Women's ODI World Cup 2025

Manoj Tiwary opened up about being unfairly targeted by Gautam Gambhir during their time at Kolkata Knight Riders, detailing strained moments, including a confrontation where Wasim Akram had to intervene.



NEW DELHI. Bangladesh's hopes of securing a direct berth in the 2025 ODI World Cup were dashed after they lost the final match of a three-match series in the West Indies on Friday, January 24. New Zealand pipped Bangladesh to automatic qualification for the

premier tournament, which will be held in India for the first time since 2013. Bangladesh had a great opportunity to seal direct qualification after defeating the West Indies in the second ODI of their series in Basseterre. However, in the series decider,

their batters crumbled under pressure, and they were bowled out for just 118. The West Indies comfortably chased down the target, sealing a 2-1 series victory. The third ODI on Friday was the final match of the ICC Women's Championship series. At the end of

the Women's Championship -- a 10-team tournament in which all teams played eight three-match series, four at home and four away -- the top six teams, including hosts India, secured direct qualification for the World Cup. Bangladesh and New Zealand were tied on 21 points each after 24 matches. However, New Zealand secured the higher position in the standings due to an extra win. Australia topped the Championship with 39 points, while India finished a close second with 37. England (32), South Africa (25), and Sri Lanka (22) are the other teams to have secured direct berths for the World Cup. Bangladesh (21), West Indies (18), Pakistan (17) and Ireland (eight) will be joined in the Cricket World Cup Qualifier by Scotland and Thailand, the two other highest ranked teams as of 31 October 2024. The ICC is yet to announce the dates for the Cricket World Cup qualifier, in which two spots will be up for grabs.

Kriti Sanon

Calls Chhaava Trailer 'Blockbuster', Praises Vicky Kaushal And Rashmika Mandanna's Look

Kriti Sanon is the latest celebrity to praise Vicky Kaushal starrer Chhaava trailer. Taking to social media, Kriti shared her excitement, calling the trailer a "blockbuster" and lauding the impressive looks of the lead pair. Earlier, Arjun Kapoor, Katrina Kaif, and Alia Bhatt have also praised the trailer. The film is all set to release on February 14. Taking to her Instagram stories, Kriti shared the trailer and wrote, "MASSIVE Mega Blockbuster Loading... Goosebumps! @laxman.utekar sir!! Kya baat hai!! Killing it! #Dino #MaddockFilms maddockfilms, laxman.utekar, rashmika_mandanna, vickykaushal09 and 07 sonmusicindia @vickykaushal09 looks like your best so far!!! outstanding!! @rashmika_mandanna love the marathi avatar! Royal, elegant and absolutely stunning! Goodluck to the entire team!" Rashmika Mandanna reacted with a cute emoji.



Taking to his Instagram stories, Arjun Kapoor shared the trailer and wrote, "It promises a grand historical spectacle with powerful storytelling and breathtaking visuals... This one deserves to be experienced on the big screen! Don't miss Chhaava in cinemas on 14th February maddockfilms and arrahman @vickykaushal09 @rashmika_mandanna #Akshaye Khanna Bashutosh ramnarayan @divyadutta25 @vineet_ksofficial @dianapenty @santoshjuvekar12 #Dinesh Vijan @laxman.utekar." Earlier, Alia Bhatt also praised the trailer and wrote, "The trailer is absolutely breathtaking. Goosebumps all over. All the best

(red heart emoji)," while tagging Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna. Earlier, Katrina Kaif, Vicky's wife, had also praised the trailer on her social media, expressing excitement with, "Outstanding #DineshVijan. This is just (multiple fire emojis)," tagging filmmaker Laxman Utekar, Vicky, Rashmika, and Akshaye. The trailer of Chhaava sets the stage for an intense battle of wills between the Marathas and the Mughals. As the Marathas strive to establish Swaraj, a vision of freedom and safety for all, the Mughal empire stands firm, vowing to crush any rebellion against its dominance. The dialogue crackles with tension, warning of the silent but deadly hunt that awaits those who challenge the empire. Akshaye Khanna's Aurangzeb then goes on to say, "Purey khandaan ki laash par khadey hokar hum ne taaj pehna tha, use dobara usi waqt pehneinge jab uss Sambha ki cheekhein poore Hindustan mein gujengi." Directed by Laxman Utekar, known for his work in films like Mimi (2021) and Luka Chuppi (2019), Chhaava marks another collaboration between Utekar and Vicky Kaushal following their recent comedy-romance hit Zara Hatke Zara Bachke (2023). Chhaava is a historical drama that revolves around the life of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the son of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. In the film, Vicky Kaushal is set to portray the character of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the eldest son of the Maratha empire's founder. The film also stars Ashutosh Rana, and Divya Dutta in key roles.



Kartik Aaryan Waves At Fans During Coldplay Concert In Mumbai



Kartik Aaryan was recently spotted attending Coldplay's concert in Mumbai. The videos and photos of him from the concert are going viral. Amid this, a video surfaced online in which he is seen waving at fans while he waits for the show to begin. Kartik is seen chatting with his other team members. The fan took to his Instagram handle and shared the video in which he is seen asking his other friends also to see Kartik. Suddenly the actor noticed and came forward to wave at them. They were seen screaming with excitement. Many fans dropped heart and fire emojis in the comment section. Kartik Aaryan and his sister, Dr. Kritika Tiwari, joined thousands of Coldplay fans at the band's Music of the Spheres World Tour concert in Navi Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium.

Taking to Instagram, Kartik posted a video capturing the electric atmosphere of the concert and wrote, "Sky Full Of Stars In My College Campus Pure Magic (sic)." The post resonated with his fans, who were thrilled to see the actor enjoying himself at the venue where he once pursued his studies.

Just a few days before the concert, on January 11, Kartik returned to DY Patil College for his convocation ceremony, finally receiving his engineering degree after over a decade. Reflecting on his journey, he shared, "From sitting on the backbench to standing on the stage for my convocation - what a journey it's been. DY Patil University, you gave me memories, dreams, and now, finally, my degree (only took over a decade!)." He expressed gratitude to Vijay Patil, his teachers, and students for the warm welcome he received.

On the professional front, Kartik was last seen in Bhoor Bhulaiyaa 3 in November 2024. He is currently working on Anurag Basu's upcoming romantic drama alongside Tripti Dimri. Kartik is also set to star in Tu Meri Main Tera, Main Tera Tu Meri, a romantic comedy directed by Sameer Vidwans and produced by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions and Namah Pictures, slated for release in 2026. Reports suggest that Sharvari Wagh will play the female lead. Kartik's journey from being an engineering student from Gwalior to becoming one of Bollywood's most bankable stars is inspiring. Despite having no film connections, he pursued his dream while sharing an apartment with 12 roommates in Mumbai, proving that hard work and perseverance can lead to success.

Akshay Kumar DENIES Going To Bed While Vivek Oberoi Had Dinner At His Place: 'This Doesn't Happen'



Akshay Kumar, who is currently promoting his film Sky Force, was recently asked about his 'early to bed, early to rise' routine and how he manages to socialise. He was specifically asked about an incident where he supposedly went to bed at 9:30 pm while Vivek Oberoi and Riteish Deshmukh were still having dinner at his place. In an interview with , Akshay explained that he is a "very good host" and always sees his guests off to their cars. Refuting Vivek's claim, he said, "No, this doesn't happen. I drop people till their cars. I don't leave them by themselves." He then opened up on parties at his house and said, "I am very good host. We usually don't have parties at home but when we host a party, it's usually an early dinner. People come over, talk a bit, those who want to drink, they drink and then I see them off."

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Earlier, in an interview with the same publication, Vivek praised Akshay's discipline, calling it "commendable" as the actor sticks to his routine without fail. He recalled a dinner at Akshay's house when, at 9:30 pm, Akshay went upstairs. "Akshay is so disciplined that one evening, we were having dinner at his place, and as soon as the clock struck 9:30 pm, he went upstairs. We thought he was just going to the washroom, but he never returned. We kept waiting for him until 11 pm, only for his wife, Twinkle Khanna, to come and tell us, 'You guys should leave now. He's already gone to sleep!' That's how disciplined he is. Hats off to him," he had said.

On the film front, Vivek has three movies lined up, the first being Masti 4. In an earlier chat with Screen, Vivek had opened up on it. "I am having a lot of fun cracking up between me, Riteish, Aftaab, and Induji, Milap Zaveri is directing it," he had said.

Priyanka Chopra

Drops Pics From Balaji Temple Visits As She Begins Shoot For SS Rajamouli's SSMB29



Priyanka Chopra is currently in India for the shoot of her next film with Mahesh Babu. The actress today took to her social handle and shared glimpses of a temple visit ahead of the shoot. The film SSMB29 has been grabbing headlines for a long time. Priyanka was spotted visiting the renowned Balaji temple. Taking to her Instagram stories, Priyanka shared glimpses of the visit. She has not mentioned anything in the caption. Last week also shared photos from the temple visit and wrote, "With the blessings of Shri Balaji, a new chapter begins."

May we all find peace in our hearts and prosperity and abundance all around us. God's grace is infinite." While she didn't offer details on what "new chapter" referred to, some speculated it hinted at her rumored collaboration with SS Rajamouli and Mahesh Babu. In the post, Priyanka appeared effortlessly graceful as she posed at the temple, donning a gorgeous blue suit.

Mahesh Babu and SS Rajamouli's highly anticipated film SSMB29 is officially underway. While the spotlight has been on this exciting pairing of Mahesh Babu and Priyanka Chopra, the film promises to bring together a diverse array of talented artists from around the world. However, the full list of cast and crew is yet to be revealed, leaving fans eagerly awaiting more updates.

SSMB29 is set to be produced in two parts, with the first instalment expected to release in 2027 and the second instalment by 2029.

Mahesh Babu will be playing the male lead. Malayalam actor Prithviraj Sukumaran will be playing the antagonist in the film. It is rumoured that Mahesh Babu's character would be inspired



by Lord Hanuman. This film promises to feature stunning visuals and engaging storytelling like never before. The official pooja ceremony for this SSMB29 was held on January 2. The ceremony was held strictly private, and no pictures or glimpses from the same were released by the makers.