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CBI files second chargesheet against 6 accused in NEET-UG paper leak case

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi, Jan. 15: AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday filed his nomination from New Delhi constituency for the

upcoming assembly elections and urged people to vote based on work and not 'abuses'.

the former chief minister. After filing his nomination, Kejriwal exuded confidence that the AAP would return to power in Delhi.

Punjab CM Mann inaugurates palace hotel in Patiala

ST Correspondent Chandigarh, Jan. 15: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Wednesday inaugurated 'Ran Baas', the state's first luxury palace hotel, at Qila Mubarak here and said the initiative will encourage destination wedding tourism in the state.

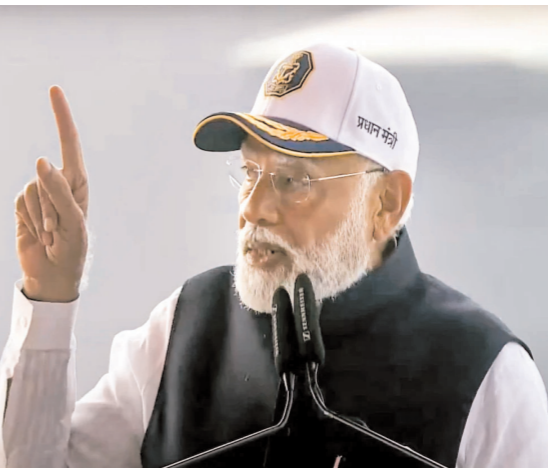


place for destination weddings and other events, Mann was quoted as saying in the statement. The hotel will give a big boost to the tourism sector in the state in general and the 'royal' city of Patiala in particular, he said.

India becoming major maritime power: PM Modi

Simmi Kaur Babbar Mumbai, Jan.15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said India is becoming a major maritime power and is being recognised as a reliable and responsible partner in the world.

said India is working for development, and not expansionism. He said 33 ships and seven submarines have been inducted into the Navy in the last 10 years.



India's defence production has crossed Rs 1.25 lakh crore and defence equipment have been exported to more than 100 countries, he added.

Nilgiri, the lead ship of the Project 17A stealth frigate class, represents a significant advancement over the Shivalik-class frigates. Designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau and built at the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), it incorporates advanced features for enhanced survivability, seakeeping and stealth.

Meta India apologises for CEO Zuckerberg's remark on India elections

New Delhi, Jan.15: Meta India on Wednesday apologised for CEO Mark Zuckerberg's remarks during a podcast that the incumbent government in India lost power in the 2024 elections, and termed it an "inadvertent error".

On SP backing AAP over Congress for Delhi election: Akhilesh Yadav

Navdeep Singh Sahni Lucknow, Jan 15: The Samajwadi Party, AAP, and the Congress are part of the INDIA bloc, including other regional heavyweights like the TMC, DMK, and Shiv Sena (UBT).

Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav said on Wednesday that his party is supporting the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over Congress in Delhi as the former is in a stronger position to beat the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the upcoming assembly election.

AAP and Congress are facing each other... My advice is AAP is strong so we should all support it. After all, our com-

mon goal is the defeat of BJP, whether it is Congress, Samajwadi Party or AAP." Yadav said. The Samajwadi Party, AAP, and the Congress are part of the INDIA bloc, which also includes other regional heavyweights like the TMC in West

Bengal and the DMK in Tamil Nadu. The Kannauj MP asserted that the unity among INDIA bloc parties is intact. "The INDIA alliance is intact. I remember when the alliance was being formed, Nitish Kumar had talked to leaders of all parties, including ours. He had said at the time that we should strengthen the hands of a regional party wherever it is strong. AAP is strong in Delhi, so we support it," Yadav clarified.

Rahul Gandhi on Mohan Bhagwat's 'true independence' remark

Tejinder Kaur Babbar New Delhi, Jan.15: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday hit out at RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat saying that his remark that India got 'true independence' after the Ram temple consecration amounts to treason and is an insult to every Indian.

the Constitution is invalid and the fight against the British was invalid. "He has the audacity to say this publicly. In any other country, he would be arrested and tried. That is a fact," Gandhi said at the inauguration of the Indira Gandhi Bhawan. "To



say that India did not get independence in 1947 is an insult to every Indian. And it is time to stop listening to this nonsense that these people think they can keep parroting out and shouting," he said. The former

Congress president said the party has worked with the Indian people and it has built the success of this country on the foundations of the Constitution and that is what this building symbolises. "It is important that we take ideas from this building and spread these ideas in the rest of the country," he said.

Gandhi said "we are fighting a civilisational war with these people, they are attacking every day the ideas that we believe in" and asserted that only the Congress can fight them. Hitting out at the Election Commission, he said, the EC has refused to give us information about the increase in the number of voters in Maharashtra from Lok Sabha elections to assembly elections. "What purpose does it serve? Why will it damage the EC? Why are they not giving us the list? It is the duty of the EC to ensure transparency in elections. If there is an increase of one crore in (the number of) voters in Lok

Sabha and Vidhan Sabha in Maharashtra, it is the duty and sacred responsibility of the EC to show us exactly why this has happened. There is a serious problem with our election system," Gandhi said.

DGCA warning to Akasa Air, asks to ensure strict compliance of rules

New Delhi, Jan 15: The DGCA noted that the Operations Manual revision cycle exceeded six months, which is director Flight Operations' Failure to Ensure Compliance The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued a warning letter to Akasa Air chief executive officer (CEO) (Accountable Manager) Vinay Dube to ensure strict compliance with rules to prevent violations.

Army chief throws weight behind ALH

Naresh Malhotra Pune, Jan 15: Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Wednesday threw his weight behind the locally produced Dhruv advanced light helicopter (ALH) in the wake of the armed forces grounding the choppers for a thorough safety inspection following a recent crash that put the spotlight on the fleet's troubling safety record.

"Let me assure the countrymen and my own Indian Army that the ALH has not hit a rough patch. These small accidents keep taking place. All over the world, even the best helicopters meet with such accidents," he said on the sidelines of the 77th Army Day parade held in Pune. He was responding to a question on safety concerns surrounding the helicopter. The army chief's comments came on a day HT reported that it was uncertain if the Dhruv ALH and its armed version Rudra will take part in the upcoming Republic Day flypast after a coast guard helicopter crashed at Porbandar in Gujarat on January 5, with authorities still struggling to determine the cause of the accident.

Limited (HAL) and often touted as a prime example of indigenisation in the defence sector. The army flew its ALHs for more than 40,000 hours in 2023-24, Dwivedi said. "In those 40,000 hours, only one glitch took place. And we are flying these



helicopters at altitudes of more than 15,000 feet. The ALH is a workhorse, and it will remain a workhorse. We have 100% confidence in this platform," he added. To be sure, the ALH did not take part in Army Day flypast as the fleet is grounded because of flight safety concerns. The choppers

have been a regular feature at the Army Day parade, just like the Republic Day parade. Chetak and Cheetah helicopters took part in the Army Day parade, which was reviewed by Dwivedi. The three services and the coast guard together operate around 330 ALHs, and the army and the air force account for more than 90 Rudra helicopters — all of them were grounded after the January 5 crash, along with seven to eight ALHs operated by the Border Security Force and civil entities. The wreckage of the helicopter that crashed in Porbandar will be flown to Bengaluru in an Indian Air Force aircraft so that HAL can analyse it in detail to find out what went wrong and take steps to fix the problems so that the helicopters can return to service soon. The integrated drive system, including the transmission system, gearbox and rotor hub, of the ALH that crashed in Porbandar is being flown to Bengaluru for a thorough inspection. The ALH has been involved in around 15 accidents during the last five years. The coast guard suspended ALH operations following an accident last September too when a helicopter crashed into the Arabian Sea near Porbandar. Then too, two pilots and an aircrew diver were killed.

UP govt deploys mobile labs to check food quality at Maha Kumbh

Lucknow, Jan.15: The Uttar Pradesh government on Wednesday announced the deployment of mobile laboratories to carry out food inspections at eateries in the Maha Kumbh Mela area here, aiming to monitor hygiene and safety standards. Assistant Food Commissioner (Grade 2) Sushil Kumar Singh emphasised the use of 'Food Safety on Wheels' to prevent the distribution of spoiled or adulterated food to the pilgrims. "These mobile laboratories conduct on-the-spot testing of food and beverages. Regular quality checks are conducted at hotels, dhabas, and small stalls, with food safety complaints promptly addressed to ensure swift action," Singh added. In a statement, the Uttar Pradesh government said that under the leadership of chief minister Yogi Adityanath, efforts are being made to ensure clean and quality food for the millions of devotees attending the Maha Kumbh. "The fair is divided into five zones and 25

sectors, with food safety officers in each sector regularly monitoring hygiene and safety standards," the government said. "All food safety operations are coordinated from the central office located on Sankat Mochan Marg in Sector 24. This office oversees food monitoring efforts and supervises the deployment of teams across the fair," it added. While food safety officers are stationed in every sector, while chief officers oversee every five sectors, the government said. A maximum of 14 sectors are actively monitored in the Jhansi area, it noted. On January 13, the first day of the Maha Kumbh, around 1.75 crore devotees gathered at the Triveni Sangam. The number of devotees doubled to 3.5 crore on the second day, marked by Makar Sankranti. The Uttar Pradesh government estimates a footfall of 40 to 45 crore pilgrims and visitors over the next six weeks, until February 26, for the largest spiritual gathering on the planet.







NEWS BOX

Relatives to move Kerala High Court against exhuming Gopan Swami's body

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. The decision to exhume the body of Neyyattinkara Gopan Swami from the controversial burial site will be taken by the sub-collector based on a new police report.

The police will also hold discussions with Hindu organisations regarding the matter. The police recorded the statements of Gopan Swami's sons again on Monday and found contradictions.

12 labs gutted in fire at govt-owned Bangalore Bioinnovation Centre

BENGALURU. As many as 12 research laboratories were reportedly destroyed in an early morning accidental fire on Tuesday, at the Bangalore Bioinnovation Centre (BBC) -- located at the Helix Biotech Park, IBAB Campus, Electronics City Phase 1.

The BBC comes under the Karnataka Biotechnology and Information Technology Services (KBITS), Department of IT, BT and Science & Technology, Government of Karnataka.

The fire erupted at Galore Tx startup room on the second floor (ESF07 lab) due to improper management of flammable solvent in their lab.

The second floor of the facility, which was recently revamped to house more number of startups, was completely gutted, while extensive damage was also sustained to first and ground floors due to the interconnected HVAC lines.

Thiruvananthapuram Airport records 18.5% passenger growth in 2024

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. Over 49 lakh passengers used the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport in 2024, according to data released by the airport authorities.

Bills stuck with govt, KEONICS vendors seek PM's Intervention

BENGALURU. In the wake of the state contractors' association threatening to launch protests over the delay in releasing pending bills, vendors working with the Karnataka State Electronics Development Corporation Ltd (KEONICS), a state government undertaking, have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his intervention to release pending bills and end "harassment".



Keonics Empanelled Vendors' Welfare Association, in its letter to the PM, stated that around 450 to 500 vendors working with KEONICS are in dire straits due to delays in releasing the pending bills and changes in the eligibility criteria by the management.

The association held IT and BT Minister Priyank Kharge, KEONICS Chairman Sharath Bache Gowda and senior officers with the corporation responsible for the harassment they face.

Association president Vasanth K Bangera said bills worth around Rs 350-400 crore are pending and nearly 6,000 families that depend

on the vendors are facing hardships. Vendors are being harassed as they had protested against an official who had demanded commission and bills are being held back in the name of investigating a few violations, they alleged.

BJP Purges CM to take action

The opposition BJP urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to take immediate measures to clear the pending bills. Taking to a social media platform, the BJP stated that the state government was "torturing" the contractors and now the KEONICS vendors' welfare association has written to the President seeking mercy killing.

Gowda, the BJP stated. Minister Kharge hit back at BJP leaders, asking them to do their homework thoroughly before making public statements.

Do you seriously expect our government to clear payments to vendors who were involved in irregularities during your tenure? Have you forgotten the accountant general's audit findings, which flagged over Rs 300 crore worth of misappropriations by KEONICS under your government?" the minister said.

The minister said some of the audit observations included payments made without conducting third-party inspections, payments made against fake bills before the supply of goods, claims for software that were never installed yet payments were made, fraudulent and excessive claims by vendors, including payments against fake delivery 'challans' and forged third-party inspection reports.

No evidence, Karnataka HC quashes case against Ragini, Ranka in 2020 drugs case

BENGALURU. The Karnataka High Court on Tuesday quashed criminal proceedings against accused actress Ragini Dwivedi and Prashant Ranka on the ground that police have not produced any material evidence to prove that they organised parties or sold drugs, except voluntary statements of the co-accused and chargesheet witnesses.



petition involving the same issue. The chargesheet was filed against them under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and IPC. The CCB, in its complaint, stated that they filed a suo motu complaint with Cottonpet police station.

Chargesheet was filed against several accused

Later, the CCB recorded the voluntary statement of an accused. Based on this, a crime was registered against the petitioners on September 4, 2020, at Cottonpet police station.

Odisha government probes complaints against rice millers obstructing paddy procurement process

BHUBANESWAR. A day after Cooperation minister Pradeep Bal Samant urged farmers to lodge FIR in their respective police stations against rice millers who are interfering in the paddy procurement process, the state government on Tuesday directed the officials concerned to inquire into the problems faced by them.

"These officials are inquiring into the problems faced by farmers at the mandis. Arrangements have also been made for farmers to report their grievances directly to the field staff," it added.

Odisha government to establish pharmaceutical hub in state

BHUBANESWAR. After the metal, mineral and food processing sectors, Odisha is now gearing up to establish a pharmaceutical manufacturing hub, which could be a game-changer for employment generation and economic growth in the state.



The cell headed by chief secretary will serve as a bridge between the state and potential investors, facilitating collaborations and expediting investments.

been planned to attract multinational and national industry leaders for exploring the opportunities and investment landscape in the state.

pharmaceutical parks with world-class infrastructure, streamlined regulatory clearances, and financial incentives for investors.

Locations on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Balasore are being considered for setting up these parks, given their strategic connectivity

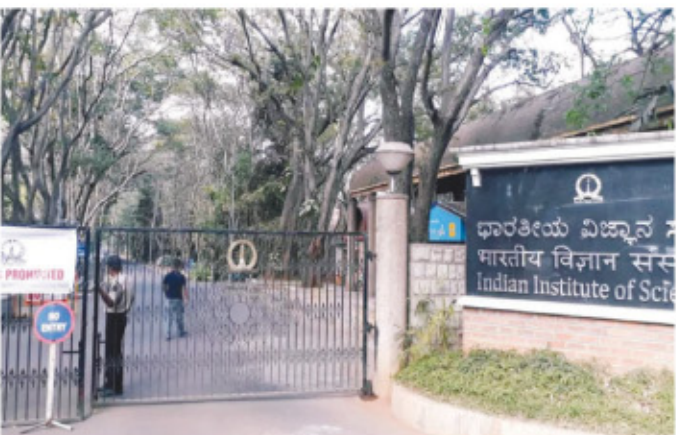
and existing industrial base. Steps are being undertaken to develop a world-class pharmaceutical SEZ in the Khurda-Balasore corridor with state-of-the-art facilities, officials said.

The OPDC is a part of PM Narendra Modi's vision for transforming India into a global leader in pharmaceutical manufacturing and innovation.

device/equipment manufacturing companies, five liquid medical oxygen plants and one active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) unit.

Experts call for detailed geological study before further construction in Bengaluru

BENGALURU. With construction activities commercial, residential, and civil increasing across the state, particularly in and around Bengaluru, geologists and experts suggest that a detailed geological study be undertaken for the city before any further expansion.



Geologists point out that the soil in Bengaluru, Mysuru, and surrounding areas is silty and red, and the region is made up of metamorphic granite rock called Peninsular Gneiss.

mining, and deep drilling are undertaken to lay the foundation. This has an impact on the rocks, not just in the surrounding location, but even in faraway places.

unplanned construction everywhere," said a geological expert from IISc.

Corporation Limited said the delay is not just because of a labour shortage, coordination issues with other stakeholders, lack of underground maps of public utilities like drinking water and sewage lines or garbage pits, but also hard rock surfaces.

Citing the example of ongoing Namma Metro works, officials in Bangalore Metro Rail

added. Due to natural soil and rock conditions, structures stand strong, but the same cannot continue in the future. What is happening underground needs to be studied before undertaking future projects.

Harivarasanam, the lullaby of the Lord

KOCHI. For the past five decades, the Sabarimala hill shrine has been closing by playing the song Harivarasanam through loud speakers. It is a nostalgic tradition for devotees who term the song the lullaby of Lord Ayyappa.

It is believed that the ashtakam was first rendered at Sabarimala in 1955 by Swami Vimochanananda. This was after the reconstruction of the temple following the fire of 1950. In those days, only a few



ardent devotees managed to trek through the dense forest and reach the hill shrine. In 1975, Merryland Subramanian produced the movie Swami Ayyappan, and Harivarasanam was included in the movie as per the wish of his son Karthikeyan.

The popular rendition goes 'Harivarasanam Viswamohanam...', while the version sung in front of the deity is 'Harivarasanam Swami Viswamohanam...'. The word Swami is repeated in each line.

### Trump's new term draws near amid scepticism

AS the United States readies for the inauguration of Donald Trump as its 47th President, I have a sense of déjà vu. Trump's swearing-in as the 45th President is the only presidential inauguration that I skipped since I was posted to Washington as a foreign correspondent in the final full year of the Bill Clinton presidency 26 years ago.

I skipped the ceremonies on the advice of bipartisan political contacts and reliable security sources. Behind their well-meaning advice was the primary fact that I am a journalist. My badge at the inaugural ceremonies would identify me as one. Moreover, I would be in the media enclosure near the Reflecting Pool, which, on a clear day, will reflect the swearing-in of new presidents on the steps of Capitol Hill. During that poll season which saw Trump emerging victorious, the Republicans treated the media as an enemy. This was not entirely without reason. The bulk of the US media — especially the mass subscription liberal media on the east and west coasts — was unfair to Trump throughout the campaign. He did not have a level playing field in dealings with American journalists. I am brown in complexion. Black people are an inalienable part of the US social fabric. If they are trifled with by rednecks in a city like Washington, which is predominantly black, there will be consequences for the perpetrators of white racism. Not so with the brown-skinned minuscule minority, who are also meek compared to African Americans. This also shows very visibly in the ongoing mud-slinging against H-1B immigrants. The underlying anger which culminated in the January 6, 2021, riot on Capitol Hill was already there when Trump was being sworn in for the first time. Trump began his presidency with a peeve that the US media had deliberately under-reported the crowds at his inauguration. If the most important day of a person's political life begins with a grievance against the institution of the Fourth Estate, he is likely to spend the rest of his public life undermining that institution. Never mind that the Fourth Estate is one of the pillars of democracy in the US. Trump did not succeed in this destructive mission as President. That was not for want of trying every day for four years from 2017.

But his next presidency may be different. The spate of resignations in the mainstream American media in recent weeks — including the dissolution and reconstitution of the Editorial Board of The Washington Post in October — are ominous. Partisan new owners of legacy media have chosen to kow-tow to Trump even before he has moved into the White House. Social media will mostly be the new President's facilitator instead of an outlet for free expression. Meta's latest decision to get rid of independent, third-party fact-checkers in the US is the latest assault on truth in that country.

A saving grace is that institutions in the US are strong. That is why they survived the tenure of the 45th President. Officers of the Metropolitan and Capitol Police paid with their lives to save the high-domed edifice, which is emblematic of the world over, of the oldest democracy on earth. On January 20, they will once again be prepared to offer the ultimate sacrifice to protect those they may not personally like and whom they have voted against in Washington, Maryland and Virginia, the tri-points which are similar to the National Capital Territory (NCT) surrounding Delhi. In a tribute to the strength of America's institutions, law enforcement agencies are allowing demonstrations against the incoming President. A major rally in Washington in support of Trump is also planned on the day before he takes office. It is praiseworthy that in a media briefing last week, US Secret Service spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi said such demonstrations are not being viewed as security threats and upheld the rights of people to protest. There are few other countries where this can happen. The Secret Service is the lead agency in charge of security at the presidential inauguration. Unlike the run-up to Trump's first swearing-in and the start of Joe Biden's presidency soon after the violent attack on the Capitol, fate ordained that there would be a dress rehearsal of safeguards on a presidential scale during all of last week.

### Disclosure curbs enfeebling RTI law

Much remains to be done by the Supreme Court to ensure effectiveness of the Act

THE Supreme Court's recent ruling on the Right to Information (RTI) Act has invited widespread comment and much appreciation from activists. "An institution has been created," said Justice Surya Kant; he then pointedly asked Additional Solicitor General Brijender Chahar, appearing for the Union of India, "What is the use of this institution if you do not have persons to perform the duties under the law?" The Bench asked the government why only people from a specific background (bureaucracy) were the favoured few to be appointed information commissioners. "We can take judicial notice of how many people from different walks have been appointed... The entire Commission is overloaded with one set of candidates," was Justice Kant's telling comment. Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for RTI activist Anjali Bhardwaj, had pleaded, "There has been only regression and not progress after the court's intervention. They are killing the RTI because nobody is interested in giving information. So, the best way to kill the law is to render the information commissions defunct."

The intervention in question was the decision on a writ petition (civil) of 2019, of which the present ruling is a follow-up. Justice AK Sikri, a judge with high sensitivity to the nuances of the RTI Act, had referred to a report published in March 2018, titled, 'Report Card on the Performance of Information Commissions in India'. It found that eight information commissions had a waiting time of more than one year for an appeal or complaint to be heard, which was calculated on the basis of the number of appeals and complaints pending as on October 31, 2017, as against the monthly disposal rate. By not filling vacancies in information commissions in a timely manner, the Central and state governments are, in his view, frustrating the very purpose of the RTI Act as receiving information in a time-bound manner is the 'very essence' of the law. The judgment directed in Conclusion (v): "We would also like to impress upon the respondents to fill vacancies, in future, without any delay. For this purpose, it would be apposite that the process for filling of a particular vacancy is initiated one to two months before the date on which the vacancy is likely to occur so that there is not much time lag

between the occurrence of vacancy and filling up of the said vacancy." The ruling added: "We would like to place on record that aforesaid directions are given keeping in view the salient purpose which the RTI Act is supposed to serve. This Act is enacted not only to subserve and ensure freedom of speech. On proper implementation, it has the potential to bring about good governance, which is an integral part of any vibrant democracy. Attaining good governance is also one of the visions of the Constitution."

Thus that writ petition was disposed. That order, followed as it is by Justice Kant's enforcement order,



no doubt merits appreciation by the public, to whom the right to freedom of speech belongs under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, and therefore, ownership of the right to any information held by its server, which is the government that it elects.

Yet, in so lauding the judgment, it is well to remember that the apex court has much to answer for in enfeebling the exercise of this right by the citizenry, having gone so far as to exceed its own brief, which is limited, by actually amending the Act.

Former Information Commissioner Shailesh Gandhi, who served with me in the Central Information Commission (CIC) that I chaired and is now a leading RTI activist, lamented in a recent article in The Leaflet that "our right to information is being transformed into a right to deny information before our very eyes". After quoting from the Supreme Court ruling in P Ramachandra Rao vs State of Karnataka (2002), which lays down the limits of any

court's jurisdiction in ruling on any law as, "Courts can declare the law, they can interpret the law, they can remove obvious lacunae and fill the gaps but they cannot trench upon the field of legislation properly meant for the legislature", Gandhi cites the court's decision of 2012, unremedied thus far, in Girish Deshpande vs Central Information Commission & Others. Relying on the clause to protect privacy under Section 8(1)(j) of the Act, the judge went on to give licence to refuse most information at will to public information officers, first appellate authorities, information commissioners and courts. This ruling can and indeed has too often been used to deny information for which the Act mandates suo motu disclosure under Section 4. The Supreme Court gave no reasoning for this unequivocal conclusion, but merely stated that the information sought was 'personal' and need not be given unless a larger public interest could be demonstrated. It chose to ignore whether the information sought stemmed from a public activity or whether or not its disclosure would amount to an unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual, which are provisions enunciated in the Act and have been elucidated repeatedly by rulings of the CIC and the courts. It is necessary to consider the areas in which reasonable restrictions can be placed on the RTI while denying information on the grounds of privacy. These are defined in Article 19(2) of the Constitution and can be encapsulated in two words: 'decency' and 'morality'. Transgression of either would amount to an invasion of privacy. Yet, Justices KS Radhakrishnan and Dipak Misra have given short shrift to these limits and constricted the Act itself in a judgment repeatedly taken recourse to by those in authority seeking to deny disclosure.

And so, while we might heave a sigh of relief at the stand taken to uphold the spirit of our Constitution by the SC, we should urge the revered institution that much remains to be done not only to make the instruments of enforcement — Central and state information commissions — useful but also to ensure the effectiveness of the law to uphold what has been described by the court as a constitutional right.

### Workers in peril

Paying the price for employers' negligence

SITTING ducks — that's what all those nameless, faceless workers are who toil day and night on development projects across the country. Their safety is of little concern to their employers, even though the infrastructure sector continues to be a key driver of Indian economy. When 40-odd labourers were rescued from Uttarakhand's Silkyara tunnel in November 2023 — the risky operation was watched by the entire nation with bated breath — it was hoped that lessons would be learnt to ensure safer working conditions at construction sites. That hope has proved to be short-lived. Two workers were killed when a centring frame collapsed during the laying of a slab at an under-construction building in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, on Saturday. The same day, 28 workers were trapped when the shuttering of an upcoming building caved in at Kannauj railway station in Uttar Pradesh. It took a 16-hour operation, involving personnel of the national and state disaster response forces and the railways, to rescue all of them. In contrast,



frantic efforts to save labourers from a watery grave in a flooded rat-hole coal mine in Assam have proved futile. Criminal negligence is at the core of such mishaps, even

miraculous escape every time. He or she deserves a safety net — financial as well as physical.

### Legal framework to protect digital data must be flexible

The goal of the draft DPDP Rules is to strike a balance between the right to privacy and technological advancement.

THANKS to our growing digital dependence, the majority of our personal data is now in the digital form. To facilitate the implementation of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, which creates a framework for processing digital personal data in India, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has created the draft Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules, 2025.

By providing necessary details and in an effort to strike a balance between the need to process personal data for legitimate purposes and the right of individuals to protect their data, it seeks to fortify the legal framework for the protection of digital personal data. The government has given stakeholders 45 days to give inputs or comments on the draft rules. The journey of data protection legislation is intriguing. The World Economic Forum (WEF) started a project called "Rethinking Personal Data" in 2010 to deepen the collective understanding of how a principled, collaborative and balanced personal data ecosystem can evolve. The main goals of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which was created by the European Union in 2018, are to simplify the regulatory framework for international business and to improve individuals' ownership and rights over their personal data. In fact, the UK also kept the law even after breaking with the EU. Additionally, countries such as Brazil, South Korea, South Africa, Japan and Turkey — and the American state of California — adopted the GDPR as a model for protecting personal data. China's Personal Information Protection Law became operative in November 2021. In today's social media-driven world dominated by the Big Techs, data localisation is a delicate issue. Data localisation refers to actions

that restrict data flow within a jurisdiction's boundaries. Under the Data Protection Act cleared in August 2023, the Government of India had stated that it would merely inform the territories where Indian personal data cannot be taken to. Following immaculate lobbying efforts by the tech companies against a provision in an earlier draft bill that required severe localisation rules, this was viewed as a significant victory. Companies were required to keep copies of certain sensitive personal data, such as financial and health information, within India under the Data Protection Bill, which was first introduced in 2019 and later withdrawn from Parliament in 2022. Additionally, it was forbidden for companies to export any undefined "critical" personal data from India. Rob Sherman, vice-president and deputy chief privacy officer of Meta, said in 2022 that the country's data localisation regulations might make it "difficult" for the business to provide its services there. And Keith Enright, the chief privacy officer at Google, stated that norms for data localisation should be as "narrowly tailored as possible".

Significantly, the draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, reinstated data localisation, a Big Tech annoyance that had been eliminated in the Data Protection Act, 2023. The goal is to establish a central body that will collaborate with sectoral regulators and other ministries to successfully deploy local data storage without interfering with business operations. The government is considering giving the industry two years to transition to the new law and set up their systems for compliance.

The introduction of possible obligations for "significant data fiduciaries" with relation to cross-

border data sharing is an intriguing feature in the draft regulations. While businesses and organisations that gather and handle personal data are considered data fiduciaries, "significant data fiduciaries" will be chosen based on the quantum and sensitivity of the personal data they handle as well as



the potential threats to India's sovereignty and integrity, electoral democracy, security and public order. It is anticipated that the Big Tech companies, such as Amazon, Microsoft, Apple, Google and Meta, will be categorised as important data fiduciaries. Additionally, the draft regulations permit tech businesses to put in place a system for obtaining "verifiable" parental approval prior to processing children's personal data. In essence, when companies expressed dissatisfaction over the potential difficulty of implementing the rule, the government has decided not to propose a mechanism from its end and has instead left it up to the companies to choose a system. In the event of a data breach, data fiduciaries will be required to notify affected parties "without delay" about the breach, including its nature, scope, timing and location; the

implications that the breach is likely to have for the impacted user; and the steps that have been taken or are being taken to reduce risk, among other things. Failure to take adequate precautions to avoid a data breach could result in a fine of up to Rs 250 crore.

The Data Protection Act has given the government or its agencies broad exemptions for processing the personal information of residents on the basis of "public order", "friendly relations with other states", and "national security", among other things. Additionally, the government has suggested that health experts, educational institutions, creche and daycare facilities be excused from requiring parental agreement before processing children's personal data. "Yet, we can't just hit the 'pause button' and let these issues sort themselves out. Building the legal, cultural, technological and economic infrastructure to enable the development of a balanced personal data ecosystem is vitally important to improving the state of the world," the 2011 WEF report said. For similar reasons, we also urgently need a concrete law. The goal of the draft DPDP rules is to strike a balance between the right to privacy and technological advancement. In the near future, the quantum, dynamics and discoveries of the hidden potential and risks of personal data will undoubtedly vary due to the constantly shifting pattern, purview, domain, demand and scope of data transmitting into an unknown horizon. Additionally, there ought to be a dynamic alteration in the pattern with technological evolution, our intrusion into the AI world and changes in the global climate, geopolitics and trade. Any legislation pertaining to the protection of personal data should have the ability to easily and continuously adapt to the changes.

**Do you struggle to get out of bed, feel constantly drained and rely on pick-me-ups like coffee and sugary treats to get you through the day?**



# 9 reasons why you're Constantly Worn out

If so, you're far from alone. Research reveal that one in three of us admit we're permanently worn out because of the pace of modern life. A survey by a vitamin company revealed that a whopping 97% of us claim we feel tired most of the time and doctors' records reveal that 10% of people who visit them complain of unexplained tiredness. So much so that doctors have even created a handy acronym — TATT (Tired All The Time). Here, experts point to some of the causes and how to deal with them.

### No Exercise

Avoiding exercise because you're tired actually makes you feel worse. Regular

exercise makes your heart and lungs work more efficiently, delivering oxygen and vital nutrients around the body. Remedy: Next time you're tempted to flop on the sofa, force yourself up for a brisk 10-minute walk — you'll feel more alert.

### Lack of sleep

Recent research shows many of us survive on so-called 'junk sleep' — the kind when we wake up frequently throughout the night. It doesn't replenish our energy levels as well as long stretches of continuous sleep do. Remedy: Develop good sleep hygiene. Go to bed on time, avoid staring at screens an hour before bed time. If sleep evades you, have a

relaxing bath and a cup of warm milk. Throw in some easy reading, as that helps.

### Caffeine addiction

Although we think of caffeine as a pick-me-up, it actually makes us feel more tired once the initial surge wears off. This is because our brain chemistry doesn't like being interfered by stimulants, so it releases chemicals to dampen down the alert response. Drinking coffee even six hours prior to bedtime meant poorer quality kip. Remedy: Avoiding caffeine will increase energy levels in the long run. But cut down gradually to

avoid headaches and irritability.

### Iron deficiency

Figures show that around one third of women are low on iron often due to heavy periods. Some have low enough iron levels to be anaemic. If you pull down your bottom eyelids and the inner rim looks pale rather than pink, it's an indicator. Remedy: Include plenty of iron-rich foods in your diet, such as lean meats, dark green vegetables, pulses and dried fruits, and pair them with foods like citrus fruit high in vitamin C.



### Dehydration

Losing even as little as 2 per cent of your body's normal water content can take its toll on

your energy levels. As we get older we lose our thirst reflex. Also, working in an air-conditioned office, going for a long walk can lead to depleted fluid levels. This causes blood pressure to drop and not enough blood gets to the brain or muscles. It results in headaches, fatigue and loss of concentration. Remedy: Try to drink water every two hours. If you need encouragement, add mint, basil, lemon or cucumber to liven its flavour.

### Sugar Overdose

Sugary energy drinks and snacks like biscuits, chocolate and crisps cause sharp spikes in blood sugar levels that can leave you tired. Remedy: Swap to low-sugar foods. Avoid white carbs such as bread and pasta which quickly convert to sugar in the body. Choose wholegrain carbs such as granary bread, wholemeal pasta and brown rice.

### Missing out on protein

Surviving on fruit and salad might feel worthy, but avoiding protein will leave you exhausted, as it's a vital energy giver. Remedy: Eating a minimum of a palm-sized amount of protein with meals and eating seeds and nuts or nut butters can prevent tiredness. Meat, fish, cheese, tofu, beans, lentils, yogurt, nuts and seeds are good sources of proteins.

## Breakfast high in protein better for kids: Study

A breakfast high in protein - like eggs - keeps children fuller longer than cereal or oatmeal, causing them to eat fewer calories at lunch, says a new study.

"It is really important that we identify certain types of food that can help children feel full and also moderate caloric intake, especially in children who are prone to excess weight gain," said lead researcher Tanja Kral, associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing in the US.

The study, published in the journal Eating Behaviours, also found that the effects of a protein-rich meal do not last throughout the day. It only impacts a mid-day meal. The study recruited forty, eight to 10-year-old children to consume one of three, 350-calorie breakfasts (eggs, oatmeal, or cereal), then play games with research staff and then eat lunch once a week for three consecutive



weeks.

On each occasion, every participant had to eat their entire breakfast, but could eat as much or as little lunch as desired.

According to the research, after consuming the egg breakfast (scrambled eggs, whole wheat toast, diced peaches, and one percent milk) children reduced their energy intake at lunch by seventy calories - roughly equivalent to one small chocolate-chip cookie.

Moderately active children in the same age range as those who participated in the study generally need between 1,600 and 1,800 calories daily.

The 70-calorie drop at one meal equals about four percent of a child's daily caloric needs.

Eating beyond the caloric threshold, even by a little, can cause excess weight gain and obesity in children, if sustained, the researchers pointed out.



## 3 home remedies to get relief from Acidity attack

Do you find yourself often under the deadly attack of acidity or acid reflux and have tried on varied medications to get rid of the deadly acidity attacks? While there might have been times when these medicines have showed their wonders and made acidity shoo off, there are certain home remedies which you can use, to get

rid of your problems without worrying much about the side effects. Here are some simple and easy home remedies to keep acidity at bay.

1. Bananas: Known to be rich source of potassium they keep the acidity levels in check. The next time keep a banana handy,

and in case of a bad bout of acidity eat an overripe banana.

2. Cold milk: Milk has a high amount of calcium, which helps to prevent acid build up by absorbing the excess acid produced. Also with if the milk is cold it sure does provides instant relief from the burning sensation that one feels during

3. Tulsi: One of the safest ayurvedic products, Tulsi helps in stimulating stomach to produce more mucous. It contains antiulcer properties and reduces the effects of gastric acids. One of the easiest way to beat the discomfort felt during acidity is by chewing 4-6 Tulsi leaves to find instant relief.

reflux. Avoid adding sugar, however a spoon of ghee added to it is more effective.

## Exercises for a toned midriff

want to wear that crop top, but are afraid of showing off a flabby stomach? Attaining a flat and toned stomach is every woman's dream. However, even if most women follow a healthy diet and exercise regularly, getting a toned midriff is no cakewalk. Here's how you can work out the belly fat and look fab.

1. Bicycle crunches: Lie flat on the floor and press your lower back to the ground. Interlace your fingers, and put your hands behind your head. Bring your knees in toward your chest and lift your shoulder blades off the ground. Straighten your right leg out to about a 45-

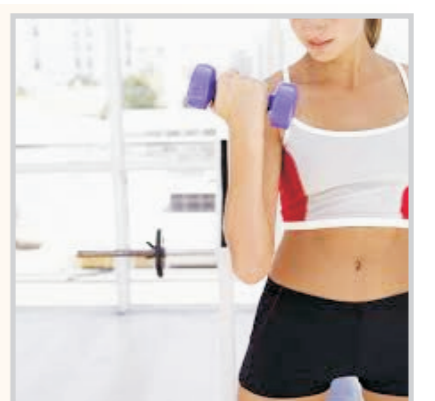
degree angle, while turning your upper body to the left. Get your right elbow toward the left knee to create a pedalling motion. Do 10-20 reps

2. Downward dog: Lie on your stomach. Maintain a tight spine with your shoulder blades depressed and palms resting on the floor. Exhale and lift your back toward the ceiling in such a way that your legs are pushed back. Assume an upturned 'V' pose.

3. Side stretch: Lie on your right side with

knees slightly bent. Cross your left foot in front of your right foot. Place your right hand on the floor directly beneath shoulders and your left hand behind the head. Lift your hips off the floor, so that your body is diagonal to the ground.

4. Plank exercise: Lie with your face to the ground. Support your the weight of your upper body on your forearms with elbows firmly placed on the ground. Lift your torso off the floor to form a straight line with your body, which is propped up



by your forearms and toes. Avoid drooping and hold for 10 to 20 seconds.

# Over 300 flights delayed, trains hit as dense fog reduces visibility in Delhi

► **Delhi weather:** Due to zero visibility reported in parts of Delhi-NCR, at least 26 trains were delayed due to the dense fog conditions in Delhi and parts of northern India. Similarly, 329 flights were delayed due to the dense fog at the Delhi airport.

**NEW DELHI.** Over 300 flights were delayed, and train services disrupted as dense fog blanketed Delhi-NCR on Wednesday. The cold wave continued in the national capital, with the minimum temperature dropping to 6 degrees Celsius.

Due to zero visibility reported in parts of Delhi-NCR, at least 26 trains were delayed due to the dense fog conditions in Delhi and parts of northern India. Similarly, 329 flights were delayed, and 13 flights were cancelled due to the dense fog at the Delhi airport. Early morning travellers faced difficulties in navigating through the dense fog.

The India Meteorological Department has issued an orange alert for Delhi, with dense to very dense fog reported in several areas. It has predicted a cloudy sky for the Delhi-NCR region on Wednesday with chances of light rain in the evening. The visibility at Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi was recorded at 100 metres at 6 am on Wednesday. It stated that flights not compliant with CAT III standards might be affected by the dense fog. Notably, CAT

III is an approach system that allows flights to land safely during poor visibility conditions. "Due to dense fog at Delhi, multiple flights have been impacted. Passengers may

before heading to the airport." With winter in full swing, weather conditions in Delhi haven't improved since our last advisory. We recommend checking your flight status before heading to the airport. Our teams are working diligently, keeping a close eye on the weather, and will keep you posted with updates." IndiGo said in a release. "Poor visibility due to dense fog and airport congestion may affect flight operations in Delhi and some other cities today," Air India said. The humidity level at 8.30 am was recorded at 97 per cent while the maximum temperature is expected to settle around 19 degrees Celsius. Meanwhile, Delhi's air quality worsened to 'very poor' category, with an AQI of 332 as of 8 am on Wednesday. The weather body had earlier issued a yellow alert, forecasting dense to moderate fog in the capital until



contact the concerned airlines for flight updates. Any inconvenience caused to you is deeply regretted," the airport said in a statement posted on X.

IndiGo airlines, SpiceJet and Air India have issued advisories warning of possible flight delays and urged passengers to check their flight status

Wednesday. A fresh western disturbance will bring isolated rainfall with thunderstorms and lightning over the Delhi-NCR region, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday and Thursday, it had said.

## UP Fuel Pump Enforces 'No Helmet, No Petrol' Rule, Ends Up In The Dark

**New Delhi.** In a chain of events demonstrating why India is not for beginners, a fuel pump attendant's insistence on following the 'no helmet, no petrol' rule led to consequences he would not have imagined. The biker, who was refused fuel, happened to be an electricity department staff and took revenge by snipping the fuel pump's power supply.

The bizarre incident took place in Uttar Pradesh's Hapur district on Monday. The Yogi Adityanath government has asked district officials to enforce the 'no helmet, no petrol' rule as part of an initiative to reduce road accident casualties. Petrol pump owners have also been asked to refuse fuel to bikers who don't wear helmets. According to a petrol pump attendant, a lineman with the power supply department came to refuel his bike on Monday. He was not wearing a helmet. The petrol pump staff had been told to refuse fuel to any biker not wearing a helmet. "Our owner informed us about the district magistrate's order that no one should be given fuel if he/she is not wearing a helmet. When the lineman came, we refused to refuel his bike. He left in a huff and disconnected the power supply." The sudden power cut surprised the petrol pump staff. The power supply was restored about 20 minutes later. The petrol pump's owner has registered a police complaint.

A CCTV camera in the vicinity has captured the miffed lineman stopping his bike near the transformer and scaling a wall. He then climbs a pole and snips the power line. As he climbs down, people are seen approaching the transformer to check what has gone wrong.

## Smriti Irani, Shekhar Kapur among new members in rejigged PMML Society

**NEW DELHI.** The Prime Ministers' Museum & Library (PMML) society and its executive council have been reconstituted. Former Principal Secretary to the PM Nripendra Mishra has been reappointed for a five-year term as the chairperson of the council. Several new members have been nominated to the society. According to an order issued by the culture ministry, the newly added representatives are ex-Union minister Smriti Irani, filmmaker and director of International Film Festival of India Shekhar Kapur, former NITI Aayog vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar and retired Army General Syed Ata Hasnain.

The reconstituted body will have 34 members instead of 29, said Ahmadabad-based historian Rizwan Kadri. He has been nominated to the society.

The organisation is headed by the PM and has Defence Minister Rajnath Singh as its vice-president. Union



ministers Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman, Dharmendra Pradhan, Ashwini Vaishnaw and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat are also its members. As per the memorandum of association and rules and regulations of the society, the terms of the members nominated and executive council will be five years or until further order.

The PMML society is an autonomous institution under the culture ministry. It has four major constituents: Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, library, Centre for Contemporary Studies and Nehru Planetarium.

The other new members include Sanjeev Sanyal, who is also the member of PM's Economic Advisory Council, educationist Chamu Krishna Shastry, Vasudev Kamath of Sanskar Bharti, and archaeologist KK Mohammad.

## J&K polls, Amarnath Yatra testament to improved security conditions: Army chief

**NEW DELHI.** Army chief Gen Uppendra Dwivedi said the 2024 Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir and the Amarnath Yatra were "testament to improved security" in the union territory. He made the remarks while addressing personnel and dignitaries at an event in Pune on Wednesday to mark Army Day 2025. This is the first time that Army Day celebrations were shifted out of Delhi. In his address, the Army chief said the ceasefire along the Line of Control continues to hold, "although vigilance against infiltration is ongoing".

"While stability has been maintained, challenges persist. Efforts to modernise critical infrastructure and integrate advanced technologies remain a priority," Gen Dwivedi maintained. He also highlighted the Army's achievements over the past year and praised the operational



readiness and professionalism demonstrated by soldiers across the country, whether safeguarding borders, responding to natural disasters, or contributing to internal security. The Army chief also laid emphasis on the role of the armed forces in nation-building, underscoring the importance of a stable environment for India's

## Army chief justifies replacing 1971 war painting featuring Pakistan's surrender

**NEW DELHI.** Army chief General Uppendra Dwivedi on Monday justified replacing an iconic painting of Pakistan's surrender in the 1971 war at his office in Raisina Hills with a new artwork titled "Karam Kshetra". The painting on the 1971 war was removed from the Army chief's lounge in December, and it was subsequently installed at the Manekshaw convention centre. The shifting of the historical painting had anguished many Army veterans and the decision came under some criticism.

"If you see the golden history of India-- it has three chapters. It has the British era, the Mughal era and the era before that. If we wish to connect that and the Army's vision, symbolism becomes important," Gen. Dwivedi



said. The new painting, "Karam Kshetra", meaning "Field of Deeds", is a creation of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Jacob of the 28 Madras regiment. It portrays the Army as a guardian of "Dharma" that protects the nation's values and reflects its evolution into a technologically-advanced integrated force, according to the Army. It features the snow-capped mountains around the

growth. He introduced the Army's "Decade of Transformation" initiative, aimed at enhancing operational preparedness, adopting cutting-edge technologies, and reforming administrative processes.

Gen Dwivedi also announced that 2025 would focus on "Reforms" and "Technology Absorption", laying the foundation for a modern, agile, and technologically enabled force. Acknowledging the growing role of women in the armed forces, he lauded their contributions not only as officers but also as Agniveers. He reaffirmed the Army's commitment to supporting soldiers, veterans, and their families through robust welfare systems and initiatives.

Furthermore, he recognised the collaboration between the Army, Navy, and Air Force, highlighting their collective readiness to face any challenges to national security.

## Congress moves to new headquarters as '24, Akbar Road' ends 47-year history

**NEW DELHI.** Delhi is witnessing a historic shift on Wednesday as the Congress party moves to its new headquarters—Indira Gandhi Bhawan on Kotla Road. This moment marks a significant moment in the party's history, as exactly 47 years ago, a devastated Indira Gandhi, left with only a handful of loyalists following the aftermath of the Emergency, shifted the base of the breakaway faction of Congress to a government accommodation—a Type VII bungalow on Akbar Road.

Over the years, this British-era property has witnessed the rise and fall of the Congress party. It has seen the resurrection of Congress, Indira Gandhi regaining power, the death of her son Sanjay Gandhi, her assassination, Rajiv Gandhi stepping into the Prime Minister's office at a young age, his assassination, and Congress gradually regaining its ground in subsequent years

as it led alliance governments in 1991, 2004, and 2009. The property has a rich history of nearly 100 years. Before independence, Sir Reginald Maxwell, a member of the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow's executive council, resided here. In the 1960s, the bungalow also became the residence of Burma's ambassador, where Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi spent her early teenage years. Her mother, Daw Khin Kyi, was appointed the Burmese ambassador to India. In his book 24, Akbar Road: A Short History of the People Behind the Rise and Fall of Congress, journalist and political commentator Rasheed Kidwai details how the bungalow was chosen to become an iconic address in the national capital, and the significant events that unfolded there. According to Kidwai, the Akbar Road property was allotted to Rajya Sabha MP G. Venkataswamy from Andhra Pradesh, who chose to stay



with Indira Gandhi after the 1977 elections, when most of her colleagues had abandoned her. Left without resources and office space, Indira decided to operate her party office from the unkept house. "Facing the residence of the Chief of the Indian Air Force and the Intelligence Bureau's political surveillance unit (which still exist), it comprised five barely furnished bedrooms, a living room, a dining hall, and a guest room. The

## UP couple consume poison with their 3 children amid financial stress; two dead

**NEW DELHI.** A couple poisoned themselves and their children in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur district over high debt and repeated harassment by a finance company. During treatment, the woman and her son died, while her husband and two other children were undergoing treatment.

According to the police, all five members of the family were found unconscious on the Gagahedi-Deoband road in Saharanpur and were rushed to a hospital by another passerby in his car on Monday, January 13. Commenting on the incident, the family relatives of the family said that Vikas (45), and Rajni (35) had taken a loan of four to five lakhs from a small finance company named Fusion. After being unable to pay the EMIs on time, the company officials harassed them and often visited their home, threatening them, following which they took extreme step.

Initially, the family was taken to a government hospital, from where the doctors referred them to another medical facility for better treatment. However, Rajni and her one-and-a-half-year-old son died during treatment, while Vikas and the couple's two other children were undergoing treatment. Rajni's brother Gurmeet said, "When we arrived at the location, Vikas told me that he had a lot of debt. The company people were bothering them and threatening them. There was another person from the village from whom they had borrowed 10,000-15,000 rupees at 12 per cent interest. They were being harassed by those people."

After the incident, a probe was launched by the Saharanpur Police. Speaking on the incident, Saharanpur's SP City Vyom Bindal said, "Five members of the same family, including the husband, wife, and their three children, attempted suicide by consuming poison. All five of them were receiving treatment. Unfortunately, their one-and-a-half-year-old son died. The husband's wife, Rajni, also passed away during treatment." "An investigation will be conducted into all these facts. Our priority is to ensure that those who are hospitalised for treatment receive the best possible care. As for the other points raised by the authorities, an investigation will be carried out on all those matters as well," he added.

## Delhi schools asked to follow strict guidelines on kite flying for Republic Day

**NEW DELHI.** Ahead of Republic Day and Basant Panchami, the Directorate of Education has issued a set of strict guidelines to schools, urging them to raise awareness about the dangers of using 'Chinese Manja' while flying kites. The circular, released on Tuesday, instructed Heads of Schools (HoSs) in government, government-aided, and private unaided schools to inform students about the ban on sharp Manja. The directive also emphasised the need for awareness programs on this issue.

The circular referenced a notice from the Environment department, which highlighted the popularity of kite flying during festivals such as Makar Sankranti, Republic Day, and Basant Panchami. It warned about the hazards posed by kite-flying threads made from synthetic materials like plastic, nylon, or the commonly used "Chinese thread" (Manja), which are often coated with glass or metallic components. "These threads can cause serious injuries to humans and animals, sometimes even resulting in fatalities, as reported in news incidents in recent years," read the circular. "Additionally, such materials are non-biodegradable and pose a significant environmental threat," it said.

"There shall be a complete ban on the sale, production, storage, supply, import, and use of synthetic kite-flying threads, including those laced with sharp materials.

"To ensure safety and environmental protection, kite flying will only be allowed with cotton thread, free of any sharp, metallic, glass, or adhesive components," it said.

outhouses were neglected, and the garden was a mess of unruly hedges and a riot of weeds," the first chapter of Kidwai's book reads. Congress MP Tariq Anwar from Katihar, Bihar, who worked at 24, Akbar Road, recalls the early days: "Following the split, Congress started out with 24, Akbar Road, as a temporary office, but we stayed there." Anwar, who has worked with four generations of the Gandhi family, added, "Indira Gandhi used to come to the office regularly. I have worked with Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, and Rahul Gandhi. Indiraji always gave importance to young leaders. After she became PM in 1980, as an MP, I got more opportunities to interact with her. I have seen the party's many ups and downs at 24, Akbar Road, and have numerous memories attached to the office. I will miss the old office and hope it will be a new beginning for the party."



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

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

**Climate**

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

**Food**

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

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

**Shopping**

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

# Brighton

## The party never stops

purchase some lovely street art in Brighton.

**Places of interest**

**The Seafront**

Different from other beaches in that it has pebbled shores contrary to most white sandy beached coastal towns, Brighton has a large and beautiful coastline accompanied by a walking path as well as a bicycling track. A walk straight down from the Brighton and Hove station will bring you to the beach which is covered with tiny white, cream, red and brown pebbles. In the summer there are dozens of shacks, ice cream vendors and pubs open all day across the length of the beach. Surprisingly even nearing the end of September, a lot of these are open for business.

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

gripping view of the waves.

**The Brighton Pier**

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

With trinket shops, bars, restaurants, funny photo spots, thrilling rides and tons of deck chairs to bask in the sun.

The pier makes you enjoy a summery afternoon even in the winter! At the centre of the pier lies a casino with fun and games for all ages.

**The Royal Pavillion**

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

**The Lanes**

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

North Laines - Think shopping - fun, crazy, exciting shopping - from clothes and shoes, to quirky gift items and bags to tattoos,

designer jewellery and fancy dress shops, the North Laines are a great haunt for the wandering window shopper as well as the serious buyer! And the Laines spread out in four directions from a little square with a fountain in the centre - you feel like you've been transported into a fairytale world inhabited by hobbits.

South Laines - Think food and drinks - lip smacking, finger licking, delectable food! From streetside bars, to organic food restaurants to quaint little coffee shops, the South Laines have it all. Step in to Casa Don Carlos for authentic Spanish fare complete with Sangria and Tapas.

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

**How to get there**

**By rail**

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

**By road**

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



## Midnight boat rides at

# St. Petersburg



The curly haired guide on the motorboat I am jumping into from a pier near Zaharevskaya, Saint Petersburg, shoots unflattering looks. Is it just the strange Russian temperament I've encountered on this trip or can she actually be annoyed at me for arriving two-and-a-half minutes later than 11.30 pm, the reporting time, I wonder. It is only after our twilight cruise zips through narrow canals and reaches the imposing Neva river that I infer her reaction - the bridge we're beholding has begun to creak open from the middle as traffic on both sides and that of click-happy visitors underneath has paused itself. By ten minutes after midnight, its illuminated ends open

fully, dramatically posing against a still-blue sky. Subsequent bridge sightings and sips of 'champanska' make me feel like I'm in a fine coffee table book. Also, note to self: in this far-west Russian city, sunset will happen well past midnight (or won't happen at all one month every year), bridges will creak open at the stroke of midnight and tourist boats will leave just before midnight. With dozens of channels of St Petersburg serving as arteries to the Neva, it's only fair that one takes the water way to explore it. After Peter the Great discovered this swampland in 1703 and planned it with careful imaginations of Vienna, London and Paris, the result was a heady ode to Europe,

which today also bears a silent Tsarist hangover. And the 'kanals' have inspired articulate bridges (539 to be precise, highest in the world) so make sure you tag your architect friends in your Facebook pictures.

**Take my weird for it**

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

These reminders of the city's military history can be eerie for some, and the lack of English signs or the locals' shy demeanour could only confuse matters.

But then, there are sights of the most opulent buildings (St Isaac's Cathedral, Mariinsky theatre, Winter Palace) which make up for the above and swoop you to the time when St Pete's was Leningrad and further back, when it was the capital of imperial Russia. Throw in some stern-looking, big-nosed modern Russian characters (cabbies, shop attendants, waiters et al) and you'd have a blog-ful of anecdotes.

**Eat, play, love**

The cuisine is perhaps where Peter's idea of this city being the 'window to Europe' seems to have worked. Most of St Pete's eat streets look Parisian by ambience, feel German for their love of beer and sound Spanish with their live gigs. While it would be callous to ignore the pastas and tapas, it'll be criminal to miss local hits such as the blini (stuffed pancake), kartoshka (huge potato filled with all the vices you can think of) and Baltika beer (the city is a proud home to Eastern Europe's most popular brew).

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

I hit upon a couple of 'surprise entrants' though; in finding a sushi place more easily than a traditional Russian place (yes, Japanese is the 'Chinese' here). Secondly, it felt foolhardy to expect locals downing vodka like we down nimbu pani.

Turns out it's more of a have-at-home poison, especially during the bitter winter.

If, however, you like them drinks mixed with music and in the company of damsels, Nevsky Prospekt is what you should mark on your map. Not to give you yardsticks, but here are the takeaways of my weekend here:

1. After extensive pub crawls here, I figured that there's much to experience in both the hole-in-the-wall and the 'closed-footwearonly' categories of bars (snooker with drunk middle-aged men and grooving to David Guetta respectively, for instance).
2. The absolute mayhem on the streets with loud, drunk revelers spilling out and loitering till breakfast hours, is enjoyable and free of moral police.
3. Beer's cheaper than water and can be picked up at convenience stores (FYI, President Medvedev signed a bill which acknowledged beer as 'alcoholic' only this year!)
4. Many Sharapova-esque damsels are drop-dead stunning, but unless you have a Rapidex Russian booklet or some prolific gestural skills up your sleeve, you wouldn't get close to scoring with any. All this said, if there's one reason why you must take your partner or children to this ex-Tsarist kingdom, it's for the charm you'd find after getting over its 'weirdness'. Many would credit this to its proximity to Europe (an hour's ride from Helsinki), but its homegrown appeal shouldn't be overlooked. The petunias which dot the lampposts, the violinists who fill sidewalks with Kalinka or just the sharp, stylish locals you spot on the other side of unending subway escalators - you could either find all this strange or fascinating. But then it would just take a river cruise down the Neva on a white night for you to decide on the latter.

**Getting there**

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

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

**Costs**

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

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

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

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

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







Seema Kiran Sajdeh Gives A Special Shout To

# Malaika Arora

'Scarlet House, Take A Bow'

**B**ollywood BFFs Seema Kiran Sajdeh and Malaika Arora recently enjoyed quality time with one another at Scarlett House Bombay. And their families had also joined them. From posing with their close ones to indulging in some scrumptious meals, the evening was completely filled with love and laughter. Seema posted a couple of pictures on her Instagram handle to update her fans about the beautiful evening. In the opening frame of Seema Kiran Sajdeh's carousel, she was seen posing for a group picture with her best friends, Malaika Arora and her sister, Amrita Arora. Seema's son, Nirvan Khan, Malaika Arora's son, Arhaan Khan, and Amrita Arora's husband, Shakeel Ladak, also joined the frame captured on a lovely spot in the Mumbai restaurant. In the following slide, Seema was seen descending the stairs, followed by the other glimpses, giving a sneak peek into the guests joining them. The Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives fame's pictures also featured Abedin Sham, a co-founder of Abode Bombay, a boutique hotel in Mumbai, Richa Sajdeh and her husband, Bunty Sajdeh, the Managing Director and CEO of Dharma Cornerstone Agency.

A few of the pictures also showed the delicious snacks all the pals savoured over there. One slide showed a plate filled with rice on one side and what appeared to be delicious prawn curry. A glass of some drink was also kept near the platter. Following this, we can spot an assortment of some lovely dishes in another frame. From tarts, pasta and khichdi to many other dishes, the picture screamed deliciousness in all senses.

Seema also posed for some fun selfies with Malaika, Amrita, and their close ones. And in the last picture she was seen pouting towards Amrita, showing her love towards her BFFs. Sharing the bunch of photos and videos, Seema gave a shoutout to the restaurant and wrote, "Scarlet house take a bow." She further hashtagged the post with words like "what a vibe", "great food", "smashing in", "new spot", "absolutely fabulous", "bandra", "must visit", "some of my fav peeps"

Soon after Seema dropped the post, Malaika commented, "Thank u @seemakiransajdeh love u." Meanwhile, Amrita mentioned her love towards her and penned, "Seemus," followed by red hearts. Many social media users also showered love on them. One user added, "Seema's son can definitely make it in Bollywood. Looks great," while another stated, "Wow looks amazing!" One more comment can be read as "Food looks delic." "Wow beautiful pics," another comment read while someone said, "Bhai ki family h." For the hangout, Seema stunned in a white top teamed with denim pants and a pair of white sneakers. Malaika wore a white crop top with black shorts and heels. While Arhaan sported a white shirt with matching pants, Nirvaan picked a black T-shirt with matching pants and white sneakers. Seema and Malaika's wonderful bond is evident in the recent joyful moments featuring their sons and respective families. For those unaware, the duo were previously married to the Khan family. While Malaika was married to Arbaaz Khan, Seema was married to Sohail Khan.



Sidharth Malhotra Flies Out Of Mumbai With Kiara Advani Ahead Of His 40th Birthday



**S**idharth Malhotra is all set to celebrate his 40th birthday on January 16. Looks like the Shershaah actor and his wife Kiara Advani have jetted off for a vacay ahead of his special day. The couple made a stylish appearance at the Mumbai airport on Tuesday morning, and as usual, shelled out major couple goals as they walked hand-in-hand. Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani were spotted at the Mumbai airport by the paparazzi. They looked uber-chic as they got out of the car, and headed towards the airport. The Kabir Singh actress looked gorgeous in a grey V-neck sweater paired with white pants. She left her hair open, and accessorized her stylish look with dark sunglasses and a red handbag. Meanwhile, Sidharth Malhotra looked dapper in a black tee layered with a matching jacket and jeans. He also donned dark sunglasses. Kiara and Sidharth held hands and politely smiled for paparazzi pictures, before making their way inside the airport. Check out the video below!

Soon after the video surfaced, fans gushed over the lovely couple. While one Instagram user commented, "The og couple," another one wrote, "Aww cutest." Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani tied the knot on 7th February, 2023, in a traditional Hindu wedding ceremony in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. The couple never fails to shell out major couple goals. In December, they melted hearts on social media when they shared a cosy Christmas photo. In the picture, the couple can be seen giving a warm hug, while standing in front of a beautifully decorated Christmas tree. Taking to Instagram, the couple wrote, "Merry Christmas from us to you." On the professional front, Kiara Advani was recently seen in 'Game Changer', starring Ram Charan. Next up, she has Farhan Akhtar's 'Don 3' in which she will be seen opposite Ranveer Singh. If reports are to be believed, she will also be seen opposite Yash in his next film 'Toxic'. Meanwhile, she will also reportedly be entering the Maddock Films supernatural universe with the film 'Shakti Shalini'.

Aamir Khan's Daughter Ira Khan On Her Bond With Brother Junaid: 'We Fought Every Single Day Until...'



**W**hile Aamir Khan's son Junaid Khan stepped foot into Bollywood with Maharaj last year, his daughter Ira Khan has no plans to foray into the film industry. In a recent chat, Ira opened up about her relationship with her brother Junaid Khan, who will soon make his big-screen debut with the film Loveyapa. Junaid is 5 years older than Ira, and the latter said that they both fought a lot until he finished school. Post that, their sibling bond evolved, and they actually became very close. Speaking with People Of India about her bond with Junaid Khan, Ira said, "I don't know whether this happens with all siblings but either I wanted to be exactly like him in some aspects, while in some aspects I had to be exactly the opposite. He liked Manchester United. So I had to not like Manchester United." She further added, "We fought every single day till he finished school. When he went to college, he got a life, so he stopped troubling me and then we actually became very close. So it was a very big shift but it was a fun shift."

When asked about her relationship with her father Aamir Khan, and whether she knew about his celebrity status since childhood, she said, "I probably didn't fully understand it. But I have known, since I could remember, that he is a celebrity." She also mentioned that students in her school were also aware. "I don't think anyone judged me, but yeah, people wanted to be friends with me because they were excited about who my dad was. But I don't think anyone necessarily thought bad of me. At least not to my face." "With all parents, until you're a certain age, you don't see them as people. You see them as your parents. And in that sense, it was the same. He would travel and be on shoot, and I lived with my mom. But he would always check if anyone in school was troubling me or if everything was fine. We played a lot of board games and we were very competitive. All three of us—Junaid, dad and me. During Covid, we spent a lot of time together," she continued. Meanwhile, Ira Khan has been showing her support for her brother Junaid Khan's upcoming film 'Loveyapa' with Khushi Kapoor. Just yesterday, she shared a video of team Loveyapa's fun, goofy reel which shows Junaid, Khushi and others singing and swaying to the title track of the film. Ira Khan was amazed to see her brother Junaid Khan's fun, lively and playful side.



# Rupali Ganguly

Opens Up On Being Considered A 'Failure' In Film Industry: 'Casting Couch Existed...'

**R**upali Ganguly has opened up about facing the casting couch in the film industry. In a recent interview, the Anupamaa actress mentioned that she was considered a "failure" in films because it was her conscious decision to step away from Bollywood. "I didn't do well in films, and that was a choice I made because predominantly casting couch existed in the industry at that point of time. Maybe some people didn't come across it, but people like me did, and I decided not to make that choice. So, you are considered a failure because you come from a film family," she said, as quoted by Pinkvilla.

The actress further expressed her gratitude towards Rajan Shahi and talked about how the television show Anupamaa changed her life. "I did feel small back then, but thanks to Anupamaa, I feel very proud. The show gave me the stature that I always dreamt of. It has been a life-changing experience," she added.

Rupali Ganguly's Anupamaa is one of the top television shows today, which has been ruling the TRP charts for years now. However, a report recently claimed that the actress is likely to quit Rajan Shahi's show. Later, Rupali also broke silence on the report and called it baseless. In an emotional message, Rupali Ganguly

expressed her deep connection with Anupamaa and said, "Wow, people really have some overactive imagination. But thank you for talking about me and talking about the show. What can I say? Every person has a core, and my core, I believe, is gratitude. My husband and I both believe that whatever Rajan Ji has given me—the recognition, the platform, the position—I will never be able to repay it in this lifetime. And Anupamaa is not just a show for me; it's an emotion, it's my home, my second home, all my fur babies are



here, and the unit has become like a family." "So, does anyone leave their family, their home? And God forbid, may it never happen in life. If Rajan Ji ever says that he doesn't need me anymore, then I might fight with him, or argue, and say, 'Please let me stay in Anupamaa.' I opened the gate for this show, and I will remain part of this show till the end. Even if I have to face obstacles, I will not leave," she added.