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Attack on Saif serious incident, but wrong to brand Mumbai as unsafe: CM Fadnavis

Sanjay Kumar

Mumbai, Jan. 16: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said the attack on Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan by

Bandra area early Thursday morning. The actor was out of danger, according to the doctors who operated on him to remove the knife from his back. "I think Mumbai is



the safest among mega cities in the country. It is true that some incidents take place sometimes, and they must be taken seriously. But to say that Mumbai is unsafe due to such incidents is not right," Fadnavis told reporters. "Mumbai's image gets maligned (due to such comments). But, to make

the city safer, the government will certainly make efforts," he further said. He was talking to the media after attending a special screening of Kangana Ranaut-directed film "Emergency". Opposition leaders including state Congress chief Nana Patole have targeted Fadnavis over the attack on Saif Ali Khan, demanding his resignation as home minister.

an intruder at his home was a serious incident, but it would be wrong to call Mumbai unsafe because of it. Police were taking action, and the government will take steps to make the country's financial capital safer, said Fadnavis, who holds the home portfolio. Saif Ali Khan suffered grievous injuries after an intruder stabbed him with a knife repeatedly at his 12th floor flat in Mumbai's

Congress's KC Venugopal moves Supreme Court to defend Places of Worship Act

Simmi Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Jan 16: The Indian National Congress (INC) has filed an application in the Supreme Court to oppose petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. The party emphasised that the Act is a cornerstone of India's secular framework and warned that the challenges against it are malicious attempts to undermine established principles of secularism. The intervention application, filed by Congress general secretary KC Venugopal, highlighted that the Act reflects the mandate of the Indian people, as it was enacted during the Congress-led government in collaboration with Janata Dal. The Congress's intervention comes in response to a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, challenging the validity of the Act. Upadhyay's plea claimed the law discriminates against Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist communities by freezing the religious character of places of worship as of August 15, 1947, with the sole exception of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site in

Ayodhya. The application by Congress underscored that the 1991 Act was essential to maintain communal harmony and uphold India's secular ethos. It pro-



law risks jeopardising India's communal harmony and secular fabric, potentially threatening the sovereignty and integrity of the nation. The Congress also pointed out that the Supreme Court, in its landmark 2019 Ayodhya verdict, recognised the Act as a critical safeguard for secularism and a reflection of constitutional values. Refuting claims of discrimination, Congress stated: "The Act does not favor any religious group but promotes equality. It applies uniformly to all communities, ensuring that no group is disadvantaged or accorded special treatment." The party also dismissed allegations that the law restricts Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists while exempting others, asserting that it was designed to preserve the status quo and prevent disputes over religious sites from escalating. The 1991 Act has become a focal point in legal and political debates. Several Hindu litigants argue that it infringes on the fundamental rights of certain religious groups, particularly Hindus, to reclaim places of worship allegedly destroyed during historical invasions. Prominent challenges have come from BJP leaders like Subramanian Swamy and Upadhyay, along with members of royal families, including Kumari Krishna Priya of the Kashi royal family.

tests the religious character of places of worship as they existed on the cut-off date and prevents the rekindling of historical disputes, it argued. "The present challenge is not only legally baseless but also appears to have been filed with questionable motives," the party said, adding any alteration to this

'Family friend' Supriya Sule dials Karisma Kapoor after Saif Ali Khan attacked

ST Correspondent

Mumbai, Jan 16: Hours after a robber intruded into Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan's home in Mumbai Bandra's area and allegedly stabbed him, Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar faction) leader and member of parliament Supriya Sule expressed concern over his safety and said the attack was "worrisome". Supriya Sule is a friend of Saif Ali Khan's wife and Bollywood actor Kareena Kapoor's family, PTI reported. After being informed of the attack, she talked to Kareena Kapoor's sister Karisma Kapoor over a phone call. However, she refused to share details of the conversation and asked the media to wait for an official



statement from the family. "Saif is safe and in hospital. Wait for the official statement from the family and the police," she said. According to the PTI report, Karisma Kapoor apparently told Supriya Sule that Kareena had returned home while Saif was still in the hospital. She also talked to Karisma about how the intruder barged into Saif and Kareena's home. Earlier in the day, Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray faction) leader Priyanka Chaturvedi also raised concerns over the safety of people in Bandra. "What a shame that Mumbai sees another high profile attempt on life, the attack on Saif Ali Khan yet again raises questions on Mumbai Police & the Home Minister," Priyanka Chaturvedi said in a post on X. Why Ibrahim Ali Khan had to carry bleeding Saif Ali Khan in an autorickshaw to Lilavati Hospital after attack "If celebrities are not safe then who in Mumbai is? Wishing Saif Ali Khan a speedy recovery," she added, also emphasising on the murder of politician Baba Siddique and the amped up security, including bullet-proof windows, at actor Salman Khan's home, all of this in Mumbai's Bandra area. Maharashtra Congress chief spokesperson Atul Londhe Patil also jumped onto the bandwagon and criticized the state government for the poor law and order situation.

Delhi riots accused Tahir Hussain files nomination from Mustafabad

Navdeep Singh Sahni

New Delhi, Jan 16: The former AAP councillor is Asaduddin Owaisi-led All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen's (AIMIM) candidate from Mustafabad for the Delhi election 2025. Delhi riots accused Tahir Hussain filed his nomination papers from the Mustafabad constituency on Thursday and returned to Tihar Jail, officials said. The former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor is the candidate of Asaduddin Owaisi-led All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) from Mustafabad for the February 5 assembly polls. Hussain filed his nomination and returned to custody at 2:16 PM after leaving Tihar Jail earlier in the day to complete the process, a source said. "He was released from jail under heavy security provided by Delhi Police. He left the jail around 9:15 AM," the source added. The party may announce its other candidates later in the day. Speaking to PTI, AIMIM's Delhi president Shoaib Jamai said, "We will not contest all seats but, wherever we do, we will leave no stone unturned. Our candidates will be strong, like Tahir Hussain from Mustafabad and Shafa-ur-Rehman from Okhla. Both are currently jailed in cases related to the CAA-NRC protests."

Despite born in poverty, Modi never harboured any negativity: Amit Shah

Navdeep Singh Sahni

New Delhi, Jan. 16: Despite being born in a poor family, Prime Minister Narendra Modi never harboured any negativity and transformed his impoverishment into compassion for the needy and strenuously worked for people's welfare, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Thursday. After becoming the PM in 2014, Modi has changed the lives of crores of poor citizens by providing them various facilities such as houses, toilets, water, gas and electricity connections, medicines at affordable prices and free ration, he noted. Shah, who is on a Gujarat visit, was addressing a gathering at Modi's hometown Vadnagar in Mehsana district after inaugurating three key projects, including a redeveloped school where the PM received his early education. "In psychology, it is taught that a child whose childhood is spent in poverty and deprivation is driven

by negativity. Such children also develop destructive thinking and grow up with a feeling of revenge. But, Modi, born in a



poor tea-seller's family, transformed his poverty into compassion for the needy people," opined the senior BJP leader. "When that poor child took over the reins of the state (Gujarat as Chief Minister) and then the country, he never harboured any nega-

tivity in his mind. He worked for the welfare of the poor in the entire country to ensure no other child has to face the kind of poverty he faced," said Shah. The Union minister observed that despite facing adversity in early years of life, only a God-gifted and talented child can think of doing good for the entire society without harbouring any negativity. Apart from inaugurating the school built in 1888, which has now been redeveloped as "Prerna Complex", Shah also opened an Archaeological Experiential Museum and a sports complex in Vadnagar. The former BJP president noted that Modi gave top priority to education when he assumed the office of Gujarat Chief Minister in 2001. "Thanks to his efforts, the school dropout ratio, which was 37 per cent when he took over as CM, came down to just 1 per cent in 2014. He visited every corner of the state as an RSS pracharak (full-time volunteer) to understand the issues being faced by the people of Gujarat.

Actor Saif Ali Khan stabbed by intruder at Mumbai home, out of danger

Tejinder Kaur Babbar

Mumbai, Jan. 16: Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan was repeatedly stabbed with a knife by an intruder inside his 12th floor apartment in upscale Bandra early Thursday in a shocking attack that raises intriguing questions about security, motive, and celebrity life. Khan, 54, was "out of danger" following an emergency surgery, said the doctors at the Lilavati Hospital where he was rushed following the incident that took place around 2.30 am at his house in 'Satguru Sharan' building. The intruder fled from the spot. Dr Nitin Dange, neurosurgeon at Lilavati Hospital, said Khan had sustained major injury to his "thoracic spine." "Surgery was performed to remove the knife and also to repair the leaking spinal fluid...Khan is completely stable now. He is in a recovery mode and is completely out of danger. We will shift him out of ICU tomorrow morning," Dr Dange added. The actor's representatives

described the incident as an "attempted burglary" though police were yet to comment on it. No person has been arrested so far, a senior police official said. Earlier in the day, Lilavati Hospital's COO Dr Niraj Uttamani in a statement said Khan was



stabbed by an unidentified person at his Bandra home and brought to the medical facility at 3.30 am. "Saif has six stabs and two are deep. Of this one is close to spine," he said, adding the actor was operated

upon by a team of doctors led neurosurgeon Dr Nitin Dange, cosmetic surgeon Dr Leena Jain and anaesthesiologist Dr Nisha Gandhi. "He sustained six injuries, two are minor, two intermediate and two deep injuries, one of the injuries is on the back which is close to spine. A neurosurgeon was involved in the surgery," Dr Uttamani told PTI. The wrist wound is also deep. It's on the left hand and requires a plastic surgeon to repair it, he added. "There was an attempted burglary in Saif Ali Khan and (his wife and actor) Kareena Kapoor Khan's residence last night. Saif had an injury on his arm for which he is in hospital, undergoing a procedure. The rest of the family is doing fine," Kareena Kapoor's team earlier said in a statement. "We request the media and fans to be patient and not speculate any further as the police is already doing their due investigations. Thank you all for your concern," the

statement said. Saif Ali Khan's public relations representative also in statement said there was an "attempted burglary" at his residence. "We request the media and fans to be patient. It is a police matter. We will keep you updated on the situation," the representative said. A police official said that as per initial information, an unidentified person entered Saif Ali Khan's house and both of them had a scuffle. Some family members of the actor were present in the house at the time of the incident, he said. The actor was injured in knife attack by the intruder. He was taken to the Lilavati Hospital in Bandra and was reported to be out of danger, the official said. Asked if there was a robbery attempt at the actor's house by the intruder, a senior police official did not elaborate and said an investigation was on. The Bandra police reached the spot after receiving information and launched a probe into the incident. Saif Ali Khan is known for his performances in films like "Omkar", "Dil Chahta Hai", "Kal Ho Naa Ho" and "Tanhaji

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto will be R-Day chief guest

Naresh Malhotra

New Delhi, Jan. 16: Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto will be the chief guest at India's 76th Republic Day celebrations on January 26, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced on Thursday. Subianto will visit India from January 25 to 26 in his first trip to the country as president. As a comprehensive strategic partner, Indonesia is an important pillar in India's Act East Policy and its vision of the Indo-Pacific, the MEA said. "At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President of the Republic of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto will pay a state visit to India during January 25-26," the MEA said. "President Prabowo will also be the Chief Guest for India's 76th Republic Day celebrations," it said in a statement. "India and Indonesia share warm and friendly ties spanning over millennia," it said. The MEA said the forthcoming visit of the Indonesian President will provide an opportunity for the leadership of the two countries to undertake a comprehensive review of bilateral ties as well as to discuss regional and global issues of mutual interest. Every year, India invites world leaders to attend

its Republic Day celebrations. Last year, French President Emmanuel Macron was the Republic Day chief guest while Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi graced the occasion in 2023. There was no Republic Day Chief guest in 2021 and



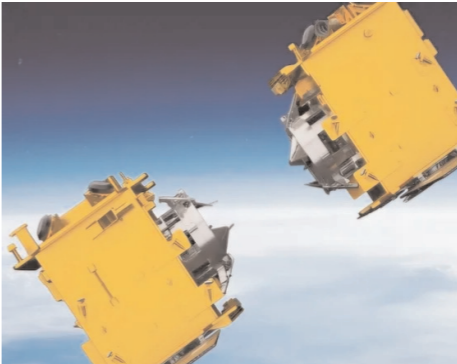
2022 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, then Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations. In 2019, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa was the chief guest at the Republic Day parade, while in 2018, leaders of all 10 ASEAN countries attended the celebrations. In 2017, Crown Prince

of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan was the chief guest at celebrations, while then French President Francois Hollande graced the occasion in 2016. In 2015, then US President Barack Obama watched the parade. In 2014, then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was the chief guest at the celebrations, while Bhutan king Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck attended the parade in 2013. The heads of state and government who have attended the Republic Day celebrations include Nicolas Sarkozy, Vladimir Putin, Nelson Mandela, John Major, Mohammed Khatami and Jacques Chirac. The then British Prime Minister John Major had attended the celebrations in 1993, Nelson Mandela participated as then South African President in 1995 while South Korean President Lee Myung Bak witnessed the parade in 2010. In 2008, Sarkozy participated in the celebrations as French President, while another French President Chirac graced the occasion in 1998. Other world leaders who have attended the celebrations include Nepal's King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev in 1999, Iran's then President Mohammed Khatami in 2003, then Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in 2011 and President of Maldives Maumoon Abdul Gayoom in 1991.

ISRO successfully docks satellites as part of SpaDeX Mission

Bengaluru, Jan. 16: ISRO on Thursday successfully performed the docking of satellites as part of the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) and the space agency also announced that post docking, control of

the feat. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a post on 'X' greeted the scientists for the achievement. He said: "Congratulations to our scientists at @isro and the entire space fraternity for the successful demonstration of space docking of satellites. It is a significant stepping stone for India's ambitious space missions in the years to come." Further, ISRO said: "Post docking, control of two satellites as a single object is successful. Undocking and power transfer checks to follow in coming days." Earlier on January 12, ISRO brought the two spacecraft to three metres and then moved them back to safe distance in its trial attempt to dock the satellites. ISRO had successfully launched the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission on December 30, 2024. The PSLV C60 rocket carrying two small satellites, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target), along with 24 payloads, had lifted off from the first launchpad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, and about 15 minutes after liftoff, the two small spacecraft weighing about 220 kg each were launched into a 475-km circular orbit as intended.



two satellites as a single object was successful. "India docked its name in space history! Good Morning India ISRO's SpaDeX mission accomplishes historic docking success. Proud to witness this moment!!", ISRO said in a post on 'X'. With the successful docking of satellites, India has become the fourth country after US, Russia and China to accomplish



## NEWS BOX

## 81-year-old's balancing act with Pongal seer wins hearts in Pudukkottai

**PUDUKKOTTAI.** For Chellathurai of Vadakku Kothakottai in Alangudi of the district, Pongal day for the past 12 years has been incomplete without a visit to his daughter's, who resides about 14 km away from the village with her husband and children. What catches the attention of the villagers, and most recently social media users, is the deftness with which the 81-year-old balances the 'seer' (gifts) even as he pedals away to his daughter's residence on his bicycle. Chellathurai's act of "love", he said, began ever since his daughter



Sundarambal, now 44, gave birth to twins after 12 years of marriage. Including coconuts, turmeric, rice, jaggery, flowers, calendar and new clothes in the 'seer' that also comprised five sugarcane pieces he separately balanced on the head, Chellathurai pedalled off to Nambampatti, where his daughter resides, on Tuesday too. During the commute, he is greeted by the sight of the awed, and others waving and exchanging quick festive wishes with him. A video capturing him on the journey is being shared widely on social media platforms. "It's my way of showing my daughter that she is loved and cherished, year after year," reasons Chellathurai.

## Pidamaneri residents in Dharmapuri urge panchayat officials to rid of garbage in burial ground

**DHARMAPURI.** Pidamaneri residents are distressed after trash was dumped in a burial ground in the area. They urged Elakkiyampatti panchayat to take steps to ensure trash is not dumped at the burial ground. The burial ground was constructed on the edge of a lake, to make it convenient for people to bury the dead and perform last rites. However, over the years, this burial ground has become a dumping ground ripe with food and plastic waste. It has become a menace that people are forced to walk through heaps of trash for burials. Speaking to S Senthilkumar from Pidamaneri said, "For years, Elakkiyampatti panchayat staff have been dumping trash here. Following the their lead, residents in the area have also started dumping waste here and heaps of trash have ended up in the burial ground, which is extremely distressing." Another resident, P Karthikeyan said, "The wastes have piled up and are burnt, which affects residents nearby. Moreover, people arriving here to perform burials of their loved ones, are left disgusted by the failure to dispose off waste properly." When spoke to DRDA officials, they said, "We will look into these issues as we have not received any complaints regarding this. Residents in the area must also bear responsibility for waste accumulation as they cannot dump waste here and expect the panchayat to clean up."

## Wild elephant tramples woman to death in Kerala's Malappuram, second this month

**MALAPPURAM.** A 52-year-old woman, belonging to the Kattunayakan tribal community, was killed in a wild elephant attack on Wednesday. The deceased is Sarojini, alias Neeli, of Uchakulam tribal village. Her family lives on the forest boundary. Sarojini and three other women from her neighbourhood went to the forest side to collect forest resources and graze the goats in the morning. "There was a group of four wild elephants, including a tusker, a female elephant and baby elephants. We did not notice the tusker charging at us. When we saw the elephant nearby, the four of us ran in different directions. Sarojini got in front of the herd of elephants and was attacked by the tusker. We saw her lying dead only after the elephants had left," said Ammini, her neighbour. Sarojini died on the spot.

Sarojini was first taken to the Nilambur District Hospital. Later, the residents staged a protest and refused to release the body for postmortem procedures. The authorities assured the Uchakulam residents that a compound wall will be built around their habitat for protection from wild animals. They also assured the residents that trenching works and fencing will be completed at the forest boundary soon. Once the residents released the body, it was taken to Manjeri Medical College Hospital. The funeral will be held on Thursday. Meanwhile, the SDPI has called for a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Nilambur on Thursday. "Humans should be protected from wild animals. We appeal to the public to cooperate with the hartal being held to protest the authorities' apathy," said SDPI Nilambur constituency president N Mujeeb.

## NTB will help increase turmeric production in TG, AP: Union Minister Piyush Goyal

**NIZAMABAD.** Stating that the National Turmeric Board (NTB) would address turmeric-related issues to enhance the income of farmers, Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said its establishment fulfils a 40-year-old demand.

There is immense potential for increasing the productivity of turmeric in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, he noted.

The NTB in Nizamabad was virtually inaugurated by Goyal, along with Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar and Nizamabad MP Arvind Dharmapuri, from New Delhi on Tuesday. Joining the event from Nizamabad were NTB chairman Palle Ganga Reddy, Spice Board officials and MLAs Paydi Rakesh Reddy and Dhanpal Suryanarayana Gupta. Turmeric farmers and officials from various parts of the country also participated in the event. In his address, the Union minister recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his visit to Nizamabad in October 2023, had promised to establish the NTB in the district. Although its establishment was delayed due to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), the promise was fulfilled on the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti in 2024, he

added. Goyal highlighted that India, where the rhizome is grown in 20 states, produces 70% of the world's turmeric. Currently, turmeric farming covers around 3 lakh hectares and yields 11 lakh tonnes annually across 30 varieties.



## Capitalising on favourable trend

The NTB is envisioned as a transformative body that will support turmeric farmers by focusing on value-added products, establishing processing units, boosting exports, conducting market-based research and promoting the medicinal benefits of turmeric. It will also address logistics and

other related challenges. The minister said turmeric consumption had risen during the Covid-19 pandemic and that the NTB would work to capitalise on this trend. Goyal reiterated the prime minister's vision of strengthening India's rural economy to bolster the country's overall economic growth. He asserted that NTB's activities would align with these goals and expedite efforts to position Indian turmeric products in global markets. Addressing the gathering, Sanjay called the NTB's establishment "a boon for turmeric farmers" and a catalyst for "unprecedented economic development in the region". He commended MP Arvind for his relentless efforts to make the NTB a reality. Meanwhile, Arvind hailed the NTB as a game-changer, marking the beginning of a new chapter in the region's development. In a

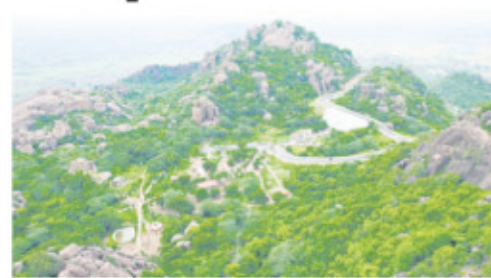
gesture of gratitude, he felicitated Goyal with a turmeric garland. Dharmapuri also thanked Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his role in establishing the NTB.

The event was attended by farmers, BJP activists, and supporters, who expressed optimism about the NTB's potential to revolutionise the turmeric industry.

## Tourist footfall soars at Kondaveedu Fort &amp; Uppalapadu Bird Sanctuary

**GUNTUR.** The Sankranti festive season has led to a surge in tourist visits to Kondaveedu Fort in Palnadu district, with daily footfall increasing from 100-200 to 4,000-4,500 visitors between January 11 and 15. This influx has resulted in record toll fees of over Rs 80,000 collected daily. As a result, the officials collected a record of over Rs 80,000 toll fee every day. As the fort is situated only 27 km away from Guntur city, it became a major tourist spot after various developmental works were taken up in recent years under the Nagaravanam project.

Originally built by the Reddy Kings during the 13th and 14th centuries, the fort stands as a testament to their glory. The fort, perched on a hill and surrounded by defensive banks and ditches, features 23 towers, three temples, and



a mosque. Speaking to the Kondaveedu Fort Development Committee (KFDC) convenor Siva Reddy credited the fort's facelift, including the construction of a ghat road, temple renovations, and the establishment of basic amenities, for the rise in tourism. The increased visitors have also boosted local businesses, with new stalls and food courts

springing up around the site.

To ensure the safety of the growing number of tourists, authorities have implemented heightened security measures. Meanwhile, another major tourist spot, Uppalapadu Bird Sanctuary has also seen increased footfall, as migratory birds make their annual stopover. From October to March, birds from regions like Siberia, Eastern Europe, and various parts of Asia visit the sanctuary. Around 30,000 birds of 25 different species, including spot-billed pelicans and openbill storks, white ibises, glossy ibises, coots, little cormorants, spot-billed ducks, and others migrate from Australia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Pakistan for breeding purposes every year, making it a key destination for birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts.

## Trio nabbed for gang rape of two minor girls in Karnataka's Belagavi district

**BELAGAVI.** Within 24 hours of the complaint being filed, police arrested three accused in the rape of two minor girls at Harugeri village in Raibag taluk of Belagavi. Disclosing this at a press conference, Superintendent of Police (SP) Bheemashankar Guled said the arrested are Abhishek, Kautub Banu alias Babasa Badiger and Adilsha Jamadar, all residents from Harugeri.

He said Abhishek had developed a friendship with the victim (complainant) on social media. He convinced her to go to a jatra (fair) at Saundatti with him. She was accompanied by her friend, who is also a minor. Guled said the complainant and her friend were picked up by Abhishek in a car, in which Kautub and Jamadar were present. However, instead of going to the fair, Abhishek brought them to a hillock where he and Kautub allegedly raped the complainant. Guled said that while the complainant was raped and brought back to the car, she found that Jamadar was raping her friend inside the vehicle. The accused threatened both the victims, before releasing them. The victims were in shock and did not know what to do next, he said. Three days ago, Abhishek called the victim on her mobile phone and asked her to come along with her friend to Goa for a picnic, said Guled. The accused warned the girl that if they refuse to come with him, he will release the videos and photos taken by him on social media. This forced the victim to disclose the incident to her family members, who immediately approached police. Following the complaint, the police took the trio into custody, Guled said.

## Farmers hope for turmeric board's swift action, demand MSP

**NIZAMABAD.** Welcoming the establishment of the National Turmeric Board (NTB), local farmers expressed hope that it would start functioning soon. Turmeric cultivation begins during the monsoon season and is

harvested from December to May. Initially, farmers cultivated turmeric in small areas, but as prices increased, the cultivation area expanded, particularly in Nizamabad. However, due to fluctuating market prices, the cultivation area gradually decreased.

Farmers recall a time when turmeric was priced on par with gold, with proceeds from sales often being used to purchase gold. Ankapur village in Armoor mandal, known for its agricultural success, had a bumper turmeric crop, with many farmers purchasing cars, a story that gained media attention. Since 2010, however, turmeric prices have steadily declined, and cultivation areas have

shrunk. In recent years, government interventions and increased market demand have led to a rise in turmeric prices. Last season, farmers sold turmeric at Rs 18,000 per quintal, with an average price of Rs 14,000. As a

result, turmeric cultivation has

expanded in Nizamabad, with over 30,000 acres under cultivation this season, and farmers are hopeful for good yields. Traditional turmeric farmer Nalimela Chinnareddy from Maggidi village in Armoor said farmers were welcoming the NTB and are expecting the government to provide a

leading position in turmeric production, consumption and export, underlining that NTB would play a key role in promoting the crop. NTB chairman Palle Ganga Reddy affirmed that the Board would guide turmeric farmers toward better welfare and development.

## Karnataka HC directs Lokayukta police to continue with MUDA scam probe

**BENGALURU.** The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday allowed the Lokayukta police to continue its investigation into the alleged irregularities in the allotment of sites to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife B M Parvathy by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA). The court also directed the Inspector General of Police of the anti-corruption body to oversee the investigation and the Additional Director General of Police to peruse the probe report to be placed before the court on the next date of hearing.

Justice M Nagaprasanna adjourned the hearing to January 27 after hearing the arguments of senior counsel Maninder Singh, appearing for the petitioner, Snehamayi Krishna, who moved the high court seeking directions to entrust the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation. The court also sought the report of the investigation done till date from December 19, 2024.

Singh argued that the investigation



must be fair and independent, which should inspire confidence in the public, but the government is protecting the accused. If higher officials and politicians are involved, the court has to exercise reasonable discretion to consider the request of the petitioner to hand over the probe to the independent investigating agency.

"Some of the committees of bureaucrats have taken the records of the case from the Lokayukta. The wife of the chief minister surrendered the sites and on the same day, an order was passed in lightning speed to accept it. The surrender of sites shows that the accused confessed to the crime," he argued. Meanwhile, the court permitted the counsels of the respondent accused to file objections and serve the copies to the petitioner.

## Congress aiming to complete Kerala party restructuring by February

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.** The Congress high command has initiated one-on-one discussions with party leaders and representatives in Kerala, aiming to complete the restructuring of the state unit by the end of this month or the first week of February. As the assembly session is set to start on January 17, MLAs would be present in Thiruvananthapuram, making it easier for the AICC general secretary in charge of the state to meet them on January 19. "The high command has decided to give priority to Kerala and Assam as they go to assembly polls in 2026," a senior Congress leader told. "We intend to restructure from booth to KPCC levels.

Ineffective committees and leaders will be replaced. The final call will be taken after the AICC in-charge of the state, Deepa Dasmunshi, submits a report."

In the informal meeting with Kerala leaders, during the CWC meeting in Belagavi, Karnataka, Deepa reportedly expressed unhappiness over a lack of coordination in the state leadership. "She stressed on the need for better coordination, and also expressed indignation on the lack of meetings," a senior Congress leader said. There is a growing criticism that some leaders use the party for their personal agenda, he said.

"They take advantage of the organisation's weakness. The KPCC president is not even present at the Indira Bhavan. We have been sitting in opposition for the past eight and a half years, but some leaders are acting as if they have already won the election," a KPCC office-bearer said. The national leadership's focus on prioritising youth and



women, in addition to experience, has led to discussions on a possible change in leadership. If there is consensus within the Kerala leadership, the AICC may allow Sudhakaran to remain in place. However, a majority push for change could lead to leadership adjustments.

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## NEWS BOX

## NYPD's new rules on high-speed chases focus on public safety

**NEW YORK.** New York City's police department is curbing its use of high-speed chases after finding that about one-quarter of more than 2,200 initiated by officers last year led to a collision, property damage, physical harm or death. A new policy effective Feb. 1 will limit vehicle pursuits to only the most serious and violent crimes, barring them for traffic infractions, violations and nonviolent misdemeanors. Officers will also have to take into account whether a pursuit would pass through a residential neighborhood or near a school or playground, Commissioner Jessica Tisch said. They will have discretion to terminate chases if they do not feel it can be continued safely.

Last October, a bicycle rider was struck and killed by a pickup truck that police were chasing after a suspected robbery in Queens. The NYPD's enforcement efforts must never put the public or the police at undue risk, and pursuits for violations and low-level crimes can be both potentially dangerous and unnecessary, Tisch said in a statement. The advanced tools of modern-day policing make it possible to apprehend criminals more safely and effectively than ever before, making many pursuits unnecessary. Of 2,278 pursuits last year, about two-thirds involved a vehicle fleeing a traffic stop. Many of those would not be allowed under the new policy, the NYPD said. The department said it will train all uniformed officers in the new policy and conduct monthly reviews to ensure it is being followed. It will also issue an annual report tracking compliance. According to 911 data obtained by the website Streetsblog NYC, vehicle chases spiked from 15 in January 2022 to 227 in January 2024. Police made more than 100 pursuits each month from July 2023 to September 2024, the last month for which data was available, according to the site.

## Cuba starts freeing prisoners a day after the US said it would lift terror designation

**HAVANA.** Cuba started releasing some prisoners Wednesday as part of talks with the Vatican, a day after President Joe Biden's administration announced his intent to lift the US designation of the island nation as a state sponsor of terrorism.

More than a dozen people who were convicted of different crimes and some of them were arrested after taking part in the historic 2021 protests, were released during the day, according to Cuban civil groups following the cases of detainees on the island. Among those freed was tattooist Reyna Yacnara Barreto Batista, 24, who was detained in the 2021 protests and convicted to four years in prison for attacks and public disorder. She was released from a prison in the province of Camaguey and told The Associated Press that eight men were also freed along with her. On Tuesday, the US government said it notified Congress about the intent to lift the designation of Cuba as part of a deal facilitated by the Vatican. Cuban authorities would release some of them before Biden's administration ends on Jan. 20, officials said. Hours later, the Cuban foreign ministry said the government informed Pope Francis it would gradually release 553 convicts as authorities explore legal and humanitarian ways to make it happen.

Havana did not link the prisoners' release to the US decision on lifting the designation but said it was "in the spirit of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025 declared by His Holiness," referring to the Vatican's once-every-25-year tradition of a Jubilee, in which the Catholic faithful make pilgrimages to Rome.

The Cuban Observatory of Human Rights, one of the civil groups, said that by 4 pm EST, 18 people had been released, including Barreto Batista.

"At three in the morning they knocked," Barreto Batista told the AP over the phone. "I was sleeping (in the cell) and they told me to gather all my things, that I was free." She said that she and the eight men were warned it was not a pardon or forgiveness and that they had to be on good behavior or they could be sent back to prison. "I am at home with my mother," she said. "The whole family is celebrating."

## Now on the list of at-risk monuments &amp; sites: The moon

**World.** For years, the World Monuments Fund has sought to draw attention and resources to endangered cultural heritage sites including Machu Picchu in Peru, temples in Cambodia and the old city of Taiz in Yemen. But this year's list of at-risk sites goes much further afield: to the moon.

"The moon seems so far outside of our scope," said Benedicte de Montlaur, the organisation's president and chief executive. "But with humans venturing more and more into space, it is the right time to get ourselves organised."

Concerned that the space race could exacerbate space debris and expand tourism in orbit and beyond, the group named the moon as one of the 25 endangered sites on its 2025 World Monuments Watch. The other sites on the list, endangered by challenges like climate change, tourism, conflict and natural disasters, include Gaza, a damaged historical building in Kyiv, and eroding coastlines in Kenya and the US. With a growing number of wealthy people going to space and more govts pursuing human spaceflight, the group warns that more than 90 important sites on the moon could be harmed. In particular, researchers are worried about Tranquility Base, the Apollo 11 landing site where astronaut Neil Armstrong first stepped onto the moon's surface.

"The moon doesn't belong to anybody," de Montlaur said. "It is a symbol of hope and the future." For almost 30 years, the World Monuments Fund has received nominations for its watch list from heritage experts around the world. The list is an educational and promotional tool serving the nonprofit's other efforts to preserve cultural heritage.

## Biden demands Constitution amendment to end presidential immunity in jab at Trump

**Washington.** President Joe Biden used his farewell address to the nation Wednesday to deliver stark warnings of an "oligarchy" of the ultra-wealthy taking root in the country and of a "tech-industrial complex" that is infringing on Americans' rights and the future of democracy. Speaking from the Oval Office as he prepares to hand over power Monday to President-elect Donald Trump, Biden seized what is likely to be his final opportunity to address the country before he departs the White House to spotlight the accumulation of power and wealth in the US among just a small few. "Today, an oligarchy is taking shape in America of extreme wealth, power and influence that literally threatens our entire democracy, our basic rights and freedoms, and a fair shot for everyone to get ahead," Biden said, drawing attention to a dangerous concentration of power in the hands of a few ultra-wealthy people. Dangerous consequences if their abuse of power is left unchecked.

Invoking President Dwight Eisenhower's warnings about the military-industrial complex when he left office in 1961, Biden added, "I'm equally concerned about the potential rise of a tech-industrial complex that could pose real dangers to our country as well." Biden used his 15-minute address to offer a model for a peaceful transfer of power and without mentioning Trump by name raise concerns about his successor. It marked a striking admonition by Biden, who is departing the national stage after more than 50 years in public life, as he has struggled to define his legacy against the return of Trump to the Oval Office. The president warned Americans to be on guard for their freedoms and their institutions during a turbulent era of rapid technological and economic change.

His speech in the Oval Office is the latest in a series of remarks on domestic policy and foreign relations that were intended to cement his legacy and reshape Americans' grim view on his term. Earlier



in the day, he heralded a long-awaited ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, which could end more than a year of bloodshed in the Middle East. "It'll take time to feel the full impact of what we've done together but the seeds are planted, and they'll grow, and they'll bloom for decades to come," Biden said, tacitly acknowledging that many Americans say they have yet to feel the impacts of his trillions of dollars in domestic initiatives. Biden sounded the alarm about

oligarchy as some of the world's richest individuals and titans of its technology industry have flocked to Trump's side in recent months, particularly after his November victory. Billionaire Elon Musk spent more than \$100 million on helping Trump get elected, and executives like Meta's Mark Zuckerberg and Amazon's Jeff Bezos have donated to Trump's inaugural committee and made pilgrimages to Trump's private club in Florida for audiences with the president-elect.

While Biden criticised social media companies for retreating from fact-checking on their platforms, Trump's incoming communications director and press secretary were sharing posts on X that falsely claimed it was a prerecorded speech. The incumbent president has blamed his poor standing among the public on misinformation on social media and the challenges he has faced reaching voters in the disaggregated modern media ecosystem.

## Chinese Billionaire Gifts Cash To Hometown Villagers As Thank You For Funding His Education Years Ago

**World.** In a heartwarming gesture, Richard Liu Qiangdong, the billionaire founder and former CEO of Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com, has moved the residents of his hometown by announcing that he would distribute gifts to them, ahead of the Chinese New Year. According to the South China Morning Post (SCMP), his generous gesture includes a significant cash gift of 10,000 yuan (approximately \$1,400) to each villager aged 60 and above, as well as a variety of gifts such as food, clothes and home appliances for every household, worth thousands of yuan in total.

Born into a family struggling financially in Guangming village, Mr Richard's journey to success was paved by the collective support of his fellow villagers. According to SCMP, in the early 1990s, when Mr Richard left for Beijing to pursue his higher education



at China Renmin University, the villagers rallied together, pooling their resources to fund his tuition fees. Their combined contribution included 500 yuan (\$70) and 76 eggs.

This kindness left a lasting impression on Mr Richard. So, upon achieving success, he returned to his village in 2016 and began his gift-giving tradition. He reportedly gifted each elderly villager a substantial sum and

sent gifts worth thousands of yuan to each family, including food, clothes and home appliances. This year, Mr Richard continued his philanthropic efforts. His team asked the villagers to submit their household registry and identity documents to ensure the smooth distribution of gifts.

Overwhelmed by his generous gesture, the villagers expressed their deep appreciation, acknowledging that no one had ever shown such kindness towards them. "Liu came last year, too, bringing down jackets and food. He's always been thoughtful, and we are truly grateful," said Xu, a local farmer.

Another 71-year-old villager reflected on the billionaire's ongoing support, saying, "Even if he doesn't give us presents in the future, we will always remember what he's done for us. He has worked hard for his success, and we're thankful for his contributions."

## US inflation rises for third straight month, grows at fastest pace since July

**Washington.** US inflation accelerated last month as prices for gas, eggs, and used cars rose, yet underlying price pressures also showed signs of easing, bolstering hopes that the Federal Reserve could still cut its key interest rate this year. The consumer price index rose 2.9% in December from a year ago, Wednesday's report from the Labor Department showed, up from 2.7% in November. It was the third straight increase after inflation fell to a 3 1/2 year low of 2.4% in September. Yet excluding the volatile food and energy categories, so-called core inflation declined to 3.2% after remaining frozen at 3.3% for three months. Economists pay close attention to core prices because they typically provide a better guide of inflation's future course. The report presents a mixed picture, with consumers still grappling with high prices for essentials such as groceries, housing, and some services such as air fares. At the same time, increases in apartment rental prices are slowly easing and clothing costs barely rose last month. If core prices continue to match December's



pace, inflation should move closer to the Fed's 2% target.

The report shows that core inflation "is on the downside," said Mike Skordeles, head of US economics at Truist, a bank. "If the trends continue, the Fed might still end up cutting at some point." Some likely one-time price spikes pushed up overall inflation, with gas prices jumping 4.4% just in December. Prices at the pump have risen by much less since then, moving up 7 cents on Wednesday from last month to \$3.09 a gallon. Grocery prices had slowed for most of last year but began accelerating in the fall, rising 0.4% in September, 0.5% in November and 0.3% last month. Egg prices jumped 3.2% in December and are up 36.8% from a year ago. An outbreak of avian flu is

decimating many chicken flocks, reducing egg supply. On a monthly basis, consumer prices rose 0.4% in December, the biggest increase since last March. Core prices climbed just 0.2%, after four months of 0.3% increases, a positive sign that some price pressures could be cooling a bit. The slowdown in core price increases was greeted with relief on Wall Street, with the Dow Jones industrial average surging nearly 700 points, or 1.6%, in early trading. Many economists and investors are worried that inflation has become stuck above the Fed's 2% target after a steady decline in 2023 and for much of last year. Such concerns have sent interest rates on Treasury securities higher, which has also pushed up borrowing costs for mortgages, cars, and credit cards, even as the Fed has cut its key rate. The increase in overall consumer prices underscores that inflation remains sticky, even as the threat of potentially inflationary policies from the Trump administration, such as universal tariffs and mass deportations of unauthorized migrants, looms.

## US short seller Hindenburg Research winds down: Been the adventure of lifetime

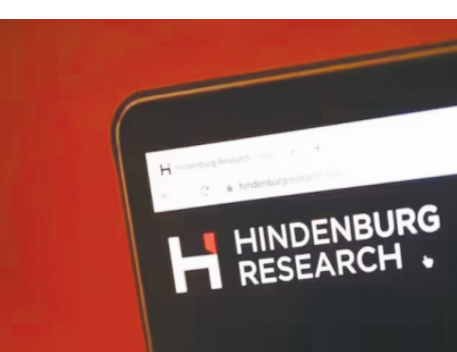
**World.** Hindenburg Research, the US short-selling firm that shook billionaire Gautam Adani's empire and wiped out billions from his companies, is shutting its doors, founder Nate Anderson revealed on Wednesday. Announcing the decision, Anderson in a note said that running the firm has "been the adventure of a lifetime." "The plan has been to wind up after we finished the pipeline of ideas we were working on," Anderson wrote in a heartfelt note. "That day is today." Since its founding in 2017, Hindenburg Research has gained a reputation for exposing fraud, corruption, and mismanagement across industries. Reflecting on the firm's achievements, Anderson shared, "We shook some empires that we felt needed shaking."

Anderson described starting the firm without a traditional finance background, financial resources, or industry connections. "When I started this, I doubted I was capable," he admitted. "I didn't have a traditional finance background. None of my relatives are in this field. I went to a state school. I'm not a

slick salesperson. I don't know any of the right clothes to wear. I can't play golf."

Early on, the firm faced three lawsuits and financial difficulties that left Anderson on the brink of eviction, with a newborn child at home. "It is very easy to succumb to negative thoughts and believe what others think of you, especially when things feel low. But it is possible to shatter all of that. I was passionate about this, and I let that carry me forward despite my fears and insecurities." He credited his resilience and the support of his family, friends, and a dedicated team of 11 for transforming Hindenburg into a powerhouse of financial scrutiny.

"They are all smart, focused, and fun to work with. Little to no ego," he said, describing his colleagues as "ruthless assassins" when it came to their work but kind and collaborative otherwise. Anderson described the intensity and all-encompassing nature of running the firm, often finding himself consumed by



investigative threads and edits even in his sleep. While deeply fulfilling, the relentless pressure led him to realise the need for a change.

Ultimately, Anderson explained, the decision to close Hindenburg was a deeply personal one. "There is not one specific thing—no particular threat, no health issue, and no big personal issue," he clarified. Instead, he cited a desire for relief and the need to move on to new chapters. "Early on, I felt I needed to prove some things to myself. I



moments. It will also present significant challenges. This is not a simple situation; it is among the greatest challenges we have ever known."

Asserting that Israeli society is "much stronger than we imagine," Mr Herzog insisted "The decision must be clear and unequivocal—We save them. We free them. We bring them home urgently, down to the last one."

After describing the sacrifices of soldiers since October 7, Mr Herzog said, "At great cost in blood, through enormous security, diplomatic, and societal efforts, we have created a moment of opportunity. We must seize it. Our nation has an open, bleeding wound that cannot heal until all our sisters and brothers return to their homeland." The most contentious aspect of the agreement is the phased nature of the hostage release. The deal calls for the release of 33 hostages — women, children, the elderly and the sick. Negotiations for the release of the remaining hostages will take place during the second phase if the ceasefire holds. Critics fear the remaining hostages will be held indefinitely. At least 1,200 people were killed, and 252 Israelis and foreigners were taken hostage in Hamas's attacks on Israeli communities near the Gaza border on October 7. Of the 95 remaining hostages, more than 30 have been declared dead. Hamas has also been holding captive two Israeli civilians since 2014 and 2015, and the bodies of two soldiers killed in 2014.

have now finally found some comfort with myself, probably for the first time in my life." Anderson also shared plans to open-source the knowledge and processes Hindenburg developed over the years. "In the past several years we've been flooded with thousands of messages from many of you asking how we do what we do," he said.

"So over the next six months or so, I plan to work on a series of materials and videos to open-source every aspect of our model and how we conduct our investigations." In closing, Anderson expressed gratitude to his wife, family, friends, team, and readers who supported him along the way. "To my wife, you have been so patient with me. To my family and friends, I'm sorry for the times I have ignored you while I let my attention be drawn away. Lastly, I want to express how grateful I am to our readers. Your messages of kindness and encouragement through the years have gone a long way to helping give us the strength to continue," he said.



NEWS BOX

**Seven CoEs being set up to bolster higher education in Kerala: Minister R Bindu**

**KOCHI.** In a bid to bolster the higher education sector in Kerala, the state government has given an administrative sanction to set up seven Centres of Excellence (CoE). The announcement was made by Higher Education Minister R Bindu at the concluding session of the International Conclave on Next-gen Higher Education at Cusat in Kochi on Wednesday. According to the minister, another step to be taken towards reforming the higher education sector in the state is presentation of a bill for necessary amendments to acts of various universities in the state. She said that the bill will enable realisation of ideas like constituent colleges and college clusters.

As for the seven CoEs, she said, "Besides administrative sanction, funds also have been allocated for the preliminary activities of the centres of excellence." The seven centres are the Kerala Institute for Science, Technology and Innovation (KISTI), Kerala Institute for Advanced Studies for Social Science and Humanities (KIASSH), Kerala Network for Research Support in Higher Education (KNRSHE), Institute for Gender Equity, Centre of Excellence for Teaching, Learning and Training, Centre for Indigenous People's Education and Kerala Language Network. Bindu further said that the CoEs are being set up based on the recommendations made by the Syam Menon Commission.

**Kerala court's rare bail condition for accused in drug case**

**KASARAGOD.** In a rare move, a court in Kasaragod granted bail to a man nabbed for MDMA possession on the condition that he display a placard against drug abuse in public for five days. The Kasaragod District Sessions Court set what would be its rarest bail condition yet, granting bail to Abdul Safvan, 29, a resident of Kurunthoor in Kanhangad village.

He was arrested by the Hosdurg police on May 18 last year with 3.06g of MDMA at Myyath Road in Kanhangad and booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. While granting him bail, Judge Sanu S Panicker said he must appear before the



investigating officer at 10 am on January 14, hold a placard in his hand and stand at a place suggested by the officer within his jurisdiction from 10 am to 1 pm for five days. As per the court order, the placard should read: "You should abstain from alcohol and drugs, because through drugs you will lose yourself, your friends, and your family." The court asked the police to submit a report after implementing its order.

**BWSSB cuts service to 100 buildings, sewage floods roads**

**BENGALURU.** The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has disconnected its services to around 100 illegal and unauthorised buildings in the Whitefield ward. This is in accordance with the Supreme Court direction against such buildings and Lokayukta notices to civic agencies like BWSSB and BESCOM to take necessary action against unauthorised structures. As a result, raw sewage from these buildings is now flooding BBMP's side drains and main roads. BWSSB officials said that BBMP officials now have to take action and raze such illegal buildings or face criminal contempt charges. "We are going by the rules. There is a Supreme Court direction to take action against illegal buildings. The Lokayukta also is watching the developments, and not taking action will lead to dereliction of duty and also criminal contempt of court. Once we have confirmation about the illegal status of a building, we send notices and disconnect services," said a BWSSB official.

BWSSB Executive Engineer Mirza Anwar said the onus of taking action, like demolishing unauthorised buildings, is on BBMP engineers. Residents said that ECC Road, Borewell Road and other streets in Whitefield have been flooded with sewage over the last few days. "The city administration has not been able to provide basic facilities. The situation is created because of BBMP officials, who allowed such illegal buildings to come up," they lamented.

"Had the BBMP zonal commissioner or joint commissioner and ward engineers stopped these unauthorised constructions at least three years ago, the area would not have been flooded with raw sewage now," said a resident.

**Jallikattu on 'Mattu Pongal' at Palamedu sees 930 bulls participating**

**MADURAI.** Bulls leashed through the avenue at Palamedu as the district's second jallikattu event went on smoothly, barring a few minor injuries, on Wednesday. Nearly 930 bulls were released on 'Mattu Pongal' day at the jallikattu site across 10 rounds. Parthiban of Natham in Dindigul bagged the first prize, a car, after taming 14 bulls, while one Thulasiram tamed 12 bulls to settle for the second spot and win a bike. The best bull award and the tractor prize went to Vijayathanga Pandi of Chatrapatti in Madurai, while the bull owned by Karthi of Madurai's Chinapatti emerged as the runner-up.

While the event got off to a great start, with the bulls being released through the Vadivasal around 8 am, fatigue set in and the bulls slowed down by 10.30 am. Later on, bulls were also released at a quick pace in order to wrap up the event on time. Around 46 persons, including bull owners, tamers and spectators were injured during the event. While some bull owners argued with the police over the winning bulls and tamers, they were lathi-charged and moved away.

Speaking to , K Karthi (28), a bull owner from Veerapatti said, "My bull Vetha is four years old, has participated in over 25 jallikattu events, but remains untamed." S Manikandan (26), a bull owner from Kamudhi said, "My

bull Maruthu is 8 years old. I am passionate about jallikattu and have spent over Rs 10,000 for feed and other items for my bull. My bull has participated in more than 30 events, and was caught only four times."

**Winner dedicates award to Avaniyapuram**

Parthiban, winner of the Palamedu jallikattu, said, "I am happy to have won the first prize, and I dedicate this win to Naveen, who died during the jallikattu event in Avaniyapuram. I thank my supporters and trainers, who provided extraordinary support for the training routine."



**deceased**

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**Poster protest against Melur tungsten project**

A few participants placed posters against the

tungsten mining project with the message, 'Save Arittapatti' in Madurai. The posters were placed in the gallery during the jallikattu event in Palamedu. Besides, several farmers expressed dissatisfaction over the tungsten mining project in Melur taluk of Madurai district and decorated kolams with the message, "ban tungsten project".

Commercial Taxes and Registration Minister P Moorthy, Madurai District Collector M S Sangeetha, Madurai MP Su Venkatesan and other officials were present.

**Stir over distribution of tokens for bulls**

Ahead of the much-awaited Alanganallur jallikattu, scheduled to be held on Thursday, hundreds of bull owners from villages around Alanganallur staged a sit-in protest outside the Vadivasal late on Wednesday, alleging disparity over the distribution of tokens for the bulls. Sources said Valasai, Otha Veedu, Kuravan Kulam and Alanganallur host the annual Jallikattu event. However, villagers alleged that despite hosting the events, no preference has been given to local bulls in recent years. Meanwhile, officials began peace talks with the protesting villagers. It may be noted that Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin will inaugurate the Alanganallur jallikattu on Thursday.

**Telangana grants one-year fire NOC abeyance to 217 private junior colleges**

**HYDERABAD.** The state government has granted a one-year abeyance of the mandatory No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the fire department to over 200 private junior colleges, allowing them to continue operations. The NOC is a key requirement for these institutions to function. This decision provides relief to 217 private colleges located in Hyderabad, Rangareddy, and Medchal-Malkajgiri districts, collectively accommodating around 65,000 to 75,000 students.

Initially, the abeyance for the fire NOC was granted for the 2020-21 academic year and subsequently extended to 2021-22. From 2022 to 2024, a two-year abeyance was in effect. In response to a request by the Telangana Private Junior College Managements Association (TPJMA) for a further two-year extension, the government has extended the abeyance only for the academic year 2024-25. On Wednesday, the



government issued an order clarifying that no further extensions will be granted. From the 2025-26 academic year onwards, private colleges must secure the mandatory fire safety NOC to continue operations. The order also mandated implementation of

temporary fire safety measures, including the placement of adequate fire extinguishers in every room. As per GO 20, colleges up to 15 meters in height and operating in mixed-occupancy buildings are required to obtain an NOC from the fire department. However, college managements have repeatedly requested abeyance due to challenges such as poorly maintained buildings and outdated infrastructure, which make compliance with fire safety norms difficult. TPJMA President Gouri Satish told : "We are thankful to the government for allowing the abeyance on the fire NOC for the year 2024-25. We are fully prepared to implement fire safety measures for the academic year 2025-26. A meeting with the Chief Minister and senior officials will be held soon to address various issues for the next academic year, based on which further actions will be taken."

**Madurai rural police to come under city police limits after corporation merger**

**MADURAI.** The extension of the Madurai city police limits will commence only after the merger of new areas with the Madurai city corporation limit is completed, a senior police officer told TNIE on Wednesday. Sources said the Madurai city corporation is the second largest corporation by area, and was established in 1972 while the city police commissionerate was formed in the 1990s. There were around 72 wards in 2011 under the Madurai corporation before nearby panchayats/town panchayats were merged and the number increased to 100 wards. The state is now planning to merge 16 nearby panchayats and one town panchayat with the corporation, which may lead to additional wards and an additional zone in the corporation limits.

Areas that were merged with the corporation in 2011 were later brought under the city police limits, and police stations in areas such as Avaniyapuram, Thiruppalai, Koodal Pudur, Thiruparankundram and Thirunagar fell under the city police limits.

A police officer said that in a few areas, residents are not willing to merge with the corporation. Areas under the station limits of Nagamalai Pudukottai, Karuppapurani, Othakadai and Perungudi come under the Madurai rural police. Once the corporation merger is completed, the work to bring the new areas under the city police limits will commence. A police officer from the rural area said that as per the norms, the merger of a police station with the city police will also add to the strength of the city police. Madurai rural police stations have not been upgraded for the last few years.

"Of nearly 35 police stations, about five police stations have a station house officer (SHO) of the inspector rank, while 12 inspectors are working as circle inspectors.

**NH projects gain momentum in Guntur**

**GUNTUR.** The erstwhile Guntur district is set for a significant infrastructural upgrade with the fast-tracked construction of the Kondamodu-Perecherla highway and the expansion of NH 167- between Vadarevu and Piduguralla into a four-lane road. These projects, aimed at enhancing connectivity and fostering development, are backed by government allocations totalling Rs 2,499.98 crore, along with land acquisition efforts spanning over 380 hectares across Palnadu and Bapatla districts. The Rs 1,064.24 crore Vadarevu-Piduguralla project will expand the 85-km-long NH 167-A from two lanes to four, connecting key highways like the Addanki-Narketpalli Road at Nekarikallu, NH 216 at Chirala and NH 16 near Chilakaluript. The project, divided into two segments, Vadarevu to Chilakaluript and Chilakaluript to Nekarikallu, also includes the construction of an 18-km-long new road from Vadarevu to Eepuripalem. Additionally, bypass roads in Parchur, Timmarajupalem and Chilakaluript will improve access. These developments are expected to



bolster exports of marine products from Chirala, enhance beach tourism between Bapatla and Vadarevu, and provide better connectivity to remote coastal areas. A comprehensive survey has detailed plans for bypasses, service roads, and bridges to optimise traffic flow and reduce congestion. The Kondamodu-Perecherla highway (NH 167 AG), costing Rs 1,032.52 crore, will upgrade the 49.91-km stretch into a four-lane road. Starting at NH 167A near Kondamodu and connecting Rajupalem, Reddigudem, Sattenapalli and Medikonduru, the highway will terminate at NH 544D near Perecherla. This road will interlink with the Amaravati outer ring road and is poised to ease traffic on the Guntur-Hyderabad

corridor while improving interstate connectivity. Another critical project is the Dacheppalli-Macherla state highway upgrade to NH 167 AD, supported by a Rs 403.22 crore allocation. The 37-km road, currently a two-lane road, will connect Dacheppalli to Macherla through Gurazala, Rentachintala, and Paluvai Junction. Upgrading this road will enhance industrial growth, particularly in cement transportation, and support tourism at Nagarjuna Sagar, Anupu, and nearby irrigation projects. These projects are expected to reduce traffic congestion, save lives by addressing accident-prone zones, and improve access to Hyderabad and other major cities. Enhanced infrastructure is projected to attract industrial investments, elevate tourism, and boost the standard of living in the region.

and acquisition, including 277.79 hectares in Palnadu and 103 hectares in Bapatla districts is underway, with 22.3 hectares being government-owned. Together, these developments underline the government's commitment to advancing connectivity and economic growth in the region.

**No fisherman assaulted, sailor was abducted, freed, says Indian Navy**

**KARWAR.** The Indian Navy has rubbished media reports of its sailors assaulting fishermen who were allegedly agitating against two Navy personnel, whose vehicle collided with a fisherman's scooter. It alleged that a sailor was abducted in a four-wheeler, and rescued by his fellow colleagues who gave chase. Now, Uttara Kannada district police is planning to write to naval higher-ups regarding the incident, involving fishermen and staff of INS Kadamba. The accident at Mudga, near Karwar, on Sunday involved two Naval staff on a bike who rammed Srinivas (50) on his scooter. Both parties sustained minor injuries. The sailors helped the injured fisherman, but things took a turn for the worse and the matter reached Karwar Rural Police. The sailors lodged a complaint, saying a group of civilians had gathered and

there was a scuffle. "The sailors ensured the injured civilian received timely medical treatment. They escorted him to Pickle's Nursing Home in Karwar... But shortly after the accident, 4-5 civilians gathered and despite the sailors' efforts to de-escalate the situation, a minor scuffle ensued," read the complaint, a copy of which is available with. "We left the scene, but the civilians pursued us and demanded an additional Rs 50,000 in compensation. My friend was then coerced into a four-wheeler and taken towards Amdalli. He managed to share his live location with friends, who intercepted the vehicle and rescued him," said Yogesh Kumar, the complainant.

**Coordination meet between Navy, fishers?**

"The civilians abandoned the vehicle and fled. The incident was promptly reported to local



police through the Naval Police, and the vehicle key was handed over to the authorities," the complainant added. The matter did not end here. On Monday morning, a group of villagers from Amdalli staged a protest and blocked the gate of NCHC Amdalli. "The protesters demanded action. The situation was addressed by the civil administration and local police. Senior

**Man sets dog and scooter on fire over mobile row**

**NELLORE.** A shocking incident of cruelty has surfaced at Chemudugunta Panchayat in Venkatachalam mandal of Nellore district, where a man, Sk Farid, allegedly set a pet dog and a scooter on fire following a dispute over a damaged mobile phone. The incident, captured on CCTV, occurred late Tuesday night and has drawn widespread condemnation from locals and animal welfare groups.

The victim, Dachuru Narasimha, a car driver, reportedly handed over a mobile phone belonging to Farid's friend. Farid accused him of damaging the phone's display and left in anger. Hours later, Farid returned with petrol packets, poured petrol on Narasimha's scooter and his tied-up pet dog,



and set them ablaze at the victim's gate. Hearing the dog's cries, Narasimha's family rushed out, rescuing the injured animal while the scooter was completely destroyed. The dog sustained severe injuries but survived.

CCTV footage showed Farid pouring petrol and igniting the fire, prompting Narasimha to file a police complaint at Venkatachalam police station. Animal rights activists have demanded Farid be charged under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, along with other criminal charges. Locals have strongly condemned the act, calling for strict punishment. "If he can set fire to a living being and property, what would he do to humans?" questioned a resident, urging authorities to act decisively.



## Keep Taliban close, Afghan people closer

THREE-AND-A-HALF years after their takeover of Afghanistan, the Taliban are no longer the only militant group to have wrested control of an entire country from its legitimate government. The Syrian Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) is the second fundamentalist Sunni group, also a designated terrorist group, to take over a country. Somalia's al-Shabaab was beaten back with Ethiopia's help, else there might have been three of them, but it's still not ruled out. The difference between Afghanistan and Syria is that the world is lining up already at the door of the HTS leader and de facto head Ahmed al-Sharaa. The French and German foreign ministers were first up. Known better by his nom de guerre Abu Mohammed al-Julani, he has quickly shed his combat gear for tailored suits, and has talked down the extremism associated with HTS, and his own al-Qaeda past, allaying fears — at least for now — of a second Afghanistan, a theocratic state, though the last word on this is yet to be spoken. America willing, HTS may soon lose its terrorist tag. The US has already removed its \$10-million bounty for him.

On the other hand, even by the duplicitous standards and shifting goalposts of geopolitics, no government has been able to find a good enough justification to put lipstick on the Taliban's gender apartheid. So, while many countries have diplomatic engagement with the regime, and some have full-fledged diplomatic representation, the Taliban might yet be beaten by HTS to formal recognition. In the end, it boils down to what the international community, and individual countries, decide to believe. At this point, India believes that the Taliban hold the keys to its security concerns on its north-western borders. That is why Delhi, which was silent on the Israeli strikes in Gaza that have now killed nearly 45,000 Palestinians, flattened homes, hospitals and schools alike, has found its tongue to condemn Pakistan's December airstrikes inside Afghanistan, apparently aimed at militants of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), but killed 45 civilians instead. No doubt Pakistan-Afghanistan tensions helped the juices flow and set the stage for a "constructive" meeting two weeks later in Dubai between Afghanistan's acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, the highest level of contact that India has offered the Taliban so far. But let's also keep our memories long. For all their apparent defiance of Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban retain many links to their first patron. Muttaqi, who grew up and obtained his Islamic education in Pakistan, and was part of the Balochistan-based Quetta Shura of the Taliban, continues to be personally invested in that country in several ways. So too other members of the de facto government.

Delhi's channels to the Haqqani network, which is blamed for the 2008 bombing of the Afghan embassy, may be out of a spy thriller, and inevitable, given Sirajuddin Haqqani's status as Afghanistan's interior minister. But the arrivals at the new international airport in Khost in Haqqani land are... who exactly? The Taliban's supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, based in Kandahar, is in touch with the who's who of Pakistan. And despite the hostility, Pakistan's links with sections of the TTP go back a long way. So why did Pakistan take the extreme step of bombing Afghanistan's border badlands? Those who have observed the Pakistan military for years believe that the Army chief, Gen Asim Munir, is desperate to rekindle US interest in the AFpak region, the Pakistan military's cash cow for four decades until it dried up in the summer of 2021. ISI chief Muhammad Asim Malik's very public visit to Tajikistan, where the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance is based, and his meeting with President Emomali Rahmon may have been another smoke-and-mirrors move that seems to have riled the Indian media more than anyone in Afghanistan. The Muttaqi-Misri photo op has similarly hit the intended audience. In the graveyard of empires, everyone is playing their own game, including the Taliban.

## IMD at 150: Precision, progress & promise

The effect of climate change on the Indian monsoon is apparent more on the micro scale, like cloudbursts, intense precipitation, landslides, lightning strikes and urban flooding. The IMD needs to tackle these issues.

MANY government organisations are engaged in scientific research and several work directly for the welfare of the people. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) is unique in that it is mandated to do both. Another exclusive feature that distinguishes the IMD from other organisations is that it is required to make accurate predictions of the future. The time scale ranges from the next few hours to days, months, years or decades and the space scale ranges from an airport or a village to a district, state, country, continent or ocean.

Established on January 15, 1875, the IMD has strived to harness the science of meteorology for the service of the nation through weather-monitoring and science-based weather and climate prediction.

Its activities have helped enhance farm outputs, manage water resources, ensure aviation safety and mitigate disasters. The IMD touches the lives of individuals, influences policy and helps envisage the future world. The IMD has, indeed, come a long way in its journey of 150 years. In the last decade, in particular, there has been a perceptible increase in the scope and precision of IMD's forecasts on all space and time scales. This is a visible outcome of the augmentation of IMD's techno-scientific base of advanced models supported by radars, satellites and supercomputers. The loss of life associated with tropical cyclones has been reduced from several thousands to near zero. Droughts and floods that are recurrent features of the monsoon have now become fully manageable. India's British rulers had a natural fascination for observatories: astronomical, seismological, geomagnetic and, of course, meteorological. For nearly 80 years before IMD came into being, local governments, railways and port authorities were setting up observatories for recording the weather. There were also numerous individuals who pursued astronomy and meteorology as a serious hobby. These included civilian and army officers, doctors, professors, geographers, sailors, surveyors and missionaries, who meticulously maintained meteorological records. In an exception, one of the earliest observatories in India was established at

Trivandrum not by the British but by the Maharaja of Travancore. India is, therefore, fortunate to possess meteorological records that span two centuries, constituting a valuable resource for climate change studies.

By 1875, India had 86 meteorological observatories and it was time to bring them together under the umbrella of a single agency. The Government of India decided to call it the India Meteorological Department, with a jurisdiction extending from Quetta to Rangoon and Leh to Colombo. It was to be

headed by the Imperial Meteorological Reporter to the Government of India. The designation was later changed to Director General of Observatories and again to Director General of Meteorology, reflecting the changing responsibility that the post carried.

It goes to the IMD's credit that it never worked in colonial style. Indian scientists were recruited by the IMD as early as in 1885 and Indians were occupying most of the senior positions by 1920. Much before India got independence, the IMD had an Indian as its head. Many British meteorologists in the IMD made seminal contributions to our understanding of the monsoon and tropical cyclones and several Indian

meteorologists in the IMD helped build new scientific institutions. The Sanskrit words 'Adityat Jayate Vrishtih' incorporated in the IMD's logo are taken from India's age-old wisdom literature. They assure us that as long as the sun shines, we will have our monsoon rains. However, it is also true that while the monsoon comes every year and has never failed to do so, it does not always give us its best. Returning to the present times, it is of significance that the 2024 monsoon yielded an 8 per cent excess rainfall for the country as a whole, and it was very close to the IMD prediction. What is also important is the fact that since 2017, the monsoon rainfall has been normal, meaning that it has consistently remained within the margin of plus or minus 10 per cent of the long-term average. The year 2024 was the eighth year in this series of good or satisfactory monsoons. In parallel, India's annual foodgrain production shot up from 275 mmt in 2017 to a record-breaking 330 mmt in 2023 and is expected to surpass this figure in 2024. From the viewpoint of the nation's food security, this rise is very substantial. It is, of course, a result of sustained efforts in multiple areas, but it has once again highlighted the fact that the monsoon continues to hold a strong grip on Indian agriculture and, through it, on the overall economy. It also needs to be noted with caution that long epochs of successive good monsoon years have been very few historically. It will, therefore, be worthwhile to attempt predictions of monsoon rainfall over longer time scales, like a decade or two, so that long-term policy decisions can be taken.

While the monsoon is under the constant shadow of climate change and concerns are expressed about its future, it seems to have been doing well so far in the overall scenario.

The effect of climate change on the Indian monsoon is apparent more on the micro scale. Situations like cloudbursts, extremely intense precipitation, landslides, lightning strikes and urban flooding are occurring with increasing frequency, causing severe damage to crops and property and loss of life.



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## Modi's J&K outreach

Restoration of statehood remains elusive

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi has gifted Jammu & Kashmir the Z-Morh tunnel, which will make the tourist resort of Sonamarg accessible throughout the year. Last week, the PM virtually inaugurated the Jammu railway division, and he is expected to flag off the Delhi-Srinagar Vande Bharat train on Republic Day. So far so good. The BJP-led Centre is going all out to boost J&K's economy and reduce 'Dilli se duri', but what about its promise to restore statehood? It's been three months since the Assembly elections were held — after a decade-long gap — and the NC-Congress alliance formed the government. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah keeps raising the all-important demand — he did so in the PM's presence on Monday too — but he has refrained from exerting pressure on the Centre to set a timeline. Modi has tried to reassure Omar and the people of J&K that "right things



will happen at the right time". The PM has claimed that he

always keeps his promises — and the CM has been quick to vouch for that, praising him effusively for keeping his word on holding the Assembly elections. Curiously, in his speech at a poll rally in Srinagar last year, the PM had asserted that the BJP would fulfil the commitment of restoring statehood; however, in his address after the tunnel inauguration, he took a circuitous route to talk about the matter. This should have perturbed Omar, but it apparently didn't.

The CM has made it obvious that he won't follow in the footsteps of his counterparts in Opposition-ruled states who are constantly at loggerheads with the Centre. Omar's recent attack on the INDIA bloc, of which the Congress is the most prominent member, was music to the BJP's ears. His own party's MP, Aga Syed Mehdi, has stirred the pot by saying that the CM should not be seen by the people as 'Delhi's representative'. At stake here are the aspirations of local residents — and Omar's credibility.

## With the largest museum, Raisina Hill to be a cultural beacon

India's most ambitious museum project will both be a challenge and a historic moment to showcase 'the timeless and eternal India.'

SOON, the burra sahibs of the British Raj, once ensconced in the North and South Blocks atop the magnificent Raisina Hill, will squirm in their graves as their crown-crested chairs will be replaced by iconic Indian antiquities, like the Dancing Harappan Girl and the Chola Nataraja, among myriad others.

The upcoming National Museum (replacing the existing one) of India, to be called Yuga Yugeen Bharat (meaning 'the timeless and eternal India') Museum (YYM), is set to come up at the North and South Blocks as part of the Central Vista Redevelopment Project in New Delhi. The museum, making adaptive reuse of the existing structures, spreading over 1,54,000 sq m and having 950 rooms, will be the largest museum in the world. "It will be bigger than the British Museum in London and the Grand Louvre in Paris, which covers around 70,000 square metres," says a government note. This magnum opus would make India sit on the high table of culture in the world. However, the humungous task of setting up of such an ambitious and gigantic museum is at once exciting and challenging. It's not a simple task of commissioning a new building designed to a programme. It's a project to retrofit two separate blocks that have been built in hybrid neoclassical styles and for use as offices by our colonial masters. Converting them into a world class state-of-the-art national museum is a daunting task.

The challenges are at multiple levels, both functional and aesthetic. They entail massive architectural modifications and refurbishing of interior spaces to function as museum galleries. They will call for the best Indologists, museum exhibitors, art scholars, interior designers and numerous other related art experts to curate the content, to tell the narrative in an

engaging, imaginative and interactive mode. What is a museum? It comes from the Greek word mouseion. It was used for ancient temples dedicated to the Muses, the patron goddesses of arts and sciences. The concept of the museum as a place for the public developed slowly. "Enlightenment ideals and values — critical scrutiny of all assumptions, open debate, scientific research, progress and tolerance — have marked the museum since its foundation," says Susan A Sternau, an art historian.

There are numerous examples across the world of existing spaces being converted into museums. The two most iconic museums — the Louvre and Musee d'Orsay of Paris — were originally a palace and a railway station, respectively. While the Louvre is famous for its star exhibit of Mona Lisa painting by Leonardo da Vinci, the Orsay is redolent with its biggest collection of Claude Monets, Camille Pissarros and other world famous Impressionist artists. The Tate Modern at London, standing along River Thames, was created by converting an old derelict power station into an imaginative museum by architects Herzog and de Meuron.

Before the 20th century, the preferred style for museums was neoclassical or Renaissance, celebrating grandeur and ceremonial language to convey its role as a temple of art. Museum design is a specialised field and some architects of the 20th century have created masterpieces of modern architecture. Museums, like the Guggenheim in New York designed by iconic architect Frank Lloyd Wright and the one at Bilbao by Frank Gehry, are works of sculptural art by themselves. For the YYM

project, let's examine the advantages first. The location is near perfect. For, what can be a symbolically more powerful message than that India holds its cultural and civilisational richness at the highest level, above the axis of state power, at Kartavya Path? The seat of Imperial hubris will now



be a temple of art, culture, democracy and diversity. Anyone passing by Vijay Chowk will view the YYM looming large, like a latter day Acropolis, as an embodiment of antique, beautiful and civilisational jewels of India. It will be the biggest gesture of decolonisation and dismantling of the erstwhile ensemble of brute Imperial power by the soft power of a nation aspiring to be Vishvavaguru to a world torn asunder by wars, conflicts and confrontations.

It will also equip the high-security, 'no-entry' zone of the North and South Blocks with a magnificent plaza between the two, which will be accessible to the public, enabling an upfront view of the magnificent

Indo-Saracenic hybrid architecture of Edwin Landseer Lutyens and Herbert Baker. The present cold space of state power will become a people's plaza — alive with art, colour and vibrancy that museum precincts the world over generate. The imposing challenge of the project will be the retrofitting of the nearly 100-year-old buildings, ensuring structural safety for the country's jewels of antiquity and civilisational wealth for another 100 years. All building services will need to be upgraded to the state-of-the-art levels, without tampering with or damaging the heritage interiors. Many clusters of smaller office rooms and warrens of service areas will have to be merged to create larger gallery spaces to showcase the priceless exhibits.

The YYM agenda is ambitious. Union Minister of Culture and Minister of Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat states that it will "transcend the traditional museum experience and embody the spirit of inclusivity. It will be a museum of the people, centring community narratives — a testament to India's legacy as the mother of democracy." In this context, the ministry recently organised an inter-ministerial stakeholder consultation and capacity-building workshop. India and France have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the development of the project as France is renowned for its expertise in such projects — exemplified by the Louvre, the Grand Palais, and the Hotel de la Marine.

Museums are integral to our cultural imagination and national identity. Let's not get this one wrong. May the timeless and eternal India shine.



# Jacqueliene Fernandez

## Shines Bright In Pink Salwar Suit

Bollywood diva Jacqueliene Fernandez never fails to turn heads with her on-trend fashion, efficiently delivering a mix of bold and imaginative styling. From rocking chic dresses to confidently carrying her elegant sarees, the actress is a total style icon, inspiring millions of youth with her wardrobe choices. Apart from her glamorous and stylish side, Jacqueliene also loves to flaunt her ethnic side, looking beautiful as ever even in simple traditionals. Keeping it all simple and casual, Jacqueliene stepped out in comfy ethnic wear for a cafe outing in Bandra, Mumbai. As soon as she came out of the cafe, she waved towards the paparazzi. But she did not stop to pose for pictures, and immediately headed towards her car. Jacqueliene was dressed in a light pink coloured kurta paired with matching trousers and a white dupatta. Keeping her make-up minimal, the actress kept her tresses partially tied in a ponytail while her face was covered with a mask. The major highlight was a red 'tikka' on her forehead, which seemingly suggested her early visit to a temple.



Jacqueliene, who continues to remain in the news over her alleged connection with notorious conman Suresh Chandrasekhar, has made her much-awaited return to the big screen with Fateh. Portraying the character of Khushi, Jacqueliene shares the screen with actor Sonu Sood, who makes his directorial debut with the film. Speaking about her character and the praises that she had received about her performance, the actress said, "Playing Khushi was a really happy space for me. The role was essayed to portray a refreshing character that has intellect and quirk. Her simplicity resonated with me. The overwhelming response from the audience is heartwarming," as per Mid-Day. Stating that the year 2025 started on a good note for her, Jacqueliene looks forward to more exciting projects lined up for this year. Made under the banner of Shakti Sagar Productions, Fateh is set against the backdrop of cybercrime. Sonu Sood is featured as a former special ops officer set on a mission to dismantle a sprawling network of digital terror. Apart from Fateh, Jacqueliene has Welcome to the Jungle and Housefull 5 in the pipeline.



# Dhanashree

## Makes First Appearance Amid Yuzvendra Chahal Divorce Rumours, Requests Paps To Stop

Dhanashree Verma and Yuzvendra Chahal have been making headlines amidst swirling rumours about their marriage hitting a rocky patch. The couple, who tied the knot in December 2020, have been the subject of speculation after cryptic social media posts hinted at issues in their relationship. While neither party has confirmed or denied the rumours, reports of an impending divorce have continued to surface. Amid the speculation, Dhanashree Verma was spotted in Mumbai for the first time since the

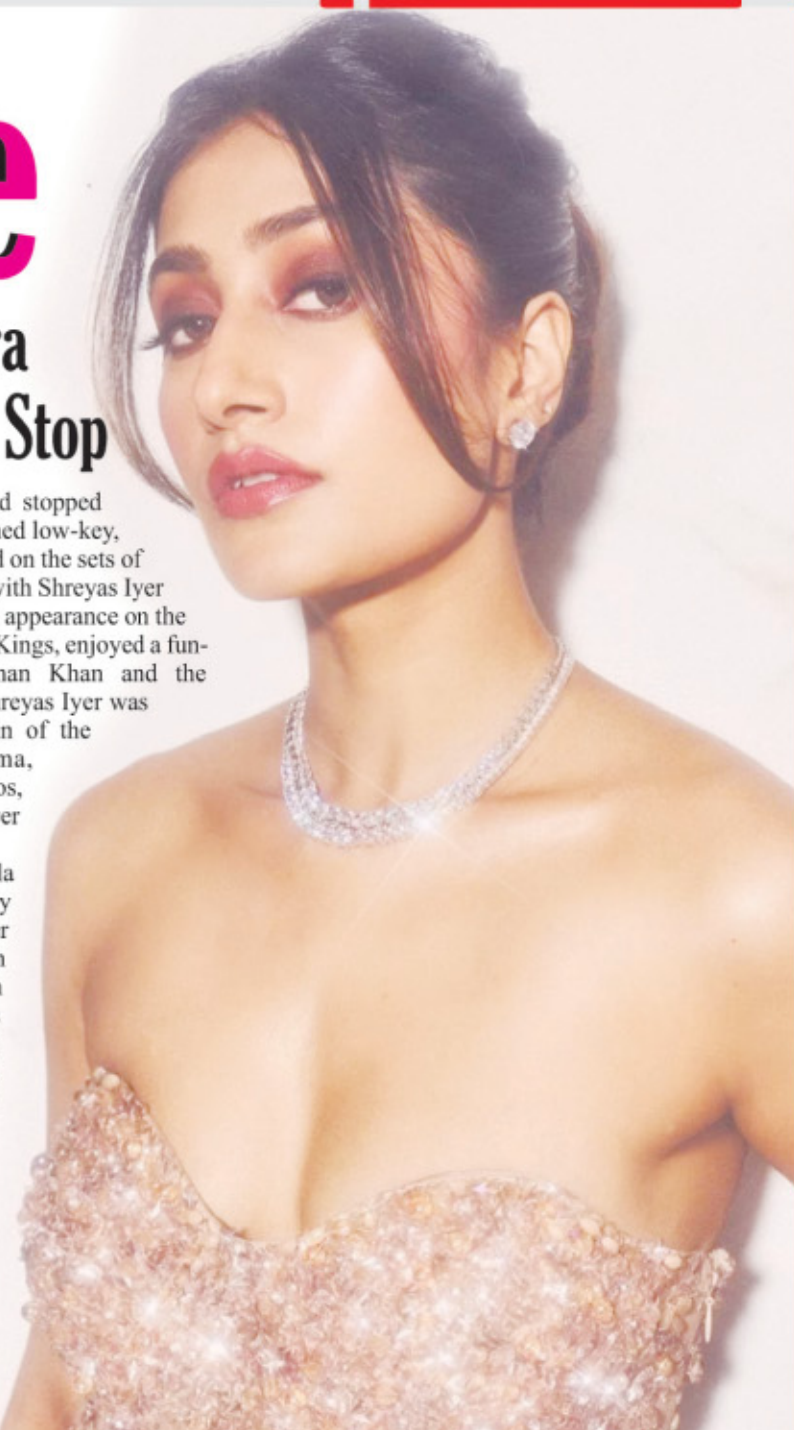


rumours began. Earlier today, the choreographer and social media sensation was photographed by the paparazzi. Dressed in a chic black bodycon skirt paired with a white shirt and black sunglasses, Dhanashree caught the attention of photographers while stepping out. During the interaction, she requested the shutterbugs to stop filming her by saying, "Bas na (Stop)." The photographers

promptly respected her request and stopped recording. While Dhanashree remained low-key, Yuzvendra Chahal recently appeared on the sets of Bigg Boss 18. The cricketer, along with Shreyas Iyer and Shashank Singh, made a special appearance on the show. The trio, representing Punjab Kings, enjoyed a fun-filled interaction with host Salman Khan and the housemates. During the episode, Shreyas Iyer was officially announced as the captain of the Punjab Kings. Dhanashree Verma, known for her vibrant dance videos, has gained immense popularity over the years.

A former contestant on Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa 11, she transitioned from dentistry to become a beloved choreographer and social media influencer. With over 2.79 million subscribers on YouTube and 6.2 million followers on Instagram, she continues to captivate audiences with her dance content. Rumours surrounding the couple's troubled marriage escalated when reports claimed Yuzvendra met a mystery woman at a hotel.

Photos of the cricketer with RJ Mahvash also went viral, adding fuel to the speculation. However, Mahvash later clarified that she and Yuzvendra were just friends, dismissing the rumours.



### Jennifer Mistry SLAMS Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah Actors For Not Helping Gurucharan Singh: 'Voh Log...'

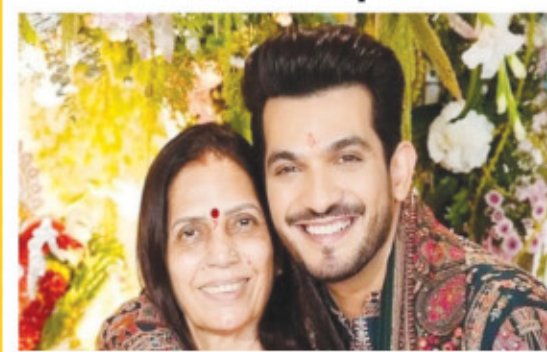


Jennifer Mistry has lashed out at the Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah actors for allegedly not helping Gurucharan Singh during his difficult time. Mistry used to play the role of Singh's wife in the popular sitcom. However, she left the show in 2023 after accusing Asit Kumar Modi, Project Head Sohail Ramani, and executive producer Jatin Bajaj of harassment. In a recent interview, Mistry talked about Gurucharan's Rs 1.2 crore debt and recalled what happened when he asked her for help once. "Gurucharan Singh had once asked me to help him with Rs 1 lakh to clear his credit card dues. I agreed to give it to him, but he later told me that he didn't want it right now. He told me, 'I will let you know once I need it.' Later, he didn't call me. After a few days, he asked me for Rs 17 lakh. Unfortunately, I had to use that Rs 1 lakh for my personal due to some financial crunch. I had also told him that I didn't have this much amount. I couldn't help him," she told Zoom.

Jennifer further questioned TMKOC actors for not helping Gurucharan and added, "Woh log kisike nahi hai. Mere case mein unhone mere liye stand nahi liya toh uske liye kya lenge. Jab meri behen ki death hui thi last year, tabhi kisine mujhe call bhi nahi kiya. They will never help him." This comes days after Gurucharan Singh's close friend, Bhakti Soni, revealed that he needs to repay a loan of Rs 1.5 crore. She also claimed that nobody, including Singh's family, was helping him during this difficult time. "He had a debt of about Rs 1.2 crore. However, his father owns a property worth 255 crore. Unfortunately, there is an ongoing dispute as the tenants are not vacating the property. If the matter gets resolved and the property is sold, he should be able to clear his loan," Bhakti told Etimes.

Currently, Gurucharan Singh is also hospitalized. Details about his health updates are awaited.

### Arjun Bijlani's Mother Critical, Shifted To ICU In A Mumbai Hospital



Things are not well for the popular television actor Arjun Bijlani as his mother's health has taken a serious turn. Hospitalized a couple of days back, she has now been admitted to the ICU at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai. She has been shifted to the ICU after her oxygen levels dropped. Her health update has left the family deeply concerned. When Arjun Bijlani was questioned regarding his mother's condition, the actor was quoted saying, "My mom is in the ICU as her oxygen levels have dropped. I just want her to get better soon." He even took to his official Instagram stories and dropped a video of her mother from the hospital. The video shows him



holding her mother's hand during her road to recovery.

Adding to the trouble, Arjun Bijlani's wife, Neha Swami, and son, Ayaan were also reported to be under the weather recently. The family has been facing health issues ever since returning from their recent vacation to celebrate New Year. Going by the reports, the actor has been spending as much time as possible at the hospital to be with his mother. He is also making sure that she gets the best possible medical care. Ever since the news of Arjun Bijlani's mother's ailment surfaced on social media, fans and his friends from the industry have been sharing their prayers for her speedy recovery on social media. In the meantime, Arjun Bijlani last graced the screen in the television show "Pyaar Ka Pehla Adhyaya: Shiv Shakti", co-starring Parineeta Borthakur. Furthermore, he was also a part of the primary season of the reality show "Laughter Chef". He was partnered with fellow actor Karan Kundra. The makers are all set to return with the second season of his popular show, however, Arjun Bijlani will not be participating this time as a contestant.



# Maha Kumbh about self-realisation not pursuit of heavenly pleasures: Sadhguru

▶ Reflecting on the organisation of the Maha Kumbh, Sadhguru praised the Uttar Pradesh government for their extraordinary arrangements for the grand event.

**NEW DELHI.** In a thought-provoking conversation with India Today TV, spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev shared his deep insights into the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, emphasising its unparalleled importance as a spiritual gathering. Sadhguru reflected on the significance of the event, the relevance of Sanatan Dharma, and its enduring message for future generations. Calling the Maha Kumbh "the greatest thing on the planet", Sadhguru explained that the event transcends mere ritual. "Human beings are seeking their personal liberation," he remarked, stressing that the Maha Kumbh is about spiritual growth and self-realisation rather than the pursuit of heavenly pleasures. He added that Sanatan Dharma, the philosophical foundation of such gatherings, is not just a religion, but a profound path of practice aimed at achieving ultimate liberation. Sadhguru also elaborated on the astronomical science

underlying the Kumbh. He described how the alignment of Jupiter, the largest planet, with the Sun and other celestial bodies creates an

energetic impact on Earth, making this period particularly significant for spiritual practices. "The science behind the Kumbh is quite simple to understand," he said, blending ancient wisdom with a modern perspective. While discussing the holy dip in the Ganga, Sadhguru humorously quipped, "It's good to take a bath," drawing laughter. However, he noted that for many, the dip represents a cleansing of the soul, an act of devotion, and a connection to something larger than oneself.



Reflecting on the organisation of the Kumbh, Sadhguru praised the Uttar Pradesh government for their extraordinary arrangements for the grand event. "It is an astonishing feat of management," he said, congratulating the authorities for handling the vast gathering with precision and care. Having attended three Maha Kumbhs, he noted the event's remarkable ability to bring together millions of people in pursuit of spiritual goals. Sadhguru also passionately advocated for the establishment of a Sanatan Board to ensure that future generations remain connected to their roots, identity, and culture. He stressed that such an initiative would preserve the teachings and practices of Sanatan Dharma, making them accessible and relevant to a rapidly changing world.

## "Who Were Crooked Puppets?" Lawyer Jai Anant Dehadrai On Hindenburg News

**New Delhi.** Jai Anant Dehadrai, the lawyer who last year accused a Trinamool MP of accepting bribes to 'target' the Adani Group, reacted Thursday to news Hindenburg Research - the United States-based short seller that alleged, with no apparent evidence, financial impropriety by the business giant - will be disbanded. In a lengthy post on X this morning, Mr Dehadrai also linked Hindenburg shutting down to the return of Donald Trump as the US President on January 20; earlier an influential member of Mr Trump's party had called out a decision by the outgoing government, led by Joe Biden, to probe certain Adani firms. Mr Dehadrai also hit out at the Trinamool leader - labelling the person a "crooked puppet who tried spinning a conspiracy-theory (around Hindenburg's allegations), particularly against the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi)", and demanded the MP be "subjected to rigorous custodial inquiry". "With Hindenburg shutting down mere days before Trump takes office, the message couldn't be clearer: the attacks on Prime Minister Modi, the Adani Group, and India's stock market regulator (the Securities and Exchange Board of India) were not just about profit - they were part of a calculated and synchronised effort to sow instability in India," Mr Dehadrai alleged. "But here's where it gets truly interesting. With (Hindenburg founder) Nate Anderson now fully exposed and in retreat - who were the crooked puppets in India who tried spinning a conspiracy-theory around the above mentioned entities?" "Will the former MP who orchestrated many of these attacks in India, particularly against the Prime Minister, be fully investigated and subjected to a rigorous custodial inquiry and global financial audit?" he continued, claiming, "The money-trail from this individual will lead to some of the most notorious criminal entities to have ever existed - worldwide. "Earlier today, Mr Anderson, in a note on Hindenburg's website, said the company would be shut down after completion of pending projects. The announcement comes days before Mr Trump is to take office. However, Mr Anderson claimed no threat in the decision to close his firm.

## Thick layer of fog, biting cold grip Delhi amid worsening air

**NEW DELHI.** The national capital woke up to dense fog and poor visibility, which disrupted operations of over 100 flights and 26 trains. While the minimum temperature dropped to 6°C, the maximum hovered around 18°C, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. Due to the severe cold, government schools that were scheduled to reopen on January 15 after the winter break remained closed. Amid sharp dip in air quality, GRAP-IV restrictions were reimposed. Departures were briefly put on hold at the IGIA early in the morning as low visibility conditions impacted operations. However, an update from the airport operator DIAL on X at 2.20 pm stated, "Runway visibility at Delhi Airport is improving, and flight operations are gradually resuming."



Several airlines, including IndiGo, Air India and SpiceJet, issued advisories, urging passengers to check their flight status before heading to the airport. Visibility significantly reduced during the morning hours, improved slightly during the day, but declined as the evening approached. On Tuesday, the MET office issued an orange alert for dense fog and predicted rain, with cold weather expected to intensify in Delhi, Noida, and Gurugram. The IMD indicated that similar conditions are likely to persist on Thursday morning, with a possibility of light rain in the evening or night.

## Sisodia bungalow dispute: Delhi HC junks plea seeking action against CM Atishi

**NEW DELHI.** The Delhi High Court on Wednesday rejected a PIL that sought action against incumbent Chief Minister Atishi for permitting senior AAP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and his family to continue using a government-allocated bungalow. A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhrui and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela dismissed the PIL filed by Sanjeev Jain, who identified himself as a social worker and RTI activist. The court noted that if any regulations were breached in this matter, relevant authorities are fully empowered to take appropriate action when necessary. "We do not find it appropriate to issue any orders in this petition. If any rules have been violated, the competent authorities are



fully capable of taking the necessary action as required. The petition is dismissed," the court stated. The PIL referred to a government bungalow initially allocated to Sisodia, and later reassigned to Atishi in March 2023 after Sisodia's arrest in connection with the liquor policy case. The petitioner alleged that allowing Sisodia's family to remain in the government property amounted to a "clear misuse of government property", arguing that the action was "blatant violation" of established rules regarding the allocation and vacation of government properties. The plea suggested that Atishi's actions were possibly aimed at gaining favor within the party by showing loyalty to Sisodia, "a mentor in her political career." The plea claimed such practices involve misuse of government resources for personal and political benefit.

## Delhi govt initiates drive to trace those not claiming Ladli Yojana benefits

**NEW DELHI.** The Women and Child Development (WCD) Department of the Delhi government has launched a targeted initiative to ensure girl children enrolled in the Ladli Yojana, a flagship financial assistance scheme, receive their dues. The campaign focuses on tracing beneficiaries who have either not claimed their payments or failed to renew their applications.

Introduced on January 1, 2008, the Ladli Yojana aims to uplift girl children born in the national capital by offering term deposits at key milestones. These include Rs 11,000 for hospital births, Rs 10,000 for home births, and Rs 5,000 upon enrollment in classes one, two, six, nine, and ten. A WCD department official revealed that nearly 1.86 lakh individuals enrolled in the scheme did not claim the benefits, while 1.66 lakh applicants either



dropped out of school or did not renew their registration. "Many children change districts for schooling but do not renew their registration under the scheme, often due to a lack of awareness. Others discontinue their education midway, further complicating the renewal process," the official said. In response, officials across Delhi's 11 districts have been directed to compile

annual reports identifying beneficiaries who have not renewed their applications. These reports will be shared with schools to locate the students. "If the students are found, their renewals will be processed. If not, the lists will be shared with other districts for further tracking and coordination with schools," the official added. The initiative also involves centralising operations through the Ladli branch headquarters, which will reconcile reports, monitor fund utilisation, and manage financial adjustments such as budget allocations and unutilised fund surrenders. The campaign coincides with a growing number of beneficiaries under the scheme. In 2022-23, 64,408 girls were added, with the figure increasing to 72,425 in 2023-24. Officials hope the drive will ensure that the scheme's benefits reach every eligible girl child in Delhi.

## ISRO's SpaDeX Mission Successful, 2 Indian Satellites Dock In Space

**New Delhi.** Indian Space Research Organisation, the Indian space agency, succeeded in docking or mating two Indian satellites in space Thursday morning. This is part of the Space Docking Experiment or SpaDeX. This was the fourth attempt when Indian scientists finally hit Bullseye. At about 10 am ISRO announced Docking Success. "Spacecraft docking successfully completed! A historic moment. Let's walk through the SpaDeX docking process: Manoeuvre from 15m to 3m hold point completed. Docking initiated with precision, leading to successful spacecraft capture. Retraction completed smoothly, followed by rigidisation for stability. Docking successfully completed. India became the 4th country to achieve successful Space Docking. Congratulations to the entire

team! Congratulations to India!" Docking is a very complex process and ISRO attempted it cautiously doing several trials over a fortnight. India used the indigenously developed Bhartiya Docking System to achieve this feat just before docking the satellites moved closer to each other at a speed of 10 millimeters per second. ISRO succeeds in docking two Indian satellites in space orbiting at 475 kilometers above Earth. India becomes the fourth country after Russia, USA and China to have successfully learnt to dock. India launched the SpaDeX mission on December 30, 2024 using the PSLV rocket. Docking is an enabling technology for future missions like Chandrayaan-4 and Bhartiya Antariksha station. On January 12, 2025, when the last attempt was made, the satellites were moved

back and forth to achieve what ISRO had described as an "exciting handshake" of the two satellites in space. Then two Indian satellites came as close as three metres in a trial attempt for space docking and are now moving back, the Indian space agency said this morning. "A trial attempt to reach up to 15 m and further to 3 m is done. Moving back space crafts to a safe distance. The docking process will be done after analysing data further," the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said in its last update of January 12, on the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission. Docking is a very complex process with the satellites being moved back and forth to achieve what ISRO has described as an "exciting handshake" of the two satellites in space.

## Woman dies by suicide, family alleges harassment by husband over English skills

**NEW DELHI.** A 19-year-old college student, Shahana Mumthaz, was found dead at her home in Kerala's Malappuram district, on the morning of January 14. Her family has alleged that harassment by her husband and in-laws over her complexion and limited English proficiency drove her to take her own life. Shahana, a first-year BSc Mathematics student, had married Abdul Wahab, an Abu Dhabi-based worker, in May last year. According to her family, the couple spent 22 days together after their wedding before Wahab returned to the UAE.



Shahana's uncle, Abdul Salam, claimed that Wahab later began ignoring her calls and harassed her through text messages, allegedly criticising her appearance and language skills. The family claimed that Shahana had sought support from her mother-in-law, who dismissed her concerns and suggested that Wahab deserved a partner who was "more mature and fair". Shahana was discovered dead at her residence on January 14. The Kondotty police have registered a case under Section 194 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and are investigating the circumstances surrounding her death. Shahana's last rites were held on January 15. The investigation is ongoing, and police have yet to comment on the allegations made by the family.

## Not in IQ or EQ, real story of Congress and BJP is in HQ

**NEW DELHI.** It was a chilly January morning in 1978 when a handful of Indira Gandhi family loyalists and karmacharis moved into 24, Akbar Road, which would become the Congress headquarters for close to 50 years. It was also a chilly morning on January 15, 2025, when the Congress, a 144-year-old party, moved into a building constructed to be its headquarters from the Type-VII Lutyens' Zone bungalow, meant to be a residence. Both the Congress and the BJP, which now have their headquarters within a kilometre of one another's, were functioning out of Lutyens' Delhi bungalows. The story of how the two national parties got their new headquarters reveals not just their history, but their priorities. The BJP was in 1985 allotted a Type-VIII bungalow at 11, Ashoka Road, which continued to be its head office till it shifted to the five-floor building at Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg in February 2018. It took the BJP, which first tasted power in Delhi in 1996, less than four decades

since its inception in 1980, to build a headquarters that took care of its modern-day needs, while the Congress kept adding rooms illegally to the 24, Akbar Road bungalow to house its functionaries. The appearance of the Congress office has "changed dramatically" over the years, and "its eight rooms have expanded to 34", writes veteran journalist and political commentator Rasheed Kiwai in his book 24 Akbar Road. Most of these constructions, in the Lutyens' Bungalow Zone building, are illegal, writes Kidwai, "but successive political regimes have looked the other way". As the BJP was growing electorally, it felt the need for modern offices to facilitate organisational growth. It was in 2016 that the BJP "began to build physical structures in the form of a modern party office in each district of India", write Bhupender Yadav and Ila Patnaik in their book The Rise of the BJP: The Making of the World's Largest Political Party. "It was felt that the

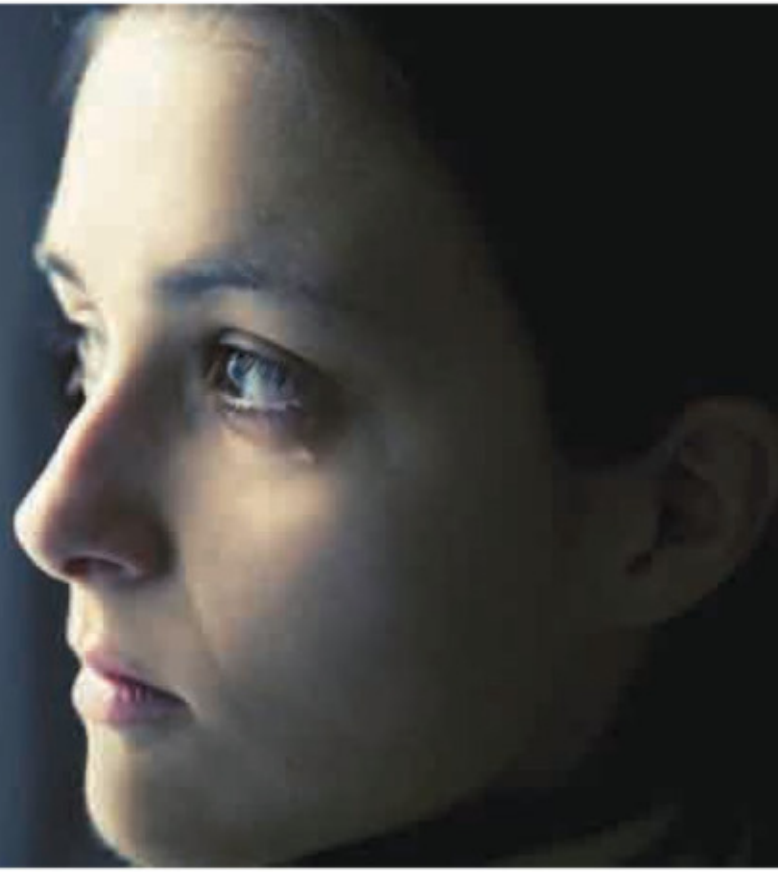


existing party headquarters, at 11 Ashoka Road in the environs of Lutyens Delhi, was not adequate or digitally equipped. It was decided that a new headquarters would be constructed," write Yadav and Patnaik. While the BJP headquarters at Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg was built in one-and-a-half years, the Congress office at 9A Kotla Marg took 15 years to be completed. The plots were allocated to the parties after a government policy barred the use of Lutyens' Bungalows as registered party offices. The shift out of Lutyens' Delhi

must have been easier for the BJP than the Congress, which generally had the party offices closer to the residences of its party head. Rasheed Kidwai says that "the advantage of the [24, Akbar Road] house was that it had a wicket gate linking it to 10, Janpath", which is now the residence of party matriarch Sonia Gandhi. Since she got into active politics in 1998, the two addresses connected by a wicket gate, have shaped the fortunes of the Congress. Even when Indira Gandhi was heading the Congress, the home and work addresses weren't far apart. Her 1, Safdarjung residence was just 2 kilometres away from the 24, Akbar Road. In fact, Indira's personal office, just behind the residence, was at 1, Akbar Road. While the BJP, whose leaders, including Narendra Modi, have tried to project tech-savviness, and has used digital technology well, the Congress seemed to have lagged behind despite Rajiv Gandhi trying to harness its power.



# How Grief can make You ill



There is nothing to be 'done'. Our research proves there are several strategies to diminish the ill health effects of loss. Our goal is to identify effective ones."

➔ **Do it like Kia**

Kia Scherr was in Florida for Thanksgiving when she heard that the Oberoi Hotel in Mumbai had been attacked by terrorists. Her husband, Alan, 58, and daughter, Naomi, 13 were staying there. Hours later, she heard that both had been killed. A few days on, she stunned the world by saying in a press interview that she had forgiven the terrorists and felt compassion for those "so separated from humanity that they would kill". Scherr shares her 4 steps to tackling grief guideline.

➔ **I was open**

Find support. I had multiple levels of it — family, friends, and so many people whom I had not met, but empathised. Everyone's wishes were sincere and heartfelt, and I felt connected to the world as a family. Even the funeral was taken care of for me. Things hit me only after everybody went home. I was left to deal with the pain.

➔ **I didn't let it linger**

Lingering grief is a private matter; unless you have gone through it, no one completely understands it. Emotion has a life of its own. Grief can fester. You can numb it through alcohol or drugs, or you can try distraction (work, television etc). I understand why people go down that path. But repressing painful feelings does damage — it may seem good in the short term, but over the long run it's deadly.

➔ **I sought professional help**

Grief doesn't go away on its own. You have to seek help. I went in for counselling sessions and meditation. My healing process started with setting up One Life Alliance, a peace organisation, but pain continues to engulf me at times. That I decided to return to Mumbai was part of the healing process. My mother died of lung cancer two years ago, and I was with her through it. This may be an experience that almost all of us go through — a parent's death — but that doesn't mitigate the pain or loss.

➔ **I connected with others like me**

Support groups are helpful because they bring together people who have suffered loss. Life goes on for others, but someone who has experienced terrible grief needs support and encouragement.

Often, the loss is so immense that you have no words to express it. It's someone's presence that makes the difference. Be there for the person, show your love. Love makes all the difference; it has the power to make you sail through the roughest times.

Can sadness leave you obese, diabetic or hypertensive? Yes, say doctors, whose research proves that heartbreak, career slumps and bereavement can kill. She started out dreaming of a bright career and love. At 25, she hanged herself. In her last letter, actor Jiah Khan wrote of the pain a failed relationship had caused, how it had "destroyed every bit of me, destroyed my soul" and why she was "running away from everything". Khan encountered a frightening enemy — the grief following a romantic break-up and stunted career — and found that she was unable to battle it. In a first of its kind study on the motivations for suicide, published in the official journal of the American Association of Suicidology, two were found to be universal: hopelessness and overwhelming emotional pain. Heartbreak, divorce, the loss of a job, terror attacks, communal riots and accidents — the modern world is fraught with incidents that leave you grieving. The reaction to it tends to be commonly marked by anguish, numbness, guilt and deep sorrow. Health professionals are concerned about the absence of adequate support the urban resident faces to cope with grief, thus jeopardising not just his mental but physical health, too.

➔ **Hidden risks**

While anxiety and depression have been associated with grief, doctors warn that life-threatening diseases like obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes are possible fallouts, too. An Italian study published in 2011 in the International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine suggests a link between the death of a parent in childhood and obesity in adulthood.

Holly G Prigerson has spent more than 20 years studying grief. The director at the Centre for Psychological Epidemiology and Outcomes Research, Harvard Medical School says that empirical evidence demonstrates that intense grief (yearning for a dead loved one, dwelling in the past and failing to reengage with life) that persists for more than six months is an invitation for an adverse health outcome. "It can include a significant increase in alcohol and tobacco consumption, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, skipping work, high blood pressure, and even the incidence of cancer," she says in an email interview. In extreme cases, she has seen it leading to hospitalisation after a heart attack. "There is some evidence that grief affects blood clotting and predicts high blood pressure, which explains the heightened risk of heart attack," she says.

➔ **The mortality project**

Dr Toni Miles, director at the Gerontology

Institute at University of Georgia, is heading an initiative called the Mortality Project, which trains the spotlight on life after death — more specifically, health after death. "Our project asks, 'If you experience the loss of someone else, what does that do to your health?'"

Grief is now a public health issue, Dr Miles warns, in much the same way that infectious diseases are. "It is a mistake to separate negative emotion from physical illness. Depression causes changes in our body, and these are measurable. I suspect that being depressed for an extended time causes the injury. In our survey, we found that newly bereaved persons are more likely to be hospitalised during the year after a death." Which is why her claim that "(grief) kills people" has been recognised. Prolonged grief will now be listed as a new disorder in the International Classification of Diseases 11 (ICD 11). "Prolonged Grief Disorder is essentially a social attachment disturbance where those separated from a highly significant other feel intense emotional pain, abandonment and a yearning, craving to be reunited (explaining the suicide risk)," she says.

➔ **Call in support staff**

Social support is one of the most important factors in recovery from grief. This can come from partners, family, friends, relatives, a

spiritual leader or a support group. "Indians shy away from seeking professional help. Seeing a behavioural expert is not the first move they'd consider. That's a mistake. If you sense you are unable to deal with your grief, and even close ones can't help, it's time to look outside," says Nagpur-based psychiatrist Dr Tushar Shinde.

Confirming perception that men and women handle grief differently, research suggests that men, who are used to emotional restraint, are more reluctant to address feelings of pain than women. In a paper published in The Review of General Psychology in 2001, psychologists at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands revealed that widowers display a higher incidence of mental and physical illness, disabilities, death and suicide than widows. Women who lost their husbands spoke of "feeling abandoned or deserted", while men spoke of their loss as "dismemberment".

➔ **The way ahead**

What will help cut down the sense of loss? The answer to that one lies in identifying the 'accurate' process of dealing with grief. Dr Shinde says processing grief needs time, patience and care. "Accept the loss, work through the pain, and learn to be without (the person, circumstance)."

Dr Miles raises a red flag when she says, "Often, people say there is nothing new about loss and depression. That grief is natural.

## Try art therapy for a Stress Free life



Forget the age-old techniques of de-stressing. Businessmen, lawyers, teachers, journalists and homemakers — who are stressed in their routine lives have found art breaks to be the new stress buster. Despite being around for some time

now, those practising art therapy have found new ways of developing the trend.

Psychotherapist and counsellor Kunjal Shah says, "Since most of our problems are not with the intellect but difficult emotions and inner conflicts, art therapy provides us with a much needed distance from our problems to resolve it. Art therapy chiefly helps to uncover hidden issues, deal with emotional pain, allows self-expression, and helps you to relax."

**Art therapy as meditation in varied forms**

Along with traditional paintings, art has now taken various forms and those who want to try these methods have taken a liking for art styles like zentangling, doodling, mandalas or the Indian tribal art forms like Warli, Madhubani, Pattachitra and the likes. In fact, these mandalas and doodles are the foundation of a lot of the most popular anti-stress colouring books for adults, which are steadily gaining popularity. Adds Kunjal who conducts art therapy sessions, "The earliest



methods range from literally angry or helpless scribbling to drawing insightful mandalas. The latest one is combining mindfulness with doodling and other unstructured arts, like zentangling. It helps train our brain to live in the present without a performance attitude, which needless to say, is very relaxing while also giving beautiful results. Those who take art therapy

find some meaning and value that they carry with them after their sessions. This either helps expedite their therapy process, or find a new tool to aid them in their daily life to meditate and also deal with their emotional ups and downs. Once they learn how to do it, people can practise it on their own."

**Fun, relaxing and helps you de-stress**

It has been proven that geometric shapes and patterns are soothing to the mind and relieve it of anxiety. Whether you are drawing or just colouring, it is considered to be almost like a meditative process since the mind and body are working together to create something unique. Says media professional Devika S, a self-taught artist, who had forgotten all about it till she enrolled in a one-day mandala workshop, "The sessions helped me relieve daily work stress and I realised how happy art makes me feel. I used to sketch a lot when I was in college but after marriage, a baby, and then the rigorous work schedule, all these left me with no time to sketch. However, after the workshop, I went back to my hobby and now I take time out at least twice a week to sketch. It definitely helps retain my sanity and rationality."

Draw and paint without fear If you are drawing on your own, there are no restrictions on your creativity as art therapy does not require you to be an expert in the subject. Even if you are a novice, you can use your imagination and let your mind drift, as your hands draw and the drawing takes shape as per your thoughts. And if you are just colouring, the templates include mandalas, doodles, wildlife images, floral patterns, geometric shapes as well as spiritual templates, which involve your mind and diverts it from all problems. Says psychiatrist Dr Pavan Sonar, "By creating a work of art,

a person is given a means of externalising powerful emotions that have been internalised, especially in stress, anxiety and depression. When a person artistically creates something which he or she feels is 'good or beautiful', it releases the pleasure chemical dopamine in the brain which helps one enjoy and feel better."

Lets you focus on your inner self experience Practising art was a welcome change for a group of kitty party ladies who took a six-session art course, which acted like therapy for them. "The feedback was that they felt amazing since those three hours at each session that they spent were the most peaceful in their lives after a long time. They learnt to slow down the fast pace of life when they would be stressed due to their routine household duties," says Ruchi Chheda, who with her combined background in arts and psychology, has been conducting art sessions for children and adults. "When participants have to create something beautiful on their own, they realise how much pressure they can handle which helps them deal in real life situations too. For many, it goes on to become a part-time hobby, which cuts them off from routine while developing a balance in life. And art is such an activity that one can continue with it even in old age without anybody's guidance."



## Markets rally in early trade tracking global peers

**NEW DELHI.** Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged in early trade on Thursday in tandem with a rally in global markets after lower-than-expected consumer inflation in the US ignited hopes of more rate cuts by the Federal Reserve. The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 595.42 points to 77,319.50 in early trade. The NSE Nifty rallied 178.45 points to 23,391.65. From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Adani Ports, Zomato, UltraTech Cement, State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, ICICI Bank and Bajaj Finserv were the biggest gainers. Nestle, Hindustan Unilever, ITC and Tata Consultancy Services were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong were trading in the positive territory.

US markets rallied on Wednesday. "Wall Street rallied overnight following cooler-than-expected core December CPI data, with the US 10-year benchmark rate falling to 4.68 per cent from its recent high," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,533.49 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Macro indicators from the US suggest that as the swearing-in of Trump nears, the Trump trade has peaked. The decline in US bond yields and the dollar index are indications of this. This downshift in the dollar index and bond yields has been assisted by the lower-than-expected CPI inflation in the US, again igniting hopes of more rate cuts by the Fed this year," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.44 per cent to USD 82.39 a barrel. The 30-share BSE index climbed 224.45 points or 0.29 per cent to settle at 76,724.08 on Wednesday. The Nifty advanced 37.15 points or 0.16 per cent to 23,213.20.

## Kalyan Jewellers shares under bear grip; fall 30 per cent in two weeks

**NEW DELHI.** Despite reporting a healthy outlook and strong business update for the recently concluded December quarter (Q3FY25), shares of Kalyan Jewellers, one of India's largest Jewellery firms, have come under a severe bearish grip.

The scrip has fallen about 30% in two weeks and on Wednesday it plummeted more than 10% intraday before settling 8% lower at Rs550 apiece. The sudden fall in share price has left many surprised. While most analysts believe that investors are booking profit after two years of strong run, a senior analyst said that there can be a possibility of shorting the shares by one or more than one entity based on the information that is not public.

To calm investors' nerves, Kalyan on Tuesday held an investors call. The Kerala-based firm reiterated that its business operations are sound and there is no FIR (First Information Report) filed against any of its promoters. The company attributed the decline in share price to market factors and emphasised that it has no direct influence on these fluctuations.

"With the stock having a stellar run in the past two years, the profit booking is evident from the shareholding pattern and also the monthly fact sheets of mutual fund houses which have been booking profit in the counter," said Akriti Mehrotra, Research Analyst, StoxBox.

## 7 last-minute investment strategies to save taxes before FY 2024-25 ends

**NEW DELHI.** As the financial year 2024-25 draws to a close, many taxpayers find themselves scrambling for ways to save on taxes. While experts recommend early tax planning, there are still some smart last-minute strategies to reduce your tax burden and boost your savings. Let's have a look at seven reliable options to consider:

### INVEST IN EQUITY LINKED SAVINGS SCHEME (ELSS)

ELSS funds are a popular choice for tax-saving investments, offering exemptions of up to Rs 1.5 lakh under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act.

With a minimum investment of just Rs 500 and a three-year lock-in period, ELSS provides an excellent blend of tax benefits and potential financial growth.

### NATIONAL PENSION SYSTEM (NPS)

The NPS not only secures your retirement but also provides tax savings. Contributions are eligible for deductions up to Rs 50,000 under Section 80CCD (1B), in addition to Rs 1.5 lakh under Section 80C. This makes NPS a dual-benefit scheme for wealth accumulation and future pension security.

### PUBLIC PROVIDENT FUND (PPF)

PPF offers a winning combination of tax benefits and risk-free returns. Contributions qualify for deductions under Section 80C, and both interest earned and maturity proceeds are tax-free, making it a favorite for long-term savers.

### UNIT LINKED INSURANCE PLANS (ULIPS)

ULIPs offer the triple advantage of life insurance, investment returns, and tax benefits. With a five-year lock-in period, investments in ULIPs are tax-free, and premiums paid qualify for deductions under Section 80C.

### TAX SAVER FIXED DEPOSITS

Tax Saver FDs come with a five-year lock-in period and provide tax exemptions up to Rs 1.5 lakh under Section 80C. While early withdrawals are restricted, they remain a low-risk option for conservative investors.

### SENIOR CITIZEN SAVINGS SCHEME (SCSS)

For senior citizens, SCSS is a lucrative option with an annual interest rate of 8.2%.

Investments up to Rs 30 lakh are eligible for tax deductions under Section 80C, ensuring both security and returns.

# TRAI proposes cut in broadband rates for public Wi-Fi



**NEW DELHI.** The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has proposed reducing broadband connection rates for Public Data Offices (PDOs) under the PM-WANI scheme. According to TRAI's recommendation, the broadband tariff for PDOs should not exceed twice the rate applicable for retail broadband services. This initiative aims to address the high costs that have hindered the growth of public Wi-Fi hotspots, which have fallen short of the government's targets. PDOs, typically local shops, retailers, and storekeepers are key players in deploying

public Wi-Fi hotspots under the PM-WANI program. "The Authority proposes a revised Draft Telecommunication Tariff (71st Amendment) Order, which prescribes that the broadband tariff (FTTH) for PDOs under the PM-WANI scheme should not exceed twice the tariff applicable for retail broadband (FTTH) services of corresponding capacity offered by service providers," TRAI stated in a press note. Launched in 2020, the PM-WANI scheme aimed to set up public Wi-Fi hotspots across the country through PDOs, which could even include

local kirana shops. The goal was to democratise access to the internet by offering affordable broadband through public hotspots. However, the program has struggled to reach its full potential due to the high cost of leased line connections charged by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to PDOs. As of July 22, 2024, India has seen the deployment of

207,642 PM-WANI hotspots, along with 199 PDO Aggregators (PDOAs) and 111 app providers. Despite this progress, the number of hotspots remains far below the targets set in the NDCP 2018 and the Bharat 6G Vision documents. According to TRAI's calculations, internet leased lines (100 Mbps) cost 40 to 80 times more annually than retail broadband connections (100 Mbps).

## Exports down for the second month in a row in December 2024

**NEW DELHI.** India's merchandise exports contracted 1% year-on-year even as imports rose 4.9% in December 2024, government data released on Wednesday showed. The trade deficit narrowed to \$21.94 billion in December month-on-month compared to \$32 billion in November as gold imports halved to \$4.7 billion. In November 2024, gold imports had surged 186% year-on-year to \$9.9 billion. In December 2023, the merchandise trade deficit was \$18.76 billion. Services exports during the month rose by 3.25% year-on-year, while imports grew 12%. Total trade deficit (merchandise plus services) widened to \$6.78 billion in December 2024 compared to \$2.76 billion in the year-ago period. Merchandise exports during April-December 2024 were \$321.71 billion compared to \$316.65 billion during April-December 2023. Merchandise imports during the period were \$532.48 billion compared to \$506.39 billion a year ago. Merchandise trade deficit during the nine-month period of the current financial year widened to \$210.77 billion from \$189.74 billion a year ago.

## Aditya Birla Fashion to raise USD 500 million equity through preferential issue, QIP

**MUMBAI.** Ahead of its planned demerger into two separate entities and their subsequent listing, Aditya Birla Fashion & Retail has finalised a capital raising plan of USD 500 million through a combination of preferential issuance and qualified institutional placement of shares. The board of the company on Wednesday approved a preferential issue worth USD 275 million, which will be led by the promoter group investing USD 150 million and Fidelity Investments investing USD 125 million. The promoter participation is at a significant premium of 17.5 per cent over Tuesday's closing price.

The preferential issue will be subscribed to by Fidelity Investments through its five funds, the statement added. The board has also approved an equity issuance through the QIP route for up to



USD 225 million, taking the total fund raise to USD 500 million. This combined fundraise will leverage the company helping it aggressively pursue growth strategy through its multiple growth engines.

This capital raise comes ahead of the proposed vertical demerger into two

separately listed entities. The demerger is expected to be completed by the end of the current fiscal. The shareholders' meeting for approving the preferential issuance is scheduled for February 13, and the relevant date for pricing of issuance will be taken as of January 14, 2025. Aditya Birla Fashion had a revenue of Rs 13,996 crore as of March 2024, making it the first billion-dollar pure-play fashion powerhouse in the country.

It operates 4,538 retail stores and its brands are sold through 37,95 multi-brand outlets as well. Its leading brands include Louis Philippe, Van Heusen, Allen Solly and Peter England. Its operational brands include Pantaloon, Style Up, The Collective and Ralph Lauren, among others. It also has ethnic wear brands such as Jaypore, Tasva and Marigold Lane.

## Adani Group shares rise as Hindenburg Research shuts down. Details here

**New Delhi.** Adani Group stocks witnessed a decent rally on Thursday, with shares rising as much as 9% following the announcement that US-based short-selling firm Hindenburg Research has shut down operations.

Adani Power was the top gainer, rising nearly 9% in early trade; Adani Green also climbed nearly 9%. Adani Enterprises, which has pared most of the gains, was up nearly 7.7% as investors reacted to the news of Hindenburg. Adani Total Gas, Adani Energy Solutions, and Adani Ports also rose as much as 6.6% in early trade.

### WHY IS HINDENBURG RESEARCH SHUTTING DOWN?

The rally in Adani Group stocks comes in the wake of an official statement by Hindenburg Research's founder, Nate Anderson, who announced the firm's closure. Anderson shared that the

decision was part of a long-term plan to wind down operations after completing their investigative projects, including those targeting Ponzi schemes.



In January 2023, Hindenburg Research published a scathing report alleging financial irregularities within the Adani Group, leading to a massive decline in the conglomerate's market valuation. While Adani Group has strongly denied

the allegations, the fallout from Hindenburg's report is something that traders and investors will remember for a long time. In his statement, Anderson dismissed any specific trigger for the closure, saying, "There is not one particular threat, health issue, or personal matter, and highlighted a desire to prioritise family, travel, and personal interests after years of intense focus on his career. The timing of Hindenburg's closure coincides with increasing scrutiny from US lawmakers regarding the firm's activities, adding intrigue to the announcement. Anderson also expressed support for his former team, some of whom plan to start their own research ventures. For Adani Group, the end of Hindenburg Research marks the conclusion of a turbulent chapter, as investors turn their focus back to the company's operational performance and growth prospects.

# Who is Nathan Anderson, the brain behind Hindenburg Research

**NEW DELHI.** Nathan Anderson is a prominent figure in the world of finance, best known as the founder of Hindenburg Research, a firm dedicated to uncovering corporate fraud and promoting transparency in the markets. Over the years, Anderson's research and bold reports have led to significant market movements, often causing sharp declines in stock prices of companies accused of wrongdoing. His investigative work has attracted both praise and criticism, cementing his reputation as a key figure in financial watchdog circles.

### Early Life and Education

Anderson grew up in a middle-class family in the United States. His academic journey began at the University of Connecticut, where he studied international business. It was during his college years that Anderson developed a keen interest in global markets and the intricate relationships between businesses and investors. His education equipped him with a solid foundation in finance and business dynamics, which would later influence his career path.

### Career Beginnings

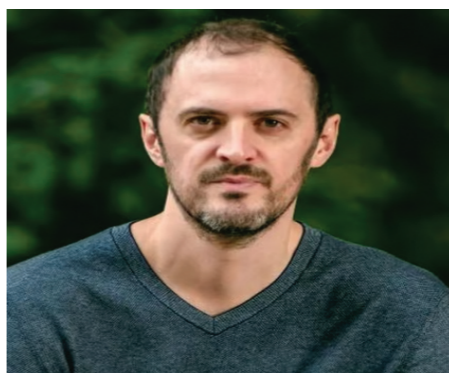
After completing his studies, Anderson

entered the world of finance and data analysis. His first role was as a fact-checker at a financial data company, where he honed his skills in identifying inconsistencies and mistakes. This attention to detail would become crucial in his future career, particularly in his work as an investigative researcher.

Anderson's career also took him to Israel, where he worked for a technology company involved in financial data. This experience broadened his understanding of global markets and gave him valuable insights into how companies can sometimes exploit vulnerabilities. These early experiences laid the groundwork for his later work in identifying corporate fraud.

### The Road to Hindenburg Research

In the early stages of his career, Anderson started a brokerage firm catering to hedge funds. The firm focused on offering due diligence services and fraud assessments. However, by 2017, the firm faced significant financial challenges, amassing just \$58,382 in net capital, and Anderson's landlord initiated eviction



proceedings. This financial strain led Anderson to make a pivotal decision: he decided to forgo his brokerage license and founded Hindenburg Research. The name "Hindenburg Research" was chosen deliberately, drawing inspiration from the 1937 Hindenburg airship disaster. The name symbolised Anderson's aim to uncover companies that were at risk of disaster, whether due to fraud, mismanagement, or deceitful practices. The firm's mission was clear: to act as a watchdog, ensuring that public companies were held accountable and

that investors were equipped with crucial information.

### Advertisement

### Hindenburg Research: A Legacy of Investigations

Under Anderson's leadership, Hindenburg Research became known for its aggressive and thorough investigations into companies, particularly focusing on fraud and corporate malfeasance. The firm's reports, often controversial and bold, have led to significant shifts in stock prices and, in many cases, prompted regulatory investigations. While Anderson's work has earned him a reputation as a financial truth-teller, he has also faced criticism. Some detractors argue that Hindenburg Research profits from the declines in stock prices that result from its reports, questioning the ethics of short-selling and profiting from the downfall of companies. However, Anderson stands firm in his belief that his work is essential for maintaining the integrity of the financial markets and ensuring that investors have access to accurate, honest information.

## EVs will be in focus at Auto Expo

**NEW DELHI.** Electric vehicles (EV) will be taking centre stage in the latest edition of Bharat Mobility Global Expo (BMGE) as leading global and domestic original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) will unveil their much-anticipated offerings for the Indian market. Industry estimates reveal that more than three dozen products, including EVs, will be launched (or unveiled) at India's biennial expo that will start in New Delhi on Friday.

Top carmakers such as Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra and Hyundai will be using the mega show either to launch or display their best offerings. Hyundai will be launching the much anticipated Creta Electric on Friday while Maruti Suzuki has confirmed the unveiling of Maruti Suzuki's first EV, the e-Vitara. Mahindra will showcase its newly launched electric cars XEV 9e and BE 6 at the expo. The homegrown



automaker is also expected to reveal the upcoming XUV700-based electric SUV- XEV 7e. Tata Motors will unveil the production-ready spec of its much-awaited Sierra SUV in both its EV and ICE-powered versions at the expo.

The EV version is expected to feature a 60-80 kWh battery with a claimed range of up to 600 km. The production-spec Harrier EV and Safari EV are also expected to be showcased at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. The expo will also have an aggressive lineup from China's biggest electric car maker - BYD. With reports suggesting that India has approved the participation of executives from Chinese automakers and auto parts manufacturers, one may expect big announcements from Chinese firms at the expo. BYD has said that it aims to make a significant impact by showcasing globally-acclaimed models, along with its existing models.

The event will herald the debut of BYD's latest performance eSUV, the BYD SEALION 7, which will be launched in the first half of CY2025. JSW MG Motor India, a joint venture between India's JSW Group and China's SAIC Motor, is expected to unveil multiple new models, including the Cyberster, the world's fastest MG roadster, and the MG M9, which is a luxury MPV. Vietnam's VinFast, which is set to launch its first car in India, will showcase two electric SUVs - the VF 7 and the VF 9 - at the expo.



NEWS BOX

**Shafali Verma's emotional interview: 'I hid news of being dropped from Indian team from my father, who had suffered a heart attack'**

**New Delhi** . Shafali Verma struggles to hold back tears when recalling the time she was dropped from the India team for the tour of Australia in November. The lead up to the squad announcement hadn't been easy for the 20-year-old Shafali, who was beside her father Sanjeev Verma who had suffered a heart attack only two days ago. With the family already going through a testing period she kept the news hidden for a week from her father, her go-to-person for all topics under the sun. "It's not easy to get over it. I didn't want to reveal because my father had a heart attack about two days before I got dropped from the team. I hid the news from him till he got better. He was in the hospital. I told him a week later," Shafali tells The Indian Express on the sidelines of the Senior Women's One Day Challenger Trophy where her team Team A lost to Team C in a thrilling final at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.

Once he learnt the news, Sanjeev didn't even give himself enough time to recover. Instead, with the Senior Women's One Day Trophy on the horizon, he began taking Shafali for practice. He was her first coach, who used to wake up at 5 and go looking for empty patches in the neighbourhood for practice when she was young. Now, yet again, at Rohtak, Sanjeev ensured her daughter got back on her feet immediately.

Father knows everything, sometimes as kids even we forget our strengths but they don't forget. He reminded me of the workouts and drills from my childhood, and helped me to do the same. When I started, we had these knocking drills - where I play on-drive, straight drive and that's what I worked on. These are my strengths and sometimes you need to work on them to remember how good you are at them," Shafali says.

The result of it is evident in Shafali's game. In the two domestic tournaments she has played since being dropped from the national side, Shafali has amassed 527 and 414 runs in 12 matches, scoring three centuries and five fifties. A strike-rate of 152.31 and 145.26 tells how dominant she is at this level. But what is definitely not to be missed is, Shafali has worked on her game, especially regarding the rotation of strike and more importantly, fitness. "The constant work is on areas like when deliveries don't come to my strengths, how do I take singles, how do I rotate strike, how do I build my innings - this last thing is a work in progress throughout. Everyone knows my strengths, but the constant goal is to mentally get smarter by learning how to build an innings better," she says.

**Rules From Virat Kohli's Captaincy Back? BCCI Planning Big U-Turn Amid Slump In Form: Report**

**New Delhi** . Team India's struggles on the international circuit since the arrival of head coach Gautam Gambhir haven't gone down well with the board. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is reportedly keen to bring back the old rules over fitness tests that were applicable during Virat Kohli's captaincy days. The board had done away with the mandatory yo-yo fitness Test considering the workload and frequency of travel for the players. But, a report has claimed that the rule could be brought back. According to the Times of India, the BCCI medical team has been asked to go back to fitness criteria for selection instead of just focusing on injury prevention because of the gruelling schedule. Yo-yo test mandate was



removed by the previous management to reduce the number of injuries but a U-turn could be on the cards now.

"The board had gone lenient on the players since they are mostly on the road. The focus had shifted to just injury prevention. This has been taken lightly by some players. It is being mooted that a certain fitness level criteria needs to be reintroduced so that complacency doesn't creep in," the paper quoted a source as saying. The BCCI is reportedly looking to make a few more changes to the way the team functions, with the stay of family members and wives of players also set to be curbed.

Officials believe having families present, especially during overseas assignments, can distract players and impact their performance. Additionally, the BCCI has introduced a rule requiring all players to travel with the team at all times. This change addresses concerns over some players opting to travel separately in recent years, which the board views as disruptive to team cohesion and discipline.

**Trossard the hero as Arsenal win North London derby, Newcastle thrash Wolves**

**New Delhi** . Leandro Trossard was the star of the show for Arsenal as he scored the winning goal in their 2-1 comeback victory over Tottenham Hotspur at the Emirates Stadium on Wednesday. The win in the North London derby propelled Arsenal back to second place in the Premier League, reigniting their title aspirations by narrowing the gap to leaders Liverpool to four points.



The Belgian's clinical finish just before halftime capped a spirited Arsenal fightback, lifting the mood at the club after a tumultuous week. A 2-0 home loss to Newcastle United in the League Cup semi-final first leg and a penalty shootout elimination against Manchester United in the FA Cup third round had threatened to derail their season. Adding to their woes, striker Gabriel Jesus was ruled out for the rest of the campaign due to injury. Tottenham struck first in the 25th minute when Son Heung-min's deflected volley wrong-footed Arsenal goalkeeper

David Raya, giving the visitors a lead against the run of play. However, Arsenal responded by keeping up the pressure. Five minutes before halftime, Declan Rice delivered a trademark corner that caused chaos in Tottenham's defence. Gabriel's back-post header deflected off Spurs forward Dominic Solanke for the equaliser. Moments later, Martin Odegaard capitalised on sloppy Tottenham play, threading a perfect pass to Trossard. The winger drilled a precise left-footed shot past Spurs keeper Antonin Kinsky, who might feel he should

have done better. Despite dominating possession after the break, Arsenal missed chances to seal the victory, with both Kai Havertz and Odegaard failing to convert opportunities. Tottenham nearly punished the Gunners for their profligacy in stoppage time when Pedro Porro struck the outside of the post, but Arsenal held firm to claim their third consecutive Premier League derby victory over Spurs their first such streak since 1989.

The win extended Arsenal's unbeaten league run to 11 games, keeping them within striking distance of Liverpool.

**Isak Shines Again in Comfortable Win Over Wolves**

Alexander Isak continued his red-hot scoring streak, netting twice in Newcastle United's commanding 3-0 victory over Wolverhampton Wanderers at St James Park. Anthony Gordon added a third as Newcastle climbed to fourth in the Premier League with 38 points from 21 matches, while Wolves remain in the relegation zone with just 16 points. Isak's brace marked his eighth consecutive Premier League match with a goal, a feat achieved by only three other players in league history: Jamie Vardy,

Ruud van Nistelrooy (twice), and Daniel Sturridge. The Swedish forward now has 15 league goals this season.

Wolves showed glimpses of promise but were undone by defensive frailties. Santiago Bueno thought he had pulled one back, only for his goal to be disallowed for handball. Jorgen Strand Larsen also came agonisingly close, hitting the woodwork twice. Despite these moments, Wolves' inability to shore up their defence continued to cost them dearly.

**Other results**

In other matches, Crystal Palace were able to continue their impressive away form by defeating Leicester City 2-0 at the King Power Stadium. Goals Jean-Philippe Mateta and Marc Guehi in the second half was enough for Palace on the day as the heaped more pressure on the Foxes in their bid to avoid relegation. David Moyes' return to Goodison Park ended on a sour note as Everton remained toothless and struggled for ideas all night.

Ollie Watkins scored the only goal of the match in the 51st minute to help Villa move to 7th place in the points table and level with Manchester City. The result left Everton just one point and two places away from the relegation zone.

**Barcelona thrash Real Betis 5-1 to reach Copa Del Rey quarter-finals**

**New Delhi** FC Barcelona continued their sensational January form on Wednesday, 15 January. After their Spanish Super Cup Final win against arch-rivals Real Madrid, Barcelona booked a place in the Copa Del Rey quarter-finals with a scintillating victory against Real Betis. Teenage sensation Lamine Yamal played a starring role in the 5-1 win, scoring once and providing two assists. Barcelona cruised past their La Liga rivals in a terrific performance which would surely have lifted their confidence after a terrible patch in December 2024.

Barcelona head coach Hansi Flick made several changes to his lineup, opting to rest key players such as Robert Lewandowski, Marc Casado, and Alejandro Balde. However, even with a rotated squad, Barcelona controlled the match from the opening whistle. The hosts wasted no time in taking the lead, with Gavi finishing low into the net from a Dani Olmo assist just three minutes into the



game. Barcelona continued to threaten throughout the first half, with Olmo almost doubling their advantage in the 20th minute, firing a powerful shot from inside the box that cannoned off the post. The second goal came in the 27th minute, as Jules Kounde latched onto a brilliant lobbed pass from Yamal and volleyed it home to make it 2-0.

Despite two goals being ruled offside by VAR, Barcelona were in control, and their third goal came in the 58th minute. A quick counter-attack led by Yamal saw Raphinha finish from close range to make it 3-0. Ferran Torres added a fourth in the 67th minute, converting from an Olmo cross. Yamal capped his excellent performance with a fifth goal in the 75th minute. Though the goal was initially ruled out for offside, the decision was swiftly overturned by VAR, confirming the 17-year-old's strike. Betis managed a late consolation in the 84th minute, as Brazilian forward Vitor Roque converted from the penalty spot. However, the match was already decided, with Barcelona comfortably advancing.

**Do Or Die For Atalanta In Serie A Title Race, Face League Leaders Napoli**

**New Delhi** . Atalanta's bid for a first Serie A title will come in for a huge test on Saturday when the plucky provincial upstarts host league leaders Napoli, while Inter Milan lurk in an intriguing three-way Scudetto battle. Gian Piero Gasperini's side are unbeaten in 15 league matches but three consecutive draws have left the ambitious outfit from Bergamo four points behind Napoli ahead of this weekend's big match at the Gewiss Stadium.



Napoli's visit comes after Atalanta were held to a 1-1 draw by Juventus on Tuesday night, a brilliant match but disappointing result which leaves an unprecedented challenge for a league crown somewhat in the balance.

Gasperini admitted after the Juve draw that Atalanta's Scudetto hopes had reached a "crossroads", as defeat on Saturday night would leave Atalanta some way off the pace. "We're also at a crossroads in the Champions

League, so if we're going to aim for anything then let's aim for that," said Gasperini, whose team also face Sturm Graz and Barcelona in consecutive weeks. A boost for Atalanta comes in the shape of Mateo Retegui who was back with a bang on Tuesday night, nodding home a classic poacher's goal shortly after returning as a

substitute from a hamstring injury. The 25-year-old may start on the bench on Saturday but will be key for Atalanta as they try to both stay in touch with Napoli and get direct qualification to the last 16 of the Champions League.

Napoli meanwhile are on a run of five straight wins coming into the weekend, and Antonio Conte's rebuild job has benefitted from his team having no midweek European football due to the disastrous nature of their title defence last season. Conte has already mentally said goodbye to wing wizard and the star of Napoli's historic third title Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, who is set to move to Paris Saint-Germain in the January transfer window. With Scudetto-winning coach Luciano Spalletti, Kim Min-jae, Victor Osimhen (albeit for now on loan), Piotr Zielinski and now Kvaratskhelia out of the picture, a new era has officially begun at Napoli.

**"He Needs To Learn To...": Ruben Amorim's Clear Message To Alejandro Garnacho Amid Exit Rumours**

**New Delhi**. Ruben Amorim has said it is "clear" that Alejandro Garnacho can have a bright future at Manchester United despite reports linking him with an Old Trafford exit during the January transfer window. Sunday's FA Cup match at Arsenal, which United won in a penalty shootout, was the first time Garnacho had made Amorim's starting XI since the 3-2 home defeat to Nottingham Forest on December 7. During that time the 20-year-old, who has eight goals in 30 appearances this season, had been left out of the squad entirely for the Manchester derby, while speculation has increased that United could be open to selling the academy product to free up funds.

"He has talent. He needs to learn to play in a different position." Amorim, whose 15th-placed side host Premier League bottom club Southampton on Thursday, added:



But United have distanced themselves from suggestions that Garnacho could leave this month despite links with Napoli. When asked Wednesday if the Argentina international has the qualities to thrive at Old Trafford, Amorim said: "That is clear."

"He's finding the best way to play in this system. He's improving during training. He started the last game. Let's see tomorrow (against Southampton)." United showed grit in Sunday's shootout win over Arsenal after being reduced to 10

men when Diogo Dalot was sent off, a week after a hard-fought 2-2 draw at Premier League leaders Liverpool. "I think we want to be a team that is hard to play," said Amorim. "It's like I had this feeling, especially at home in the last games, that we were easy to play. And we have to be honest with that."

"So if we face the competition the right way, we will be tough to beat for any opponent. So that's what I wanted. That's what I felt in the last two games." And the Portuguese manager singled out Harry Maguire for praise. The former captain clocked 104 minutes against Arsenal despite suffering from illness and missing training on the Friday beforehand and Amorim said that was the sort of attitude he wants to see across the whole squad. "I think we have to praise Harry more than me," he said. "He's doing a great job. He was sick in the last game. He was dead in the end. That's what I want from every player. He has to continue to do a good job."

**Australian Open: Iga Swiatek continues streak, Emma Raducanu beats Anisimova**

**New Delhi**. Iga Swiatek put on a dominant display to breeze past Rebecca Sramkova into Round 3 of the Australian Open and keep her unique streak going while Emma Raducanu secured a hard-fought win against Amanda Anisimova on Thursday, January 16. Swiatek and Raducanu will now square off in the 3rd round of the competition. Swiatek, who is aiming to continue her good run of form, thrashed Sramkova 6-0, 6-2 to keep her unique streak in grand slams going. The win on Thursday meant that the 23-year-old is the only player to make it to the 3rd round or more in every single grand slam this decade. This was a run that started in the Australian Open 2020, where she reached the 4th round. The Polish star was dominant in all departments against Sramkova and was able to wrap up the win in just one hour. Swiatek was relatively untested in the first set,



apart from the second game where she was trailing 0-40 at one point. The Polish star went on to win 7 straight games before Sramkova was able to get one under her belt. There was a bit more fight from the Slovakian star in the second set as she was able to tie it at 2-2. However, Swiatek proved to be too good on the day as she was able to



convert 5 out of the 6 break points available to her and have a first serve win percentage of 83. **Raducanu sets up Swiatek clash** Raducanu was made to work hard by her close friend Anisimova to make it to Round 3 of the Australian Open for the very first time. The match lasted close to 2 hours as both

women exchanged breaks at the beginning of the first set.

Raducanu found herself in trouble, trailing 1-3, before she was able to tap into her arsenal and win the next 5 games.

The second set was even tougher for Raducanu as she was trailing 0-3, before breaking Anisimova to make it all square. She would break the American once again to make it 4-4 before serving her way into the lead. But Anisimova was determined on the day and pushed the game to 5-5. Raducanu forced two errors from the American to take the lead and ultimately broke her to secure the win. In the other matches, Ons Jabeur overcame a stern test from Camila Osorio 7-5, 6-3 to make it to the next round. The 9th seed Daria Kasatkina had an easy day at the office as she defeated China Yafan Wang 6-2, 6-0 to setup a clash with the winner of the Putintseva and Zhang match.



# Every fourth child

## has stunted growth in India's 10 most-populous cities: report

**The prevalence of stunting ranged from 14.8 per cent in Chennai to an alarming 30.6 per cent in Delhi, revealed the study**

Former MP Sachin Pilot said, "We now have to take up this issue on a war-footing just like the way we eradicated polio. This has great economic consequences on the already have-nots."



Every fourth child in the 10 most-populous Indian cities has stunted growth and development due to malnutrition, according to a report released on Wednesday.

Across the 10 most populous cities, the prevalence of stunting is 22.3 per cent and of being underweight (low weight for age) is 21.4 per cent among under five children. Overall, 13.8 per cent children below five years are wasted (low weight for height) and 15.7 per cent newborns have low birth weight at less than 2.5 kg.

In an example of 'double burden of malnutrition' (coexistence of undernutrition and obesity or diet-related non-communicable diseases), 2.4 per cent of children were found to be overweight.

The prevalence of overweight children ranges from from 0.7 per cent in Hyderabad to 3.7 per cent in Chennai, higher among children from the highest wealth quintile.

The Urban HUNGaMA (Hunger and Malnutrition) Survey Report was released by the Citizens Alliance, led by young parliamentarians, and the Naandi Foundation on Wednesday. The survey is based on a systematic sampling methodology covering 12,000 households and was conducted during April-July 2014 across Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Pune, Surat, Ahmedabad and Jaipur.

The city-wise data shows that Chennai fares relatively better across all three indicators. The prevalence of stunting ranged from 14.8 per cent in Chennai to an alarming 30.6 per cent in Delhi. Mumbai has the highest proportion of wasted children at 19 per cent, Jaipur has the lowest at 10.8 per cent; Hyderabad has the highest number of underweight children at 25.8 per cent and Chennai the least at 13.5 per cent.

The study shows that overall malnutrition is significantly higher among children whose mothers

had five years of schooling or less and among households in the lowest wealth quintile. Rohini Mukherjee, who led the survey team for Naandi Foundation, said that the existing NHFS 4 (National Family Health Survey) district-level data does not have disaggregated data for urban and rural areas within each district.

"We therefore had to undertake a fresh survey covering a random sample of 12,286 mothers and 14,616 children under five years," she said. Manoj Kumar of Naandi Foundation said that the three underlying reasons for the prevalence of malnutrition are "the poor status of women, prevalence of household poverty and lack of government service delivery centres." BJP MP Poonam Mahajan, who was present at the release, said while it was always known that malnutrition was chronic in districts such as Palghar and Thane, it was shocking that even Mumbai fared so poorly.

### Hot tea ups esophageal cancer risk in smokers, drinkers

Participants in the study who drank high-temperature tea, consumed alcohol excessively and smoked had an esophageal cancer risk more than five times greater than those who had none of those three habits.



Drinking tea when it is too hot may increase the risk of esophageal cancer in those who smoke cigarettes and consume alcohol daily, a new study warns.

However, tea aficionados do not have much reasons to worry as the researchers found that in the absence of both excessive alcohol consumption and smoking, daily tea drinking was not associated with esophageal cancer risk.

"Drinking hot tea contributed to cancer only when it clustered with smoking and drinking alcohol excessively," lead author Jun Lv, Professor at Peking University in Beijing was quoted as saying by CNN.

Esophageal cancer kills approximately 400,000 people every year, according to the International Agency for Research on Cancer, cancer research arm of the World Health Organization.

For the study, the researchers followed for about 10 years 456,155 participants aged 30 to 79 in China.

Participants in the study who drank high-temperature tea, consumed alcohol excessively and smoked had an esophageal cancer risk more than five times greater than those who had none of those three habits, said the study published in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption—both of which are known to cause esophageal cancer—as well as the chemical compounds and adverse thermal effect of hot tea, considerably complicate the association between tea drinking and cancer risk, the study suggests.

The researchers found a synergistic association between hot tea drinking with excessive alcohol consumption or smoking and the risk for esophageal cancer.



The findings of the study support the notion that yoga exercise might serve as an effective lifestyle intervention to reduce chronic inflammation and manage aspects of metabolic syndrome, in addition to help managing blood pressure.

## Yoga may help manage BP, Blood sugar levels: study

Practicing yoga may reduce chronic inflammation and help regulate blood pressure and blood sugar levels, a study has found. Published in the *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports*, the study showed that one year of yoga training decreased pro-inflammatory adipokines and increased an anti-inflammatory adipokine in adults with metabolic syndrome and high-normal blood pressure.

"These findings help to reveal the response of adipokines to long-term yoga exercise, which

underpins the importance of regular exercise to human health," said senior author Dr. Parco Siu, of The University of Hong Kong. Adipokines are signaling proteins released by fat tissue. The findings support the notion that yoga exercise might serve as an effective lifestyle intervention to reduce chronic inflammation and manage aspects of metabolic syndrome.



## Acne linked to increased depression risk Study

Researchers found that the risk for major depression was highest within one year of acne diagnosis — a 63 per cent higher risk compared with individuals without acne — and decreased thereafter.



People diagnosed with acne may be at a significantly increased risk of developing major depression within five years, according to scientists who analysed one of the largest electronic medical record databases in the world.

Researchers found that the risk for major depression was highest within one year of acne diagnosis — a 63 per cent

higher risk compared with individuals without acne — and decreased thereafter.

The results indicate that it is critical that physicians monitor mood symptoms in patients with acne and initiate

prompt treatment for depression or seek consultation from a

psychiatrist when needed. "This study highlights an important link between skin disease and mental illness," said Isabelle Vallerand, of the University of Calgary in Canada. "Given the risk of depression was highest in the period right after the first time a patient presented to a physician for acne concerns, it shows just how impactful our skin can be towards our overall mental health," said Vallerand, lead author of the study published in the *British Journal of Dermatology*.

"For these patients with acne, it is more than a skin blemish — it can impose significant mental health concerns and should be taken seriously," she said.