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Congress releases manifesto for Delhi polls, promises to conduct caste census if elected

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi, Jan. 29: Days before the Delhi polls, the Congress on Wednesday launched its manifesto, prom-

lakh and free ration kits were also among the party's guarantees. The manifesto, which has been divided into 22 focus areas, was unveiled by Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav. He was flanked by Congress communications incharge Jairam Ramesh. The manifesto also promises financial assistance of Rs 8,500 per month for one year to educated unemployed youth. The party also proposed to launch 100 Indira canteens across the city that would offer meals at Rs 5. Ramesh targeted the BJP-led central government and AAP-led Delhi government over the issue of pollution and said both of them have failed to tackle the crisis. Delhi goes to polls on February 5. The results will be announced on February 8.

Maharashtra minister Nitesh Rane demands ban on burqa at board exams

ST Correspondent Mumbai, Jan. 29: Maharashtra minister and BJP leader Nitesh Rane on Wednesday sought a ban on wearing burqa during the next month's Std 10th and 12th examinations of the state board. In a letter to school education minister Dada Bhuse, he said allowing girl candidates to wear a burqa inside examination halls could lead to malpractices and also create security issues. "Students appearing for the 10th and 12th board exams should not be permitted to wear a burqa. If necessary, female police officers or female staff should be appointed to conduct checks. These exams



are crucial for students' future, and they must be conducted transparently, free from any malpractices such as cheating. "If examinees are allowed to wear burqas, it will be difficult to determine whether electronic devices or other means are being used to cheat. In case of any untoward incident, it could lead to social and law-and-order issues, affecting many students," said the BJP leader. Rane, MLA from Kankavli, holds fisheries and ports development portfolios. The school education ministry was yet to respond to his demand, officials said. Maharashtra Secondary School Certificate exam for Class 10 will be held from February 21. The Higher Secondary Certificate exam for Class 12 will start from February 11.

Complaint filed against Telangana CM Revanth Reddy for Formula E cancellation

New Delhi, Jan 28: Ex-IPS officer and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader RS Praveen Kumar filed a formal complaint against CM Revanth Reddy for Formula-E cancellation. A former Indian Police Service (IPS) officer and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader has lodged a formal complaint against Telangana chief minister A Revanth Reddy. The complaint lodged against the CM alleged "criminal breach of trust" and substantial financial loss to the state exchequer due to "abrupt" cancellation of the Formula E race event in Hyderabad, India Today reported. According to the complaint filed by RS Praveen Kumar, the state capital was positioned as a global hub for "e-mobility and sustainable innovation". The city was hosting its first Formula E race in February 2023.

Tragedy at Maha Kumbh extremely saddening: PM Modi

Simmi Kaur Babbar New Delhi, Jan. 29: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday offered his deepest condolences to the devotees who lost their family members in the stampede at the Maha Kumbh, describing the tragedy as extremely saddening. In a post on X, he said the local administration in Prayagraj is giving all possible help to the victims and wished a speedy recovery to the injured. He said, "I have been speaking to Chief Minister Yogi ji and am in constant touch with the state government." A stampede broke out at the Sangam area of the Maha Kumbh early Wednesday as crores of pilgrims jostled for space to take a holy dip on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya. Several casualties are feared. The incident took place between 1 am and 2 am when some devotees climbed over the barricades at Akhara marg, Adityanath said. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday held a high-level meeting at his residence here on Wednesday after a stampede at the

Maha Kumbh and said some people were "seriously injured" in the incident. The situation is under control now, even though the crowd pressure remains, he told reporters here after the meeting. Adityanath said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union ministers Amit Shah and J P Nadda called him to take stock of the situation in Prayagraj. The chief minister said around 9-10 crore people are in Prayagraj and appealed to devotees to take a dip in the Ganga at their nearest ghats and not try to reach the Sangam Nose to avoid overcrowding. Multiple casualties were feared after the stampede at the Sangam as millions of pilgrims turned up for a holy bath on 'Mauni Amavasya', the most significant ritual at the Maha Kumbh. This year, a rare celestial align-

ment called 'Triveni Yog' is occurring after 144 years, amplifying the spiritual significance of the day. The 'Amrit Snan' on 'Mauni Amavasya' is expected to draw around 10 crore pilgrims. Security personnel and rescue workers were seen carrying the injured on stretchers. People's belongings, including blankets and bags, lay strewn around. After the

chaos subsided, some searched frantically for their family members while others fanned and offered water to those who were trapped in the crowd. "Between 1 am to 2 am, at the Akhara route where arrangements were made for the Amrit Snan of the Akharas, several devotees jumped over the barricades and some were critically injured. They were immediately rushed to hospital," Adityanath said. "All the injured are undergoing treatment and we hope and pray for their quick recovery," he said. "Since the start of the auspicious Mauni Amavasya period, the local administration had been busy trying to ensure safe Amrit Snan for the devotees who have converged here from all over," he said. Adityanath said PM Modi has called him four times so far to enquire about the well-being of the devotees. Union Home Minister Amit Shah,



Akhilesh Yadav to join Arvind Kejriwal for roadshow on Jan 30

New Delhi, Jan 28: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav along with his party MPs will campaign for the AAP candidates ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls on February 5, the Arvind Kejriwal-led party said on Tuesday. Yadav will join AAP supremo Kejriwal in a roadshow in Rithala on January 30. Several other MPs of the Uttar Pradesh-based party, including Igra Hasan from Kairana, will also campaign for the Aam Aadmi Party. The AAP and the SP are part of the INDIA bloc which also includes the Congress. However, the SP leaders will only be campaigning for the AAP which is pitted against the Congress and the BJP in Delhi. The move reflects further alienation of the Congress within the Indian Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) led by it during the Lok Sabha polls last year. The AAP and the Congress - sharing four and three of the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi - had fought together against the BJP in last year's general elections but are pitted against each other in the Assembly polls. Fissures appeared in the opposition alliance last year when several parties in it supported the idea of TMC supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee heading the grouping, currently led by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge.

RG Kar case: SC asks hospitals to regularise doctors' absence during protests

Navdeep Singh Sahni New Delhi, Jan. 29: The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed hospitals, including AIIMS New Delhi, to regularise the unauthorised absence of doctors who were part of protests against the rape and murder of a doctor at RG Kar Hospital, Kolkata. A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar took note of the submissions of a doctors' body that some hospitals had regularised the absence of the doctors following its August 22, 2024 order but a few others, including AIIMS Delhi, decided to treat the period as leave of absence. "We deem it appropriate to clarify that if protesting workers had joined work post the Supreme Court order then their absence shall be regularised and not be treated as absence from duty. This is

issued in peculiar facts and circumstances of the cases and is not laying down any precedent," the CJI said. The

directions. Mehta said AIIMS, Delhi, decided to treat the period as leave of absence availed by the doctors. "By an earlier order, it was stated that no coercive step would be taken against the protesting doctors for protests till the date of the order. Pursuant to this some of the AIIMS such as Kalyani and Gorakhpur and the PGI Chandigarh have regularised the absence. However some other institutes have treated the said period as if doctors were on leave," said the bench. On August 22, last year, the bench made an impassioned appeal to the protesting doctors across the country, asking them to resume work. Observing "justice and medicine" couldn't be stopped, it directed no coercive action would be taken against doctors once they resumed work. The heinous crime triggered nationwide outrage and prolonged protests in West Bengal.



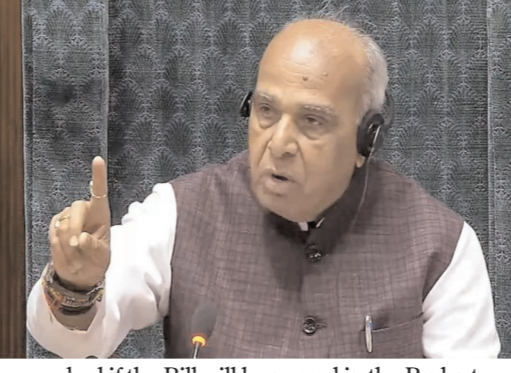
JPC adopts amended Waqf bill as Opposition slams its provisions as 'unconstitutional'

Tejinder Kaur Babbar New Delhi, Jan. 29: The Joint Committee of Parliament scrutinising the Waqf (Amendment) Bill on Wednesday adopted its report and the amended version of the proposed law with a majority vote, the panel's chairperson Jagdambika Pal said. Opposition members voiced their strong criticism of the adopted Bill, which was approved with 15-11 votes, alleging that it was "unconstitutional" and will destroy the Waqf board by allowing for the government's interference in the religious matters of Muslims. Pal, however, claimed that many of the amendments approved by the committee have addressed several concerns of opposition members as well, adding the Bill once enacted will help Waqf board in discharging its duties transparently and more effectively. For the first time, "pasmanda" (backward) Muslims, the poor, women and orphans have been included among beneficiaries of the Waqf, endowment made by

Muslims for charitable religious purposes, he added. The seasoned BJP member said the report will be submitted to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday. It is now for him and Parliament to decide the next course of action, he told reporters when

consulted stakeholders to arrive at its conclusions. Opposition MPs, including from the Congress, DMK, TMC, AAP and the AIMM, maintained their sharp criticism of the committee's functioning under Pal and the approved version of the Bill. Some of them submitted their dissent and others will be doing so by the 4 PM deadline on Wednesday. They said the report running into 655 pages was circulated to them on Tuesday night, and they were given little time to study it and prepare their dissent. TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee claimed the observation and recommendations of the committee are "wholly perverse". Owaisi said the proposed law will destroy Waqf boards and make way for the government's interference in its functioning. Congress MP Syed Naseer Hussain slammed the amendments as "unconstitutional", alleging that the Bill is aimed at targeting minorities. DMK's A Raja echoed

their view and said his party will challenge the proposed law in the Supreme Court once Parliament, where the BJP-led NDA has a comfortable majority in both Houses, passes it. Rejecting the criticism, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya said the proposed law aims to bring transparency and accountability in Waqf boards. This will empower the Muslim community, he claimed. While the adopted Bill accepts the government's stand of removing the "Waqf by user" clause in the existing law, it has added that no cases will be reopened against such properties on a retrospective basis provided these are not in dispute or belong to the government. In its 655-page draft report, the Joint Committee on Waqf Amendment Bill made it clear that the provisions to omit the 'Waqf by user' definition of a Waqf property will be with prospective effect. It has also endorsed the government's move to include non-Muslims in Waqf boards, saying they can be "beneficiaries, parties to disputes, or otherwise interested in Waqf matters", sources said on Tuesday.



Maha Kumbh stampede: Cong slams Centre & Yogi govt.

Nareish Malhotra New Delhi, Jan. 29: The Congress on Wednesday hit out at the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh government over the stampede at the Sangam, with Rahul Gandhi saying that mismanagement and administration's special focus on VIP movement instead of common devotees were responsible for this tragic incident. Gandhi also said "VIP culture" should be reined in and the government should make better arrangements to fulfil the needs of common devotees at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. Multiple casualties were feared after a stampede broke out at the Sangam on Wednesday amid the ongoing Maha Kumbh, as millions of pilgrims turned up for a holy bath on Mauni Amavasya, officials said. In view of the incident, the akharas called off their traditional 'Amrit Snan' for Mauni Amavasya, even as devotees in large numbers continued to take a dip at Sangam and other ghats in the Mela area. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the news of "many people losing their lives" and many people getting injured due to the stampede on the banks of the Tirthraj Sangam during the Maha Kumbh is extremely heartbreaking.

"Our deepest condolences to the families of the devotees and we wish for the speedy recovery of the injured," he said. "Half-baked arrangements, VIP movement, paying more attention to self-promotion and mismanagement are responsible for this. Such arrangements despite spending thousands of crores of rupees are condemnable," the Congress chief said in a post in Hindi on X. "Many important 'shahi snans' are still left, so the central and state governments should wake up now, and improve the system so that such unpleasant incidents do not happen in future," Kharge said. "The arrangements for accommodation, food, first aid and movement of devotees etc. Should be expanded and VIP movement should be reined in. This is what our saints and sages also want," he said. Kharge urged Congress workers to help the victims in every possible way. Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said the news of "many people's death and many getting injured due to stampede in Prayagraj Maha Kumbh is extremely saddening". "I express my deepest condolences to the bereaved families and hope for the speedy

recovery of the injured. "Mismanagement and administration's special focus on VIP the needs of common devotees," Gandhi asserted. He urged Congress workers and leaders to help the affected families. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also expressed sadness over the incident. "May God grant peace to the departed souls. My deepest condolences to the bereaved families. I wish for the speedy recovery of the injured," she said in a post on X. The devotees visiting the Kumbh area were constantly complaining of the severe chaos but no attention was paid and administrative negligence was observed, she said in a post on her WhatsApp channel. Priyanka Gandhi appealed to the government to airlift the injured and arrange for their immediate treatment. "The deceased should be identified and sent to their families and immediate arrangements should be made keeping the convenience of the devotees paramount. The devotees are requested to perform the bath with patience and peace," she said. In a post in Hindi on X, Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Kherra said, "The death of many devotees in the stampede during Kumbh bath in Prayagraj is very saddening.



Police can't serve notices to accused through WhatsApp or electronic modes

New Delhi, Jan 28: The Supreme Court has said police cannot serve notices to accused persons through WhatsApp or other electronic modes under the Criminal Procedure Code or Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal directed all states and union territories (UT) to issue appropriate directions to police for issuing notices under Section 41A of CrPC, 1973 or Section 35 of BNSS, 2023 only through the mode of service permitted under the law. "All the states/UTs must issue a standing order to their respective police machinery to issue notices under Section 41-A of CrPC, 1973/Section 35 of BNSS, 2023 only through the mode of service as prescribed under the CrPC, 1973/BNSS, 2023," the bench said on January 21. The top court went on, "It is made amply clear that service of notice through WhatsApp or other electronic modes cannot be considered or recognised as an alternative or substitute to the mode of service recognised and prescribed under the CrPC, 1973/BNSS, 2023." The direction came when the court accepted a suggestion by senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, appointed amicus curiae in the matter.

## NEWS BOX

## ASI conducts 3D survey of Vijaya Vittala Temple

**HOSAPETE.** The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Hampi Circle, began the 3D survey of Vijaya Vittala Temple. The work is being carried out for the conservation of the monument in association with a private agency. Over the next few days, officials will get full digital information of the monument, and tourists are banned from entering areas when the survey is being conducted. The officials are using drones and other advanced technology to know if there is any damage to the monument.

This is for the first time that such advanced technology is being used to assess the health of the monument. The work is important to preserve the temple that was built by the Vijayanagara empire between 13th and 16th century. A trial of the 3D survey was conducted last year. A senior ASI official, requesting anonymity, said the Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) and Light Detection and Ranging (Lidar) survey are being done at Vijaya Vittala Temple gopura for creating a 3D model. This will help the officials to get a horizontal positioning of the structure and give a 3D model of the Gopura. It will be accurate down to a centimetre.

This will not only reduce human effort, but also give a detailed picture of the structure. This survey also provides the exact condition of the gopura to plan the repair work. "We are doing this with the help of an agency from Bengaluru. This is the first time ASI is using this technology in Hampi.

## Deaf games medallists say TN yet to recognise their triumphs

**CHENNAI.** Eleven of the 12 medallists from Tamil Nadu, who won at the Asia Pacific Deaf Games 2024, held at Kuala Lumpur, and their parents, submitted a written complaint to the State Commissionerate for Welfare of the Differently Aabled, alleging discrimination against deaf sportspersons, on Tuesday. N Salamath — mother of Sameeha Barvin, who bagged gold and silver in 100m hurdles and long jump — said the state has not contacted the athletes since their return last December. "Even if not for cash awards, all they ask is for some recognition from the state government. We have been trying to get an appointment to meet the sports minister, but in vain. Just a photo with him or the chief minister would boost their morale," she said. Salamath said they have engaged a Tirunelveli-based coach at their own expense for Sameeha and she shuttles between coaching there and her college in Chennai. Poonkodi — mother of Subashri (17), who won gold in 400m and silver in 100m — said they travelled from Villupuram to see if her daughter could meet Sports Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin. Poonkodi and her husband run a grocery shop in Villupuram. "Nobody has even congratulated them. We cannot stay in the city as it's an additional expenditure, so we keep travelling to and from Villupuram to see if we can get any assistance from the state government," she said. Padmini Chennapragada, a disability sport researcher, said deaf sportspersons are often treated like they do not matter and that their achievements are often overlooked since.

## Karnataka HC: Getting maintenance through court not extortion

**BENGALURU.** Getting maintenance through a court order does not amount to extortion, the Karnataka High Court said while quashing the extortion and other charges levelled by a man against his wife. "There cannot be an offence of extortion when the wife initiates proceedings for maintenance and the court concerned grants it.

Those are legal proceedings, pursuant to which the husband is legally bound to pay unless it is altered or modified by a superior court," said Justice M Nagaprasanna while allowing the petition filed by the woman



questioning the crime registered by her husband, who is from Mangaluru. The court allowed both the petitions filed by the husband and wife questioning the crime and counter crime registered by each other in Mangaluru and Bengaluru in 2023 following a matrimonial dispute.

The petitioners were married in 2007 and their relationship strained in 2020 after the husband received a message through Facebook that his wife had a relationship with her ex-boyfriend. Then the wife filed a complaint against her husband on charges of domestic violence and others.

Later, the husband also filed a complaint against his wife including on the charges of extortion.

## National Waterways from Akkulam to Chettuva likely to open soon

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.**

The state's ambitious National Waterways project is set to attain a significant milestone with the commissioning of a 235-km stretch from Akkulam in Thiruvananthapuram to Chettuva in Thrissur soon. Official sources said the stretch will be made navigable and commissioned by April or May this year. "The actual deadline was March 2025. Unfortunately, the work was halted multiple times at Varkala owing to local dispute. Now, the work is progressing rapidly at Kadinankulam and Varkala. Widening of the canal is on at five locations in Varkala. We hope to complete the work in the next two months," a source said. An official with the Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Department told TNIE that economic development opportunities will be explored to tap tourism, cargo movement and water transportation. "Tourism enhancement will be key. We have wrapped up economic development opportunity studies in certain areas and the same will be pitched at the upcoming investors meet in Kochi. The role of private players will be essential to tap



the project's tourism potential and boost local economy," said the official. The department has identified around five such potential locations between Akkulam and Kollam. "Serious discussions are on to acquire these land parcels and implement development projects under PPP mode," said an official.

The ambitious West Coast Waterway project aims to develop the 590-km-long canal system running parallel to the state's coastline from Kovalam to Bekal. The project, designed to interconnect Kerala's backwaters and rivers, aims to enhance transportation, trade, and tourism in the state by 2026. An official with the

Kerala Waterways Infrastructure Ltd (KWIL), the special purpose vehicle roped in by the government for the National Waterways project, said tourism will benefit the most once 235-km stretch of National Waterways is commissioned. "The State Water Transport Department can introduce boat services linking Akkulam and Kollam.

Water metro is another possibility which is being explored in Ashtamudi Lake," he said. Kollam Mayor Prasanna Earnest said Ashtamudi Lake was one of the 18 locations across the country approved by the Union government for the water metro project. "We have been working on it for several months and are expecting project allocation in the upcoming budget. A combined inspection was done by the Kochi Metro Rail Ltd and NATPAC, and they identified Ashtamudi Lake feasible for the project," said Prasanna told TNIE. The plan is to introduce a water metro from Kollam to Munroe Island and from there to Varkala.

## NATCO Cancer Care Centre to get additional block

**GUNTUR.** The NATCO Cancer Care Centre at Guntur Government General Hospital (GGH) has been receiving an overwhelming response from thousands of patients for offering exceptional services and top-notch amenities. To address the rising needs of cancer patients, and extend the services, an additional building with 150 beds will be soon constructed.

Patients from the neighbouring districts, including Prakasam, Nellore, Krishna, NTR and Eluru have been choosing this facility for cancer treatment. Sri Nannapaneni Lokadityudu Seetaravamma Smaraka NATCO Cancer Centre is the first comprehensive cancer facility in Andhra Pradesh. Over 14,648 patients availed the outpatient services in 2023, and 16,359 in 2024. Over 11,300 patients received radiotherapy, and 4,785 patients received chemotherapy sessions in 2023 while, 9,165, and 5,644 patients received radiotherapy, and chemotherapy treatment respectively in 2024. A



total of 753 surgeries were performed in 2023, and 823 in 2024.

NATCO Coordinator Ashok Kumar said, "In response to the growing patient load, the government suggested the NATCO Trust to expand the Centre's infrastructure and capacity. In October 2023, NATCO submitted a proposal for additional land, which was approved through Government Order (GO) number 20 dated January 11, 2024. The government allotted

1,254 square metres adjacent to the existing centre. An MoU was signed on February 27, 2024, for the construction of an additional block spanning 30,000 sq.ft to accommodate 150 more beds, increasing the total to 260. The State government is also procuring an 18-crore PET-CT scanner, set to be operational by April 2025.

Union Minister of State for Rural Development and Communications Dr Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar will lay the foundation stone for the new block on January 30. The centre, located on 1.22 acres in Guntur GGH premises, was set up with state-of-the-art infrastructure, including an ICU department, ten outpatient wards, a comprehensive lab, surgical operating rooms, and a conference hall.

In the past three years, the services available at the hospital expanded to radiation, medical, and surgical oncology, nuclear medicine, and radiotherapy.

## Protector of Similipal, Bhawani dies of old age at 62

**BARIPADA.** Bhawani, the trained female elephant engaged in protection of Similipal National Park for nearly two decades, died due to old age-related ailments on Tuesday. And with her, the troika of forest protectors brought from Karnataka more than 20 years back has passed. The 62-year-old kunki elephant was stationed at Hatigarh camp in Jenbil forest range after being retired from service in 2018. Regional chief conservator of forests (RCCF) and field director of Similipal Tiger Reserve Prakash Chand Gogineni said Bhawani's molar teeth were worn out while her digestive system was not properly functioning for the last one year due to old age. "She was being fed with a cooked concentrate feed mixture, boiled vegetables besides multi-vitamin and calcium supplements. Her digestive system deteriorated gradually and she died at 6.08 am on Tuesday," informed Gogineni. The elephant was under constant observation of the veterinary assistant surgeon of STR, he added.

Bhawani was brought from Karnataka in 2001 and deployed in Similipal to prevent 'Akhand Shikar', the annual mass hunting ritual practised by tribals ahead of Pana Sankranti festival. The elephant gave birth to Rajkumar in October 2002 and Shibani in December 2008. Bhawani was initially stationed at Gudgudia elephant camp along with other captive jumbos of Similipal. She was later shifted to Hatigarh camp. Retired DFO Arun Kumar Patra told that he along with the then research officer of STR and five forest staff went to Karnataka in 2001 to bring the trained bull elephant Mahendra and two females Bhawani and Sovi. The three trained elephants were engaged to prevent Akhand Shikar in Similipal and protect the sanctuary from timber mafia and poachers. "Due to the presence of these elephants, poachers and other wildlife criminals.

## Learning levels of Class 3 students back to pre-Covid level: ASER report

**CHENNAI.** The learning levels of students in Tamil Nadu have returned to pre-COVID standards among Class 3 students, while Class 5 students have shown substantial improvement, according to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024 which was released on Tuesday.

The survey was conducted in 876 villages in 30 districts, covering 17,337 households and 28,984 children aged 3 to 16. However, the survey excluded Thoothukudi due to logistical issues, while the data from Kancheepuram was insufficient. The ASER basic survey is conducted every alternate year by the Pratham Foundation with smaller surveys focusing on various other dimensions of learning conducted in the intervening years. Only rural areas were covered in the survey.

Among Class 3 students, 12% (13.2 in government schools and 9.4 in private schools) were able to read Class 2 level text in 2024, an improvement from 4.8% in 2022 and 10.2% in 2018. Similarly, 27.7% (27.6% in government schools and 28.2 in private schools) of students could perform subtraction in 2024, compared to 11.2% in 2022 and 25.9%



in 2018. "The gains in government schools were high compared to private schools, with an increase in 8.5 percentage points in reading and 18.3 percentage points in arithmetic between 2022 and 2024. Tamil Nadu recorded an improvement of 16.5 percentage points in arithmetic during this period, outperforming neighbouring states and the national average," said G Kumaresan, ASER associate. For Class 5 students, 35.6% were able to read Class 2 level text in 2024, up from 25.2% in 2022, though still below the 40.8% recorded in 2018. Similarly, 20.7% of Class 5 students could solve division problems in 2024, an improvement from 14.9% in 2022 but short of the 25.6% recorded in 2018.

## Clear overgrown hyacinth from Papparapatti lake, Dharmapuri locals urge officials

**DHARMAPURI.** Residents of Papparapatti town have urged the town panchayat to clear up Papparapatti lake which is filled with overgrown water hyacinth and has been impacting water storage. Papparapatti is a key town panchayat in Pennagaram taluk. It houses over 20,000 households with a large portion of the population relying on agriculture as a key source of livelihood and their key water source has been the Papparapatti lake, which is located along Palacode. It also feeds dozens of other lakes including Amma Lake, Kanjan Lake, and others before reaching the Sogathur Lake in Dharmapuri taluk located over 20 km away. However, this lake is infested with overgrown water hyacinths. The government has also sanctioned Rs 2.45 crore to clear the weeds and improve the lake. However, so far no initiative has been taken.

D Senthambizhan, a resident of Papparapatti, told TNIE, "Nearly a year ago, Rs 2.45 crore was sanctioned under the Tamil Nadu Urban Development fund to clear



the lake and improve its canals. However, so far no initiative has been taken by the town panchayat. At present because of the overgrown water hyacinth, the entire storage capacity of the lake is impacted. Moreover, the canals through which water from Jarhalav Lake is flowing are also blocked. Hence, efforts must be taken to clear the overgrowth." J Karthik, another resident, said, "Funds were also allocated to construct pavements along the shores and set up street lights around the lake. It would improve the beauty of the lake.

There are also a few encroachments on the lake canals, efforts should be taken to clear these too. Further, there is also a lot of plastic waste in the lake and efforts must be taken to prevent pollution.

## Steps on to run metro systems on solar power

**KOCHI.** The Kochi Metro Rail Ltd

(KMRL) has initiated major steps, including the setting up of a solar plant on 50 acres in Kasaragod district, to harness solar energy in line with its ambitious plan to be fully energy neutral by 2030. "We've to go for solar power for the Water Metro. But we'll do it for Kochi Metro on a war footing. Sooner or later, we'll have to run these two modern transport systems on solar energy. The sooner the better," KMRL managing director Loknath Behera told.

While KMRL is in the process of setting up a solar plant in Kasaragod, it has initiated talks to acquire 90 acres in Kuttanad in Alappuzha district. "We're acquiring 50 acres in Kasaragod. It has



almost been finalised. We now have to entrust an agency like INKEL to implement it," Behera said. On getting the land, it will take nearly six to eight months to put up the solar plant, he said. "If everything goes as per plan, we can implement the project by the end of this year. Also, talks are on with the forest department to get some land, around 90

acres, in Kuttanad," he said. The Kochi Metro, operational since 2017, is one of the first metro rail networks in India to run on solar energy, with 55% of its power sourced from solar plants. The Water Metro, launched in 2023, aims to connect 10 islands along a network of routes spanning 78km. It uses energy-efficient, battery-operated boats, thereby reducing emissions and enhancing connectivity. Complementing these efforts are the introduction of electric feeder buses and extensive non-motorised infrastructure, including pedestrian-friendly zones and cycle tracks.

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# Man hit by car on MG Road dies; driver on the run

Gurgaon. A 34-year-old man was killed while crossing MG Road on Thursday evening after being allegedly hit by an unidentified speeding car, police said on Saturday. Police identified the victim as Nazmul Haq, originally from South Dinajpur, West Bengal, residing in a rented accommodation at Nathpur in DLF Phase-III. He worked as a painter in Gurgaon. Officers said Haq was returning home from Chakkarpur, Sector

28, just when he met with the accident in front of Metro pillar number 73 around 8.30pm. The driver, after hitting the pedestrian, allegedly accelerated his car and fled from the spot. However, nobody could note down the vehicle's registration number, said investigators citing eyewitnesses. Commuters alerted the police control

room and rushed the injured Haq to a private hospital in DLF Phase-III, they added.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I MD IQBAL D/O AHMAD HUSSAIN R/O K-4 SAURABH VIHAR JAITPUR BADARPUR SOUTH DELHI 110044 I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME MOHAMMAD IQBAL.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, JC-677601H, RANK-NBSUB/DVRSPLV/VEH NAME-VENKATA RAMANA TAMMINENI S/O APPALASURY R/O VILL. SEEPANA CHANDRAYA PETA POST-KANUGULAVALASA (TEH)MD-AMADALAVALASA DISTT-SRIKAKULAM (ANDRAPRADESH). I have changed my name from T GAGANA JYOTI to TAMMINENI GAGANA JYOTI for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 28.01.2025 before Public Notary Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
It is for general information that I, MOHD NISAR S/O MOHD JABBAR R/O House No. 5, R-3/2, Mohan Garden, Ujjain Nagar, PO: DK, Mohan Garden, West Delhi, Delhi-110059, declare that name of mine and my minor son have been wrongly written as MD NISAR and MD MUSHAB in my minor son's name MOHD MUSHAB aged 16 years in his CBSE 10th class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my minor son are MOHD NISAR and MOHD MUSHAB respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, Ranjeet Chaudhary S/O Yogendra Chaudhary, resident at House No 48 Gali No-7, Vijay Nagar Colony, Village & Post Office Bawana District North-West Delhi-110039, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Sandip Chaudhary in my minor daughter Rakhi Kumari aged 13 years in her school records. The actual name of mine is Ranjeet Chaudhary, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I AFIYA D/O SHAKEEL AHMED R/O B-125 JOSHI COLONY I/P EXTENSION EAST DELHI MADHU VIHAR DELHI-110092 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO AFIYA KHAN

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Rashid Ali S/O Shamsad Ali R/O H.No-F 2/358, Sunder Nagn, Nand Nagn, North East Delhi, Delhi-110093 have changed the name of my minor son Mohammad Afi aged 13 years and he shall hereafter be known as Muhammad Afi Malik.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, BINDU W/O NARENDER KUMAR R/O R-13, GURPREET NAGAR, UTTAM NAGAR, WEST DELHI, DELHI - 110059, I have changed my name from BINDU TAMANAG to BINDU for all future purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Rina Kumari W/o Sh. Ritesh Kumar R/O Flat No. 105 First Floor, Block - F, Utasav Apartment, Rohini Sector-18, Delhi-110099 have declared that Rina Kumari and Rina Jha are one and the same person for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, No-7242772K Rank-DFFR (CLK SD) Name-VASANT GAVAS Presently residing at VPO-BAILUR, TEH-KHANAPUR, DISTT-BELGAUM, KARNATAKA-590014 have changed my father's name from MARUTI GAVAS to MARUTI RAMU GAVAS for all future purposes and in my service records my father's date of birth wrongly mentioned as 30/01/1956 instead of his correct date of birth as 23/03/1956 vide Affidavit dated 29/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Jeehan brother of Israr Khan presently residing at Vill - Mahol, Post - Mahol, Tehsil-Farrukhabad Distt-Farrukhabad (Uttar Pradesh)- 209743 have changed my Name from Jishan Khan to Jeehan vide Affidavit dated 29.01.2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, No-7242772K Rank-DFFR (CLK SD) Name-VASANT GAVAS Presently residing at VPO-BAILUR, TEH-KHANAPUR, DISTT-BELGAUM, KARNATAKA-590014, have changed my mother's name from PRABHAVATI GAVAS to PRABHAVATI MARUTI GAVAS for all future purposes and in my service records my mother's date of birth wrongly mentioned as 30/01/1956 instead of her correct date of birth as 01/01/1959 vide Affidavit dated 29/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, No-7242772K Rank-DFFR (CLK SD) Name-VASANT GAVAS Father of MANSI VASANT GAVAS Presently residing at VPO-BAILUR, TEH-KHANAPUR, DISTT-BELGAUM, KARNATAKA-590014, have changed my minor daughter's name from MANSI VASANT GAVAS to MANSI GAVAS for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 29/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, ASHOK KUMAR JAIN S/O MAN-MORHAN JAIN residing at 28 NEW MARKET SADAR BAZAR, DELHI CANTT, South West Delhi-DELHI-110010 have changed my name to ASHOK JAIN for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, No-6946107P Rank-NK Name-LATE LAXMAN VISHWANATH Residing at VPO-KOTHLI, TEHSIL-SHRIGONDA, DISTT-AMARNAGAR, MAHARASHTRA-413728 have changed my father's name from VISHWANATH to VISHWANATH YADU LATE for all future purposes and in my service records my father's date of birth wrongly mentioned as 22/02/1959 instead of his correct date of birth as 01/01/1953 vide Affidavit dated 29/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, LALITHA spouse of No. JC-677601H Rank- NBSUB/DVRSPLV/VEH Name-VENKATA RAMANA TAMMINENI S/O APPALASURY R/O VILL. SEEPANA CHANDRAYA PETA POST-KANUGULAVALASA (TEH)MD-AMADALAVALASA DISTT-SRIKAKULAM (ANDRAPRADESH). I have changed my name from LALITHA to TAMMINENI LALITHA for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 28.01.2025 before Public Notary Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
It is for general information that I, RITIKA D/O THAKUR DASS R/O B-291, Madipur J Colony, Paschim Vihar, SO West Delhi, Delhi-110063 declare that the name of my Father has been wrongly written as THAKURDAS in my 10th and 12th class Educational Documents. The actual name of my father is THAKUR DASS which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
It is for general information that I, KHUSHBOO SINGH D/O AJAY SINGH R/O H.No.-C-115, Janak Puri, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201005 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as KHUSHBOO in my 10th, 12th and Graduation educational documents. The actual name of mine is KHUSHBOO SINGH which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, PRAMOD KUMAR S/O GAURI SHANKAR residing at FLAT NO-B-4/1A, ASHOK VIHAR PHASE-2, DELHI-110052 have changed my name to PRAMOD MAHENDRU for all future purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I hitherto known as ARVIND TYAGI S/O RAM KUMAR R/O House no. 13, A-1 Block Bangali Colony Sant Nagar, Burari, North Delhi, Delhi - 110084 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as ARVIND KUMAR

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Balvir Chand S/O Karan Chand RZD-1/12,13 Khessa no.83/14,gal no.5, mahavir enclave Palam colony,New Delhi, south west Delhi, Delhi-110045 have changed my name to Balvir Chand

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Hitherto known as AFRIDI S/O Md Parvez Siddiqui R/O Vill. Alwadpur Kulesara Greater Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar (UP) 201306, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SAHID.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I hitherto known as NIKITA DAUGHTER OF ANIL LOHCHAB residing at Flat No.2305, Sleuth CGHS, Plot No.6, Sector-19-B, Dwarka, South West Delhi, Delhi-110075, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as NIKITA LOHCHAB.

## NORTHERN RAILWAY

### E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, Invites open e-tender for the under noted work:

- Name of Work with its Location: Design, supply, erection, testing & commissioning of 25 KV AC OHE modification work at Mairat station on ROK-BTI section in connection with provision of direct reception facility at RBT siding (goods handling line) by converting in to running line at Mairat Station on DLB-BTI section.
- Approx. Cost of work: Rs. 41.75,129.69/-
- Earnest Money Deposit: Rs. 83,500/-
- E-Tender Bid Online Submission Period: 10.02.2025 (00.00 Hrs.) to 24.02.2025 (15.00 Hrs.).
- E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time: 24.02.2025 (15.00 hrs.).
- Fund Allocation: Capital (PH-16)
- Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen: www.ireps.gov.in

No.: 48-TRD-NDLS-2024-25 Dated: 27.01.2025 311/2025

### SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

### Format C-1

#### (For candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

#### Declaration about criminal cases

(As per the judgement dated 25th September, 2018, of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) no. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union Of India & Anr.)

Name and address of the candidate: **SUSHMA DEVI**

Name of the Political Party: **INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

Name of election: **DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTION, 2025**

Name of the Constituency: **35-NAJAFGARH**

I, Sushma Devi, a candidate for the above-mentioned election, declare for public information.

The following details about my criminal antecedents:

#### A. Pending Criminal Cases

Sl. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1.	Ld. MM, Dwarka Court, Delhi	Case No. 4988784/16	Criminal Revision Petition No. 500/2022 filed against judgement date 04.02.2020 and same is pending before Hon'ble Delhi High Court.	Not applicable as Cr. Appeal No. 442/2018 filed by candidate and conviction order dated 25.08.2018 was set aside vide judgement date 04.02.2020 by appellate court and candidate was acquitted. Criminal Revision Petition No. 500/2022 filed against judgement date 04.02.2020 and same is pending before Hon'ble Delhi High Court.

#### B. Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences

Sl. No.	Name of Court & dates of (order(s))	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum punishment imposed
1.	NA	NA	NA

\*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of Constituency.

Sushma Devi  
Candidate, Indian National Congress  
Ac 35 najafgarh

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, JAFIRUL HASAN S/O ISAMAHAMMAD MIYA R/O H-NO-995, GALI NO-2, RAO VEER SINGH PUBLIC SCHOOL, VILLAGE KAPASHERA, PO-GURGAON ROAD, VASANT VIHAR, SOUTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110037 have changed the name of my minor daughter LAL BIBI alias JASMIN KHATOON aged 14 years and she shall hereafter be known as JASMIN KHATOON.

**NAME CHANGE**  
It is for general information that I, BHOLA SINGH S/O SHYAM SINGH R/O 339, Peepal Wala Chowk, Budh Ram Nagar, Daulimpura, East Delhi-110092 declare that name of mine and my father have been wrongly written as RAJENDRA SINGH RAWAT and UDAY SINGH RAWAT in my Aadhaar Card No. 5292 0940 0586 and PAN Card No. CDPRF5851J. The actual name of mine and my father are BHOLA SINGH and SHYAM SINGH.

**NAME CHANGE**  
It is for general information that I, RANJAN RATHOR S/O KALUJHA-RAN R/O A-135, Block-A, Shastri Nagar, PO: Ashok Vihar, Dist.: North West Delhi, Delhi-110052, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as RAMKUMAR in my minor son namely HARDIK aged 10 years in his School Record and as RAM KUMAR in his Birth Certificate Registration No. MCDOLUR-2216-006919937. The actual name of mine is RAMKUMAR RATHOR.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NISHI KANT S/O KIRAN KUMAR R/O H.No. A-128, Street No. 4, Near High Secondary School, North Ghonda, Delhi, North East Delhi, Delhi-110053, have changed the name of my minor daughter POORVEE aged 12 years and she shall hereafter be known as PURVI ROHILLA, for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I hitherto known as SACHIN son of Shri JAGDEV, residing at House No. 89, Dani Mohalla, Near Talab or Desu Office, Jona Pur, South Delhi, Delhi-110047, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SACHIN AMBAWATA.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I hitherto known as Akshita Sharma S/O Pradeep Kumar R/O 270 D Pocket F Dishaad Garden, Shahdara, Delhi-110095 Have Changed my name to Aksh Sharma for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Surendra Mohan Mishra S/O Laxmi Kant Mishra R/O house no D 390A1, sector 11 Pratap Vihar ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh 201001 Have changed my name to Surendra Mishra for all future purposes

**NAME CHANGE**  
I PRINCE GAUR S/O PRAMOD KUMAR GAUR R/O H.NO.30 SECTOR-2, BALLABGARH, FARID-ABAD-121004 HAVE CHANGE MY NAME TO PRINCE SHARMA FOR ALL PURPOSE.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I Sonu Gupta S/O Lalu Gupta R/O A11-6, JJ Colony, Madanpur Khadar, Jait Pur, South Delhi, Delhi-110044, declare that name of my minor daughter has been wrongly written as Khushi in my minor daughter's name Khushi Gupta aged 12 years in her school records. The actual name of my minor daughter is Khushi Gupta.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I RAKESH KUMAR S/O SANWAR MAL AGGARWAL R/O K2/271 KRISHNA VIHAR OUTER DELHI SULTAN PURI DELHI-110086 I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO RAKESH KUMAR AGGARWAL

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, KAMLA DEVI PAUL W/O VINOD KUMAR PAUL residing at 360/5B GALI NO-7, BHOLA NATH NAGAR SHAHDARA DELHI-110032 have changed my name to KAMLA PAUL for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Sangeeta Sharma Oberoi D/O Laxmi Narayan Sharma W/O Rajender Singh Oberoi R/O WB-24/1 ST NO-1, Shakapur, East Delhi, Delhi-110092. Have changed my name to Sangeeta Sharma for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I MANORAMA DEVI wife of Shri VISHNU RAJORIA, residing at G-35 B/2 Block G, Under Enclave-2, Kirari Sulaman Nagar, Delhi-110086, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as MANORAMA.

**NAME CHANGE**  
It is for general information that I, BHOLA SINGH S/O SHYAM SINGH R/O 339, Peepal Wala Chowk, Budh Ram Nagar, Daulimpura, East Delhi-110092 declare that name of mine and my father have been wrongly written as RAJENDRA SINGH RAWAT and UDAY SINGH RAWAT in my Aadhaar Card No. 5292 0940 0586 and PAN Card No. CDPRF5851J. The actual name of mine and my father are BHOLA SINGH and SHYAM SINGH.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, T. PRANITA is Daughter of JC-677601H, RANK-NBSUB/DVRSPLV/VEH NAME-VENKATA RAMANA TAMMINENI S/O APPALASURY R/O VILL. SEEPANA CHANDRAYA PETA, POST-KANUGULAVALASA (TEH)MD-AMADALAVALASA DISTT-SRIKAKULAM (ANDRAPRADESH). I have changed my name from T PRANITA to TAMMINENI PRANITA for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 28.01.2025 before Public Notary Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
It is for general information that I, ARSH SINGH S/O VIRENDRA SINGH, R/O D - 72, Sec - 61, Sai Mandir, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh - 201301 declare that Name of mine and my Father has been wrongly written as ARSH SINGH CHAUHAN and VIRENDRA SINGH CHAUHAN in my 10th and 12th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my Father are ARSH SINGH and VIRENDRA SINGH respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Yash Pal S/O JAWAHAR LAL, R/O House No. 1180, 1st Floor, SECTOR 4, URBAN ESTATE, Gurgaon, Haryana, 122001, I Have Changed My Name From YASH PAL TO YASH-PAL GANDHI For All Future Purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I hitherto known as Sulekha in my minor son namely DAKSH SURYA aged 12 years in his Birth Certificate Registration No. 94110. Also name of my wife has been wrongly written as SUREKHA in my minor son's name DAKSH SURYA aged 13 years in his Birth Certificate Registration No. 57967. The actual name of my wife is SUREKHA, which may be amended accordingly.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client (SMFG India Home Finance Co. Ltd.) that Mr. Rakesh Kapoor is claiming to be the owner of built up Property bearing No. 386, area measuring 65 sq. yds., situated at Bagh Kare Khan, Kishan Garj, Delhi, vide Regd. GPA, Notarized ATS Notarized SPA, and Regd. Will dated 30.05.2000 executed by Mrs. Malvi Devi. All persons are hereby informed that Name of mine and my Father has been wrongly written as ARSH SINGH CHAUHAN and VIRENDRA SINGH CHAUHAN in my 10th and 12th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my Father are ARSH SINGH and VIRENDRA SINGH respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SHRIKANTI W/o Sh. LALTA PRASAD R/O NEAR SARESHI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, VILLAGE KANAWAN, MAHIHUDDIN PUR, INDIRAPURAM, PO: SHIPRA SUN CITY, DIST: GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH-2014 have changed my name from Savitri to Shrikanti for all future purposes. That SAVITRI and SHRIKANTI both the name are related to one and the same lady.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, No-6946107P, Rank-NK Name-LATE LAXMAN VISHWANATH Residing at VPO-KOTHLI, TEHSIL-SHRIGONDA, DIST-AMARNAGAR, MAHARASHTRA-413728, have changed my father's name from SOMAN to SUMAN VISHWANATH LATE for all future purposes and in my service records my mother's date of birth wrongly mentioned as 11/12/1961 instead of her correct date of birth as 01/01/1958 vide Affidavit dated 29/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

## NORTHERN RAILWAY

### TENDER NOTICE

(Through e-tendering)

Name of work with its location	Provision of Fiber based GPON Technology at San Martin Railway Officers Colony New Delhi.
App. Cost of the work (₹)	₹ 55,00,468.33/- only
Earnest Money Deposit (₹)	₹ 1,10,000/- only
Address of the office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, Annex-1, DRM office, New Delhi-110055.
Date & Time for upload the tender/closing of tender	Tender uploading / closing date & time- 21.02.2025 up to 15.00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board/location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.ireps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.
Tender No. 558-Sig-16-Tele-OT-1003 Dated: 29.01.2025	318/2025

### SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

### Format C-1

#### (For candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

#### Declaration about criminal cases

(As per the judgement dated 25th September, 2018, of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) no. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union Of India & Anr.)

Name and address of the candidate : Satpal R/o H.No. 27 Zalim Mohalla tughlakabad village Delhi-36

Name of the Political party : **INDEPENDENT**

Name of election: **DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTION, 2025**

Name of the Constituency: **AC-49 SANGAM VIHAR**

I, Satpal, a candidate for the above-mentioned election, declare for public information.

The following details about my criminal antecedents:

#### A. Pending Criminal Cases

Sl. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1.	SAKET DISTRICT COURT	Case no. 5551/2020 FIR NO. 54/2020 Case Titled STAPAL @ SATTE	ARGUMENT ON CHARGE	FIR No.54/2020 PS GOVIND PURI Offence U/S 452,323,34 IPC

#### B. Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences

Sl. No.	Name of Court & (Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed)	Maximum punishment imposed
1.	NA	NA

\*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of Constituency.

## NORTHERN RAILWAY

### TENDER NOTICE

Invitation of Tenders through E-Tendering (E-Procurement System)

S/Tender Notice No. & Date	Name of work with its location	Approx. Cost of work	Amount of Earnest Money	Completion period of the work	Date & time for submission of tender & opening of tender
1 32-W-52PEDESTAL-MB DATE 28.01.2025	Strengthening work of RCC pedestal of Br. No. 52 DN (17.0,0m) span on MB-GZB	₹ 2382663.58	₹ 80000/-	(6) Six Months	Upto 14:00 hrs on 22.02.2025 Opening of tender after 14:00 hrs on same day
2 32-W-BR-621-970-MB DATE 28.01.2025	Replacement of badly corroded anodes, gasket plate of side pathway of Br. No. 821UP (4x18.30m), Br. No. 970 UP (10x18.30m) & Br. No. 974 (18x18.30m) on LKO-BE section of MB division	₹ 4001060.04	₹ 47700/-	(8) Eight Months	Upto 14:00 hrs on 22.02.2025 Opening of tender after 14:00 hrs on same day

Note : Above tender is available on website, IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in, where complete details of Tender can be seen & downloaded.

### SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NISHI KANT S/O KIRAN KUMAR R/O H.No. A-128, Street No. 4, Near High Secondary School, North Ghonda, Delhi, North East Delhi, Delhi-110053, have changed the name of my minor son TARUN aged 16 years and he shall hereafter be known as TARUN ROHILLA, for all future purposes.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
I hitherto known as Suresh S/O PAANCHU RAM R/O N-16/A-190, SANJAY BASTI T-HOUSE, TIMAR PUR, Civil Lines S.O, DIST: North Delhi, Delhi - 110054 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SURESH CHAND.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, T. PRANITA is Daughter of JC-677601H, RANK-NBSUB/DVRSPLV/VEH NAME-VENKATA RAMANA TAMMINENI S/O APPALASURY R/O VILL. SEEPANA CHANDRAYA PETA, POST-KANUGULAVALASA (TEH)MD-AMADALAVALASA DISTT-SRIKAKULAM (ANDRAPRADESH). I have changed my name from T PRANITA to TAMMINENI PRANITA for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 28.01.2025 before Public Notary Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
It is for general information that I, ARSH SINGH S/O VIRENDRA SINGH, R/O D - 72, Sec - 61, Sai Mandir, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh - 201301 declare that Name of mine and my Father has been wrongly written as ARSH SINGH CHAUHAN and VIRENDRA SINGH CHAUHAN in my 10th and 12th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my Father are ARSH SINGH and VIRENDRA SINGH respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Yash Pal S/O JAWAHAR LAL, R/O House No. 1180, 1st Floor, SECTOR 4, URBAN ESTATE, Gurgaon, Haryana, 122001, I Have Changed My Name From YASH PAL TO YASH-PAL GANDHI For All Future Purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I hitherto known as Sulekha in my minor son namely DAKSH SURYA aged 12 years in his Birth Certificate Registration No. 94110. Also name of my wife has been wrongly written as SUREKHA in my minor son's name DAKSH SURYA aged 13 years in his Birth Certificate Registration No. 57967. The actual name of my wife is SUREKHA, which may be amended accordingly.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client (SMFG India Home Finance Co. Ltd.) that Mr. Rakesh Kapoor is claiming to be the owner of built up Property bearing No. 386, area measuring 65 sq. yds., situated at Bagh Kare Khan, Kishan Garj, Delhi, vide Regd. GPA, Notarized ATS Notarized SPA, and Regd. Will dated 30.05.2000 executed by Mrs. Malvi Devi. All persons are hereby informed that Name of mine and my Father has been wrongly written as ARSH SINGH CHAUHAN and VIRENDRA SINGH CHAUHAN in my 10th and 12th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my Father are ARSH SINGH and VIRENDRA SINGH respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Yash Pal S/O JAWAHAR LAL, R/O House No. 1180, 1st Floor, SECTOR 4, URBAN ESTATE, Gurgaon, Haryana, 122001, I Have Changed My Name From YASH PAL TO YASH-PAL GANDHI For All Future Purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I hitherto known as Akshita Sharma S/O Pradeep Kumar R/O 270 D Pocket F Dishaad Garden, Shahdara, Delhi-110095 Have Changed my name to Aksh Sharma for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Surendra Moh

## NEWS BOX

## Mayors of Hiroshima, Nagasaki invite Trump for 80th anniversary of World War II atomic bombings

**World** The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have invited US President Donald Trump to visit this year for the 80th anniversary of the World War II atomic bombings, officials said Wednesday. In a joint letter to Trump, the mayors urge him to come and "listen to the testimonies of the hibakusha (bomb survivors) in person, take to heart their fervent wish for peace, and deepen your understanding of the inhumanity of nuclear weapons". "It is our sincere hope that you will break away from the notion of nuclear reliance and take strong leadership in the abolition of nuclear weapons and the realization of lasting world peace," said the January 28 letter shared with AFP on Wednesday. The United States dropped an atomic bomb on each Japanese city on August 6 and 9, 1945 -- the only times nuclear weapons have been used in warfare. Days later Japan surrendered. Around 140,000 people died in Hiroshima and some 74,000 others in Nagasaki including many who survived the explosions but died later from radiation exposure.

Washington has never apologised for the bombings. US ambassador John Roos in 2010 became the first US representative to attend the annual Hiroshima commemoration and went to the Nagasaki event two years later. Barack Obama became the first sitting US president to come to Hiroshima in 2016, followed by Joe Biden in 2023. Trump did not make the trip during his first term, despite the two mayors inviting him according to Japanese media.

Last year, Nagasaki's mayor Shiro Suzuki sparked a furore by not inviting Israel's ambassador to the ceremony. Suzuki insisted the decision was "not political" but to avoid possible protests related to the Gaza conflict. The ambassadors of the US, Israel, Britain and others snubbed the ceremony in protest and attended a smaller memorial event in Tokyo instead. Last year's Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Nihon Hidankyo, a grassroots movement of Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors pushing for a nuclear weapons ban.

## No food, nothing': Famine grips Sudan

**World** In the span of just two months, the Sudanese mother watched helplessly as severe malnutrition killed her 10-year-old daughter, Rania, and her eight-month-old son, Montasir, in the famine-stricken Zamzam displacement camp. "I could only hold them as they faded away," Ibrahim, 40, told AFP via video call, sitting outside her straw-and-plastic shelter near North Darfur state's besieged capital El-Fasher.

Rania was the first to succumb. In El-Fasher's only functioning hospital, understaffed and unequipped, she died in November just three days after being admitted with acute diarrhoea. Her baby boy Montasir followed weeks later, his tiny body bloated from severe malnutrition. El-Fasher, under paramilitary siege since May, is only one grim battlefield in the 21-month war between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

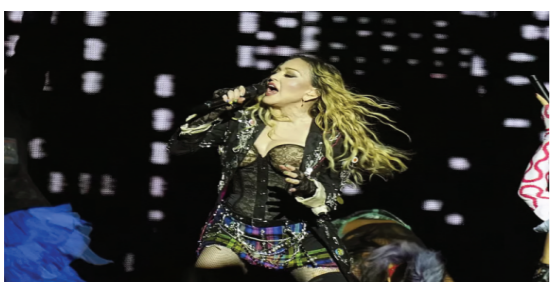
In July, a UN-backed review declared famine in Zamzam, a decades-old displacement camp home to between 500,000 and a million people. By December, it had spread to two more camps in the area, Abu Shouk and Al-Salam, as well as parts of the Nuba Mountains in southern Sudan, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification determined.

The Sudanese government, aligned with the army, has denied reports of famine, even as millions across the country suffer on the brink of starvation. Now, Ibrahim fears for her four-year-old daughter, Rashida, who battles severe anaemia with no access to medical care. "I am terrified I will lose her too," she said. "We're abandoned. There is no food, no medicine, nothing." At Salam 56, one of Zamzam's 48 overcrowded shelters, exhaustion was etched onto mothers' faces as they cradled their children, too weak to stand. Multiple families gathered around bowls with a few scraps of peanut residue traditionally used as animal feed.

## Sad to watch new govt dismantling all freedoms we've been fighting for: Madonna

**LOS ANGELES.** Pop icon Madonna has criticised the newly elected Donald Trump administration for its decision to remove protections for transgender people and end diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, urging citizens to keep fighting for their rights.

It's the latest push by Trump to reverse policies set by former president Joe Biden's government to protect transgender people and their care. On Monday, Trump directed the Pentagon to conduct a review that is likely to lead to them being barred from military service. Madonna, a longtime advocate for the LGBTQ community, expressed her disappointment in an X post on Tuesday.



"It's so sad to watch our new Government slowly dismantling all the Freedoms we have been fighting for and WON over the years. Don't give up the Fight! (sic)" she wrote, adding the LGBTQ pride flag and broken red heart emojis. Earlier, singer-actor Selena Gomez, whose father is of Mexican descent, got emotional over the Trump administration's stand over the deportation of undocumented immigrants on social media in a now-deleted Instagram video.

# Study says climate change made conditions that fed California wildfires more likely, more intense

**WASHINGTON.** Human-caused climate change increased the likelihood and intensity of the hot, dry and windy conditions that fanned the flames of the recent devastating Southern California wildfires, a scientific study found.

But the myriad of causes that go into the still smoldering fires are complex, so the level of global warming's fingerprints on weeks of burning appears relatively small compared to previous studies of killer heat waves, floods and droughts by the international team at World Weather Attribution. Tuesday's report, too rapid for peer-review yet, found global warming boosted the likelihood of high fire weather conditions in this month's fires by 35% and its intensity by 6%. Once-in-a-decade super strong Santa Ana winds, a dry autumn that followed two very wet years that caused rapid growth in flammable chapparal and grass, hot weather, dry air and vulnerable houses in fire-prone areas all were factors in the fast-moving fires that destroyed thousands of homes and killed at least 29 people, study authors said. But the climate attribution team was only able to quantify

issues that dealt with the fire weather index, which are the meteorological conditions that add up to fire danger. The fire weather index — which includes measurements of past rainfall, humidity and wind speed — is where the team looked and found markers of climate change that they could quantify.

The team used observations of past weather and computer simulations that compared what happened this month to a what-if world without the 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 degrees Celsius) of human-caused climate change that Earth has had since industrial times. That allowed them to come up with a calculation for warming's contribution to the disaster. It's a method that the National Academy of Sciences says is valid. Even though these rapid studies aren't yet peer-reviewed, nearly all of them are published later in peer-reviewed journals without significant changes, said World Weather Attribution co-lead scientist Friederike Otto. "The number (35%) doesn't sound like much" because unlike dozens of its past studies, the team looked at a small area and a complex meteorological measurement in the fire weather index that



would generally mean there would be large uncertainties, said Otto, a climate scientist at Imperial College London. But in this case the climate change fingerprint is big enough that it stands out, she said. Those conditions are part of what makes California attractive to 25 million residents, said study co-author John Abatzoglou, a climate and fire scientist at the University of California Merced. Southern California has "some of the best climate, best weather on the planet — except when you get a combination of

conditions that occurred here," Abatzoglou said. "You get the trifecta of dry windy and warm conditions. Those three things, in combination with dry fuels and ignitions, are the perfect recipe for fire disasters." Abatzoglou said it's like a bunch of switches — dryness, fuels, high temperatures, wind and ignition — that all need to be turned on "for conditions to really take off." Think of it as switches for a light bulb to illuminate — "and so you can think about the artificial warming due to human-caused climate change making the light brighter," added co-author Park Williams, a UCLA fire and climate scientist. The study also found California's dry season has increased by 23 days and the lack of rain in October, November and December was more than twice as likely now than in pre-industrial times, but because of limitations on the data, researchers couldn't statistically pinpoint these to both climate change and the specific fires this month, Otto said. But she said "the rains are decreasing — that is because of human-induced climate change."

## Who can share seeds As climate change and counterfeits hurt Kenyan farmers, it's a growing question

**KIKUYU.** Tucked away in a lush, forested area of central Kenya's Kikuyu town, the National Seed Bank stands as a crucial safeguard for the future of the country's agriculture. Inside two chilly rooms of a government building, more than 50,000 seed varieties are cataloged and stored. The bank was established in 1988 after the realization that some traditional varieties of seeds were being lost, an occurrence that is becoming more common with climate change. It aims to conserve seeds for research and reintroduction to farms.

"We realize that some of the traditional varieties that we had abandoned there are actually more resilient to climate change, so when you introduce them especially in marginal areas, those varieties outperform the improved varieties," said the director of the Genetic Resources Research Institute that operates the bank, Desterio Nyamongo, referring to hybrid seeds that must be bought every planting season. He said the some of bank's seeds also were found to be more resistant to diseases and pests and were high-yielding. This gives hope to a country that relies heavily on rain-fed



agriculture instead of irrigation, leaving it more vulnerable to climate shocks like drought. The sector contributes a third of Kenya's GDP.

Kenya is not alone facing food security pressures. According to a U.N Food and Agriculture and Organization report in 2023, over a billion people across the African continent are unable to afford healthy diets, and the number of hungry people is increasing. But in Kenya, another complication has emerged. Farmers in recent months suffered losses in the millions of shillings (tens of thousands of dollars) after planting counterfeit seeds bought from private sellers. Kenyan officials have acknowledged that the seed sector is critical. During the country's first international seed quality conference in

August, the agriculture ministry's permanent secretary, Paul Rono, said Africa has limited capacity to produce high-quality certified seeds that are subjected to quality standards.

The head of the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation, Stephen Muchiri, said the vigor of crops in Kenya has become low, and he believes that the main reason is a flawed seed breeding and propagation program. But some farmers say efforts to improve the seed system in Kenya have been limited by a 2012 law banning seed sharing, which is what millions of farmers did every planting season to cut their production cost. The government has said the law is meant to prevent the circulation of uncertified seeds and protects farmers, but it faces a court challenge from more than a dozen farmers across Kenya who say it's expensive having to buy new seeds every planting season. The next hearing in the case is in March.

Francis Ngiri is one of the farmers who filed the case. He runs an indigenous seed bank for the local community on his five-acre farm in the semi-arid Gilgil area located 120 kilometers (74 miles) from the capital, Nairobi.

## Discovery of brutal mass graves in Syria reveals Assad's legacy of horror

**DAMASCUS, Syria.** The charred remains of at least 26 victims of the Bashar Assad government were located Tuesday by Syrian civil defense workers in two separate basements in rural Damascus. The discovery adds to the growing tally of mass graves unearthed since the fall of the Assad government in December. The remains, which are believed to include men, women and children, showed evidence of gunshot wounds and burning.

Members of Syria's White Helmets, a volunteer civil defense group, exhumed the fragmented, weathered skeletal remains from the basement of two properties in the town of Sbeneh, southwest of the capital. Wearing hazmat suits, they carefully logged and coded each set of remains before placing them into body bags, which

were then loaded onto trucks for transport. Since Nov. 28, the White Helmets have uncovered "more than 780 bodies, most of unknown identity," Abed al-Rahman Mawwas, a member of the rescue service, told The Associated Press. He said many were found in shallow graves uncovered by locals or dug up by animals. The bodies are transferred to forensics doctors to determine their identities, time of death and cause of death, as well as to match them with possible family members.

"Of course, this takes years of work," he said. Mohammad al-Herafe, a resident of one of the buildings where remains were uncovered, said the stench of decomposing bodies was overwhelming when his family returned to Sbeneh in 2016 after fleeing because of fighting in the area during

the country's uprising-turned-civil war that began in 2011. He said they found the bodies in the basement but chose not to report it out of fear of government reprisals. "We could not tell the regime about it because we know that the regime did this." The Assad government, which ruled Syria for over two decades, employed airstrikes on civilian areas, torture, executions and mass imprisonment, to maintain control over Syria and suppress opposition groups during the country's 13-year civil war. Ammar al-Salmo, another Civil Defense member dispatched to the second basement site, said further investigation is needed to identify the victims. We need testimonies from residents and others who might know who stayed behind when the fighting intensified in 2013," he told the AP.



strengthen "the nuclear shield of the country," according to KCNA. Kim said that further boosting the country's nuclear counteraction posture is "our invariable noble task" to cope with intensifying challenges posed by "hostile forces," an apparent reference to the US and South Korea. The start of Trump's second term raises prospects for the resumption of diplomacy between the United States and North Korea, as Trump met Kim three times during his first term. The Trump-Kim diplomacy in 2018-19 fell apart due to wrangling over US-led economic sanctions on North Korea, and Kim has since significantly dialed up weapons testing activities. During a Fox News interview broadcast Thursday, Trump called Kim "a smart guy" and "not a religious zealot." Asked whether he will reach out to Kim again, Trump replied, "I will, yeah." North Korea hasn't yet directly responded to Trump's overture as it continues its belligerent rhetoric against the US along with weapons testing activities.

## White House opens doors to 'new media', allocates seats in press briefing room

**WASHINGTON.** The Trump Administration has announced that it will allocate seats in the White House press briefing room to representatives from "new media" outlets, including podcasters, social media influencers, and content creators.

This move, spearheaded by Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, aims to provide representation to groups that have not previously had a presence in the briefing room. "Millions of Americans, particularly young people, have shifted away from traditional television and newspapers to consume news through podcasts, blogs, social media, and other independent platforms," Leavitt said on Tuesday during her first daily press briefing. "It is crucial for our team to share President Trump's message widely and adapt the White House to the evolving media landscape of 2025." Leavitt said. At just 27 years old, Leavitt is the youngest White House press secretary in history. She invited independent journalists, podcasters, social media influencers, and content creators to apply for White House press credentials through the newly launched website,

whitehouse.gov/newmedia.

She also revealed that a front-row seat in the briefing room, traditionally reserved for the press secretary's staff, will now be designated the "New Media Seat." Applications will be reviewed by Leavitt's team, and credentials will be granted to those who meet the criteria and pass the US Secret Service's security requirements. During her first briefing, Leavitt fielded questions from new media representatives, including outlets that rank among the most-viewed news websites in the country but have never had a seat in the briefing room. When asked about the initiative, Leavitt reiterated the administration's commitment to upholding the First Amendment. "It's a fact that Americans, especially young people, are consuming news from a variety of platforms. As the youngest press secretary in history, thanks to President Trump, I take



great pride in opening this room to new media voices to ensure the president's message reaches as many Americans as possible," she said. She added, "We will ensure that respected outlets like Axios and Breitbart have a permanent seat in this room every day. We also encourage anyone in the country whether you're a TikTok creator, blogger,

podcaster, or any other type of content producer to apply for press credentials if you are producing legitimate news content, regardless of the platform."

The move marks a significant shift in the White House's approach to media engagement, reflecting the changing ways Americans access and consume news in the digital age. Leavitt also emphasized the administration's commitment to the First Amendment, announcing plans to reinstate press passes for 440 journalists whose credentials were revoked under the previous administration. "This White House strongly believes in the First Amendment, which is why we are working diligently to restore press passes to journalists who were wrongly denied access. Additionally, we are opening this briefing room to new media voices that produce news-related content but currently lack representation here," she explained.

NEWS BOX

Hyderabad to get two new IT parks

HYDERABAD. IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu on Tuesday announced plans to create two new IT parks similar to the Hitech City in the suburban areas of Hyderabad.

The announcement came following a meeting with representatives of US-based Dew Software, which proposed to invest Rs 100 crore. Over the next five years, this investment is expected to create 900 job opportunities for IT professionals.

“Hyderabad has emerged as a fast-growing IT hub, attracting significant investments from leading global companies. To maintain this growth, we have decided to develop two additional IT parks,” Sridhar Babu stated.

On the challenges faced by industries in acquiring land, the minister unveiled plans for a dedicated land allocation policy. “Currently, there is no specific policy for allocating land to industries, which has created hurdles for entrepreneurs. The new policy will allocate land based on the scale of investment and the number of jobs created,” he explained. A detailed study is underway to identify the optimal locations and land required for the new IT parks. “We are evaluating suitable areas in the city’s outskirts to ensure seamless connectivity and accessibility for employees and investors,” he added. The proposed IT parks will feature world-class infrastructure and essential amenities tailored for professionals.

Pending dues KMF staff threaten to go on strike

BENGALURU. The employees of Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) have threatened to go on strike from February, if their demands are not met. The employees’ union submitted a memorandum to the management, giving them a week’s time to adhere to their demands, ending on January 31, failing which they will go on strike. Highlighting their demands, KMF Employees Association president Govinda Gowda said they requested for dues pending under the 7th Pay Commission to be cleared at the earliest. “The government



had agreed to a 25% hike under the 7th Pay Commission. It has cleared 17%, while 8% is pending. We are hoping that the demands will be met,” he said.

The association comprises around 7,000 employees across the state, of whom 1,400 are higher-grade staff. When calculated, this amounts to Rs 3 crore a month to the employees. The management has reasoned that the government is yet to give its clearance for releasing the amount, a senior KMF official said. KMF supplies around 96,000-1 lakh litres of milk a day to consumers, while procuring milk through 15 unions.

Boyfriend in police custody after 20-year-old found seriously injured at her house in Chottanikara

KOCHI. A youth has been taken into custody after a 20-year-old woman, a survivor of a 2021 rape case, was found severely injured and unconscious at her residence in Chottanikara on Sunday. The police have detained a native of Thalayolaparambu, who is suspected to be the victim’s boyfriend.

According to the police, the victim was discovered by her uncle on Sunday evening, lying unconscious with severe injuries at her home. There was a knot on her neck, and she was partially stripped. It is suspected that she had been lying unconscious for hours, as ants were found on her wounds. She was rushed to Ernakulam General Hospital and later shifted to a private hospital in Kochi, where she remains on ventilator support.

Based on a complaint from her mother, the police have registered a case of rape and attempted murder.

The police investigation revealed that the victim’s boyfriend had arrived at her residence on Saturday night. A friend had dropped him off at the house at around 9 am, and he reportedly left on Sunday morning. “We are interrogating the person in custody. The facts he revealed have to be cross-checked. We are checking whether this person has any criminal history. He is one of the suspects now. We suspect that the victim was physically assaulted,” said V. T. Shajan, DySP Puthencruz.

The victim had survived a rape case in 2021 when she was a minor. Two individuals were arrested in connection with that case, and the trial is still pending in court.

Her mother revealed that she had only recently become aware of her daughter’s relationship with the suspect and had warned her to maintain distance. The victim’s father, a retired military officer, passed away two years ago.

Once an SFI leader, now a Mahamandaleshwar

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. For Swami Anandavanam Bharathi who was recently anointed as a Mahamandaleshwar of Juna Akhara, the country’s largest monastic order, the journey over the years has been quite distinctive. Once a rebellious leader of the SFI, the student wing of the CPM, his spiritual ascent from the land of Adi Shankaracharya has now reached a culmination point in Sanatan Dharma.

Juna Akhara head Swami Avdheshanand Giri had anointed him Mahamandaleshwar, the highest level of monks in the order, on January 26. He is the third Keralaite to reach this position and the first in Juna Akhara. The previous Malayali seers to earn the title did so around half a century ago. Shankaracharya is believed to have established the akhara system in northern India to train warrior monks to protect Hinduism.

According to Swami Anandavanam, he is now able to accept everyone and everything as equal but with a detachment that was impossible earlier. Born to Madhavan, an employee of Madura Coats, and Anandavalli, a teacher, in Chalakudy in Thrissur district, he was named P Salil. He entered student politics through SFI while pursuing Pre-Degree at the Christ College in Irinjalakuda.

After joining the Sree Kerala Varma College in Thrissur, he became the SFI unit secretary, area president, and later the district office-bearer while a degree and post-graduate student. Salil went on to become the SFI district vice-

president. “I studied politics. I had close relations with current Ministers P Rajeeve and M B Rajesh and other left politicians like P K Biju and TV Rajesh,” Anandavanam told TNIE. He said he first went to see Kumbh Mela, in 2001, as he had some police cases against him. “While applying for anticipatory bail, I was advised to stay away for some days.



The Kumbh Mela was quite an experience for me. For six days, I stayed on the banks of the Ganga. At night, I would buy two bundles of grass to be used as a mat and two dried dung to escape from mosquito bite,” he recalled. While his elevation as Mahamandaleshwar was an occasion to celebrate for his friends, he received some criticism too. One snub he received was from Minister R Bindu. A former teacher with the Sree Kerala Varma College, Bindu commented under a social media post, “If we consider the history of Swamiji, his chances of staying there are low.

But the seer said his actions did not cause any controversy in the SFI or the CPM at the time.

Youth kills three-year-old to settle scores with toddler’s father in Odisha

KEONJHAR. Police on Tuesday arrested a youth for allegedly kidnapping and murdering a three-year-old boy to settle scores with the toddler’s father at Munda Sahi under Nahabeda panchayat in Jhumpura block of the district.

The accused, 25-year-old Sritam Munda, reportedly bludgeoned Duryodhan Munda’s son Lucky to death with a stone two days back. He later disposed of the boy’s body in a dry canal.

Police said tribal residents of Munda Sahi celebrated Maghe festival around 10 days back. During the festival, the accused reportedly misbehaved with some women in an inebriated condition. Subsequently, the festival committee held a meeting and imposed a fine on Sritam for his act. Duryodhan played a major role in collecting the fine from the accused. Since then, Sritam was nursing a grudge against



Duryodhan and waiting for an opportunity to settle scores with him. On Sunday afternoon, the accused kidnapped Lucky when the toddler was playing near his house. He took the boy to a nearby forest and killed him with a stone. He then disposed of his body in the dry Kanpur

canal near Khendra and returned home. Meanwhile, worried family members searched for Lucky at various places but could not trace him. On Monday, Duryodhan lodged a complaint with Jhumpura police in this regard.

Basing on the complaint, police registered a case and launched efforts to find Lucky. During investigation, the cops were tipped off about Sritam’s involvement in abduction of the boy. Subsequently, the accused was brought to the police station.

Sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) of Champua Bijay Kumar Mallick said during interrogation, the accused confessed to his crime. On Tuesday, he was taken to the forest and Kanpur canal for recreation of the crime scene. The toddler’s body was recovered in presence of Jhumpura tehsildar Rohit Bagh and IIC Somabari Hansda. Police arrested the accused and sent the body to the hospital for postmortem, the SDPO added.

Tamil Nadu forest staff given training to shoot wild boars, 91 take part

COIMBATORE. A special camp organised by the forest department to sensitise staff to behaviour of wild boars and give them training to shoot them down began at the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy campus on Tuesday. Principal chief conservator of forests and head of the forest force Srinivas R Reddy inaugurated it. A total of 91 foresters and forest guards are taking part. Speaking on the occasion, Reddy said the camp is being organised after the government issued a GO to kill wild boars if they come three kilometres out of forests boundaries. The state government has allocated Rs five crore for the project, and advanced guns have been procured from the ordnance factory in West Bengal, he added. Traps will also be procured to



capture the animals alive, he added.

“We have instructed staff to capture boars using traps if they are within three kilometres from the forest boundary and release them back into the forests. We will not kill pregnant and young boars. We will shoot and kill animals that enter areas which are not notified as forests,” Reddy said. The participants were trained in handling rifles by members of special task force (STF) and police personnel at TNFA’s shooting range in Madukkarai. “Each of us shot three rounds using a 7.62 x 39 mm rifle. In the next class, the type of rifle will be changed. Most of us have already undergone similar training at Vaigai dam in Theni district,” said a participant.

“Officials told us to try not to kill the boars because they play a key role in forest ecosystem. Only boars that cause problems to farmers by ravaging crops will be identified and killed,” said another participant.

FSSAI licence of Thoothukudi restaurant selling ‘Rs 20 biryani’ suspended for unhygienic preparation of food

THOOTHUKUDI. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) licence of a restaurant, popular for selling biryani at Rs 20 in Thoothukudi, has been temporarily suspended by the food safety department on Tuesday, citing unhygienic preparation and selling of food in the name of chicken biryani without chicken pieces.

The action follows a complaint lodged with District Collector K Elambavath seeking to verify the quality of the biryani served at the restaurant for Rs 20. Subsequently, officials headed by district food safety designated officer Dr Mariappan inspected the shop and its production house at Davisapuram near Thalimuthunagar. In a statement, Dr Mariappan said the chicken meat had no extraneous matter or foul smell. However, the kitchen environment was unhygienic, as cats and dogs were found wandering inside. A sample of the meat has been collected for laboratory analysis and action would follow based on the results, he added.

The officer further stated that the biryani parcels had only crushed chicken and not pieces, thereby misleading the public by terming it “chicken biryani”. Hence, the chicken meat supplier will also be summoned for inquiries, the statement read.

Holding that the cooking environment was not hygienic, and had no bills and receipts for the purchase of raw materials and sales, Dr Mariappan issued an order to temporarily suspend the food safety licence of the restaurant. It may be noted that the restaurant owner can get the suspension revoked after satisfying the food safety conditions prescribed under the Food Safety Standards Authority of India Act.

Mammoth rail network proposed for mining regions of Sundargarh

ROURKELA. For seamless connectivity and faster movement of freight, the Indian Railways has reportedly chalked out a transformative plan to lay wide network of new rail lines connecting mining belts of Sundargarh and nearby regions with industrial hubs and ports.

The upcoming steel corridor to connect the iron ore-rich Koida belt of Sundargarh and Barbil in Keonjhar along with the adjacent West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand envisages to drastically cut freight travel time to Paradip, Dhamra, Gopalpur and Haldia ports and industrial hubs of Rourkela, Kalinganagar, Angul, Jharsuguda and others. In 2024, the proposal for Karampada-Gua line of 24.4 km was sanctioned to connect the triangular mining regions Sundargarh, Keonjhar and West Singhbhum as part of the proposed steel corridor.

Member of Zonal Railway Users’ Consultative Committee and senior BJP leader Ramesh Agarwal said the proposed steel corridor further envisages to lay multiple new rail lines to connect the mining belts with existing operational lines. Key new rail lines under the steel corridor would involve around 181 km of new lines for Sanindpur-Dholtapahar, Barsuan-Nugaon, Barbil-Bhadrasihi-Banspani



and Basuan-Banspani new sections. He said other proposals include Kiriburu-Barbil new line (17.73 km), Dumerta-Bimlagarh (3rd & 4th lines) and Lathikata-Kalunga (20 km) besides track doubling of Bimlagarh-Kiriburu and Bimlagarh-Barsuan sections. Agarwal said the Barkote-Deogarh-Kuchinda-Jharsuguda new line has also been mooted to connect the proposed steel corridor. Work for the Talcher-Bimlagarh new line (149.780 km) is already in progress. Final location survey of most of the proposed lines of

the steel corridor have been completed and allocation of necessary funds against these proposals is likely to be made in the upcoming budget.

He further said a separate proposal is also in the pipeline for a new line from Sardega in Sundargarh to Bangurkela via Birmitrapur with a length of about 150 km. Besides, proposal for the new Sardega-Sundargarh-Pathalgaon-Ambikapur rail line (128 km) has been finalised. This new route is envisaged for both passenger and freight movement, especially coal.

Karnataka Panchayat Raj department issues circular to ensure respect for gram panchayat representatives

BENGALURU. Panchayat Raj department authorities have sent a circular warning all taluk and district chief executive officers (CEOs) to treat Gram Panchayat members, presidents and vice-presidents with respect. “We have learnt that elected representatives from panchayats are treated as servants. This has to be stopped,” the circular issued by Panchayat Raj Director N Nomesha Kumar stated. In Karnataka, there are close to 6,000 gram panchayats with over 91,000 elected representatives. After the Panchayat Raj department received a complaint from Karnataka State Gram Panchayat Members’ Federation about the

disrespectful behaviour of CEOs of a few zilla panchayats and taluk panchayats, the state government decided to warn senior officials to behave with respect.

The circular, a copy of which is available with The New Indian Express, says that as per Article 234B of the Indian Constitution, panchayats are local bodies providing self-government for rural areas. Panchayat presidents are on par with CEOs of panchayats. “Some CEOs of zilla panchayats and taluk panchayats ill-treat presidents and other members when they visit their office.



The Federation has complained that senior officials of zilla and taluk panchayats do not treat members as elected representatives, but as servants,” it stated. The circular also stressed that CEOs of taluk panchayats have to

convene meetings once in two months with gram panchayat presidents and Panchayat Development Officers to discuss issues of their panchayat. “If there are any grievances, they have to be resolved,” the circular said. Zilla panchayat CEOs have to convene similar meetings once in three months, and treat them with respect at all times, the circular added. A senior department official, on condition of anonymity, said it is basic culture to treat anyone who comes home or to office with respect. “It is unfortunate that some senior officials are treating panchayat members, including presidents and vice-presidents, as their servants.

## 26/11 probe gets a new lease of life

It is an irony that the US has decided to extradite Canadian national Tahawwur Hussain Rana to India for his supporting role in the Mumbai terror attacks that killed 166 people in November 2008, but has refused to part with one of the primary perpetrators — Daoud Gilani aka David Coleman Headley. Rana, a doctor who had deserted from the Pakistan Army, and Headley were old friends and classmates at the Hassan Abdal military academy near Islamabad. Both were tried on 12 counts by a US court and sentenced to 15 and 35 years in jail, respectively, in 2013. Details of the Rana-Headley connection come to us from their indictment and trial in the US on terrorism charges. These were confirmed by the interrogation report of Headley by the National Investigation Agency in June 2010. In September 2023, the Mumbai police filed a 400-page supplementary chargesheet that came up with a surprise revelation: Rana had visited Mumbai a week ahead of the attacks. The US court documents did not have this information, which suggest that he may have had a more sinister role to play in the attacks. Rana came into the picture when Headley met him in Chicago in 2006 and told him about his Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) links and his decision to change his name to conceal his identity. He also told him about his association with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and his assignment to conduct surveillance in Mumbai. He asked Rana whether he could set up a branch of his First World Immigration office there, and Rana agreed.

After subsequent visits in 2007 and 2008, Headley kept Rana abreast of his activities there, including video surveillance of Taj Mahal hotel and surveying a possible landing site. He also briefed him on his conversations with Sajid Mir and Major Iqbal, two Pakistani ISI operatives. At least twice in his five visits to Mumbai, Headley received money from Rana at a bank close to the Oberoi hotel. Count 12 of the US indictment noted that since 2005, the two had "knowingly provided" material support — personnel, currency, tangible property, and false documentation and identification — to the LeT.

Despite this, Rana was actually acquitted on the counts relating to the Mumbai attacks. His conviction was on count 11 connected to the subsequent plot, of which Headley was also a part, to target Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten and on count 12 for providing material support to terrorists. Rana's defence counsel claimed that he was "easily the least culpable of all the members of the plot". But there are many gaps in the American proceedings and this is what the Indian authorities hope to fill after they obtain Rana's custody.

Headley was not extradited to India because of his plea agreement with the US, which barred a death sentence and extradition to either India or Denmark. The US authorities said they were provided significant information by him about the association and the involvement of the ISI in the attacks, about the personnel, structure, methods, abilities and plans of the LeT, that his testimony helped convict Rana and that he had also answered the questions of Indian authorities for seven days. In addition, Headley's actions also enabled the authorities to file criminal charges against six others — Sajid Mir, Abu Qahafa, Mazhar Iqbal, Major Iqbal, Ilyas Kashmiri and Abdur Rehman Hashim Syed. Rana did not enter a plea deal or fully cooperate with US authorities, and hence his extradition is taking place, albeit after a lengthy process. India did make efforts to extradite Headley. A request was sent to the US in December 2012 by the government, but despite this, America refused. There is no easy closure on 26/11. Though Lashkar chief Hafiz Saeed is serving a 78-year sentence for terror financing and his deputy Zakir-Rehman Lakhvi and Rana are serving a 15-year jail term for terrorism, the whereabouts of other perpetrators — Sajid Mir, Abu Qahafa, Mazhar Iqbal, Major Iqbal, Hashim Syed, Muzammil and Zarrar Shah — are not very clear.

## Why UGC fondness for Governors is unhealthy

The role of state governments in the appointment of VCs has been eliminated, though education is a state subject and under the Concurrent List.

First formulated in 2010 and amended from time to time since then, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has again revised its rules on the "minimum qualifications for appointment of teachers and other academic staff in universities and colleges and measures for maintenance of standards in higher education." The draft regulations 2025 have triggered a mixed response from academic circles as the intended modifications in certain contentious issues have far-reaching consequences on appointments, service conditions and promotions of teachers as well as the autonomy and control of the state on higher educational institutions (HEIs). With the aim of achieving the goals of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, emphasis has been laid on the use of Indian languages, societal engagement and teaching, learning and research in the Indian knowledge system. The numerical score-based academic performance indicator (API) system for the recruitment and promotions of teachers has been replaced with a subjective evaluation system that involves contributions towards teaching, research and digital content creation. This system has inherent limitations, which have been already experienced prior to the API system era. Emphasis has been laid on non-measurable accomplishments, to be considered by selection committees. The new system lacks transparency, leaves room for irrational evaluation and manipulation, which is of serious concern. Apparently envisioned to promote academic flexibility, allowing teachers to teach subjects based on their highest specialisations without having degrees in the same subjects at the lower academic levels may create problems in case of collaborative multi-disciplinary studies and discourage the much-needed interdisciplinary research approaches. The draft document lacks a transparent mechanism for foolproof and acceptable implementation of its provisions to eliminate suspicion, partiality and undue preference to subjective evaluations. It is feared that de-capping of the limit on contractual appointments of teachers will encourage this practice, compromising the quality and creation of committed and innovative professionals. Such appointments need to be curtailed as they are only an emergent temporary solution. The minimum qualifications and procedure for the selection of vice-chancellor (VC) have been revised. Now, absolute powers are vested in chancellors (governors in case of state universities)

to select VCs through search-cum-selection committees. The VC's post has also been opened for non-academicians from the industry, public administration and public policy. This is a cause of disappointment and discouragement for distinguished and accomplished



academicians. These ill-conceived, unsustainable solutions have probably been envisioned due to the recent rows between some opposition-ruled state governments and their governors over the appointment of VCs. The role of state governments in the appointment of VCs has been eliminated though, constitutionally, education is a state subject and under the Concurrent List. Being contrary to the federal principles of governance, the Tamil Nadu and Kerala governments have rejected the draft document. The document is also unacceptable to the All-India Federation of University and College Teachers Organisation. Some other quarters may also oppose it. Views have been expressed against making the VC's post open to non-academicians. Questions like whether we appoint businessmen as civil surgeons have been raised in this context. A VC is essentially an academic leader and scholastic role model for the faculty, staff and students. The HEIs are neither factories nor business franchises. They are institutions where excellence in teaching and learning is ensured and young minds are groomed for free thinking in a research-undertaking environment. These values cannot be appreciated by non-academic paratroopers or persons not exposed to the rigorous academic ecosystem of HEIs and lacking in academic and research knowledge and orientation, no matter how expert they may be in their field of specialisation.

It will open the VC's post to persons with political and ideological affiliations, compromising the eminence, propriety and commitment to academic excellence that is expected from this position. The appointment of non-academicians as Professors of Practice in universities with similar expectations, too, is yet to show tangibly beneficial results.

It would be in the interest of the nation to avoid such experiments with HEIs. A balance of the role of state governments and governors in the selection of VCs is needed. Further, it should be provided that none of the selection committee members is below the rank of a VC; that a non-academician is not appointed VC even as a stop-gap arrangement; and that the post does not stay without a regular VC for a long time. Instead of inviting applications, nominations may be invited from current and former VCs, directors of institutions of importance, acclaimed intellectuals, etc, elucidating the achievements, integrity and calibre of the aspirant.

Though questionable, the draft regulations are mandatory in nature and impose stringent penalties on their violations. The penalties include debarring the institution from getting UGC schemes and disqualifying it not only from offering any degree but also the institution as a whole.

These regulations, ostensibly asserted as "measures for maintenance of standards in higher education", are, in fact, a blatant effort to erode the autonomy of universities, impose Central control, compromise the quality of education, curtail academic freedom, undermine academicians and overstep the UGC mandate. The UGC Act of 1956 does not clearly contain any provision related to VCs' selection. Having no regulation till 2010, introducing the UGC nominee on the search panel in 2010, withdrawing it in 2013, reintroducing it in 2018 and expanding it for greater control over HEIs in 2025 reflects that the UGC itself is not clear about its role in VCs' appointments. The regulations will lead to academic chaos and put the state universities in a disadvantageous position. The UGC must not go ahead with the disruptive revisions.

Especially so, when the formation of an umbrella organisation — the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) — as envisaged in NEP-2020, subsuming the UGC, is in the pipeline. The HECI would have responsibilities, like maintaining academic standards and specifying the eligibility criteria and mode for selection of VCs.

## MGNREGS funds

Annual crunch demands urgent fixes

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), a lifeline for rural livelihoods, is once again grappling with an acute fund shortage. For the fiscal year 2024-25, the government allocated Rs 86,000 crore, yet Rs 4,315 crore worth of wage payments remain pending. In 2023-24, the scheme ran a deficit of

Rs 6,146 crore just six months into the year. Similarly, in 2022-23, the revised allocation of Rs 89,400 crore was 33 per cent higher than the original budget. This annual struggle to meet financial requirements raises critical questions about the scheme's implementation and funding priorities. It is riddled with glaring inefficiencies. The Congress' demand for increasing MGNREGS wages to Rs 400 per day reflects political optics rather than a sustainable solution. It is a popular move and fails to address the root cause: a systemic shortfall in timely fund



allocation. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural

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## Fight for the eyesight of premature babies

Using unmonitored, high-concentration supplemental oxygen in newborn care units undoubtedly saves lives, but often at the cost of blindness.

Oxygen is the elixir of life, and this was brought home during the Covid-19 pandemic when millions of lives perished because of the worldwide scarcity of the much sought-after oxygen cylinders. However, it is not widely known that oxygen is also a double-edged sword. When given to yet-not-fully-developed babies born too soon, high-concentration oxygen may devastate their eyesight.

An estimated 18,000 babies thus go blind for life every year in India alone. Using unmonitored, high-concentration supplemental oxygen in newborn care units undoubtedly saves lives, but often at the cost of blindness. The blindness results from the consequences of scarring and unfettered growth of abnormal blood-supplying vessels in the immature retina. It is now known as retinopathy of prematurity (ROP). Babies mature in the womb for 40 weeks before entering the world. The eye's light-sensitive layer, the retina, is fully matured only if the baby attains at least 2,000-gm weight. If born before 31 weeks, several vital organs, especially lungs and retina, are not fully developed. A vast swath of the retina remains without a blood supply, especially in babies weighing less than 1,250 gm. Around the turn of the 20th century, doctors realised that babies born too soon could be saved if given oxygen. In the early 1940s, Dr Theodore Terry from Boston (USA) first flagged the issue of a visible white reflex due to massive scar tissue seen in the eyes weeks after birth of premature babies, all of whom weighed less than three pounds at birth. For several years, exposure to light was wrongly blamed. It was a pathologist in London, Norman Ashton, who fortuitously discovered that the retina of the kitten till three weeks of birth was similar to that of a human



Neonatology Department, PGI, Chandigarh, India is experiencing an epidemic of ROP-induced blindness due to increased survival of premature babies, unregulated oxygen use, lack of pulse oximeters and oxygen blenders in the newborn care units mushrooming all over urban India. Highly skilled manpower is required to care for these babies and counsel the parents. Although at-risk babies continue to be born, albeit in small numbers, in high-income countries of Europe, North America and Southeast Asia, hardly a baby goes blind from ROP because of the advanced infrastructure in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Almost four decades after what led to ROP was understood, experts reached a consensus on grading the stage and severity of ROP and

developed guidelines for treating the immature retina in these babies. While many early-stage cases resolve without treatment, some babies may require laser therapy or injections into the eye of drugs to block the abnormal retinal vessel development. If treated appropriately, success rates exceed most medical procedures. This protocol has also become the most cost-effective procedure by saving sight for the rest of life. Dr Joy Lawn from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and colleagues estimated that nearly 15 million babies worldwide are born too soon (less than 37 weeks). With India topping the charts, almost eight million babies are born too soon in resource-limited middle- and low-income countries. Those born too soon in low-income countries with poor resources barely have any chance of survival.

Timely detection, staging and treatment within 48 hours of at-risk babies is the key to saving their sight. The American Academies of Paediatrics and Ophthalmology recommend screening babies born with a birth weight of less than 1,500 gm, gestational age of 30 weeks or less, or any newborn with a higher weight (up to 2,000 gm) who received oxygen even for a few days. Dr Praveen Kumar, head of the Neonatology Department in PGI, however, recommends that Indian babies born before 34 weeks or weighing less than 2,000 gm or even higher if oxygen support is required must be screened for ROP. Starting at 28 days of age or discharge from NICU, whichever is earlier, the eye surgeon needs to monitor the newborn until the retina is fully matured. Training thousands of eye surgeons and equipping them with the necessary skills nationwide to screen and treat these tiny babies is a herculean task. Dr

Subhadra Jalali in Hyderabad and Anand Vinekar in Bangalore, both PGI alumni, have devoted their careers to saving the right of sight of these hapless babies. More than 50 years ago, Prof ON Bhakoo set up a modern neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) in the PGI, Chandigarh, and started training super specialists (DM) in neonatology. They were successful in saving the lives of very low birth weight babies. I remember Dr Anil Narang, who trained at Oxford and followed Professor Bhakoo, asking me the big question — who among us would undertake the onerous task of examining and treating those at risk of ROP in these tiny incubator-bound babies?

Dr Mangat Dogra, fresh from his training in the US, volunteered. As they say, the rest is history. Applying a cold probe at -80° Celsius (cryotherapy) to the retina that lacked blood supply was the standard of care back then if these babies had to have any eyesight in their lifetime. The babies had to be put under general anaesthesia. I remember the long hours he spent in NICU, examining babies, selecting those requiring treatment, and chasing anaesthetists, who, in those days, had little experience in giving anaesthesia to 1,000-1,200-gm babies. He would regularly share the day's story with me. I remember the pride on his face, a million-watt smile, announcing that the baby would see as the ROP had regressed. Over the decades, cryotherapy was supplanted with lasers and injections that do not require anaesthesia. In the last 35 years, Dr Dogra has treated the retinas of hundreds of premature babies and trained many ophthalmologists across India, including Anand. Happily, many of the same teeny-weeny babies he saved the sight are having babies with normal sight.



# North Delhi for Heritage lovers

## Ambedkar University Campus

This is not your usual university campus with a main building surrounded by graffiti-ridden walls and some academic blocks. The single-storeyed sprawling building that serves the Ambedkar University today is steeped in history and has been witness to all its turmoil. It's age-old trees have an impressive canopy of their own and can boast of many a historical figures taking sanctuary under their branches. Built in the 1900s, the building was initially the IG Block in British rules India. As the British were looking to develop more structures of governance, before the Parliament was built, Civil Lines, beginning from Kashmere Gate right up till Majnu Ka Tila, was going to be the scene of action.

As a result, since the time of the British and after that, this campus has housed many educational institutions including the Kashmere Gate Polytechnic, the Woodcraft Institute and the Delhi College of Engineering, the latter has now moved to Bawana.

## William Fraser's Bungalow

Referred to as a 'white mughal' by noted author William Dalrymple, William Fraser was a civil servant in the times of British ruled India and the reign of the last Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah Zafar. His bungalow, today the site of the Railway office, was built next to the Yamuna in 1803 when he was the deputy resident of Delhi. Fraser was murdered outside this bungalow and has been buried in the grounds of the neighbouring St. James' Church.

The rather well-maintained structure of William Fraser's bungalow is also the recipient of DDA's Adaptive Urban Heritage award in 1998. The building comprises of two separate structures that have been joined together. Architecture is in the Indo-Saracenic style, also known as Indo-Gothic or Hindu-Gothic. The building was greatly damaged during the revolt of 1857 and has since then been restored hence the alteration in architectural styles. What is most interesting is that the building stands on a tykhana, or a dungeon, that has three tunnels, one leading up to Red Fort, the other to the Yamuna river and the third to a corner of the bungalow's huge campus. This network of tunnels was meant to facilitate clandestine passage of sepoys as well as prisoners, not to mention their execution. Often, prisoners were sent from the Red Fort, decapitated in one part of the dungeon and their bodies thrown into the nearby Yamuna river without anyone getting to know.

The Yamuna river's waters came right up to the dungeons at the time that the waters had not receded. This is probably why these dungeons reek of a dank odour even today. A part of the tunnel accessible from behind

the bungalow has some lighting for people to be able to walk along a portion of this. Since most of the elaborate tunnel networks under Red Fort are either broken down or inaccessible, this tykhana is an interesting opportunity to explore if you'd fancy a peek into history and the scandalous crimes that could have taken place here. An alert for single women tourists, go in large groups if you plan to explore the

tunnels.

## How to reach

If you are planning to take the metro, take the Kashmere Gate exit and ask a three wheeler or a cycle rickshaw (plenty available) to the St. James' Church. The building is right behind the church.

## Dara Shikoh's Library

The more well known and revered son of emperor Shahjahan, Dara Shikoh was known to have keen intellectual pursuits. The library established by him in the year 1637, stands in the grounds of the Ambedkar University to this day, a testimony for this interest, although few of the prince's original works are accessible. Dara Shikoh was involved in the translation of the Upanishads and had already completed the translation of 50 Upanishads from Sanskrit to Persian in a bid to bring these

ancient scriptures within the reach of Persian scholars. A lot of his own texts reflect a confluence of both Sufi and Vedantic schools of thought.

The library building is a short drive into the Ambedkar University campus, accessible on weekends as well. In the British period, the building served as the residence of the Mughal Viceroy of Punjab, Ali Mardan Singh. Thereafter, the Government College, the District School and the Municipal Board School operated from these premises.

The building has a huge lawn on the back side of the premises that probably served as a play area for the children at that time. Today, the Department of Archaeology of Ambedkar University operates from here.

## Old Post Office

The oldest post office of Delhi dating back to 1885; this is where the story of India Post began. Despite the age, the building is in good shape due to adequate maintenance and the fact that this is still an operational post office.

Its double-storeyed structure is located a quick walk down from the Ambedkar University entrance, on the way from Kashmere Gate to Red Fort. The Old Delhi Railway Station is a stone throw's away, a convenient location for all the post coming in at the time when snail mail was the only way of communication. The building has five bays with semi-circular arched doorways, typical of architecture of this time. There are semi-circular tapering pilasters between each bay.

Once you are in the area, you can also check out some other British era buildings in the vicinity; the St. James' Church, Ambedkar University building that was earlier used as the IG Block during the British governance and houses Dara Shikoh's library and William Fraser's Bungalow that is today the Railway office.

## Bara Hindu Rao Hospital

Overlooking a quaint roundabout on the North Delhi Ridge, with the Ashokan Pillar on one side and the Delhi University North Campus to the other, stands the Hindu Rao Hospital. The sprawling campus of the biggest hospital of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation has quite a few shards of history tucked away in various

corners.

As per the official version of the Hindu Rao Hospital, the main building of the hospital goes back to 1911. It was built by Sir Edward Cole Brook as a 16 bedded nursing home. However, other accounts of this structure, particularly those of noted author William Dalrymple have referred to the Hindu Rao House as a structure built by William Fraser in the early 19th century who also resided here. After his death in 1835, the house was acquired by Hindu Rao, a Maratha nobleman and brother in law of Maharaja Daulat Rao Scindia of Gwalior and the name has since stuck.

The house premises was turned into the British head quarters during the time of the 1957 Revolt, probably because of the vantage point that it offers, thanks to its elevation and thick green cover. Incidentally, this was also the spot where Timur the Lame camped and looted Delhi in 1398.

## Qudsia Bagh and Masonic Lodge

The Qudsia Bagh complex that separates IBSB from Civil Lines has been in and out of news for various reasons. The story goes back to the 18th century when the palace of Qudsia Begum-mother of mughal emperor Ahmad Shah Bahadur and wife of Mughal king Mohammed Shah Rangila, stood at this very point. After the revolt of 1857, much of the palace was destroyed and what remains today is a mosque, an archway and a hunting lodge and some remains of the corner facade of the erstwhile palace.

The mosque is an ASI protected monument. Built with lakhori bricks, the ASI is still working to restore this to its days of glory. Some of the initial work has been patchy and looks as if sepia paint has been slapped on the structure in a hurry. The mosque is already giving in to encroachment despite notices prohibiting the same.

In the same complex is the Masonic Club and the mason's lodge. While the club is now closed since it would attract mostly those who would come across to enjoy highly subsidised liquor, the mason's lodge has recently been painted and restored, freed of all the broken furniture that had been piled up here for decades.

The historical structures notwithstanding, the real story lies in the resurrection of the park complex itself. Built in the char-bagh style, the Qudsia lawns sprawling over 50 acres were dishevelled and gradually deteriorating into a den for miscreants. Ever since the upkeep of these lawns was taken over by the Qudsia Bagh Welfare society, a body comprising mainly of local residents, the area has been converted into a walker's and horticulturist's paradise. A neat 1-km walk-way has been carved out of the lawns' periphery so that even the remote corners are now accessible to all. Almost 550 trees, 42,500 shrubs and 450 bamboo plants were planted recently.

This has only added to the already existing green treasures of this area; a few 200 year old Pipal trees that were probably planted in the Mughal era, two of the largest specimens of Cycus Palms in the city going back almost 80 years and many other old trees that are now neatly labeled for those who care to observe as they go about their morning walk. The complex is flanked by the ring road on one side and Palna-an orphanage-on the other side.

Way back in the 18th century, when the palace of Qudsia Begum stood on this grounds, the river Yamuna was flowing right next to the mosque. The river has now receded many metres and is barely visible from here today. However, you must pay a visit to the area and witness the wonders that can materialize when ownership comes from the ground up, from residents and not just an alienated municipal body.



# Delhi, Haryana war over water gets political colours ahead of elections

►Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini dismissed these allegations, demanding an apology from Kejriwal and threatening a defamation suit.

**NEW DELHI.** The battle for water between Delhi and Haryana has resurfaced amid the fervent campaign for the February 5 Assembly elections in Delhi.

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal has accused the BJP-led Haryana government of contaminating the river, labelling it as an attack on Delhi's drinking water.

Incumbent Chief Minister Atishi went further, accusing Haryana of "water terrorism." In a letter to the EC, she cited a Delhi Jal Board report, which flagged dangerous ammonia levels in Yamuna water from Haryana, rising to seven parts per million - 700% above treatable limits - due to untreated sewage and industrial waste. Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini dismissed these allegations, demanding an apology from Kejriwal and threatening a defamation suit. Saini countered that Haryana reveres the Yamuna as a sacred river, asserting that the accusations tarnished its honour.

This clash is the latest episode in a decades-long feud between the two states over the Yamuna, which has been fought in courts and political arenas since 1995, shortly after Delhi got its



Legislative Assembly.

Legal battles began in 1995 when the Supreme Court, responding to Delhi's plea for a steady water supply, ordered Haryana to ensure adequate flow. This decision was based on a 1994 memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh on Yamuna water allocation. However, tensions escalated quickly, with contempt petitions filed against Haryana for alleged violations of the top court

order. In 1996, the court ruled that Delhi's water supply must remain uninterrupted, irrespective of the MoU.

Despite the directives, disputes persisted. In 2018, the DJB alleged Haryana was supplying only a third of Delhi's rightful share, prompting the apex court to urge dialogue between the states. Later that year, Haryana offered to release additional water if Delhi withdrew pending legal cases, but the issue remained unresolved.

Conflict erupted again in 2021, with DJB accusing Haryana of ignoring the 1996 Supreme Court ruling by allowing water levels in Delhi's reservoirs to drop. Haryana, in turn, blamed Delhi's internal mismanagement. That same year, AAP leaders accused Haryana and neighbouring states of polluting the river, depriving Delhi of clean water. In 2023, the rivalry took a different turn when a severe flood hit Delhi. AAP accused Haryana of deliberately releasing water from the Hathnikund Barrage to inundate the capital. This barrage, central to the 1994 MoU, regulates Yamuna water allocation among states.

## How many cases filed over triple talaq? Supreme Court seeks data from Centre

**New Delhi.** The Supreme Court, on Wednesday, directed the Central government to provide data about the criminal cases registered under the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019 for the pronouncement of triple talaq. The court was hearing a batch of petitions filed by Muslim organisations challenging the constitutionality of the 2019 Act. A Bench of Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justice PV Sanjay Kumar, while hearing 12 petitions challenging the constitutionality of the 1991 Muslim Women (Protection of Rights in Marriage) Act, also asked about the pending triple talaq cases and any challenges pending before the High Courts against the enactment.

"Parties to file written submissions on both sides. Check up and give us data on the number of FIRs registered," the Supreme Court ordered. The petitioners argued that the law has introduced penal legislation specific to a class of persons based on religious identity. It is causative of grave public mischief, which, if unchecked, may lead to polarisation and disharmony in society.

They further contended that since the Supreme Court had already declared the practice of instant triple talaq as unconstitutional in the Shayara Bano case, the law serves no purpose. It has been argued that the intent behind the Act is not the abolition of triple talaq but punishment of Muslim husbands. The Court also remarked that the petitioners were only challenging the criminalisation of the practice and not defending the practice itself.

"I am sure none of the lawyers here are saying that the practice is correct, but what they are saying is that whether it can be criminalised when the practice is banned and no divorce can take place by uttering talaq three times at once," CJ Khanna remarked.

When the Court was adjourning the matter, SG Mehta chose to refer to an Urdu couplet by Pakistani poet Praveen Shakir on divorce. "Talaq de rahe ho Aahurur-o-shroor ke saath meri jawani bhi lauta do mere mehr ke saath"

The bench fixed the petitions for final hearing in the week commencing March 17. Notably, the Supreme Court on August 22, 2017 had criminalised the 1,400-year-old practice of 'triple talaq' among Muslims. The court set the practice aside on several grounds, including that it was against the basic tenets of Quran and violated the Islamic law Shariat.

## MEA summons Sri Lankan envoy, 'strongly' protests navy's firing on Indian fishermen

**NEW DELHI.** A firing incident by the Sri Lankan Navy near Delft Island early Tuesday left five Indian fishermen injured, including two with serious injuries, prompting a strong diplomatic response from India. Priyanka Wickramasinghe, Acting High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in New Delhi was summoned to the External Affairs Ministry and a strong protest was lodged over the incident. The Sri Lankan diplomat was told that use of force is not "acceptable" under any circumstances whatsoever.

"Our High Commission in Colombo has also raised the matter with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sri Lankan government," External Affairs Ministry said in a statement. "An incident of firing by the Sri Lankan Navy during the apprehension of 13 Indian fishermen in the proximity of Delft Island was reported in the early hours of this morning," the MEA said.

Out of the 13 fishermen who were on board the fishing vessel, two have suffered serious injuries and are currently receiving treatment at the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. "Three other fishermen received minor injuries and have been treated for the same. Indian Consulate Officials in Jaffna have visited the injured fishermen at the hospital to seek their welfare and are extending all possible assistance to the fishermen and their families," the statement said. The Government of India has stressed the importance of addressing issues related to fishermen in a humane and humanitarian way, with consideration for their livelihoods. The use of force is unacceptable, and existing agreements between the two governments should be strictly followed.

## Balance privacy with need for DNA test in paternity dispute cases: Supreme Court

**NEW DELHI.** Courts must be mindful of the collateral infringement of privacy of the child and the parents while permitting an enquiry into somebody's paternity by a DNA test, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan, said that forcefully undergoing a DNA test would subject an individual's private life to scrutiny from the outside world. The ruling brought the curtain down on a two-decade-old dispute over paternity by a person from Kerala. "That scrutiny, particularly when concerning matters of infidelity, can be harsh and can eviscerate a person's reputation and standing in society. It can irreversibly affect a person's social and professional life, along with his mental health," the bench said.

Laying down the procedure of when a court can order a DNA test to ascertain an individual's paternity, the top court said that courts should assess the eminent need for a DNA test and there should be a balancing of interests.

"On one hand, courts must protect the parties' rights to privacy and dignity by evaluating whether the social stigma from one of them being declared 'illegitimate' would cause them disproportionate harm. On the other hand, courts must assess the child's legitimate interest in knowing his biological father and whether there is an eminent need for a DNA test," the bench said.

The bench pointed out that the effects of social stigma about an illegitimate child making their way into the lives of parents and there could be scrutiny owing to alleged infidelity.

Casting aspersions on a married woman's fidelity would ruin her status, dignity and reputation, and she would be castigated in society, it added. "First and foremost, the courts must, therefore, consider the existing evidence to assess the presumption of legitimacy. If that evidence is insufficient to come to a finding, only then should the court consider ordering a DNA test," the court said. Once the insufficiency of evidence is established, the court must consider whether ordering a DNA test is in the best interests of the parties involved and must ensure that it does not cause undue harm to the parties. There are thus two blockades to ordering a DNA test: (i) insufficiency of evidence; and (ii) a positive finding regarding the balance of interests," it added.

## 'Genocide remarks can endanger national security': Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena writes to CM Atishi

**NEW DELHI.** Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena wrote to Chief Minister Atishi on Tuesday, alleging that AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal's allegations that "poison" is being mixed into Yamuna water and there was an "attempt of genocide" in the capital are highly objectionable, and amount to endangering national security.

Citing media reports, Saxena said the former Delhi chief minister's allegations against the BJP-led Haryana government of poisoning the Yamuna river and attempting a "genocide" in Delhi are "highly objectionable, unfortunate and undesirable". "Making false, misleading, non-factual accusations

of poisoning and genocide over a sensitive issue like drinking water and attempting to incite the public against

condemning Kejriwal's statements, Atishi strengthened the "confusion and fear" among people by writing a letter to the Election Commission (EC) over the matter.

Saxena said he expects the Chief Minister to rise above "narrow interests" and refrain from making "misleading, dangerous, and baseless statements, and advise the AAP convenor to do the same for sake of public welfare." Delhi's water crisis took a sharp political turn on Monday, with thw AAP supremo accusing Haryana government of "biological warfare". "Poison is being mixed into the Yamuna to make its water untreatable. If people in Delhi consume this water, many will die," he wrote.



another state government is not only a threat to the states involved but also to national peace and security," he said in the letter to the chief minister. The L-G also pointed out that instead of

## Muslim woman seeks succession law

**NEW DELHI.** The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought the Centre's stand after hearing a Muslim woman's plea seeking to be governed by the Indian succession law. A woman from Alappuzha in Kerala, Safiya P M, had moved the SC stating that she is a non-believer Muslim and hence should be governed by the Indian Succession Act 1925 concerning inheritance instead of the Muslim Personal Law (Sharia Law).

After hearing Safiya's plea, the apex court sought a response from the central government within four weeks. A three-judge bench led by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and comprising Justices Sanjay Kumar and KV Viswanathan said, "We will hear this plea after we receive the reply." The matter was posted for May first week.

Safiya, the general secretary of "Ex-Muslims of Kerala", said that as per Shariat law, a Muslim person cannot bequeath more than 1/3rd of his/her properties by way of will. "Her father



cannot bequeath more than 1/3rd of the property to her, and the remaining 2/3rd will go to her brother, who was suffering from Down's syndrome," the plea stated.

The petitioner said she has a daughter, and after her death, the entire property will not go to her daughter as her father's brothers will also get a claim.

Safiya said that she has not officially left Islam. She is a non-believer and wants the enforcement of her fundamental right to religion under Article 25 of the Indian constitution. Safiya has sought a

declaration from the apex court that the persons who do not want to be governed by the Muslim Personal Law must be allowed to be governed by the secular law of the country i.e. the Indian Succession Act, 1925, both in the case of intestate and testamentary succession.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, a senior lawyer representing the Centre, said the plea raised an interesting question. He said the Centre will file its reply as per the SC's order.

Mehta further said that Safia has only one daughter and wanted to bequeath the entire property to her, but Sharia law allows bequeathing of only 50%. "She wants the benefit of the Indian Succession Act, the secular law," he said. Last year, the top court notified the Centre and Kerala on the petition. As per Sharia law, the person who leaves her faith in Islam will be ousted from her community, and thereafter, she is not entitled to any inheritance right in her parental property, the petition said.

## What led to Maha Kumbh stampede? Congress blames VIP culture; CM cites overcrowding

**New Delhi.** A stampede broke out on Wednesday as millions of people flocked to the ghats to take a holy dip in Prayagraj where the grand Maha Kumbh mela is taking place. Ten people lost their lives while many others were seriously injured in the incident that gave Opposition an opportunity to attack the state government. Congress blamed 'VIP culture' for the unfortunate incident, targeting the Yogi Adityanath-led administration. Till 8.30am on Wednesday, around 3.5 crore pilgrims had taken holy dip at Maha Kumbh mela, CM Yogi said, emphasising the enormous crowd the event is attracting. However, he assured that he is continuously monitoring the situation along with senior officers.

### CONGRESS BLAMES VIP CULTURE

Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi said the news from Prayagraj is heart-rending and alleged poor management by the state government.

"Poor management and prioritising VIP movement over ordinary pilgrims is responsible for this tragic incident," he said, adding that the government should make proper arrangements to prevent a recurrence of such an incident. "VIP culture should be checked and better arrangements must be made for the pilgrims," Gandhi said. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has said in a post on X, "Half-baked preparations, VIP movement and a focus on self-publicity instead of management is responsible for this. Such preparations despite spending thousands of crores in condemnable."

"Facilities for lodging pilgrims and first-aid must be expanded and VIP movement checked. Our saints want the same," he added. The Congress leaders' jabs over VIP culture come after high-profile BJP leaders, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, visiting the Mahakumbh to take the holy dip.



Coldplay frontman Chris Martin also arrived at Maha Kumbh Mela with his girlfriend Dakota Johnson.

### WHAT CM YOGI SAID

"Around 8-10 crore devotees are present in Prayagraj today. There is continuous pressure due to the movement of devotees towards the Sangam Nose. A few devotees have suffered serious injuries when they tried to cross barricading on Akhara Marg. The injured been shifted to hospitals for medical treatment." The CM said the

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called four times so far to stake stock of the situation. He further assured that the situation is under control and.

"The situation in Prayagraj is under control but the crowd size remains massive...There are large crowds at Sangam Nose, Nag Vasuki Marg and Sangam Marg," the CM said. He also appealed to devotees to not pay attention to any rumour and take holy dip at the ghats nearest to them.

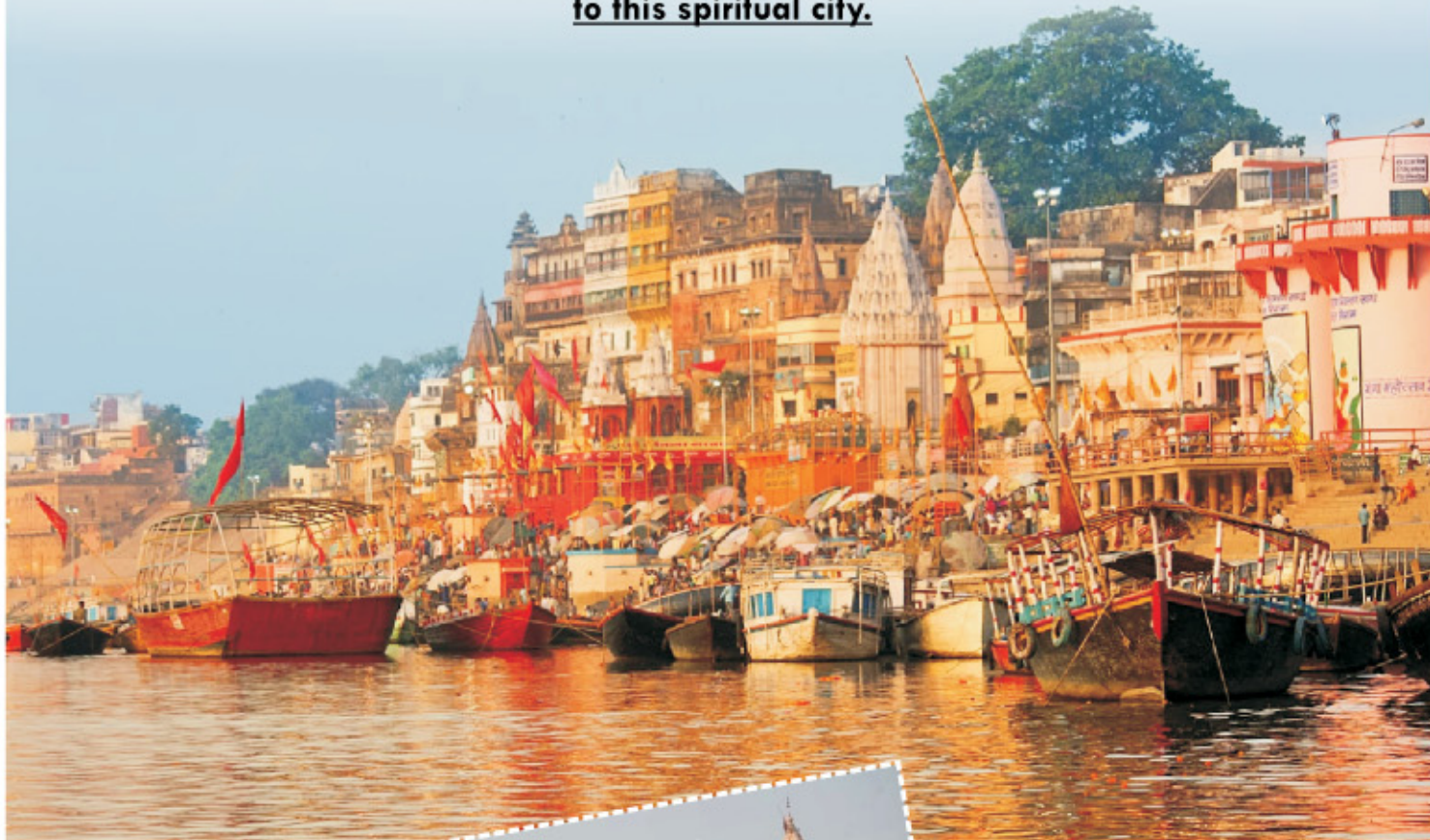
### WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED

The stampede broke out at around 2 am when a sea of devotees converged at the Sangam to take a holy dip on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya. The Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj is the sacred meeting point of the Ganga, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati rivers. Pilgrims believe bathing here cleanses sins and ends the cycle of rebirth. As a result, the Sangam Nose became the most visited spot during the Maha Kumbh.



# 48 hours in Varanasi

**One of the oldest living cities in the world, Varanasi is situated on the western banks of the Ganga and extends beyond the riverbank into a labyrinth of alleys. Filled to the brim with temples and teeming with pilgrims, the city is a magnet for travel enthusiasts. From witnessing vibrant evening prayers at Varanasi's oldest ghat to touring one of the most significant Hindu temples in India—here is a guide to making the most of your two-day trip to this spiritual city.**



## Breakfast at Kachauri Gali

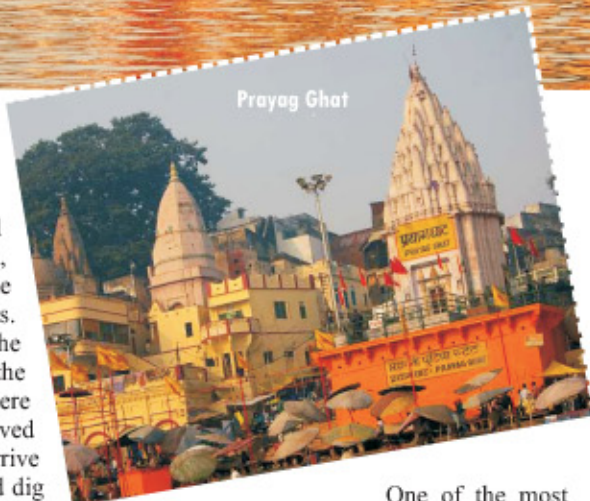
Dotted with weathered, blackened cauldrons bubbling with hot oil, Varanasi's Kachauri Gali is one of the city's main landmarks near the ghats. The Vishwanath Gali transforms into the Kachauri Gali as soon as you pass the famous Vishwanath temple. This is where the famous kachauris are fried and served fresh with chana and imli chutney. Arrive as early as 7 AM to beat the rush and dig into the hot fried kachauris. Make sure you are not too late, as the street falls into a lull soon after breakfast.

## Visit Prayag Ghat

Overflowing with devotees that come to offer their prayers day and night, the Prayag Ghat is another significant ghat in Varanasi. Located on the immediate left of the Dashashwamedh Ghat, it was built by Balaji Bajirao in 1778 and is a replica of the Prayag holy city in Allahabad. Fortune tellers, seated under rattan umbrellas, read fortunes for the visiting pilgrims.

## Watch the rituals at Manikarnika Ghat

One of the most unique aspects of the city of Varanasi is that the cremation grounds at Manikarnika Ghat are located in the city itself and in the vicinity of some of Varanasi's most sacred temples. Piles of firewood line the shore and the fires continually burn as a stream of dead bodies, each wrapped in cloth, is carried through the lanes on makeshift stretchers. It was said that Lord Shiva gave Lord Vishnu a boon, that whoever dies in Kashi would be liberated from the endless cycle of birth and death and his soul would be set free.



Prayag Ghat

their homage to Lord Shiva in the form of a huge lingam situated under a peepal tree. To most visitors to Varanasi, it's known for being a place where long-term foreign students, researchers and tourists live. It was at Assi Ghat where the famous Indian poet, Tulsi Das had written the much-celebrated Ramcharitmanas and the ghat can accommodate about 22,000 people at once during festivals like Shivratri. In the evenings, around 7 pm, a full-fledged aarti takes place here and many visitors prefer watching it from the boats that can be hailed from the ghat.

## Catch evening prayers at



Manikarnika Ghat

# 24 hours in Agra

**Drawing in hordes of tourists on a regular basis, Agra is perhaps one of the most visited cities in India for both Indian and global travellers. Although tourists mostly flock to the Taj, there are several other places of significance which are worth visiting when you're in the city. For visitors who have only a day to spare, we highlight the top attractions for you to fit into your itinerary. From touring the Taj Mahal to sampling delicious local cuisine—pack it all into a day without missing out on a thing. Here's how you can make the most of your 24 hours in Agra.**

Kick-start your day with the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal is considered by many, to possess architectural beauty unsurpassed by any other structure in the world. Constructed over a period of 22 years, employing twenty thousand workers, it was completed in 1648 C.E. and cost a whopping 32 million Rupees. Built entirely of white marble, it almost seems to glow in the moonlight, with the shimmering Jamuna river situated just across. The Muslim emperor Shah Jahan built this monument in the memory of his wife Mumtaz, whose grave is housed within the premises at the lower chamber. The grave of Shah Jahan was added to it later. The Taj stands tall and regal on a raised, square platform, forming an

unequal octagon with its four truncated corners. The architecture uses the interlocking arabesque concept, where each element is singular in its entirety, but integrates seamlessly with the whole. The central dome spans 58 feet in diameter and soars to a height of 213 feet. It is flanked on four sides by smaller domed chambers, and four slender minarets rising to a lower height of 162.5 feet. The entire mausoleum is decorated with an inlaid design of

flowers and calligraphy using precious gems like agate and jasper, and the main archways are carved with passages from the Holy Qur'an.

## Take a guided tour of Agra Fort

Aside from the Taj Mahal, Agra has one of the finest Mughal forts in India, the Agra Fort. A massive red sandstone structure located on the banks of the Yamuna River, construction on the fort was started in 1565 by the Mughal Emperor Akbar, and further additions in white marble were subsequently made up till the reign of his grandson Shah Jahan. Originally built for military purposes, it was later used as a palace, and eventually even served as a prison where Shah Jahan was confined for 8 years by his son Aurangzeb, who seized power in 1658. The fort runs along a length of 2.5 kilometres within enclosed walls, it encompasses several exquisite



Dashashwamedh Ghat

## Dashashwamedh Ghat

One of the oldest and most important ghats, the Dashashwamedh Ghat is also Varanasi's liveliest. Two Hindu mythologies surround the ghat, one being that Lord Brahma created it to welcome Lord Shiva and another where he sacrificed ten horses during the yajna performed here. Around dusk the Dashashwamedh Ghat comes to life with the evening Ganga Aarti. Performed by young pundits dressed in saffron, the aarti is an elaborate ceremony complete with puja, dance and fire. The riverbank lights up with flaming lamps and the smell of sandalwood envelops the ghat. Close to the ghat, overlooking the Ganga, lies the Jantar Mantar—an observatory built by Maharaja Jai Singh of Jaipur.

## Breakfast at Phulwari

A gang of playful monkeys keeps you company till the food arrives at Phulwari. Situated in the backdrop of an ancient kaali temple with massive graffiti on the main wall, Phulwari is as much a visual delight as a culinary one. The pizzas and yoghurt muesli are especially delicious.

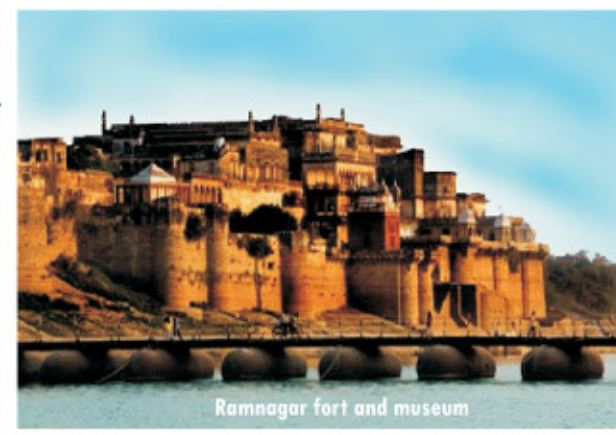
## Head to the Sri Kashi Vishwanath Temple

Not far away from the Ganga is one of the oldest temples in Hinduism, Sri Kashi Vishwanath Temple. Deriving its name from the city Kashi, the temple was built in 1780 by the Late Maharani Ahilya Bai Holkar of Indore and is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, the holiest of Shiva temples. The main deity housed within its premises is known by the name Vishwanath or Vishweshwara, both translating to mean 'ruler of the universe.' The temple is also the starting point of the sacred Panchkoshi

Yatra—a 88.5 km long barefoot walk encircling Kashi.

## Explore the Ramnagar fort and museum

A repository of the history of the kings of Varanasi, the Ramnagar fort and museum is located opposite Varanasi's Tulsi Ghat. This crumbling 17th century fort and palace on the eastern banks of the Ganga is a beautiful place to watch the sunset over the river. Built with red sandstone by the Maharaja of Banaras, the fort houses a temple and a museum within its compound. Carved balconies, open courtyards and intricate pavilions highlight its



Ramnagar fort and museum

Mughal style of architecture and the most important construction inside the fort is the famous 'Durbar hall' which is a hall dedicated to the public audience.

## Lunch at Shree Café

If you're staying close to Dashashwamedh ghat, this is going to be your constant choice for meals. The cosy cafe dishes out the most delicious Indian, Middle Eastern, Chinese and continental vegetarian fare. The owner, Santosh Ji's interest in photography has resulted in the cafe's bright walls being adorned with brilliant Varanasi themed pictures. You can never go wrong with ordering the lemon nana and the special thali.

## Sarnath

The Buddhist pilgrimage, Sarnath lies 10 km from Varanasi, and is yet another attraction that appeals to people from all around the world. This is the place where Gautum Buddha first gave his sermons on Dharma. The main deer park complex and



Assi Ghat

a number of other Buddhist temples can be seen here. The Mulgandha Kuti Vihar temple, the Archaeological Museum, the Dhamek Stupa, the Chaukhandi Stupa and ruins of monasteries are the key highlights here. Other modern structures like the Japanese & Korean temples have been added to the Sarnath topography in the last few decades. Go early so you can beat the rush of tourists through the day and enjoy the tranquil ambience of these Buddhist relics.

The construction of this walled city took almost 15 years to complete, and the complex included several royal palaces, a harem, courts and a mosque. The buildings have been made from red sandstone and have been designed in keeping with Persian architectural concepts, although the overall style is Mughal.

## Shopping at Sadar Bazaar

This is the best place for shopaholics, and probably one of Agra's most popular shopping areas. In close proximity to the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort, Sadar Bazaar is a bustling marketplace that houses hundreds of tiny shops selling everything from ethnic clothes and accessories to leather goods and shoes.

## Dinner at Dasaprakash

Something of an institution in the city, Dasaprakash dishes out the most authentic and delicious south Indian cuisine. Despite being jam-packed with both locals and tourists at all times of the day, the service is quick and the food's served hot and fresh. You could go with the dosa-idli combination, or alternatively try the thali, which is loaded with south Indian staples.



## Dutch airline KLM scraps 250 jobs in cost-cutting drive

**The Hague.** Dutch airline KLM said Wednesday it was shelving 250 jobs as part of cost-cutting efforts it hopes will lead to a boost in operating profit of around 450 million euros (\$469 million).

The firm said it would try to avoid forced lay-offs to achieve the cuts, but admitted it could not rule that out. The 250 jobs would come from "non-operational" roles, said KLM chief executive Marjan Rintel in a statement.



"It is crucial for our future to structurally lower costs, which involves making painful choices," said Rintel. Other cost-cutting measures already announced by KLM include postponing the construction of a new HQ, as well as other maintenance buildings. The firm is also seeking to shelve non-core activities and bolster productivity by at least five percent, via automation, mechanisation and reducing absenteeism. KLM, allied with Air France, together posted a sharp drop in net profit for the third quarter of last year.

The Franco-Dutch group reported a profit after tax of 824 million euros, down 13 percent from the same three-month period last year.

## Sebi rejects Danny Gaekwad's offer to buy 26% in Religare

**NEW DELHI.** Sebi has rejected the competing open offer for Religare Enterprises by Florida, US-based investor Digvijay 'Danny' Gaekwad.

Market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) responding to the Gaekwad's letter has said: "The letters submitted by Digvijay Laxmansinh Gaekwad are being returned since the same is not an exemption application in terms of Regulation 11 of SEBI (SAST) Regulations, 2011." The content of the letter was part of an exchange filing by the New Delhi-headquartered company, Gaekwad on January 24 had made a counter offer in cash for the company at Rs 275 a share as against Rs 235 apiece made by the Burman Family of the FMCG major Dabur group. The offer was made in a letter addressed to the Chairperson of the market regulator, according to a filing made by Religare to the BSE. Gaekwad, in the letter, had said its offer of Rs 275 per equity share represents a 17% premium to the open offer price offered by the Burmans and a 24% premium to the 60-day volume weighted average price of Religare's shares calculated with a reference date of September 22, 2023, of Rs 221. We believe that the Burmans' Open Offer price of Rs 235 per equity share grossly undervalues the real worth of Religare and is to the detriment of public shareholders. At the time the offer was made on September 25, 2023, the offer price was already at a discount of 15% to Religare's prevailing market price of nearly Rs 271 per share. Even considering the closing price of Religare shares on January 22, 2025, the Burmans' Open Offer price is at a steep discount of 7%," the letter stated.

## Maruti Suzuki approves reappointment of Hisashi Takeuchi as MD & CEO

**New Delhi** Maruti Suzuki India Ltd on Wednesday said its board has approved the reappointment of Hisashi Takeuchi as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer for a further period of three years with effect from April 1, 2025.

The board in its meeting held on January 29, 2025 approved the appointment of Takeuchi as MD and CEO for a further period of three years till March 31, 2028, Maruti Suzuki India said in a regulatory



filing. Takeuchi was first appointed as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer with effect from April 1, 2022, consequent to the completion of the term of his predecessor Kenichi Ayukawa on March 31, 2022. He has been on the Board of Maruti Suzuki since July 2019 and was Joint Managing Director (Commercial) from April 2021 till his elevation.

# Budget 2025 income tax: Why standard deduction should be hiked under new tax regime

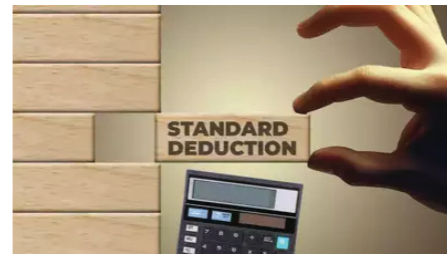
**NEW DELHI.** Budget 2025 income tax expectations: With Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman set to deliver the Union Budget 2025 speech on February 1, 2025, salaried and middle class taxpayers are looking to the Modi 3.0 government for income tax relief, especially under the new income tax regime.

The new income tax regime, introduced in FY 2020-21, has steadily seen changes with more favourable income tax slabs and rates, introduction of standard deduction and benefits for NPS. In Budget 2024, FM Sitharaman announced a hike of Rs 25,000 in standard deduction from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000 under the new income tax regime. The standard deduction under the old income tax regime, however, continues to be the same at Rs 50,000. Standard deduction is a flat deduction available on the salary income that helps reduce the taxable income of a taxpayer. With the new income tax regime being the default tax regime, and the government pushing for its adoption, taxpayers are looking to FM Sitharaman

to increase the standard deduction limit further.

**Budget 2025:** Why standard deduction should be hiked Personal tax experts are of the view that since no major exemptions and deductions are available under the new income tax regime, there is a strong case to hike the standard deduction to encourage further adoption. One expert even recommends considering standard deduction as a fixed percentage of income. Sundeep Agarwal, Partner, Vialto Partners says, "With rising living costs, the standard deduction under the new tax regime should be increased from Rs 75,000 to Rs 1,00,000. This hike would make the new income tax regime more attractive, considering no other deductions/exemptions are allowed."

According to Agarwal, raising the standard deduction would provide relief across income groups while keeping the tax system simple. "It would enhance disposable income, stimulate spending, and support economic growth while addressing inflationary pressures," he tells TOI. Kuldeep Kumar, Partner,



Mainstay Tax Advisors LLP also believes that raising the standard deduction from Rs 75,000 to Rs 100,000 could provide relief to the salaried class. "There is merit in this demand, as professionals/businesspeople can claim actual expenses incurred against the income they earn from their profession/business. Even those eligible for presumptive taxation benefit from a large amount of assumed expenditure, as a much lower amount is presumed to be their income for taxation purposes," he tells TOI. "In comparison, salaried class taxpayers under the new tax regime have no deductions available, except for the standard deduction or the employer's

contribution to the NPS. This does not result in equitable treatment for salaried taxpayers compared to others," he adds. Sudhakar Sethuraman, Partner, Deloitte India says that the government can also consider providing standard deduction as a fixed percentage to the income like that of standard deduction of 30% on rental income. "Allocating fixed percentage brings equity across various income levels," he tells TOI. Surabhi Marwah, Tax Partner, EY India says that since there are no major deductions or exemptions available under the new tax regime, there is a strong case for increasing the standard deduction further to make the new tax regime attractive. "An increase could potentially lower taxable income, providing significant relief, particularly for individuals in lower to middle-income brackets," she says. Tax experts are also of the view that any further hike in standard deduction under the old income tax regime is unlikely since the government is looking to encourage adoption of the new income tax regime.

## Zepto moves corporate base from Singapore to India ahead of IPO

**NEW DELHI.** Quick-commerce unicorn Zepto has officially moved its corporate base from Singapore to India, ahead of its highly anticipated initial public offering (IPO). The company's chief financial officer (CFO) Ramesh Bafna said that this is a good "ghar wapas" template for the startup ecosystem and overtime, enables a great pipeline towards capital markets.

"Historic scenes on completion of... reverse merger from Singapore to India in the fastest ever timeline," Bafna said in a LinkedIn post today (January 28). "This is a display of understanding of technicals, working with right partners, getting into (the) nuts and bolts on execution, unblocking natural causes of delay and tactical calls real time by an empowered team," he added. Zepto's move follows a growing trend among Indian startups, including companies like Groww and PhonePe, that have shifted their headquarters back to India to tap into the expanding local startup ecosystem. The relocation also comes amid reports that Zepto is looking to increase the size of its IPO from the



previously planned \$800 million to \$1 billion. As part of its shift, Zepto's Mumbai-based entity, Kiranaktar Technologies Private Ltd, will likely become the holding company for Zepto, according to a January 9 ruling by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). Prior to this, Kiranaktar Pte Ltd, based in Singapore, was the parent company. Financially Zepto's revenue surged in

financial year 2023-24, more than doubling to Rs 4,454.52 crore, up from Rs 2,025.70 crore the previous year. The company's CFO Ramesh Bafna said that this is a good "ghar wapas" template for the startup ecosystem and overtime, enables a great pipeline towards capital markets. Zepto's move follows trend among Indian startups, including Groww and PhonePe that have shifted headquarters to India

## Pace of AI development 'terrifying,' says former safety researcher at OpenAI

**NEW DELHI.** A former safety researcher at OpenAI says he is "pretty terrified" about the pace of development in artificial intelligence, warning the industry is taking a "very risky gamble" on the technology, The Guardian reports.

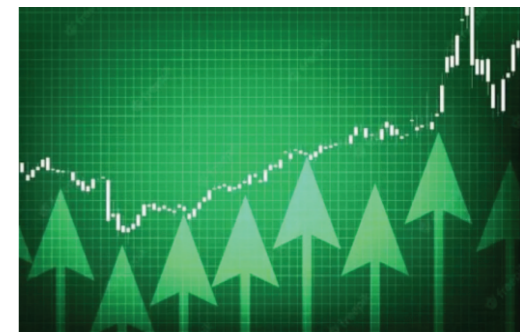
Adler, who left OpenAI in November, said in a series of posts on X that he'd had a "wild ride" at the US company and would miss "many parts of it." However, he said the technology was developing so quickly it raised doubts about the future of humanity. "I'm pretty terrified by the pace of AI development these days," he said. "When I think about where I'll raise a future family, or how much to save for retirement, I can't help but



wonder: will humanity even make it to that point? Adler's fears have been echoed by some of the world's leading AI researchers, Fortune pointed out. Stuart Russell, professor of computer science at the University of California,

Berkeley, told the Financial Times that the "AGI race is a race towards the edge of a cliff."

"Even the CEOs who are engaging in the race have stated that whoever wins has a significant probability of causing human extinction in the process, because we have no idea how to control systems more intelligent than ourselves," he said. Adler's and Russell's comments come amid increased attention on a global AI race between the US and China. The news that Chinese company DeepSeek had potentially built an equal or better AI model than leading US labs at a fraction of the cost spooked US investors on Monday and sparked a reaction from leading tech figures, including OpenAI CEO Sam Altman.



### WHAT DO BROKERAGES SAY?

Brokerage firm Nuvama maintained a 'Buy' rating on the stock with a target price of Rs 10,700. The brokerage highlighted better-than-expected EBITDA, supported by pricing, scale, PLI incentives, and cost management. Analysts at the brokerage expect export growth of over 20% and domestic growth between 6-8%, with revenue and EBITDA likely to grow at a CAGR of 11% and 12%, respectively, over FY25-27E. On the other hand, Axis Capital retained a 'Sell' rating, cutting its target price to Rs 7,550 from Rs 8,000. While exports are improving, the brokerage noted that Bajaj Auto lost over 100 basis points in market share over the first nine months of FY25. Lower volume assumptions led to a 7% cut in its EPS estimates for FY25-27E.

# Wall Street tech stocks recover a day after DeepSeek selloff hit Nvidia

**Nvidia, which lost 17% in Monday's session, the biggest one-day loss in market history, rose 8.9% on Tuesday as investors looked for buying opportunities.**

**New Delhi** Technology stocks on Wall Street saw some recovery on Tuesday, after the losses suffered the previous day when Nvidia saw its market value fall by \$593 billion. The massive selloff in Nvidia's stock was triggered by the rise of Chinese AI startup DeepSeek, which introduced a low-cost AI assistant that investors feared could disrupt the dominance of US companies in the artificial intelligence sector. Nvidia, which lost 17% in Monday's session, the biggest one-day loss in market history, rose 8.9% on Tuesday as investors looked for buying opportunities. Other tech stocks, including semiconductor, power,

and infrastructure companies linked to AI, also regained ground after collectively losing over \$1 trillion in market value a day earlier.

### US TECH STOCKS GAIN GROUND

Much of Tuesday's gains in the tech sector were driven by major companies like Apple and Microsoft. Apple rose 3.7%, making it the second-biggest boost for the Nasdaq after Nvidia. Microsoft gained 2.9%, recovering from losses earlier in the week. Meta Platforms, the parent company of Facebook, added 2.2%, marking its seventh straight day of gains despite the AI-driven market turmoil. The overall technology sector rose 3.6% on Tuesday after falling 5.6% the day before. The Philadelphia semiconductor index, which tracks major chip companies, gained 1.1% after suffering a 9.2% drop on Monday, the steepest one-day percentage fall since March 2020.

Investors began to question whether DeepSeek's AI model could truly live up to its claims of lower costs and efficiency. "Yesterday was an initial reaction. Today investors are asking if anybody did any sort of homework and made sure DeepSeek is exactly what they say it is.

Can we have more proof that they really built it for so much less?" said JJ Kinahan, president of brokerage firm Tastytrade, in an interview with Reuters. Nvidia closed Tuesday at \$128.99 per share, still lower



than its Friday close of \$142.62. Other major tech stocks also showed signs of recovery. Oracle, which had dropped 13.8% on Monday, ended the session up 3.6%. Marvell Technology, which had fallen 19%, rose 3.5%, while chipmaker Broadcom recovered 2.6% after Monday's 17.4% drop. EXPERTS BULLISH ON AI STOCKS Despite Monday's selloff, some investors see the rise of DeepSeek as a positive sign for the

AI industry. Steven Cohen, founder of Point72 Asset Management, said at a conference in Miami on Tuesday that DeepSeek's breakthrough is "actually bullish because it advances the move to artificial intelligence," as reported by Reuters. Traders also showed renewed interest in Nvidia. While the stock suffered a historic drop, options traders quickly returned, betting on a recovery. Cody A Cree, a semiconductor industry analyst at Benchmark Company, told Reuters that the emergence of cheaper AI models would not reduce the need for high-performance chips. While companies like DeepSeek may develop cost-effective AI software, they still require powerful hardware to train and operate their models. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman called DeepSeek's model "impressive" but added that competition is a good thing. "We will obviously deliver much better models, and also it's legit invigorating to have a new competitor!" Altman said in a social media post. US President Donald Trump commented on DeepSeek, calling it "a wake-up call for our industries."

## NEWS BOX

## Alyssa Healy declares herself fit for Women's Ashes Day-Night Test: Ready to go

**New Delhi** Skipper Alyssa Healy said that she was "good to go" for the Women's Ashes Test against Heather Knight's England at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground. The 34-year-old Healy played in the ODI leg of the Ashes, but missed the three-match T20I series due to an injury to her right foot. Healy, who has played nine Tests since her debut in 2011, declared herself fit before the game, but said that Australia haven't finalised their playing XI for the Day-Night Test. Due to a stress reaction on her foot, Healy had to wear a moon boot throughout the last week.



"I'm good to go. We'll make a final decision on what the XI looks like over the next little period ... but I feel like I'm ready to go, so we'll wait and see what happens," Healy said in the pre-match press conference. "The final XI hasn't quite been decided upon just yet, but I'm standing here in front of you without a moon boot, saying I'm ready to go," Healy said.

### 'Have done everything possible'

Healy has had her fair share of troubles with a foot injury after she missed a few games in the Women's T20 World Cup where Australia crashed out in the semi-final. She also missed the WBBL due to a left knee injury. Before the upcoming Test, Healy took laps of the ground and also participated in fielding drills. "The medical staff have been really supportive of (giving me) the opportunity to even push to play in this Test match. We've done everything we possibly can to get myself in a position to put my hand up and say, 'I'm ready to go,'" Healy added.

All-rounder Ash Gardner has also been cleared to play after she did not play in the T20Is due to a calf injury. Fast bowler Megan Schutt, however, will miss out after national selector Shawn Flegler confirmed earlier that Australia would persist with the duo of Kim Garth and Darcie Brown.

## Suryakumar Yadav needs to choose when to be aggressive: Michael Vaughan

**NEW DELHI.** Former England cricketer Michael Vaughan has advised India's T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav to adopt a more measured approach at the crease before shifting into aggressive mode. Vaughan believes Suryakumar's tendency to attack too early has backfired, contributing to his struggles in the ongoing T20I series against England, including India's 26-run defeat in the third T20I in Rajkot on January 28.

With India now leading the five-match series 2-1, concerns over Suryakumar's form have intensified. The batter has failed to make an impact so far, registering scores of 0, 12, and 14 in the first three matches. His dismissals have largely been a result of mistimed attacking strokes, either edging the ball behind or mis-hitting it into the air. Speaking to Cricbuzz, Vaughan emphasised that while India prioritises maximising their powerplay runs, Suryakumar must structure his innings better to fully contribute to the team. "It's a few times on the trot where he's been getting out to quite soft dismissals. When



you say be aggressive all the time, it's choosing the right ball to be aggressive to. Clearly you can't hit every single ball to the boundary and some of these players in this era, they've got so much skill and talent that they think they can. It's just not possible," Vaughan said. "For India to come back, and I'm sure they will, they're not going to play any worse, I can't imagine in a few days time, but it will need maybe Sky (Suryakumar Yadav) just saying, 'okay, I just need to about 15 balls to give myself in, get myself in, look at the dimensions of the ground'. He's got the game to just go and explode into the boundary hitting mode that wind that we know that he can," he added. India's batting unit has displayed inconsistencies throughout the series, with victories largely coming through individual brilliance rather than collective performance.

# Neymar returns to Brazilian club Santos after termination of contract in Saudi Arabia

## Neymar won six titles with his boyhood club Santos, including a Copa Libertadores trophy in 2011.

**RIO DE JANEIRO.** Neymar has agreed to return to Santos nearly 12 years after he left the Brazilian team, club president Marcelo Teixeira said Tuesday. The Brazil striker confirmed earlier that his contract with Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal had been terminated by mutual consent. He had an injury-marred spell at Al-Hilal, where he played only seven matches and scored once. Neymar won six titles with his boyhood club Santos, including a Copa Libertadores trophy in 2011. Santos is a beachfront city outside São Paulo. "It is the time (to come back), Neymar. It is time for you to come back to your people. To our home, to the club in our

hearts," Teixeira said in his social media channels. "Welcome, our boy Ney! A boy of Vila (Belmiro, Santos' stadium). Come back to be happy again with the white and black shirt. The Santos nation awaits you with open arms." Neymar, once hailed as one of the world's best players, spent much of his time in Saudi Arabia on the sidelines due to an ACL injury he picked playing for Brazil in October 2023. São Paulo media reported that the former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain star is expected to return to Brazil this week and reintroduce himself to Santos fans within days. Neymar became the most expensive player in soccer history when he transferred from Barcelona to PSG for 222 million euros (then \$262 million) in 2017. "My father must be taking bicycle kicks in heaven after finding out that our boy is coming back home," Nascimento said on Instagram. Pelé died in December 2022.

A video published by Al-Hilal on Tuesday evening shows Neymar giving a farewell speech. "Today I am very happy to be able to go, return home. To my country," Neymar told his former teammates, without mentioning Santos. "It was a pleasure for me to play for this club. It was a short time, things were not as I expected. I could not



help you on the pitch as I wanted." Santos was relegated to Brazil's second division in 2023 and was promoted again in the latest season. Neymar's most recent match was played in November. Al-Hilal coach Jorge Jesus had repeatedly cast doubts about the striker's form to play. Neymar left the Saudi Arabian league after playing just seven games in 17 months following his big-money move to the oil-rich kingdom. Al-Hilal said Monday it reached an agreement with Neymar to terminate his contract by mutual consent. Neymar's spokeswoman, Duy Franco, told The Associated Press the player had no immediate comment. However, Neymar responded with

a heart gif to a post of Kely Nascimento, one of the daughters of three-time World Cup winner Pelé, celebrating his return to Santos. "I gave everything to play and I wish we enjoyed better times on the pitch together," Neymar said in a message on social media. "To Saudi, thank you for giving me and my family a new home and new experiences. I now know the real Saudi and have friends for life." Despite Neymar's injury, Al-Hilal still managed to win last season's Saudi league. The Brazilian's contract was due to expire after this year's FIFA Club World Cup, which will be played between June 15 and July 13 in the United States. The striker joined the Saudi club from PSG in August 2023 for 90 million euros (\$94 million). His salary was reportedly one of the biggest in world soccer as well. But Neymar picked up his ACL injury playing for Brazil only months after he joined Al-Hilal. Neymar returned in October but said in different interviews there were doubts over whether he would stay for the rest of the season. Santos fans have already been expecting Neymar's return. Since last week, they have posted a video of a man with the voice of legendary three-time World Cup winner Pelé.

## Ignoring pacers, under-using Sundar: Aakash Chopra questions India's selection

**New Delhi** Former India cricketer Aakash Chopra has raised concerns over India's team selection in their ongoing T20I series against England, citing it as a key reason for their defeat in the third T20I in Rajkot. After winning the first two matches, India failed to seal the series, allowing England to pull one back with a win on January 28. Chopra believes India has not fully utilised its squad depth, which has contributed to the inconsistent team performance. While Abhishek Sharma and Tilak Varma guided India to victories in the first two matches with individual brilliance and Varun Chakravarthy impressed with the ball, India has lacked a well-rounded collective effort. One of Chopra's main concerns is the underutilisation of Washington Sundar, who has been in the playing XI for the last two matches but has hardly been given the ball.

**IND vs ENG, 3rd T20I: Highlights** "You are saying you want four spinners. Let me agree that you need four spinners, but are you bowling 16 overs of spin? You don't do that as well. You got Washington to bowl only one over. You cannot play someone for

one over. It is bizarre," Chopra added. Sundar was introduced into the lineup in the second T20I in Chennai, replacing Nitish Kumar Reddy, but bowled just one over for nine runs. The trend continued in Rajkot,



where he was again restricted to a solitary over, conceding 15 runs. Chopra questioned why India would pick a bowling all-rounder but not use him effectively in the

attack. Additionally, Chopra raised concerns about India's reluctance to field a proper combination of pacers despite having Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Hardik Pandya, and Harshit Rana in the squad. He suggested that India's team selection has not been balanced, leading to avoidable weaknesses.

"I don't think we are selecting the right team. Arshdeep Singh was playing earlier and Hardik Pandya was there with him. Then Mohammed Shami played and Hardik was there with him too. It's not that this team doesn't have any other fast bowlers, but you don't want to play any fast bowler," Chopra added. Another selection decision that raised eyebrows was Dhruv Jurel's batting position. Chopra criticised the move to send the wicketkeeper-batter as low as No. 8 in the order, a concern that was also echoed by former England captain Kevin Pietersen after the Rajkot defeat. With the series now at 2-1, India must fine-tune its playing XI for the fourth T20I in Mumbai on January 31 to ensure a strong collective display rather than relying solely on individual performances.

## Varun Chakravarthy explains how Rajkot pitch helped England defend 171

**NEW DELHI.** Varun Chakravarthy said that the lack of dew in the second innings of the Rajkot T20I helped England bowlers dominate the Indian batters. On Tuesday, January 28, Suryakumar Yadav's India lost the third T20I by 26 runs as the visitors stayed alive in the series. After being asked to bat first, England put up a healthy score of 171 for the loss of nine wickets. Chasing the challenging target, India finished at 145 for nine. Jamie Overton, Jofra Archer, Mark Wood, Brydon Carse and Adil Rashid did not let the Indian batters dictate terms. Chakravarthy said that the pitch got tougher to bat during India's run-chase as it got slower. "The pitch definitely got slower in the second innings. We thought that there might be dew which might set in. But it didn't set in and that definitely played in their favour," Chakravarthy said in the post-match press conference.



Chakravarthy also heaped praise on Rashid and hailed him as a 'legend' after the English spinner finished with figures of 4-0-15-1. "Adil Rashid is a legend and knows how to bowl; he has that control

over his speed," Chakravarthy said. From the personal viewpoint, Chakravarthy had a memorable day after he became only the third Indian in Men's T20Is after Kuldeep Yadav and Bhuvneshwar Kumar to pick up multiple five-wicket hauls. Chakravarthy finished with figures of 4-0-24-5. Chakravarthy said that he would keep focussing on being consistent.

"The work doesn't stop because consistency is constant work. Even if I want to bowl a stock ball, I need to keep working on it, need to get 9 out of 10 consistency, and that work is always there. So, right now, my focus is on consistency, and line and length," Chakravarthy added.

The fourth and penultimate T20I of the series is scheduled to take place on Friday, January 31 at the Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) Stadium in Pune



wicket. AUS vs SL 1st Test Day 1 LiveHead survives as Sri Lanka opts against DRS The Sri Lanka captain Dhananjaya de Silva also wasn't too keen to go for DRS and decided against it. Much to his dismay, the ball tracking showed that the ball was pitching in line and Head would've had to return to the pavilion, had they opted for a review. As a result, the southpaw continued his stay at the crease as Sri Lankan bowlers had nowhere to hide from his belligerent strokeplay. Head showed no mercy to the bowlers, hitting both spinners and seamers at all corners of the ground and brought up his half century off just 35 balls. He was dismissed shortly after completing his fifty while trying to smash Jayasuriya down the ground but could only find Dinesh Chandimal at long on.

## Mohammed Shami will regain his rhythm after a couple of more games: Ambati Rayudu

**Former India cricketer Ambati Rayudu has backed fast bowler Mohammed Shami to find his rhythm again in a couple of matches after he looked far from his best on his comeback in the third T20I against England in Rajkot.**

**NEW DELHI.** Former India cricketer Ambati Rayudu feels Mohammed Shami will take a couple of more games to find his rhythm back. Shami made his international comeback after a long gap of 14 months in the third T20I against England at Niranjan Shah Stadium, Rajkot. The speedster last represented the country in the ODI World Cup 2023, where he finished as the highest wicket taker with 24 wickets.

However, the star fast bowler looked far from his best on his return as he was out of rhythm and remained wicket-less in his three overs,



giving away 25 runs. Analysing Shami's comeback, Rayudu said that it takes some time for a player to gain confidence about his body after returning from injury and hence Shami wasn't seen at his best.

**IND vs ENG 3rd T20I Highlights** "I think his rhythm builds when he runs well during his run-up and comes to the crease at

good speed. Today, I couldn't see that much. Having confidence about your body is extremely crucial for a player after injury. Players who've gone through injury will tell you that it takes time after returning. The body remains in good shape but the confidence in one's body to put in the extra efforts comes with time. Hence, I feel Shami

will pick up his rhythm after a couple of games," said Rayudu on Star Sports. Former India spinner Piyush Chawla agreed with Rayudu's statements and said that one is bound to have butterflies in his stomach while making a comeback after a long hiatus. "When you make a comeback to international cricket after so long, you have butterflies in your stomach. No matter, how much you've played in the past when you come back to the team after a long gap of 436 days, there were some nerves there. He didn't look in his usual rhythm, every player takes 1-2 matches. The good thing is that he played a game and bowled three overs and the way he ended his spell, I feel the more he plays, the better he will get," said Chawla.

Meanwhile, India lost the third T20I by 26 runs as they failed to chase down the target of 172. The Men in Blue could only score 145/9 in 20 overs as England bowlers continued to keep a stranglehold on their batting. As a result, they emerged victorious in the game to stay alive in the five-match series which India currently leads by 2-1.

# Pashmina Roshan's

## Instagram Post Has A Shah Rukh Khan Connection, Did You Get It?

Herithik Roshan's cousin sister, Pashmina Roshan, is no more unknown to the cinema buffs. She began her acting career with the 2024-released Ishq Vishk Rebound. This is a sequel to the 2003 movie Ishq Vishk, starring Shahid Kapoor in the lead. Coming to the daughter of Hrithik Roshan's uncle Rajesh Roshan, she is extremely active on social media. She recently posted a picture of herself clad in a red coloured saree taking to her Instagram handle, Pashmina Roshan dropped a carousel featuring her latest looks in a red-hued pre-draped saree. The 29-year-old actress simply spread the aura of her beauty among her social media community and looked every bit gorgeous. The saree featured a fish-cut, loose-fitted silhouette attached to a piece of the same fabric, which she wrapped around her body as the pallu of the piece.

Pashmina teamed her look with a bralette made of the same shiny fabric. It also featured noodle straps, a board deep neck and no sleeves design. A pair of golden hoop earrings and two diamond bangles accessorised her glam for the day. Coming to her makeup, she was seen flaunting her natural glow alongside fully flushed red cheeks. Glossy lipstick and thin stroke of eyeliner.

However, Pashmina's post also had a quirky note alongside it. She wrote, "Muh th



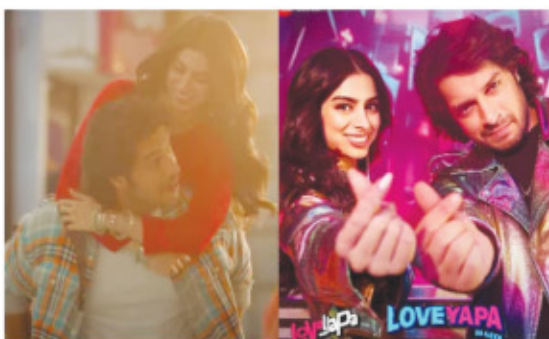
band kar lo uncle (please close your mouth, uncle)," followed by a face with a hand over mouth emoji representing her embarrassed look. Many of Pashmina's fans soon began flooding the comment section by showering a lot of love on her picture.

For those unaware, Pashmina had taken admission to Jeff Goldberg Studio in Mumbai after completing college to learn acting. Later she also participated in a theatre play named The Importance of Being Earnest in the year 2019. Apart from this, she is also a trained classical dancer. Previously, in an interview with ANI, Pashmina recalled, "In the initial years, I was very confused if I could be a good actor or not. Poll: Who is the best Bollywood icon of all time? Amitabh Bachchan Shah Rukh Khan Though, I did theatre in school but I was not sure. So, I had applied to different universities in the UK for marketing. I got my visa, rooms were booked and it was summer holiday. I was very depressed. All my friends would go for parties and they would do everything. I used to just sleep in the afternoon." The actress added, "After a lot of rejections, after continuously evaluating myself and taking feedback from family, after many years, I got this opportunity and this film. And I am very grateful for that."

# Khushi Kapoor

## Calls Character Bani In Loveyapa 'Completely Opposite' To Her: 'Fun Exploring That Side'

Khushi Kapoor and Junaid Khan are all set for their first theatrical release Loveyapa. The rom-com will be released on February 7. However, ahead of the release, the lead actors are seen busy promoting the film on all platforms. Recently, Khushi Kapoor has opened up about her character Bani in the film. Sharing insights into fitting into the shoes of her character, Khushi Kapoor said, "I was sitting quietly in the corner when I first met Advait, and he asked, 'Can you scream? This film is about shouting.' I told him I'd



try. Right after that meeting, I started yelling, and even I was surprised at myself, like, 'Where did this voice come from?' Bani and Gaurav are such badass, loud characters, completely opposite to us introverts. It was fun exploring that side."

The film is directed by filmmaker Advait Chandan. Talking about her character Bani, Khushi Kapoor said, "I mean, I had the best experience. I think I immediately just felt seen and heard as an actor. I just felt like he

would listen to me and understand me, and he would give us both that space to kind of explore and approach the scene, how we would interpret it, and then kind of give us his notes on how he would want the scene to go."

She added, "So it would kind of give him a fresh perspective and help us understand how the progression of our characters in the scene should be. So, I mean, overall, the whole experience was just the smoothest. And I keep telling him as well, I just think I had the best time shooting this film. It just felt like such a breeze. And I think that affects your performance as well, your environment."

For those unaware, Khushi Kapoor and Junaid Khan's upcoming film Loveyapa is a Hindi remake of the 2022 Tamil movie Love Today. Loveyapa is a fresh take on Gen-Z relationships, blending romance with comedy. The plot revolves around a humorous challenge set by the lead characters' parents, where Gaurav and Baani must exchange their phones for a day to prove their trust before deciding to marry. In addition to Junaid Khan and Khushi Kapoor, the film features a stellar cast including Grusha Kapoor, Ashutosh Rana, Tanvika Parlikar, Kiku Sharda, and Kunj Anand.



## Shilpa Shinde Bashes Bigg Boss 18 Makers After Karan Veer Mehra's Win: 'Logon Ko Ullu Bana Sakte Ho'

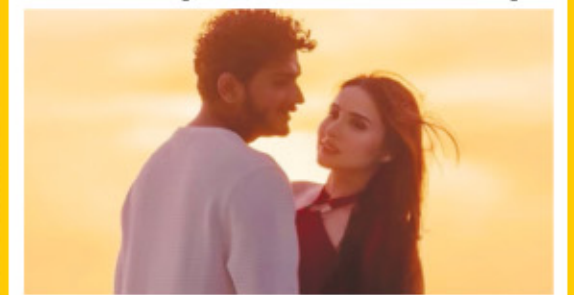


Karan Veer Mehra's Bigg Boss 18 win has left many disappointed. While some claim that finalist Vivian Dsena should have won Salman Khan's show, others argue that Karan did not deserve to lift the trophy. Recently, television producer Sandeep Sikand also reacted to Karan's victory and claimed that it was not based on audience votes, as fans believed, but on his personality. His statement has reignited debates over the show's credibility, with viewers calling the finale rigged. Therefore, former winner Shilpa Shinde has also bashed the makers of Bigg Boss 18 now. In a statement, the actress alleged that the winner of the controversial reality show is fixed and claimed that makers can no longer befool viewers.

"I don't know, kuch logo ko pata chal gaya ki makers khud hi decide karte hain winner. Khud hi banate hain, apne ghar se uthakar late hain aur khud hi dikhathe hain. Toh channel ki jo bhi strategy hai, I think logon ko pata chal gayi hai. Aap ek limit tak logon ko ullu banaa sakte ho, uske baad nahin," Shilpa said. Bigg Boss 18's grand finale was held on January 19. While Karan Veer Mehra emerged as the winner of the show, Vivian Dsena and Rajat Dalal were the first and the second runners-up respectively. Other contestants in the finale were Avinash Mishra, Chum Darang and Eisha Singh.

Following Karan's win, several Bigg Boss 18 contestants were seen expressing disappointment with the audience's decision. Among others, Arfen Khan shared a post on her X handle and wrote, "He pinned down my wife, Salman confirmed, he made a mockery of Vivian's child, a fine example for the world of a winner. Rajat Dalal should have won, if not him, Avinash did more than the so-called winner from the beginning. Vivian [Dsena] was honourable. What a world we live in."

## Munawar Faruqi's Wife Mehzabeen Coatwala Shares A Romantic Photo On His Birthday, Calls Him 'Hubby'



Munawar Faruqi is celebrating his 33rd birthday on Tuesday, January 28. On this special day, his wife, Mehzabeen Coatwala took to her Instagram stories and sent wishes to the love of her life in a special way. She shared a romantic picture of them from one of their vacations and wrote, "Happy Birthday Hubby", along with a red heart emoji. In the picture, Munawar and Mehzabeen were seen striking a pose on a beach at the time of the sunset. While Munawar sported an all-white attire, Mehzabeen looked prettiest in a red outfit. The two looked lost in each other as Munawar held his wife close and flaunted his charming smile. Check it out here:



Munawar Faruqi and Mehzabeen Coatwala tied the knot on May 26, 2024. It was said to be a close-knit affair which only their family members attended. In the photos from the intimate wedding ceremony that leaked online, the couple was seen cutting a cake together.

Later, a report by Times Now claimed that Hina Khan played cupid for Munawar and Mehzabeen. "Hina Khan introduced Munawar to Mehzabeen. At an event, Hina sent Mehzabeen to Munawar for his makeup. They met for the first time at that event," a source cited by the entertainment portal claimed. It also reported that Hina attended the wedding ceremony as well.

Prior to Mehzabeen, Munawar Faruqi was married to Jasmine, with whom he also has a seven-year-old son named Mikael. While the comedian often shares pictures with his son online, he first opened up about him in Kangana Ranaut's Lock Up. Later, he also talked about his son with Mannara Chopra while they were in the Bigg Boss 17 house. "I have been with someone for the past two years. I was in a marriage in 2017 and in 2020 we got separated. Last year our divorce was finalised. Amid all this, the best thing about my life is my son. He is 5 years old and stays with me," he said.