

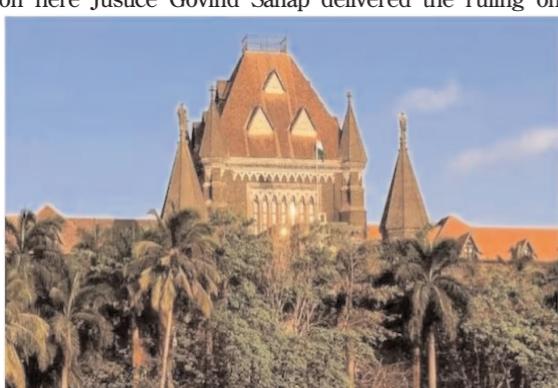


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ਲੱਖ-ਲੱਖ ਵਧਾਈਆਂ

'Single instance of following a girl is not stalking': Bombay high court

ST Correspondent

Mumbai, Jan 05: In a key ruling, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay high court said that a single instance of following a girl does not constitute stalking under Section 354-D of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which was not replaced by the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) when the case that the court was hearing was filed. The Bombay high court recently clarified that a single instance of following a girl does not constitute stalking under Section 354-D of the Indian Penal Code. The court highlighted that repeated or persistent behaviour is required to establish the offense of stalking, reported LawTrend. 2025 Unveiled: Baba Vanga's Shocking Predictions! For more details & latest news, read on here Justice Govind Sanap delivered the ruling on



December 5, 2024, in response to separate appeals filed by the two individuals challenging their convictions for several offenses under the IPC and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act). The Bombay high court partially upheld their appeals, acquitting them of certain charges while confirming their convictions for others. The victim of the case was a 14-year-old girl hailing from Maharashtra's Akola, who alleged that the two accused had harassed her over a period of several months. The prosecution in the case claimed that the victim's younger sister had been witness to one of the accused entering the victim's house forcibly in August 2020, groping her and threatening her to not tell anyone about the violent act. Earlier, a trial court, had convicted both of the accused under Sections 354 (outraging modesty), 354-D (stalking), 452 (house trespass), and 506 (criminal intimation) of the IPC, as well as Sections 7 and 11 of the POCSO Act, sentencing them to rigorous imprisonment ranging from three to seven years. Justice Sanap said, "The prosecution must prove that the accused repeatedly or persistently followed or watched the victim. A single act of following cannot constitute the offense." One of the accused in the case was acquitted of all charges. The other, continued to be charged under Section 354-A IPC (sexual harassment) and Section 7 of the POCSO Act (sexual assault) as the court found credible evidence of him sexually assaulting the girl.

Rahul Gandhi's response on difference between BJP and Congress

Naresh Malhotra

New Delhi, Jan 05: Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, spoke about the differences between Congress and BJP during a conversation with IIT Madras students, saying that his party prioritises fair distribution of resources and inclusive growth, while the BJP focuses on aggressive growth and a "trickle-down" approach. During a recent conversation with the students, the Congress leader discussed various issues including the changes he would like to make to improve the education system. 2025 Unveiled: Baba Vanga's Shocking Predictions! For more details & latest news, read on here When students asked about the differences between the Congress and BJP in terms of their operations, he explained that Congress and the UPA generally believe in fair distribution of resources and in promoting wider, inclusive growth. The BJP, he said, is more aggressive on growth. "They believe in what in economic terms is 'trickle-down.' On the social front, we feel that the more harmonious society is, the less people

are fighting, the better it is for the country. On the international relations front, there are



probably some differences with regards to the way we relate to other countries but it will be similar," said Rahul Gandhi. On his WhatsApp channel, the Congress leader said they discussed "redefining success and reimagining education in India." "I believe it is

one of the foremost responsibilities of any government to guarantee quality education to its people. This cannot be achieved through privatisation and financial incentives. We need to spend a lot more money on education and strengthening government institutions," Rahul Gandhi said in a post on X, while sharing an edited video of his conversation with the students. "Our conversation centered on empowering students to explore paths beyond traditional careers, encouraging them to embrace innovation and pursue their passions. By prioritising fairness, fostering research, nurturing creativity, and driving production, we can position India as a true global leader. Their insightful perspectives made this dialogue deeply inspiring and hopeful for the future," he added. "I don't think that the best way to guarantee quality education to our people is to privatisate everything. Frankly, when you bring some sort of financial incentive into the game, you don't actually give quality education. I have said this many a times that the best institutions in our country are government institutions, yours being one of them."

Suraaj founder told reporters. 2025 Unveiled: Baba Vanga's Shocking Predictions! For more details & latest news, read on here Around 1.00 am, amidst dense fog, Prashant Kishor joined the protesting students, showing solidarity with their demand to cancel the BPSC examination.

"This is not a dharna. This is the passion of the people of Bihar to better their conditions, to secure a better future. In this cold weather, some are singing and you can see people from across the board sitting here. I am tired of answering accusations. Look around, and spot the vanity van if you can. We will sleep here too," Kishor said. Addressing concerns about his health amid his fast unto death, Kishor said, "I will not get sick so soon. I am fine

as of now. My throat is a bit irked. That's about it. The doctors have told me to sleep. Nothing serious." Earlier, Yadav on Saturday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of politicising the issue of BPSC protest. Speaking to ANI, he accused the independent movement of students of being politicised and said that these people joining the protest were the B team of the BJP. "It is being completely politicised. We feel that the people of Bihar will have to recognise these people who are the BJP's 'B' team and are trying to crush this independent movement. This is highly condemnable," he said. On the controversy surrounding Jan Suraaj Chief Prashant Kishor's vanity van, Yadav said, "An attempt was made to end the movement. Actors sit in the vanity van and the producer and the director make them sit, we know who is the producer who the director is, and why the actor was made to sit. Everyone knows."

Days after Lalu's offer, comes snub from Nitish

Patna, Jan 05: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday snubbed the RJD, headed by his arch-rival Lalu Prasad, stating that he had forged alliances "by mistake" with the opposition party which "did nothing" while in power. The JD(U) supremo made the remark days after Prasad, a former CM himself, had claimed that the RJD was keeping its "doors open" for the former ally, who is now back in the BJP-led NDA. Talking to reporters in the north Bihar district of Muzaffarpur, as part of a state-wide Pragati Yatra, Kumar said,

"Those who were in power before us... did they do anything? People used to fear stepping out of their homes after sunset. I had by mistake aligned with them a couple of times." "What was the condition of women back then? Today you can see these self-help groups, which we gave the name 'Jivika'. The Centre replicated our model and called it 'Ajivika'. Did you see such confident rural women earlier?" asked the longest-serving CM of the state. Kumar, however, did not take questions about the cryptic "offer" from Prasad, which was made light of by the RJD supremo's son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav, but endorsed by Congress. Prasad's comments had come in the backdrop of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's stance on projecting Kumar as the chief ministerial candidate in the assembly polls due in less than a year. State BJP leaders, on their part, have been maintaining that the JD(U) supremo will be the "face" of the NDA in the 2025 assembly elections.

Delhi to Meerut South in 40 minutes: PM Modi

Simmi Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Jan 05: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a 13-km section of the Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridor on Sunday, connecting Sahibabad in Uttar Pradesh to New Ashok Nagar in Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives to take a ride on the Namo Bharat train during the inauguration of the 13 km stretch of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Namo Bharat corridor between Sahibabad and New Ashok Nagar, Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025. Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives to take a ride on the Namo Bharat train during the inauguration of the 13 km stretch of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Namo Bharat corridor between Sahibabad and New Ashok Nagar, Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025. During the event, PM Modi took a ride on a Namo Bharat train from Sahibabad station to

South, with 11 stations, is now operational. Passenger services will begin at 5 pm, with trains running every 15 minutes. The fare for a journey

rated the Janakpuri West-Krishna Park Extension section, marking the opening of the first segment of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's (DMRC) Phase 4, officials announced. This is the first stretch of Delhi Metro's Phase-4 to be inaugurated. (HT Photo) As per the PMO release, this will be the first stretch of Delhi Metro's Phase-4 to be inaugurated. 2025 Unveiled: Baba Vanga's Shocking Predictions! For more details & latest news, read on here Passenger services will commence on the section on the Magenta Line from 3 pm Sunday, the DMRC's principal executive director Anuj Dayal said. "With the addition of Krishna Park Extension Station, the Delhi Metro network now comprises 289 stations spanning a total length of 394.448 km. This new section is an extension of the already operational Botanical Garden-Janakpuri West on Magenta Line." Dayal said. The Janakpuri West-R K Ashram Marg extension of the Magenta Line will receive 144 new coaches (24 trains), ANI reported. The section will include a single new station, Krishna Park Extension, extending the operational Magenta Line from Botanical Garden metro station to Janakpuri West. PM Modi will also lay the foundation stone for the 26.5-kilometre Rithala-Narela-Kundli (Sonipat) Metro corridor under Phase 4.



from New Ashok Nagar to Meerut South is ₹150 for the standard coach and ₹225 for the premium coach. This follows the inauguration of the 17-km priority section between Sahibabad and Duhai Depot on October 20 last year. The newly inaugurated 13 km section includes a 6 km underground stretch, featuring the key Anand Vihar station. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugu-

Karnataka govt likely finding excuses to halt guarantee schemes: Kumaraswamy

Navdeep Singh Sahni

New Delhi, Jan. 5: Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy on Sunday accused the Congress government in Karnataka of finding ways to discontinue its flagship guarantee schemes, while "burdening" the common people with increased costs such as the recent 15 per cent hike in public transport bus fares. Speaking to reporters, Kumaraswamy said, "The Chief Minister (Siddaramaiah) is someone who has presented the most number of budgets in the state, as he has also held a finance portfolio, with his consent the five guarantee schemes were implemented and they (Congress) claim that they have walked the talk, but to walk the talk they are playing with the lives of the common man." Expressing concern over the fare hike, he said it impacted farmers, labour-

ers, and the working class. "By increasing bus fares by 15 per cent, what has this government achieved? These hikes affect



the lives of the common people, not the wealthy or ministers' families," he said, adding that the hike reflects the government's insensitivity towards the struggles of the underprivileged. The revised bus fares, which took effect at midnight on

Saturday, have drawn criticism from opposition parties and various sections of society. The JDS leader charged the government with indulging in "daylight robbery," claiming that in the guise of implementing guarantee schemes, it was extracting several times more money from the same beneficiaries. "The Congress government claims it is fulfilling its promises, but at what cost? They are taking money from the people through fare hikes, increased stamp duties, and higher cess on petrol and diesel, and then giving it back in the form of schemes like Grsha Lakshmi. This is no achievement," he remarked. He further alleged that corruption under the current administration has reached unprecedented levels. "Contractors supporting the Congress have said commissions now exceed 60 percent, which is worse than the previous government. Corruption is rampant at Vidhana Soudha and across departments, with fixed percentages for ministers."

SC to hear contempt plea against Punjab officials over lack of aid to Dalawal

New Delhi, Jan 05: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear Monday a contempt petition against the Punjab chief secretary and director general of police for non-compliance of an order directing medical aid to farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dalawal, who is on an indefinite hunger strike. The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear Monday a contempt petition against the Punjab chief secretary and director general of police A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh is scheduled to hear the matter. 2025 Unveiled: Baba Vanga's Shocking Predictions! For more details & latest news, read on here Also Read: Supreme Court's clarification on Jagjit Singh Dalawal: 'Our directions were not to break his fast' The top court had earlier pulled up the Punjab government and said its officials and some farmer leaders were making irresponsible statements in the media over attempts to break Dalawal's indefinite fast. The court had come down heavily on the Punjab government for not moving Dalawal to a hospital even as it doubted the intention of the agitating farmers for resisting availability of medical aid to their septuagenarian leader. On December 20, the apex court put the onus on Punjab government officials and doctors to decide on his hospitalisation.

Prashant Kishor joins BPSC aspirants' protest, urges Tejashwi to lead the agitation

Tejinder Kaur Babbar

Patna, Jan 05: Jan Suraaj founder Prashant Kishor joined students protesting against the Bihar Civil Services (BPSC) exam early Sunday, urging RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, a 'tall leader' and the Leader of Opposition, to lead the demonstrations. Jan Suraaj chief Prashant Kishor with others during his indefinite hunger strike demanding the cancellation of the 70th Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) 2024, conducted by the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC), over allegations of question paper leak, Jan Suraaj chief Prashant Kishor with others during his indefinite hunger strike demanding the cancellation of the 70th Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) 2024, conducted by the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC), over allegations of question paper leak, "He (Tejashwi Yadav) is a tall

leader. He is also the LoP. He should have led the protests. I have been telling them



to lead the protest. We will step aside. He said that he was coming to Gandhi Maidan with five lakh people. Students (and their issues) should be talked about. Politics can happen whenever. We don't have any party banner here. We care about the agenda of the students," the Jan

Suraaj founder told reporters. 2025 Unveiled: Baba Vanga's Shocking Predictions! For more details & latest news, read on here Around 1.00 am, amidst dense fog, Prashant Kishor joined the protesting students, showing solidarity with their demand to cancel the BPSC examination. "This is not a dharna. This is the passion of the people of Bihar to better their conditions, to secure a better future. In this cold weather, some are singing and you can see people from across the board sitting here. I am tired of answering accusations. Look around, and spot the vanity van if you can. We will sleep here too," Kishor said. Addressing concerns about his health amid his fast unto death, Kishor said, "I will not get sick so soon. I am fine

as of now. My throat is a bit irked. That's about it. The doctors have told me to sleep. Nothing serious." Earlier, Yadav on Saturday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of politicising the issue of BPSC protest. Speaking to ANI, he accused the independent movement of students of being politicised and said that these people joining the protest were the B team of the BJP. "It is being completely politicised. We feel that the people of Bihar will have to recognise these people who are the BJP's 'B' team and are trying to crush this independent movement. This is highly condemnable," he said. On the controversy surrounding Jan Suraaj Chief Prashant Kishor's vanity van, Yadav said, "An attempt was made to end the movement. Actors sit in the vanity van and the producer and the director make them sit, we know who is the producer who the director is, and why the actor was made to sit. Everyone knows."

NEWS BOX

Cold wave grips Karnataka, Vijayapura shivers at 9 degrees Celsius

BENGALURU. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday issued a cold wave alert for most parts of Karnataka, particularly for north-interior Karnataka. IMD also issued a Yellow Alert warning of severe cold wave conditions for three districts in Karnataka-Bidar, Kalaburagi and Vijayapura, where the minimum temperature will drop by less than 4 degrees Celsius below normal. On Saturday, Vijayapura recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 9 degrees Celsius, followed by Hassan 10.3 degrees Celsius and



Chintamani 10.4 degrees Celsius.

Bengaluru recorded a minimum temperature of 14 degrees Celsius, which was 2.4 degrees Celsius below normal and HAL airport recorded a minimum temperature of 12.6 degrees Celsius, which was 3 degrees Celsius below normal. "An alert has been issued for three districts of north interior Karnataka. There will be a dip in minimum temperatures in most parts of Karnataka for the next 2-3 days. This is because of the northerly winds blowing from the hilly regions. No cold wave alert has been issued for regions of south interior Karnataka, but the region experiencing drop in minimum temperatures is not ruled out," IMD (Bengaluru) Director in-charge N Puviyarasan told.

Hindi should be promoted as bridge language: Governor Arif Mohammed Khan

MYSURU. Bihar Governor Arif Mohammed Khan emphasised that all Indian languages are expressions of Goddess Saraswati and stressed that there is no competition among them. He advocated for equal scope and respect for all languages, asserting the need to promote Hindi as a connecting language while preserving pride in regional languages. He was speaking at the Regional Official Language Conference organised by the Ministry of Home Affairs at the KSOU Convocation Hall in Mysuru on Saturday. "In India, we must nurture pride in all our languages while promoting Hindi as a link language," Governor Khan said, highlighting the role Hindi played during the freedom struggle as a unifying medium. "Language should never be a tool for division... instead, it should unite people. Just as we respect divinity, we must honour all languages and cultures," he elaborated. He noted that Indian society's embrace of linguistic and cultural diversity has been a hallmark of its unity. "The profound philosophy of Adi Shankaracharya, who achieved cultural and spiritual unity without linguistic knowledge but through the depth of emotion, serves as an example for us. His principle of Aham Brahmasmi illuminated the divinity within every individual centuries ago, showcasing India's inclusive heritage," he said.

Two dalits tonsured, paraded on charges of goat theft in Cuttack

JAGATSINGHPUR. Two dalit men were allegedly tonsured, beaten and had shoes hung around their necks on suspicion of stealing goats in a village under Cuttack district. The incident which took place recently came to light after a video went viral. A case was later registered with Biridi police in this regard. According to sources, Bikram Bhoi and Dinesh Bhoi, both in their 30s, allegedly stole two goats from the canal embankment in Gobindpur area of Cuttack district on December 27.

As they were fleeing after committing the theft, villagers pursued and apprehended them near a bridge in Bareida village under Biridi police limits in neighbouring Jagatsinghpur district. Gobindpur and Biridi police stations share the borders. As punishment, villagers tied the hands of Bikram and Dinesh and hung chappals around their necks. Later, they tonsured their heads in public and beat them with sticks and chappals. The incident was recorded on mobile phone by one of the villagers which later found its way to social media. Both Bikram and Dinesh belong to Sundargon village under Gobindpur under Cuttack district. The owners of stolen goats later lodged a complaint with Gobindpur police station, prompting the cops to register a case against Bikram and Dinesh on charges of theft. Meanwhile, the act of dehumanisation, including public humiliation and physical assault, caused outrage.

Bikram's father Bilash Chandra Bhoi filed an FIR with Biridi police on January 1 against the villagers involved in the act. The incident drew widespread criticism, with social activists and opposition political parties seeking stringent action against those responsible.

Partha Sarathi Mahanta: Assam's decorated police officer and multifaceted polymath

ASSAM. Even as he dwells the dark corners of the criminal underbelly, this decorated Assam police officer has not lost his touch with the aesthetic pursuits of the soul. Inspector General (IG) Partha Sarathi Mahanta has been instrumental in busting several terror networks, nabbing fundamentalists, and bringing down drug cartels. Law enforcement is his forte, yet he has also made a mark as a writer, columnist, actor, filmmaker, conservationist, sociologist and cultural activist. Mahanta, IG (Administration, Special Task Force, Bureau of Investigation of Economic Offences and Traffic; Road Safety), has contributed immensely to Assamese literature and culture, his works spanning multiple genres – prose, poetry and non-fiction. He writes in both English and Assamese. Born in upper Assam's Sivasagar district, this Assam Police Service officer of the 1993 batch learnt the values of social work as a schoolboy from his father Prof Sarat Mahanta's selfless service for the community. The boy was deeply moved and he got involved in social service. During his college days, he had a penchant for acting, performing in amateur theatre. It did not take long for Munin Barua, a noted film director, to spot his talent and soon enough, young Paratha Sarathi began acting in Assamese films. He has acted in about 20 Assamese films and seven television serials. With time, he took to filmmaking too.



'Lachit, the Warrior', directed by Mahanta, won awards at 45 international film festivals. Twenty-five of them were either in the best animated film or best short film category. It is a 2022 biopic celebrating the life of 17th century Ahom General Lachit Borphukan who had defeated the Mughals. Mahanta's 'Hargila: The Greater Adjutant Stork' is also an acclaimed documentary. The 19-minute documentary produced by Mina Mahanta and Indranil Barua, who is Mahanta's wife and DIG (central-western range), was screened in nine international film festivals and awarded. It won 'Special Mention' at the 70th National Film Awards, 2022. Mahanta dedicated the award to a group of women, led by Purnima Devi Barman. They have been working tirelessly for the past few years for the conservation of this endangered bird species. Mahanta's 'Bohag Bohag Mon' won the 'Best Short Film on Environment, Culture' award at the Northeast

Film Festival 2023, Mumbai. His 'Fehujali', a short film, has been screened and awarded at eight film festivals so far. He developed an interest in making documentaries and short films only after he had started writing books. He authored eight books – 'Kamakhya', 'The Colours of Majuli', 'Rhino', 'Shiva' (all co-authored), 'Jibonor Sanglap', 'Nimakhit Kobia', 'Tuh Jui' (collections of poems) and 'Decoding Jibon' (a compilation of articles). 'Kamakhya' is on the Kamakhya temple.

Perched on the Nilachal hills in Guwahati, it is an ancient Shakti Peeth. 'The Colours of Majuli' depicts the river island Majuli. The book 'Shiva' centres around Lord Shiva while 'Rhino' is based on the one-horned rhinos of Assam. Mahanta turned a serious writer during the Covid-19 pandemic. His personal experience of life played a part in it. "I used to write poems occasionally during my college days. However, after I had joined the police service, I stopped writing due to paucity of time. Assam was going through turbulent times then," he says referring to the insurrections which peaked during the early years of his career. "I returned to writing during the Covid days. We transported thousands of people – students and workers – from one place to another during the pandemic. My daughter was studying outside but I could not bring her home. The situation did not permit me. I was deeply concerned about her well-being."

Adivasi engineer pioneers 'heavenly fruit' cultivation in Andhra Pradesh

VIJAYAWADA. Perhaps for the first time in Andhra Pradesh, 30-year-old Boragam Venkat, panchayat secretary and an Adivasi youth from Mamidigondi village in Polavaram mandal of Eluru district, has cultivated the exotic gac fruit. Known globally as 'heavenly fruit', the nutrient-rich gac starts attracting farmers and fruit lovers for its commercial potential and health benefits.

Venkat's parents Rama Rao and Venkayamma have supported his efforts to raise innovative crops as they hail from an agricultural family. A Btech Electrical and Electronics Engineering graduate from GIET Engineering College in Rajamahendravaram, Venkat brought gac plants from Kerala in November 2023. By May 2024, the plants began yielding fruit. With the help of his parents, wife Lakshmi, and son Rithik, he has turned their backyard into a flourishing gac fruit orchard. Gac fruit, part of the watermelon family, is recognised for its vibrant orange skin, oval shape, and striking red seeds encased in yellow-green pulp. It undergoes four distinct colour changes during ripening, and requires male and female plants for cross-pollination. Hand pollination can also be done. Native to Southeast Asia, the gac fruit is celebrated for its exceptional nutritional profile. It is rich in beta-carotene, lycopene, omega fatty acids, and essential nutrients. The fruit aids eyesight, heart health, and cancer prevention,

and is used in traditional medicine.

It is also prized for its skin-brightening properties. Currently, gac fruit sells locally for around Rs 500 per kg, but can fetch up to Rs 1,500 in wider markets, making it highly profitable. It is versatile and gaining popularity for its unique flavour and health benefits. The gac fruit, the spiny bitter gourd or baby jackfruit, is celebrated as a superfruit.

Its beta-carotene content is up to 10 times more than carrots, and 70 times more than tomatoes, promoting vision, skin health, and immunity. Rich in vitamins E and C, it also has anti-inflammatory, and anti-ageing properties, while its essential fatty acids enhance its health benefits.

"I have planted 300 gac plants so far, and the results are promising. By June 2025, I plan to expand the gac cultivation to two acres with 1,000 plants. Each plant can produce up to 60 fruits, weighing 1.5 to 2 kg," Venkat explained.

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News box

PAC constable among 4 held for using fake docus in police exam

Noida. A PAC constable posted in Varanasi was arrested for allegedly submitting forged documents and appearing in the UP Police Constable Direct Recruitment, 2023, using a different name.

Three others were also arrested earlier this week for forging documents like birth and educational certificates. ACP-3 (Central Noida) BS Vir Kumar said the accused, Arvind Kumar of Sardhana's Nahali village, is a constable in the 36th Battalion of PAC, but was trying to get into the police services. With his experience in the PAC, Kumar knew he could clear the physical standard test (PST) but may face hurdle during document verification (DV) as he was already a PAC constable. In 2022, the Allahabad High Court ruled the PAC and civil or armed police are a part of the same force and allowed interdepartmental transfers.

Kumar allegedly took the help of three acquaintances — Vishal Som, Tushar, and Ankit, all from Nahali — to create a fake identity as Abhay Singh and forged his documents to appear in the tests conducted on Dec 30, 2024. During the verification of documents, the DV/PST board found a mismatch in the e-KYC and iris scans. Kumar was subsequently questioned and arrested on Dec 31, 2024, after an FIR was registered at the Ecotech-3 police station under BNS sections 318(2) (cheating), 319(2) (cheating by personation), 338 (forging valuable securities and related documents), 336(3) (forgery cases where the purpose is to commit fraud), and 340(2) (using forged documents or electronic records as genuine) and Section 13 of the Uttar Pradesh Amended Examination Act. The three others have also been arrested under Section 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) of the BNS Act.

Noida AQI nearing 'severe' again, it isn't getting any better soon: IMD

Noida: The air quality of Noida and Ghaziabad marginally deteriorated but remained in the "very poor" category on Saturday. Noida recorded an AQI of 365, Ghaziabad's was 310, while Greater Noida registered an AQI of 285 — in the "poor" category.

Noida's air monitoring station in Sector 62 recorded an AQI of 426 in the "severe" category. Sector 1 was at 349 and Sector 116's AQI was 320 — both "very poor". Greater Noida's Knowledge Park V recorded a "very poor" AQI at 315. Knowledge Park III was at 255 in the "poor" category. In comparison, Ghaziabad's Indirapuram and Vasundhara recorded AQIs of 395 and 363 — both in the "very poor" category, while Loni's reading stood at 268 and Sanjay Nagar's at 216 — in the "poor" category. According to a bulletin of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), the predominant surface wind came from the southeast direction with a wind speed of less than 8 kmph until Saturday evening. It plummeted to less than 6 kmph during the night. The city recorded smog and shallow to moderate fog. Delhi-NCR recorded 0 to 250 metres of visibility at 8:30 am. Smog and moderate fog are likely in most places, and dense fog in isolated places is likely in the morning. The wind speed will gradually increase to 8-10 kmph during the afternoon.

Meanwhile, the national capital's air quality remained in the very poor category. Fifteen out of 37 monitored areas, however, suffered severe air quality levels by Saturday evening due to the aggregation of pollutants and weather conditions unfavourable for their dispersion.

CI 10 student loses an eye after classmate attacks him with pen

Ghaziabad. A class 10 student suffered severe eye injury after a classmate he apparently did not get along with stabbed him with a pen at a private school in the Sangam Vihar area on Friday.

The classmate, a 15-year-old boy, was apprehended after the boy's uncle Manjeet Baisla submitted a police complaint on Saturday claiming that Vansh, a student of JD Public School, "suffered permanent eye damage" after he was attacked by his classmate, ACP (Ankur Vihar) Bhaskar Verma said. The boy is currently under treatment at Delhi's AIIMS.

Baisla claimed Vansh had earlier submitted a complaint against the classmate for allegedly troubling him at school.

"On Friday, the two boys were in their classroom when a heated argument broke out between Vansh and his classmate. It was during the argument that the boy picked up a pen and stabbed Vansh in the right eye. He fled when Vansh was rushed to a nearby hospital by the school authorities," a police officer, who is a part of the investigation, said.

The boy was taken into custody after a case was registered under BNS sections 115 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 118 (2) (voluntarily causing hurt or grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means) and others. He will be produced before a juvenile justice board for further investigation. Police will also question the other students and school authorities in the case. TOI could not contact the school for comment.

GRAP-3 back in NCR, brakes on construction again

GURGAON. The air quality index (AQI) marked a sharp deterioration on Friday, reaching 292, just a few points shy of the 'very poor' category. The AQI on Thursday was 208 (poor). According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), improvement in AQI is unlikely due to unfavourable meteorological conditions for the dispersion of pollutants. The deteriorating AQI levels were followed by the Commission for Air Quality Management's (CAQM) directions to reinvoke stage 3 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) on Friday evening. GRAP-3 was revoked just six days back. GRAP 3 bans non-essential construction and demolition activities, functioning of industries, brick kilns using non-clean fuels, and non-essential diesel generator sets. The use of BS-3 petrol and BS-4 diesel cars is restricted across Delhi-NCR, including Gurgaon. However, persons with disabilities will be exempted from the restrictions. The district administration has yet to issue directives for schools since they are closed for winter vacation till Jan 15. To prevent further deterioration of the air quality and in pursuance of the Supreme Court's directives, the sub-committee on GRAP hereby decides to invoke all actions under



stage-3 (when Delhi AQI is 'severe') of GRAP, with immediate effect in right earnest by all the agencies concerned in Delhi-NCR, in addition to the stages 1 and 2 actions already in force," the order read. "Local sources such as road dust, vehicular emission, and garbage burning are contributing to the deterioration of air quality. We will meet with industries to encourage staggered timings for their employees, aiming to reduce vehicular traffic. Anti-smog guns will be mandated at construction sites, and the civic body

will ensure mechanised sweeping and regular water sprinkling," said Vijay Choudhary, HSPCB Gurgaon (south) regional officer. "The thermal inversion has been strong, and moisture levels in the air remain high. Winds are calm, so we are not expecting significant improvement until Monday. Morning pollution levels are likely to be higher," said Sachin Panwar, an independent air quality expert. Two of the four monitoring stations in the city recorded 'very poor' AQI — Gwalpahari at 356 and Vikas Sadan at 305.

Sector 51 recorded an AQI of 292, and Teri Gram recorded 249 — both 'poor'. According to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (Safar) the ventilation index, which measures the atmosphere's ability to disperse pollutants, is lower than the required 6000 m²/s. The average wind speed, which is less than 10 km/h, adds to poor pollutant dispersion.

SAFAR's forecast for Saturday predicts surface winds from the northwest direction, with speeds less than 4 kmph during the morning hours, which will cause smog or dense fog across the region. "By afternoon, the wind speed may increase slightly, but it will decrease again in the evening," SAFAR stated.

The particulate matter levels remain highly concerning. Gwalpahari recorded a PM2.5 level of 445 µg/m³, nearly 30 times higher than the World Health Organization's (WHO) safe limit of 15 µg/m³. It was followed by Vikas Sadan (401 µg/m³), Teri Gram, and Sector 51, both at 290 µg/m³.

PM10 levels were also the worst at Gwalpahari at 408 µg/m³ — nine times WHO's safe threshold of 45 µg/m³. Sector 51 measured 387 µg/m³, Vikas Sadan 346 µg/m³, and Teri Gram 194 µg/m³.

Delhi weather: Several flights, trains delayed as dense fog grips national capital; mercury dips to 10°C

NEW DELHI. A thick blanket of fog covered Delhi on Sunday morning, disrupting flight and train schedules in the national capital. The city also witnessed a dip in temperature, accompanied by cold wave conditions.

Around 51 trains and several flights were delayed due to low visibility caused by fog. The India Meteorological Department reported a temperature of 10°C at 5:30 am on Sunday, slightly lower than Saturday's 10.2°C. The Met office also noted that visibility at Palam was zero between 4am and 7.30am, while Safdarjung saw visibility drop to 0.50 meters at 5.30am. "While landings and take-offs are continuing, flights that are not CAT III compliant may face delays. Passengers are advised to contact the respective airlines for updates. We regret the inconvenience caused," Delhi Airport stated in an advisory on X. Foggy conditions also impacted

train services, with several trains running late at New Delhi Railway Station.

Delhi's air quality remained in the 'very poor' category, with an AQI of 377 recorded at 6 am, slightly improved from 385 on Saturday, according to



the Central Pollution Control Board. The AQI scale categorizes readings between 301 and 400 as 'very poor', while 401 to 500 is considered 'severe'. The cold weather drove many homeless individuals to night shelters across the city. At Bhikaji Cama Place, several people were seen taking

refuge, while the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) reported setting up 235 pagoda tents to accommodate the homeless. Night shelters have also been established in areas such as AIIMS, Lodhi Road, and Nizamuddin flyover to provide relief during the ongoing cold wave. Residents across the capital were seen gathering around bonfires to keep warm. The air quality in Delhi was categorized as "very poor," with an AQI of 372 at 9 am. The minimum temperature was 9.4°C, and humidity stood at 95%. The Met office has forecasted dense fog throughout the day, with a maximum temperature expected around 18°C.

Similar weather conditions prevailed in other parts of North India. Lucknow recorded a temperature of 11°C at 5.30am, while Jammu and Kashmir's capital, Srinagar, registered -1°C. Chandigarh recorded 9.1°C at the same time.

4 years in the making, sectors off Southern Peripheral Road set to get new lights by March

Gurgaon. After four years of planning, the new sectors off Southern Peripheral Road (SPR) are set to be illuminated with the installation of smart lights. The project, costing around Rs 5 crore, is expected to be completed by March. Initially, GMDA planned to install 700 lights in phase 1, but the number was later increased to 835, covering sectors 76-77, 75A-76, 75-75A, 73-74, 71-73, 70-75, 70-70A, 68-69, and 68-70A. Despite the transfer of these roads to GMDA in 2018, the arterial stretches lacked lighting, posing safety hazards for commuters. In 2021, the authority first proposed the project, but later said that it was to be executed by MCG.

In 2022, it was decided that HSVP would carry out the works since they were already maintaining streetlights in sectors 58 to 67 and sectors 81 to 115, with the plan to fund the project through EDC funds. However, in 2023, GMDA decided to take over the work

and floated a tender in Oct. Due to the lack of experienced bidders, the tender was re-invited in Jan last year, further delaying the project. Work eventually began in March 2024 with a deadline of 12 months. Of the 835 streetlights, 550 have been installed and GMDA has secured three electrical connections from DHBVN. "We are hopeful of completing phase 1 of the smart streetlight project covering sector 68-80 by March. We have already started the process of obtaining the remaining five electrical connections from DHBVN. Once completed, the smart lighting system is expected to enhance road safety in new sectors," a senior official of GMDA said. The smart streetlights are equipped with advanced technology, including sensors and automated controls. These lights will adjust brightness levels automatically based on ambient light and will be linked to GMDA's integrated command and

control centre (ICCC). The ICCC will help monitor the lights for maintenance, reduce downtime, and report issues such as theft. "We have been waiting for years for proper lighting along these roads. The absence of streetlights made the area unsafe, especially for women and children. The lack of lighting led to frequent accidents and made commuting difficult, especially during winters. While we are glad that streetlights are getting installed, the progress of the project is slow. We have met GMDA officials and urged them to expedite the process," said Neelam Ranjan, RWA president of BPTP Astaire Gardens. Meanwhile, works on the second phase of the smart streetlight project are also going to start soon. Under this, 770 streetlights will be installed along 11.5 km of roads covering sectors 71-72, 73-74, 75A-76, 78-79, outer 70A, outer 77, outer 79, and 79B, at a cost of Rs 6.

Fog throws train timings off track, hundreds wait on chilly platforms in Ghaziabad

Ghaziabad. Babita Singh left for the railway station early in the morning, lest she misses her train scheduled to depart from Ghaziabad around noon. While she reached the station well before noon, there was no announcement for the Kalinga Utkal Express, which she was supposed to board. As the clock ticked towards the arrival time, the speaker suddenly blared. Utkal Express — originating from Rishikesh — would now arrive eight hours late, around 8pm. Babita was not alone. Hundreds more waited, huddled under layers of woollens, jackets and shawls in severe cold conditions for an update on the display board or the public announcement system. Severe fog and freezing temperatures across north India have thrown railway schedules into disarray over the past 48 hours, with over 90% trains experiencing significant delays. Some of them have been running more than 10 hours behind schedule.

When TOI approached Babita in the afternoon, she still wasn't sure if Utkal Express would eventually arrive by 8pm. "I have nowhere nearby to go now. I must wait here the entire day in this biting cold," said Babita, who had come to

Bulandshahr to attend a family event.

At Ghaziabad station, the display board had one thing in common — all trains on it were delayed. The Gomti Express, initially running 30 minutes behind schedule, had extended to a four-hour delay. "I arrived around noon for the 1pm train. It's 3pm now, yet there's no clear update," said Ramakant, a frustrated passenger. Asha Singh, heading to Lucknow, did not know whether to head back home or wait at the station itself.

"I've been waiting here since 11am for the Gomti Express. The delay keeps increasing on the app, and railway officials provide no clear information as well," she said. The situation worsened with the cancellation of major trains — such as the Tejas Express and Kashi Vishwanath Express — forcing passengers to seek alternative travel arrangements. At the station, there was chaos and crowd everywhere. Many



passengers were forced to occupy staircases, with waiting rooms filled beyond capacity. Some even spread out sheets on the platform, enduring overnight stays and exposed to icy cold winds. "The waiting room was full when I arrived around 7am for my Kanpur-bound train. I've been stuck on the platform since morning. While this fog is unavoidable, the mismanagement is making the situation worse," said Rajeev Tiwari. Over the past couple of days, visibility around

Delhi and NCR cities have hovered between 0 and 50 metres early in the morning. This has not only disrupted flight and train schedules, but also affected local businesses and transportation services around the station.

Among them are auto-rickshaw and cab drivers. "The unpredictable train arrivals because of weather conditions have forced us to remain on standby continuously," Ramesh Gupta, an auto driver, noted. Railway officials said they were monitoring the situation.

But with weather conditions showing no immediate signs of improvement, passengers are exposed to uncertain wait times and travel disruptions. "The delay is due to dense fog and low visibility — as it usually happens during this time of the year. Almost all trains, including express and superfast, are running behind schedule. But, we have no provision for medical facilities or food for waiting passengers," said a senior official at Ghaziabad station.

NEWS BOX

Edward Pettifer: Man With Royal Family Link Killed In New Orleans Attack

World A 42-year-old US Army veteran rammed a pickup truck into a crowd of people celebrating the New Year on January 1, killing 14 people. The accused, Shamsud-Din Jabbar, who had pledged allegiance to Islamic State (ISIS), was killed in a shootout with police shortly after the attack. Among the victims, was Edward Pettifer, a 31-year-old from Chelsea who shared strong ties with the Royal Family. "The entire family are devastated at the tragic news of Ed's death in New Orleans. He was a wonderful son, brother, grandson, nephew, and a friend to so many. We will all miss him terribly," the Pettifer family said in a statement.

What was Edward Pettifer?

Edward Pettifer was the stepson of Prince William and Prince Harry's former nanny Tiggy Pettifer. In 1993, King Charles employed Tiggy Legge-Bourke, now Pettifer, whose family had longstanding links to the royals. Edward's half-brother Tom is one of William's godsons and was a page boy at his wedding to Catherine, the Princess of Wales, in 2011.

King Charles expressed grief over Edward's death on Saturday. It was "understood the King was deeply saddened, and had been in touch with the family to share personal condolences", local media reported.

Prince William and Princess Catherine said they were "shocked and saddened" by the tragic death of Edward. "Our thoughts and prayers remain with the Pettifer family and all those innocent people who have been tragically impacted by this horrific attack," a post on the couple's Kensington Palace social media account read.

New Orleans attack

14 people died and over 30 were injured after Jabbar, a former US Army veteran, drove his pickup truck into a crowd on Bourbon Street in New Orleans on Wednesday. The Pentagon said Jabbar had served in the army as a human resource specialist and an IT specialist from 2007 to 2015, and then in the Army Reserve until 2020.

US Olympic Medallist Fred Kerley Tased, Arrested After Clash With Cops In Miami



Miami American Olympic medallist and former world champion sprinter Fred Kerley was tased and then arrested in Miami Beach following a clash on Thursday, the police department said. Kerley, bronze medallist in the 100m at the Paris Olympics last year and silver medalist in Tokyo, was involved in a scuffle with police and was tased by them after trying to force his way into an active investigation scene.

The 29-year-old had approached the scene in South Beach to ask about his car which was parked nearby the scene and police said he showed an "aggressive demeanor" and ignored orders to back away before a scuffle involving several officers. A police arrest affidavit said four officers had tried to restrain Kerley and said they had hit him in the head, rib cage and back before using the taser. The statement said that after being incapacitated by the taser he "continued to resist officers." Kerley, 100m world champion in 2022, was charged with resisting arrest without violence, battery against an officer and disorderly conduct.

Police said Kerley was transported to Mount Sinai Medical Center for evaluation and was booked at Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center.

South Florida television station Local 10 WPLG, reported that Kerley appeared in court on Friday afternoon. His attorney, who was not named, criticized the police's behavior and said there had been a "total misunderstanding" and that Kerley was a "model citizen in our community. This is nothing more than an overreaction by the police." The station said that Miami-Dade judge Mindy Glazer said the incident "could have been handled another way." I have a gentleman who's never been arrested, there's no prior arrests, who his attorney's saying has competed in the Olympics, who is obviously a professional athlete and it's unfortunate that he got to this position," she said.

Gaza: Hamas Accuses Israel Of 'Horrible Crimes' After 94 Airstrikes Kill 184 In 3 Days

World The Hamas-run Gaza media office said that the Israeli army carried out 94 airstrikes and shelling on the Gaza Strip over the past 72 hours, killing 184 people. In its statement, the office on Saturday described the escalation as "dangerous and brutal," targeting unarmed civilians and residential areas, particularly in Gaza City. It added that many of the victims, either killed or injured, remained trapped under rubble, with damaged infrastructure obstructing their recovery and access to hospitals, Xinhua news agency reported.

Palestinian Civil Defence officials in Gaza confirmed that Israeli airstrikes had intensified violently over the past three days, which local residents have described as an extraordinarily difficult period. The statement held the Israeli army fully responsible for these "horrible crimes" and also criticised the US administration for providing Israel with weapons and political support. It called on the international community and the UN Security Council to uphold their legal and moral obligations by dispatching independent investigative teams to document these "heinous crimes" and ensure accountability for the perpetrators.

Trump's second term foreign policy to focus on China challenge and strengthening ties with India, says Lisa Curtis

WASHINGTON A major focus of President-elect Donald Trump's foreign policy will likely be on the China challenge, and it will likely involve building stronger strategic ties with India, an influential American expert has said. She added that the Quad will also likely remain an important forum for engagement for the incoming administration. Trump, 78, will be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States on January 20, making him the second president in American history after Grover Cleveland in 1892 to be elected to a non-consecutive second term. Trump previously served as the 45th President of the United States from 2017 to 2021.

A major focus of the Trump II foreign policy will likely be on the China challenge, whether in the form of economic and military competition, the technology race, or countering China's strategy to dominate the Indo-Pacific," Lisa Curtis, who was deputy assistant to the president and senior director for South and Central Asia at the National Security Council (NSC) from 2017 to 2021, told PTI in an interview.

"We can expect the incoming Trump team to

continue multiple lines of effort aimed at competing effectively with China. This will likely include investments in U.S. defense capabilities that enhance deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, as well as a greater focus on positioning U.S. defense assets in the region," she said.

Curtis further noted that Trump is likely to continue and may even strengthen the Biden-era restrictions on U.S. high technology to China through export controls but may also focus more on reaching bilateral trade deals that protect U.S. consumers. Trump's advisors, such as incoming National Security Advisor Michael Waltz and Secretary of State-designate Marco Rubio, will likely focus on strategic competition with China and working with allies and partners to circumscribe China's growing power and influence in the region, as well as to counter Chinese aggression and bullying of other Indo-Pacific nations, Curtis said.

Trump's economic team, on the other hand, will likely want to maintain a steady economic relationship with Beijing, accounting for the interests of U.S. businesses that have major investments in



China. The way these differing areas of focus on U.S.-China relations play out inside the Trump administration could mirror the situation we saw in the first Trump term, when Trump reached a trade deal with China in January 2020, only to see U.S.-China relations plummet a few months later during the outbreak of COVID-19," she said. According to Curtis, a major aspect of the second Trump administration's strategy toward the Indo-Pacific will likely involve building stronger strategic ties with India.

"While friction over trade issues will certainly be a factor in relations, these differences are unlikely to define the overall strategic partnership or get in the

way of their joint goal to check China's influence," she said.

"For example, even though the Trump administration revoked India's GSP privileges in 2019, we saw tremendous goodwill between President Trump and Prime Minister Modi, as evidenced during the 'Howdy, Modi' event in Houston in late 2019 and the 'Namaste, Trump' event in Ahmedabad in February 2020. The first Trump administration also pulled out all stops to support India during its border crisis with China in the spring and summer of 2020, which contributed to the overall elevation of the U.S.-India relationship by the time Trump left office in January 2021," said the former White House official.

Curtis, who is currently a senior fellow and director of the Indo-Pacific Security Program at the Center for a New American Security think tank, said the Quad will also likely remain an important forum for engagement. "The Quad was originally revived under Trump I and has since become an effective multilateral mechanism to support concepts like sovereignty and independence of nations, free and open seas.

Pakistan: Six dead, 25 injured after BLA militants bomb bus in Balochistan

At least six people, including paramilitary troops, were killed, and more than 25 others injured in a bombing on Saturday in Pakistan's Balochistan province.

The attack targeted a bus carrying paramilitary troops of the Frontier Corps (FC) as it traveled from Karachi to Turbat, about seven kilometers west of the city.

"At least six people, including FC soldiers and civilians, were killed in a bomb attack on a bus," Rashid-ur-Rehman, a senior local police official, was quoted as saying by news agency AFP. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the bombing. Jeeyand Baloch, the group's spokesperson, said the attack targeted a convoy of Pakistani army personnel. "Exact details of the blast are being investigated but a police official said high-ranking



police officer SSP Zohaib Mohsin was in the bus along with his family and could have been the target," A senior police official was quoted as saying by news agency PTI. The senior police official and his family were part of a wedding party on the bus.

The BLA often claims responsibility for attacks on security forces and non-local Pakistanis, particularly those from Punjab, in Balochistan province. Pakistan has experienced an increase in attacks in recent months, especially in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The military reported that in 2024 alone, 383 soldiers and 925 militants have been killed in various clashes. Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, has faced decades of sectarian, ethnic, and separatist violence. Militants in the region have also targeted foreign-funded energy projects, accusing external groups of exploiting the area's natural resources while neglecting local residents.

In November, separatists claimed responsibility for a bombing at Quetta's railway station that killed at least 26 people, including 14 soldiers. In August, the BLA carried out coordinated attacks involving dozens of assailants, killing at least 39 people, one of the highest tolls in recent years.

Powerful Winter Storm To Hit Half Of US With Snow, Ice And Strong Winds

Washington A powerful winter storm began hammering the central United States on Saturday, with meteorologists warning that millions in the east of the country would face blizzard conditions, treacherous ice, frigid temperatures and severe travel disruptions. More than 60 million people are in the path of the dangerous storm, which is set to plunge the eastern half of the United States into a deep freeze of Arctic air through Monday. The National Weather Service (NWS) warned of ferocious weather and severe travel delays, with ice, snow and gale-force winds in states from the central plains to the Mid-Atlantic. Winter storm warnings have been issued from western Kansas clear across to the coastal states of Maryland, Delaware and Virginia, an unusually broad 1,500-mile (2,400-kilometer) swath under immediate threat.

"Disruptive winter storm to impact the Central Plains to the Mid-Atlantic through Monday with widespread heavy snow and damaging ice accumulations," the NWS said in its latest report. The agency warned that areas from northeastern Kansas to north-central Missouri would see "the heaviest snowfall in a decade."

Scientists say extreme weather is becoming more common and more severe as a result of manmade climate

change. Travel disruptions - The first major storm of 2025 was already wreaking havoc on travel, with Kansas City International Airport announcing closure of its flight operations Saturday "due to rapid ice accumulation." Parts of the eastern states of New York and Pennsylvania are facing "heavy lake-effect snow" coming off the Great Lakes that could dump as much as two feet (61 centimeters) there, according to the NWS. Forecast company AccuWeather said Saturday that the lake-effect snow total in the region, already blanketed in snow this week, could top four feet. A blizzard will rage across the Central Plains by early Sunday, and "whiteout conditions will make travel extremely hazardous, with impassable roads and a high risk of motorists becoming stranded," the NWS said.

The US capital Washington could be blanketed in five inches or more of snow, with up to 10 inches possible in nearby areas. With the jet stream diving southward, temperatures are expected to plunge, in some places to below zero degrees Fahrenheit (-18 Celsius), while strong wind gusts will compound the dangers. The mercury could sink tens of degrees below seasonal norms down to the US Gulf Coast. Before then, severe

thunderstorms are expected across the lower Mississippi Valley, the NWS forecast. Another major concern is freezing rain and sleet expected from Kansas eastward to Kentucky and Virginia, setting the stage for thick ice to coat roads, making travel hazardous, bringing down trees and electricity lines, and potentially leaving millions of customers without power during a cold snap. The NWS warned that it expected widespread tree damage and "long-lasting power outages" from Kansas to the central Appalachian Mountains. Conditions could prove especially perilous in the Appalachians, where a deadly hurricane in late September devastated communities and ravaged multiple southeastern states including Kentucky. Many of those communities are still recovering from the effects of that hurricane.

The new storm "will likely cause significant disruption and dangerous conditions on our roads and could cause significant power outages just 24 hours or so before it's going to get really cold in Kentucky," Governor Andy Beshear told an emergency meeting. The governors of Missouri and Virginia have declared a state of emergency in their states, and they took to social media to warn residents to expect hazardous weather this weekend.

Austria's chancellor says will step down in 'coming days'



VIENNA Austria's conservative chancellor Karl Nehammer said Saturday he would step down in the 'coming days' after breaking off coalition talks with the Social Democrats over disagreements on key issues. Nehammer made the announcements in a video message and accompanying statement posted on the X platform. "After the break-off of the coalition talks I am going to do the following: I will step down both as chancellor and party chairman of the People's Party in the coming days and enable an orderly transition," he said. The surprise move comes just one day after Austria's liberal party withdrew from three-party coalition talks to form a centrist government. The aim had been to

sideline the far-right Freedom Party (FPOe), which won the September 29 national elections. The FPOe won 28.8 per cent of the vote but has been unable to find partners to form a national government. The conservative People's Party (OeVP) came second with 26.3 per cent, while the centre-left Social Democrats (SPOe) won 21.1 per

cent. That led Nehammer to pursue talks with the SPOe and the liberal party NEOS to form a government to shut out the far right, but those three-way talks collapsed on Friday. The remaining two centrist parties had vowed to continue their work. But a day later, on Saturday, Nehammer announced on X that "agreement with the SPOe is not possible on key issues." We are therefore ending negotiations with the SPOe," Nehammer added.

On Friday, President Alexander Van der Bellen had called on the two parties to form a government "without delay". A three-party governing coalition would have been a first since 1949 in Austria, which faces a flagging economy and a ballooning budget deficit.

Biden Honors Hillary Clinton, George Soros, Lionel Messi with Presidential Medal of Freedom



WASHINGTON Outgoing President Joe Biden has presented the U.S.'s highest civilian award to 19 people, including former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, football superstar Lionel Messi, controversial philanthropist George Soros, and actor Denzel Washington, for their contributions to America and the world. The Presidential Medal of Freedom is awarded to individuals who have made exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values, or security of the United States, world peace, or other significant societal, public, or private endeavors. Due to a scheduling conflict, Argentine football star Messi could not be present in person at the White House to receive the award from the U.S. President. "For the final time as President, I have the honor of bestowing the Medal of Freedom, our nation's highest civilian honor, on a group of extraordinary, truly extraordinary people who gave their sacred effort, their sacred effort, to shape the culture and the cause of America," Biden said at a glittering function in the East Room of the White House. Former President Bill Clinton, several of his Cabinet members, including Defense

Secretary Lloyd Austin, along with numerous celebrities, were present in the East Room during the awards ceremony on Saturday afternoon. "This group of people leaves an incredible mark on our country with insight and influence that can be felt around the globe in major cities and remote areas of life, finding us closer as people and showing us that what's possible as a nation is nothing beyond our capacity," Biden said.

"As cultural icons, humanitarians, rock stars, sports stars, you feed the hungry, you give hope to those who are hurting, and you craft the signs and sounds of our movements and our memories. It's amazing." "You inspire, and you bring healing and joy to so many lives that otherwise wouldn't be touched," the President continued. "You answer the call to serve and lead others to do the same. You defend the values of America, even when they're under attack, which they have been," Biden added, before presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Fannie Lou Hamer, who transformed the struggle for racial justice in America, Ashton Carter, who served as the 25th Secretary of

Defense, Robert Francis Kennedy, remembered as an Attorney General who fiercely combated racial segregation, and George W. Romney, a businessman who served as the chairman and president of American Motors Corporation, were awarded posthumously. Their medals were received by their family members.

Hillary Clinton was the only recipient to receive a standing ovation.

"As a lawyer, she defended the rights of children. As First Lady, she fought for universal healthcare and declared women's rights are human rights," a military aide read the citation as she was presented with the medal by the president. "As Senator,

she helped New York rebuild after September 11, 2001. As Secretary of State, she championed democracy worldwide. Her nomination for president broke barriers and inspired generations. Through it all, her career has been dedicated to an eternal truth: America's ideals are sacred, and we must always defend and live by them," the citation said. Alex Soros accepted the award on behalf of his father, George Soros, an investor, philanthropist, and founder of the Open Society Foundations.

"Born into a Jewish family in Hungary, George Soros escaped Nazi occupation to build a life of freedom for himself and countless others around the world," said the citation, as read by the military aide. "Educated in England, he settled in America and became an investor and philanthropist, supporting key pillars of open societies, rights and justice, equity and equality, freedom now and in the future," it continued. "As an immigrant who found freedom and prosperity in America, I am deeply moved by this honor," George Soros said in a statement.

NEWS BOX

Vijayawada Passport Office processes record 3.23 lakh applications in 2024

VIJAYAWADA: Vijayawada Regional Passport Officer Shiva Harsha announced advancements in passport services through enhanced technology and collaboration with the police and postal departments.

Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, the Passport Officer revealed that the office processed 3,23,553 passports last year, setting a record in citizen service and connectivity. The Vijayawada office was recognised as the best in its category for 2023-24 for maintaining exceptional service standards. He urged citizens to avoid brokers and use official online and offline services for passport-related needs.

The region operates two Passport Seva Kendras in Vijayawada and Tirupati, along with 13 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras, ensuring widespread accessibility in Andhra Pradesh. Harsha highlighted that expansion work at the Vijayawada Passport Seva Kendra is nearly complete. Once operational, the upgraded facility will offer enhanced infrastructure and services. Andhra Pradesh Police's swift verification process, along with contributions from the Postal Department and Tata Consultancy, was credited for expediting passport issuance.

To improve services further, 250 additional appointments will be offered weekly every Wednesday in January. Special staff have been appointed to issue Police Clearance Certificates. Citizens can finalise appointments and reschedule via the official website. Plans include doorstep passport delivery through post offices for greater convenience.

One killed, three injured in reactor blast

YADARI BHUVANAGIRI: One person was killed, and three others were injured in a reactor explosion that took place at Premier Explosives Company, located on the outskirts of Peddakandukuru in Yadagirigutta mandal, on Saturday. The cause of the blast is yet to be ascertained.

Police said that the deceased was identified as Marka Kanakaiah (54), a resident of Bachannapeta village in Jangaon district. The injured were shifted to Yashoda and KIMS hospitals in Hyderabad. According to sources, the blast occurred when the pellet formula was being prepared in the company's PRDC Building-3 around 9.45



am. Durga Prasad, the director of the company, said only four workers were in the building, and others had gone out for a shift change at the time of the explosion. The cause of the accident will be revealed after a thorough probe, he added. Government whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ilaiyah said that the cause of the accident would be investigated, and strict action would be taken against the Premier Explosives Company, responsible for the death of a worker. Speaking to the media after inspecting the site of the incident, he expressed anger against.

Srimandir to use organic rice for Mahaprasad

BHUBANESWAR: The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration is planning to use only organic rice for preparation of 'Mahaprasad'. This was informed by the temple chief administrator Arabinda Kumar Padhee while addressing the ongoing three-day Krushi Odisha-2025 in Bhubaneswar on Saturday. As a part of several reforms being brought in the management of Srimandir by both state government and SJTA, it has been proposed to use only organic rice for preparation of the Mahaprasad that is offered to the Trinity, he said. At present, normal rice is used in the temple kitchen which is produced using chemicals, fertilisers and pesticides, he said. Padhee also appealed to vendors to stop selling 'khaja' in the name of Mahaprasad outside the shrine. 'Khaja Mahaprasad is only sold in the Anand Bazaar



of the temple. But outside the temple, some traders have been seen selling khaja in the name of Mahaprasad, which is completely wrong," he wrote on X. The temple administrator advised the vendors to refrain from doing so and not to mislead the devotees. "It is the responsibility and duty of all of us to respect the sentiments of the countless devotees who come to the temple. Exceptions in this will never be tolerated," he said.

Are firecracker units in TN turning death trap for untrained workers?

In 2024 alone, Virudhunagar district saw 43 deaths and 24 injuries in 27 cracker accidents.

VIRUDHUNAGAR: The deaths of a former snack-maker and an ex-electrician, two among the six dead in the blast at Sainath Fireworks Industries in Kottaiyur, have triggered a discussion on how well these workers were trained in handling explosives. In April 2024, a committee appointed by NGT had suggested that the workers involved in hazardous chemicals have to be trained and certified before being recruited. Speaking to the family members of the former snack-maker, Meenakshisundaram, said he had switched his job just 10 days ago due to health reasons and better pay. Meanwhile, the ex-electrician, Sivakumar, joined the cracker unit a month ago, in December, due to a complication in his leg. A document accessed by said the district administration began training programme for foremen and supervisors of cracker units in 2024. However, training for the workers in the cracker units began four days ago.

Responding to a question on whether the employees of the cracker unit were trained, Collector VP Jeyaseelan said, "We have instructed the owners to mandatorily give training to the workers, especially the foreman,



managers before recruiting them. Whether the workers were recruited after training, in this particular incident, will be known only after the investigation. "Action will be taken if it is found that they are not trained," he said. Sources said all the six deceased were engaged in handling manimaran (pellets) in one of the rooms of the cracker unit. A leading cracker manufacturer in the district said the chemical pellets are significant in cracker manufacturing owing to their ability to produce colours in the much sought-after cracker varieties like aerial shots. "Generally, the pellets have a mixture of over five chemical compounds including

aluminium powder, potassium nitrate, charcoal, sulfur, and magnesium," the manufacturer said, adding based on the weighing ratio and pellet size, the crackers could be tailor-made to suit different functions. "The pellets are to be dried properly and handled with caution as they are sensitive, due to which the cracker manufacturing units usually deploy well-trained workers for handling the pellets," he added. The officials pointed out the cause of over 80-85% of the accidents are due to carelessness. In 2024 alone, Virudhunagar district saw 43 deaths and 24 injuries in 27 cracker accidents.

KGMOA withdraws non-cooperation after assurance on Dr. Nelson's reinstatement

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Thiruvananthapuram branch of the Kerala Government Medical Officers Association (KGMOA) withdrew its decision not to join State School Arts Festival duties, following talks between their representatives and the additional chief secretary. The latter gave assurance that the doctors' demand for reinstating Dr D Nelson who was transferred to Adoor General Hospital as a punishment would be reinstated. The withdrawal of non-cooperation came as a relief for the department which was struggling to find alternative arrangements to run the camps in the festival venues. The department formed 6 to 24 medical teams to manage health care in the venues till January 8. The medical team at the venues operates in two to three



shifts, starting from 9 am. Drawing doctors and paramedics from family and community health centres to the arts festival is likely to impact the OP activities of these centres during the festival period.

Bhadrachalam gears up for Mukkoti Ekadashi

KHAMMAM: With the Mukkoti Vykunta Ekadashi festival set to be held from January 9, the Sri Sita Ramachandraswamy temple, Godavari bridge and bathing ghats in Bhadrachalam are decked up with beautiful lights and decorations ready to welcome devotees to the temple town. Temple executive officer L Rama Devi said that about 70% of the arrangements for the festival have been completed. Welcome boards, flower decorations and Kalyanamandapam preparations are being monitored by temple executive engineer P Ravindranath.

The Teppotsavam event will be conducted on the evening of January 9 while the Uttara Dwara Dharshnam will be held in the early hours of January 10 at Uttara Dwaram near Kalyanamandapam. The temple administration has spent Rs 1 crore on the arrangements and expects more than one lakh devotees from across the country to participate in the two-day festival. Many VVIPs, including three district ministers, are expected to take part in the celebrations.

District Collector Jitesh V Patil has planned this year's festival. Officials are also organising the first-ever tribal river festival in tandem with Ekadashi celebrations, which will showcase tribal dishes, traditions, culture and products. Huts have been set up along the Godavari river for the devotees' accommodation, and boating will be held, the officials said.

ITDA Project Officer B Rahul inspected the arrangements for the river festival on Saturday. He said that almost all arrangements for the festival are reaching the final stage.

Relocate Valampurivilai dumping yard to outskirts, says Nagercoil residents

KANNIYAKUMARI: Citing the years-long accumulation of legacy waste and the frequent fires that break out at the Valampurivilai dump yard, several residents of Nagercoil municipal corporation have demanded the local body relocate it to the outskirts. Situated at the Beach road Junction in Valampurivilai near Irulappapuram, the dump yard borders several neighbourhoods, schools, healthcare facilities and other commercial establishments. Every day, thousands of people pass by the road near the dump yard, in which lies a total of 1,22,400 metric tonnes of legacy waste. The dump yard, used when Nagercoil was a

municipality, still remains at a central place in the city, years after Nagercoil became a municipal corporation, said R S Rajan, a Congress state finance minister from the area. Frequent fires at the dump yard pollute the air in the neighbourhood, besides worsening the area's hygiene conditions, he urged the authorities to relocate it. G G Iyengar, a resident, said while smoke would completely engulf the area during fire accidents, the rains exacerbate the situation as the air would reek of foul odour. She added the pollution has



deteriorated the health of her pet dogs. Several residents alleged they had to undergo suffocation for prolonged periods, as the fires sometimes take days to be

The Planetic Foundation: A haven of hope for disabled strays in Coimbatore

COIMBATORE: Lost in the urban labyrinth of Coimbatore, where shadows cling to broken bodies and spirits, stray animals wander, their cries swallowed by the city's relentless hum. Forgotten, abandoned, they navigate a concrete jungle that offers little solace, their eyes reflecting the harsh realities of survival. But even in this symphony of indifference, a melody of compassion breaks through. The Planetic Foundation, a trio of hearts interwoven with empathy, hears those silent cries, transforming despair into hope, one paw print at a time.

Unlike many organisations that focus solely on sterilisation and stray dog management, The Planetic Foundation takes a unique approach. Their shelter serves as a sanctuary for animals with severe disabilities, offering a permanent home to those who are amputated, visually or hearing impaired, bedridden, or battling cancer and other illnesses. The foundation is committed to providing lifelong care for these animals, ensuring they have a safe and loving environment for the rest of their days. "People sometimes misunderstand our work, thinking we simply relocate stray dogs," explains Ganesan Somasundaram, a foundation trustee. "But we firmly believe in keeping animals within their familiar territories. We not only rescue and rehabilitate animals but also educate people in that area. We never forcibly remove strays from their areas, even when offered financial incentives."

"This ethos is embodied in their one-acre shelter located in Sengathurai, Sulur. Landowner Muthusamy generously provides the land rent-free. The facility is a haven for over 40 animals with permanent disabilities. From the victims of road and train accidents to life-threatening illnesses, these animals receive loving care day and night from the dedicated team. Ganesan Somasundaram, a medical transcriber, manages the foundation's operations with precision. Austin, a skilled chef, brings his logistical expertise to coordinate the shelter's activities seamlessly, ensuring that every animal receives the care they need."

Silambam Revival: V Manigandan's mission to restore Tamil Nadu's ancient martial art

DHARMAPURI: In the twilight of the 18th century, as the British Empire tightened its grip on India, a shadow fell upon the ancient martial art of silambam. Fearing the prowess of skilled Tamil warriors, the colonisers banned the practice, shattering a tradition that had thrived for centuries. Silambam, once a symbol of strength and cultural pride, was fragmented and driven to the brink of extinction. But like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the spirit of silambam endures. Today, a new generation of practitioners is breathing life into this ancient art, determined to reclaim its lost glory. V Manigandan, a 32-year-old Class 10 dropout, is a skilled silambam master who received training in the ancient martial art from his uncles in Erode over a decade ago during his school days. He has been practising and perfecting the art ever since. Manigandan, aka Malarmani, is also a professional photographer. He earns his living from photography after inheriting his uncle's photo studio in Dharmapuri. He has brought a photographer's eye for detail while striving to revive the ancient martial art.

"Silambam was derived from nature by imitating the movements of tigers, birds,

and elephants," Manigandan explains. "It shows our culture's proximity with nature. Now, the martial art exists in fragments. For instance, silambam trained in Theni district is different from the one taught in Erode. What was once whole now remains in parts spread across Tamil Nadu in different forms. I hope to integrate them and spread it as a sum of all its fragments." "I took part in minor tournaments and won some awards," he recalls. "One day someone, seeing my awards, asked me to teach students at the PUPS school in Kurumpatti village. It started with just five students, and now we have about 100 students each in over six locations." "The art passed on from one person to the next. The first batch of students I taught are teaching others now. Even if I am not here to teach, what I have taught will continue to spread. The students learn from each other; the seniors teach the juniors the basics, and they teach new entrants. While teaching the art, they reform themselves and improve their own skills," he says. Manigandan highlights the importance of discipline and focus in silambam. "We start with the footwork," he explains. "This improves the overall health of the

trainees, stimulating their muscles, bones, and every inch of the body." Manigandan is not only proficient in silambam but also teaches other cultural arts like Mallakhamba, Oyilattam, Periyakambattam, and Thappattam. "If a student expresses interest in other arts, we teach them that," he K Raju, who teaches silambam alongside Manigandan, shares their approach to accessibility. "We teach silambam to students from government schools for free but charge Rs 300 per month from others," he says. "We take the government school students to tournaments held across the state. So far, our students have won over 200 state-level medals and dozens of national-level competitions. They have participated in an international tournament in Malaysia, clinching three gold medals and a silver in various categories. We have also been conducting classes in schools across the district." "We take our students to various schools of silambam or cultural arts," he says. "Recently, we went to Villupuram and learnt Mallakhamba." While they shared their knowledge of Mallakhamba, we taught them silambam."

extinguished. Further, they complained of stray dog menace and birds dropping pieces of garbage picked up from the yard. Speaking to Nagercoil municipal corporation officials said work is underway to clear the garbage through a bio-mining process at an estimate of Rs 10.07 crore, under the Swachh Bharat Scheme, at the fertilizer godown -- the term officially used to denote the dump yard. The officials said that out of the total legacy waste, 13,021 metric tonnes have been segregated.

Two museums and a visitor

THE best new year gift you could give to yourself is to keep company with Bhupen Khakhar, J Swaminathan and KG Subramanyan. The absolutely fantastic part is you don't have to share them with anyone. A Ramachandran loiters somewhere in the back. The brilliant Nalini Malani is immersed in her own world, so you don't have to wonder about an invasion of privacy — watch where she's hung, take a step back, gaze at her from all angles, including from the back.

You'll find that all the oils on canvas are stuck on a piece of cardboard hung with twine on the wall. You feel the temptation slithering across the back of your spine, of wanting to do what you shouldn't but you know you can. You must push it away.

It's time to move on to the next modern master in the next gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts at Panjab University in Chandigarh. "How to steal a painting and get away with it" could easily be the subject of this column — except not. It's all too precious. Also, perhaps, there's something charming in the fact that most of the world has forgotten that these works even exist — they are certainly on no website — so when you come upon them in this serendipitous way, the thought crosses your mind. Yes, this could be your very own, private space where on special occasions like the new year you could break open a samosa or two. After all, Bhupen Khakhar's work that's hanging on the front wall is called 'Breakfast in Kasauli'. Foodies would certainly applaud. There's more. This building was designed by BP Mathur, an architect who worked with Pierre Jeanneret, the main architect-planner of the university. The collection of contemporary masters in the museum, about 1,200 artworks, was curated by none other than Chandigarh's beloved son and internationally acclaimed art historian, BN Goswamy, who wrote a much-read column for The Tribune until he passed away a year ago. Moreover, I am now a card-carrying member of the City Beautiful. I realise I am in the presence of both History and Culture, both H & C capitalised.

Kulwinder strides in. His angry movements disturb the cold air of the gallery — so far it's just me and the masters. Ramachandran's brooding painting of monks in a church seems like it's part of the Andrei Rublyev school. The attendant, who prefers warming her hands on the heater in the reception area, tells me, "Bahu log aate hain museum main", at least 10-12 every day. I ask Kulwinder if there is a guide. I don't know, he replies sternly, "main technical se hoon".

If Chandigarh is what Delhi was 40 years ago, then you can well imagine its museums — hidden jewels encrusted by sarkari indifference. The Government Museum and Art Gallery in Sector 10, designed by Le Corbusier himself, has that gorgeous wooden door that turns on a single pivot — you also see this large door in the conjoined Haryana-Punjab Legislative Assembly space that Corbu designed at one end of the Capitol Complex, itself a magnificent plaza that should have been teeming with happy people and moongphali-wallahs in the winter but has, instead, been turned into an exclusive zone in the name of security, which means only VVIPs and registered visitors have access — but the real experience begins when you go through the Corbu door into the Government Museum. The only available brochures are in French. (Corbusier was Swiss-French, so those folks come, it seems.) The English ones "are finished". The guide — her name is Geetanjali — walks up the ramp with me. On one wall hangs a gorgeous rope installation by Mrinal Mukherjee, except the bottom is frayed. You reach the first floor and are immediately stunned by the bronzes, the Sanghol excavations, the Gandhara sculptures and the Pahari paintings in the rooms beyond. Seems MS Randhawa, widely acknowledged as Chandigarh's First Citizen, scoured the estates of the small princelings soon after Independence and requested them to part with their treasures so they could become the heart of the Art Museum. And that's how BNG — as all of North India lovingly called BN Goswamy — revolutionised our understanding of our own heritage.

Highs and lows of Congress that 24 Akbar Road has seen

What is urgently needed is a vaccine that is effective before and after TB exposure, and in all age groups.

STILL smarting from its shock defeats in the Haryana and Maharashtra Assembly elections, the Congress is set to have a new address in the Capital in the new year. The inauguration of the new office of the grand old party had been delayed partly because the building was yet to get a 'no-objection certificate' from the Delhi municipal authorities. The other reason was more compelling. The party, facing an existential crisis, needed a 'favourable celestial alignment', which would apparently be in place on January 14, the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti. A plaque would be installed by party President Mallikarjun Kharge, one of the few Congress chiefs who is not from the Nehru-Gandhi family. The absence of a plaque at the present office — 24 Akbar Road — was the result of confusion among party members on the first day of January 1978. Nobody, including Indira Gandhi, had bothered about the stars and their influence on her politics. For the past nearly 46 years, 24 Akbar Road has served as the headquarters of the Indian National Congress. The new office address is Indira Bhawan on Deendayal Upadhyaya Marg, where the BJP already has an impressive headquarters.

However, the Congress, wary of having an office on a road named after RSS ideologue Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, apparently wants to use its back door as the main entrance, which is located on Feroz Shah Kotla Marg. With the Congress set to complete 140 years of its foundation on December 28 this year, here is a recap of how the party under Indira occupied 24 Akbar Road. It has witnessed many highs and lows since then. It was a chilly winter morning in January 1978 when Shoban Singh and 20 other karmacharis (workers) of the breakaway Congress faction headed by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi entered 24 Akbar Road.

A Type VII bungalow in Lutyens' Delhi, 24 Akbar Road belonged to G Venkatswamy, a Congress MP from Andhra Pradesh. Venkatswamy had chosen to side with Indira when most party leaders had stayed away, fearing that proximity to her would invite retaliation from the then ruling Janata Party. It was a testing time for Indira and her party. She was herself

'homeless'. Her Mehrauli farmhouse was half-built and she was losing friends fast. Even such trusted friends as Teji Bachchan (megastar Amitabh Bachchan's mother) had begun complaining that the government-run censor board was troubling her son and filmmaker Manmohan Desai, who had made several blockbusters starring Amitabh.

Family loyalist Muhammad Yunus offered his residence, 12 Wellington Crescent, for Indira and her family as their private residence, while he moved

The Congress split of 1969 was significant on many counts. It led to Indira's Congress losing control over 7 Jantar Mantar Road, where the party office had been housed since Independence. It moved first to 5 Rajendra Prasad Road in 1971 and then to 24 Akbar Road in 1978. The bitter split of 1978 had left the Indira Congress with absolutely nothing. The then office secretary, Sadiq Ali, had declined to hand over any official records, papers or books to Indira. So, the party no longer had any files, records, correspondence, stationery, flags or typewriters. Indira was greatly pained to lose her party's invaluable archives. But when she returned to power with a thumping majority in 1980, like a true believer in destiny, she refused to stake claim on the old party office. "I have built the party from scratch, not once, but twice. The new office premises will rejuvenate the party rank and file for decades," she told Sanjay, when her politician son broached the subject of returning to the old office.

Indira's words proved prophetic. 24 Akbar Road provided a new lease of life to the Congress. Like emperor Akbar, 24 Akbar Road struggled in its nascent stages, but managed to stand on its feet in such a manner that it provided strength and stability for decades to come. In 2009, when the Congress was heading the UPA government at the

Centre, none of the AICC general secretaries occupying the big rooms at 24 Akbar Road, except Rahul Gandhi, had won a parliamentary election. For decades, 24 Akbar Road has contributed little in terms of generating new ideas for the party's agenda. These 'non-accountable' leaders often lacked the ideological clarity that the Congress was so proud of, and they were unable to come up with out-of-the-box ideas. These functionaries were only keen to kill or blunt any fresh initiative rather than help the party make collective use of the talent at its disposal.

Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi and Congress President Kharge face the daunting task of reversing the party's fortunes. Will the grand old party — which launched the nationwide 'Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan Abhiyan' on Friday — find its feet at its new office or wilt under the might of the BJP? We will know the answer in due course.



to private quarters in South Delhi.

Incidentally, this was not 24 Akbar Road's first brush with history. For two years beginning 1961, it played host to Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Suu Kyi was barely 15 when she arrived there with her mother Daw Khin Kyi, who had been appointed Myanmar's ambassador to India.

24 Akbar Road was named Burma House by Jawaharlal Nehru in recognition of Daw Khin Kyi's special status. The house, built by Sir Edwin Lutyens between 1911 and 1925, was regarded as a singularly fine example of British colonial architecture and a masterpiece of early Modernism.

After the 1969 party split, Indira's breakaway Congress faction emerged as the 'real Congress' and she had no regrets about splitting the party over her choice of presidential nominee VV Giri against the old guard's choice Neelam Sanjiva Reddy.

Missing learners

Concerning drop in school enrolment



THE Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) 2023-24 data paints a concerning picture for India's school education sector. A decline of 37 lakh students in school enrolment, dropping from 25.17 crore in 2022-23 to 24.80 crore, demands introspection and action. While some of this reduction reflects enhanced accuracy due to the Aadhaar-linked unique IDs, it exposes systemic challenges that go beyond data adjustments.

Alarmingly, the data reveals a sharp decline in girl enrolment and a persistent underrepresentation of minority and marginalised communities. States like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra have witnessed the steepest enrolment drops, reflecting entrenched socio-economic barriers. Transition points, particularly from middle to secondary education, exacerbate dropout rates — rising from 5.2 per cent in middle school to 10.9 per cent at the secondary level. This is compounded by retention rates plummeting from 85.4 per cent to a mere 45.6 per cent. Infrastructure

Plus, technological readiness is abysmal, with only about 57 per cent of schools equipped with functional computers. The digital divide continues to marginalise the most vulnerable students, undermining efforts for equitable education. Despite these challenges, there are silver linings. The introduction of unique educational IDs facilitates precise tracking of dropouts and better targeting of schemes like Samagra Shiksha. However, progress demands more than data — it requires transformative policy action. Investments in teacher training, digital infrastructure and community outreach are vital. As the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aspires for universal education by 2030, India must ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all. The future of millions of young learners depends on bridging the gap between aspiration and implementation.

A case for Make America & India Great Again

If US investors channel funds towards Indian firms capable of carrying out cutting-edge R and D, the US could reap the benefits of innovation without increasing immigration flows.

PERHAPS it should not be surprising that India should feature so prominently in the "civil war" that has emerged within US President-elect Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) movement. Surprising or not, that is what is happening, with an India-shaped chasm having formed between MAGA's warring factions. On one side stand those who believe, realistically or not, that the key to restoring American greatness lies in isolationism, tax cuts and deregulation — essentially, reducing America's external obligations, shrinking the government and unleashing business by hiring the best talent available from around the world.

For those on the other side, however, MAGA has always been first and foremost a reaction to cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and pluralism in America. In their view, American greatness is synonymous with American whiteness.

India has become Exhibit A for both sides. By many measures, Indians are a model minority: 72 per cent of the Indian immigrants in the United States are university graduates and Indians are among the highest-earning immigrant groups. Indians (including Indian-Americans) have led about 25 per cent of the Silicon Valley startups in the last quarter-century as well as some of America's tech behemoths, including Alphabet (Google), Microsoft, Adobe and IBM. This helps to explain why the economy-first MAGA faction was perfectly happy to see Trump nominate several Indian-Americans for key positions in his administration, including Jay Bhattacharya (to direct the National Institutes of Health) and Kashyap "Kash" Patel (to head the FBI). Trump also selected Vivek Ramaswamy to co-lead, with Elon Musk, the

Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), an advisory commission focused on slashing the federal budget. The MAGA movement's white-nationalist faction, however, was seething at the appointments. Trump's nomination of Sriram Krishnan, a Chennai-born venture capitalist, to serve as a senior policy adviser on artificial intelligence pushed them over the edge. As one user wrote on X, "Did any of y'all [sic] vote for this Indian to run America?"

The problem for MAGA's white-nationalist hardliners extends beyond "this Indian." On November 14, Musk — who had hired Krishnan in 2022 to run Twitter (now X) shortly after acquiring it — put out a call on X for suggestions for DOGE. Krishnan replied, "Anything to remove country caps for green cards/unlock skilled immigration would be huge." When Trump announced Krishnan's nomination the following month, the backlash was immediate. One prominent MAGA activist, Laura Loomer, took to X to declare the announcement "deeply disturbing." In a passionate, if ungrammatical, rant, she asked: How can the US possibly "control immigration" and "promote America First innovation" under a "guy who wants to REMOVE all restrictions on green card caps"? This would, she claimed, enable foreign students to go to the US and "take jobs that should be given" to Americans. But Krishnan mentions removing only country caps, which limit the number of green cards (US permanent residency visas) that can be issued to individuals from a particular country each year. Country caps disproportionately affect individuals from large countries, particularly those, like India, with large numbers of highly skilled workers. As David Sacks,

Trump's nominee for White House AI and crypto czar, pointed out, every country currently is "allocated the same number of green cards, no matter how many qualified applicants it has." As a result, applicants from India have an 11-year wait "whereas applicants from many other countries have no wait at all." In fact, while Indians account for an overwhelming majority of those holding H1-B visas

jobs" from Americans. Immigration from India — where just 2-3 per cent of the population is Christian, and pretty much nobody is white — is no exception. As far-right commentator Ann Coulter told Ramaswamy, a former Republican presidential candidate, earlier this year, she never would have voted for him despite agreeing with many of his views because he is Indian. The recent experiences of two Congressional Democrats of Indian descent, Ro Khanna and Shri Thanedar, were no better. Khanna pointed out that Americans should be celebrating the fact that talented people from around the world, like Krishnan, want to come to the US, rather than going to China. Among the replies he received were statements like, "If they are so great, why didn't they fix their country of origin?!" and, "We want white immigrants not invasive brown hordes."

Likewise, Thanedar's condemnation of the "deplorable rhetoric" targeting Indian-Americans in the H-1B debate triggered a barrage of racist abuse. One X user wrote, "Can I buy you a ticket to Mumbai? One way, of course." Another declared, "Wow, you are a foreigner shilling for more of your compatriots to flood into my country and compete against my people?" To be sure, racism is not the only reason some Trump supporters oppose immigration. As the responses to Khanna and Thanedar also highlight, many Americans fear increased competition for jobs, especially at a time when AI is threatening to displace workers in a fast-growing range of industries.



for high-skilled workers, they are eligible for just 7 per cent of the green cards issued (the ceiling for any single country). Sacks, Musk and others on the economy-first side of the MAGA civil war want to use legal immigration channels to attract the world's best and brightest in service of American "greatness." But for Loomer and her cohort, all immigration is fundamentally problematic as it threatens America's essentially Christian, European national character and enables foreigners to "take



Take a walk around a workspace in a large organization, and the chances are, you will encounter employees gathered around foosball tables, furiously typing away while sitting on beanbags or strategizing business growth over a cup of coffee. These are outward signs of what companies are trying to do - make creativity a part of the organization's culture and generate new products, ideas or solutions by creating a relaxed atmosphere at the workplace.

The workforce today has evolved over the last decade or so to be more open to creativity. With a large number of millennials joining the employee population, the needs of the employees are drastically different from those of the previous generations. And this has caused a cultural shift within organizations. The new culture is headed towards fostering creativity to bring out the best in employees. Rigid systems and processes, hierarchies, inflexible policies and linear modes of thinking are slowly being phased out to welcome flat organizations, space for innovation, and a focus on collaboration through creative thinking.

Richard Lobo, SVP, Head HR, Infosys Limited says, "It's easy to examine these outward signs and mistake them for a creative culture. There is nothing a creative workspace can do if the underlying structure does not allow free collaboration across teams. Allowing a creative culture to grow involves both a strong foundation of creative

values as well as a workspace free of constraints to open the mind." So, how are companies dealing with this? He explains, "At Infosys, we have begun the journey towards greater employee engagement and innovation by fostering creative thinking in the spaces of technology and beyond. In 2014, we launched the first crowd-sourcing idea campaign at Infosys called Murmuration. A CEO-driven initiative, employees were encouraged to provide their ideas about our business strategy, and through an inclusive employee-voting mechanism, 10 ideas were shortlisted for consideration from the original pool of 2,650

ideas." Tech giants such as Facebook and Google are already famous for their hack-a-thons -- overnight events where employees are asked to ditch their regular work and concentrate on trying out something else within the company. According to Lobo, "These events encourage out-of-the-box thinking and inculcate the culture of rapid problem-solving using technology." Similarly, Infosys has its own global Hackathon, which is currently in its second season, to channel creative thinking among employees. Here, people are able to get

hands-on experience with open source and proprietary software tools and technologies. It also provides a platform for employees to identify and engage with talented designers and developers. To ensure that employees have a holistic professional experience, it is necessary to encourage creativity in leisure spaces as well. With Google being the front runner, companies are now encouraging healthy environment through creatively designed workspaces, world-class sports facilities, recreational rooms, gyms, and even sleep pods for power naps. The workplace has become all the more

dynamic and fast-paced. Invariably because of long shift hours, the office becomes a second home and the colleagues, an extended family. Sabbas Joseph, Director of one of the leading event management companies, Wizcraft shares, "For keeping the dynamism alive, we always host interesting activities that can help the Wizzes (team members) to get to know each other and more importantly, relieve stress. From quizzes to pop up shops, celebrating festivals together to dedicating an entire room with books and a music system for just 'chilling'; I think it's extremely important for companies, especially those that require loads of creativity, to provide an outlet for people to engage and bond with each other as they serve as the best stress antidotes." Companies have realized the importance of innovation and how encouraging creative activities can boost team morale. Venkatramana B, President, Group HR, Landmark Group India asserts that Landmark Group strongly believes in a culture of innovation and over the years has benefitted greatly from employee sourced solutions. He says, "Keeping the creative juices flowing is important for us and we continuously organize activities that encourage out-of-the-box thinking. Play in a Day or Theatre Methodology has been a very successful program for us, where various concepts. Be it business or soft skills, they are explained to employees through theater." He also talks about conducting an interesting engagement activity called Islempix, in which store teams are provided with various Olympic-like tasks and adds, "These activities are not only fun, but also increase employee morale, camaraderie and understanding between team members."

Fostering a creative culture in the Workplace

Take frequent breaks to avoid Fatigue at work

If the high pressure and longer work hour is taking a toll on your health lately and if you want to experience better health and increased job satisfaction, regular short breaks are better than longer breaks, suggest experts. Health and fitness specialists are of the opinion that instead of taking a conventional lunch break, smaller breaks throughout the workday replenishes more resources -energy, concentration and motivation. Here are some ways you can steal those moments without compromising on work...

Plan your day in advance

By planning your work activities in advance you get an exact idea of how much work you need to accomplish that day. Spread the work evenly and also plan your free time. "Planning is the key to a life without stress. Even if you have a few surprises at work, you will be well-equipped to handle them," says Dr Amrapali Patil, yoga and wellness expert. She also suggests doing a bit of stretching and distressing exercises during the breaks.

Seek assistance

If you feel the task at hand is too much for you to handle alone, ask your colleagues to help out. There is no harm in seeking

help from your co-workers. Taking too much work and not able to finish it on time or doing a shoddy job will only impact your reputation. In return, help out others as well on your slack day. This will also help you in building a support system at work which will come handy during crisis.

Do something creative to de-stress

You may feel tempted to rush to the coffee machine every time you think of

taking a break. According to Emily Hunter, a researcher, who is working on stress issues faced by the employees at work, find something creative to do during your break that unwinds you - doodling, reading, listening to music - the idea is to engage in activities that are going to make your breaks much more restful, provide better recovery and help you come back to work stronger.

Have an early break

Do not wait till you really feel stressed and hungry to take a break. A study suggests taking an early break helps employees to be better equipped for long work hours. "We found that when more hours had elapsed since the beginning of the work shift, fewer resources and more symptoms of poor health were reported after a break," a study done by researcher Cindy Wu, said. "Therefore, breaks later in the day seem to be less effective," the study noted.

Avoid discussing work during the break

The idea of taking a break is to get away from work and stress. If you are going to discuss work with your colleagues at the coffee machine, it would beat the whole purpose. Instead, choose lighter topics.



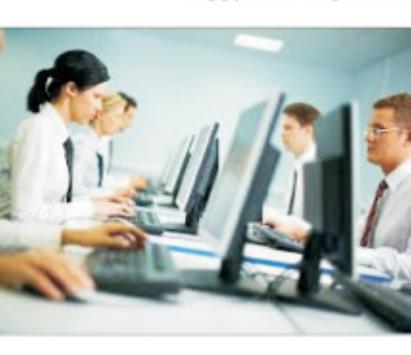
Of course, we all come to office so that we could do work, but other than that there are a few regular things that we all end up doing. They all are so regular that they formed a part of our work routine. Here they are...

Take quite a lot of coffee/chai breaks

It's not just one in the evening, and another towards day end, coffee breaks are integral to our work schedule. In fact, no serious meeting, discussion, brainstorming session, or presentation or just starting work can happen without a cup or two of coffee or chai. And, some of these breaks are taken without anyone, just to for some self assessment time or just to break from the work monotony.

Gossip and bitch

No, we don't do it on purpose, it is just the way every workplace functions. Some people are happy and some are not. Happy people generally gossip about how inefficient



Read bizarre stuff while researching

Research is a pivotal part of every job profile, and all that research work is usually done online. However, while we are trying to some serious finding out on important stuff, we tend to lose track and go about reading fun and bizarre things by opening one link from another.

Have several non-productive days

This is something we all do, but never accept of doing it. There are days when we are completely non-productive and spend hours doing absolutely nothing. However, we start the day by thinking that we are going to finish a good amount of work, but end it completely being unproductive.

UAPA tribunal upholds Centre's five-year ban on Khalistani group SFJ

►The ruling follows the Union government's declaration in July 2024 that SFJ remains an unlawful association, citing alarming evidence of its escalating anti-national activities.

NEW DELHI. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) Tribunal has upheld the Centre's decision to impose a five-year extension on the ban against the pro-Khalistani group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ). The ruling follows the Union government's declaration in July 2024 that SFJ remains an unlawful association, citing alarming evidence of its escalating anti-national activities. Presided over by Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta of the Delhi High Court, the tribunal on Friday confirmed the government's concerns about SFJ's deepening ties with Khalistani terror groups like Babbar Khalsa International and Khalistan Tiger Force, as well as its collaboration with Pakistan's notorious Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to fuel militancy in Punjab. The tribunal's investigation revealed disturbing patterns of SFJ recruiting and



radicalising youth via social media, financing terrorism through smuggling, and issuing death threats to prominent political figures, including the Prime Minister and Home Minister. Over a five-year period, SFJ's unlawful activities grew significantly, with the number of FIRs against the group rising

from 11 in 2019 to a staggering 122 by 2024. Additionally, SFJ's campaign to incite mutiny within the Indian Army and its destructive attempts to disrupt national events, including the G20 Summit, were noted as major security concerns. The tribunal also condemned SFJ's efforts to target critical infrastructure like power plants and railways, further highlighting the group's dangerous agenda.

The group's exploitation of cyber platforms to spread separatist propaganda, incite violence, and disrupt public order, using automated calls and videos, was also a key piece of evidence. With the testimony of 52 witnesses, including senior police and intelligence officers, and corroborating documents and videos, the tribunal concluded that SFJ's activities posed an undeniable threat to India's national security.

Delhi wakes up to dense fog, several flights and trains delayed

New Delhi. Delhi flights delayed: The National Capital on Sunday woke up to a thick layer of fog disrupting the flight and train services. The Delhi Airport shared an update regarding flights delayed at IGI Airport and stated flights that are not CAT III compliant may get affected. It is advisable to contact the airline for updated timings.

Flights delayed Delhi Airport fog: Several flights are delayed at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi, due to fog. "While landings and take-offs continue at Delhi Airport, flights that are not CAT III compliant may get affected. Passengers are requested to contact the airline concerned for updated flight information. Any inconvenience caused is deeply regretted," Delhi Airport stated in an advisory posted on X. CAT III facility allows aircraft to operate in low-visibility conditions. Along with the flights, several trains are also running late. The travellers are advised to keep checking the updated time of their flights or trains through accessible platforms beforehand. On Saturday too, the dense fog led to the delay of 81 trains while 19 flights got diverted. The Northern Railway yesterday said a total of 59 trains were running late by up to six hours and 22 by around eight hours.

Delhi weather: According to the India Meteorological Department, Delhi recorded 10 degrees Celsius at 5.30 am on Sunday. Dense fog enveloped the national capital on Sunday morning, reducing visibility to zero in several areas. Meanwhile, the air quality in the national capital continued in the 'very poor' category.

Student stabbed to death by group outside Delhi school after fight over 'Pithu' game

NEW DELHI. In a tragic turn of events, a fight over a game of 'pithu' (seven stones) between two schoolmates two days ago escalated into violence on Friday when a 14-year-old boy was stabbed to death by a group, which included his classmate, outside a government school in east Delhi's Shakarpur. The police have detained five minors and arrested two men in connection with the case. According to the police, "The victim, a class 9 student, got into a quarrel with his classmate during a game of 'pithu' two days ago. The exchange got heated between the boys and in order to exact revenge, one of the boys reportedly borrowed a mobile phone from another student at 4 pm on Friday during the break period to make a call to someone. Over the call, the boy mentioned the dispute with his classmate (the victim) and instructed the other person to 'send people' to resolve the matter. This conversation set the stage for the larger confrontation outside the school gate," police said. Police said, when students were exiting the campus after the school hours, the boy with whom the victim argued was seen waiting outside the main gate with a group of individuals. Acting on the boy's instigation, one of the accused stabbed the victim in his thigh. The assailants fled the scene, leaving him critically injured. The victim was given first aid by the school staff and transported to Hedgewar Hospital, where he was referred to GTB Hospital due to his critical condition. The teen was declared dead at the hospital, police said.

Delhi: Bangladeshi national residing illegally for 3 years arrested, deported

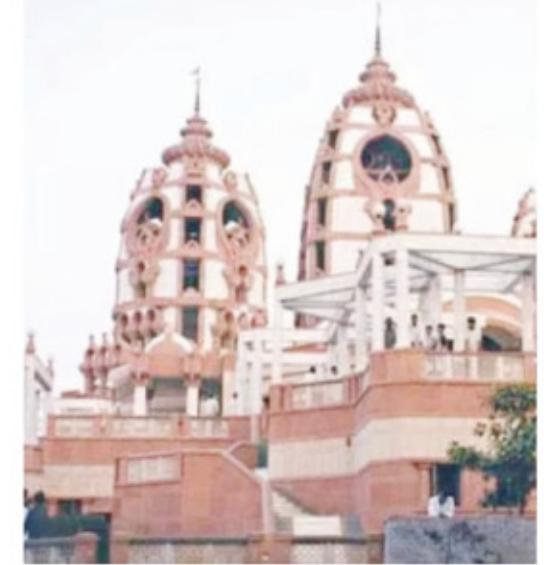
NEW DELHI. During the recent verification drive, Delhi Police arrested a Bangladeshi national, Md Sahidul Islam, who had been living illegally in the south west district of Delhi for three years. Officials from the Palam Village Police Station detained the individual, who was later handed over to the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) for deportation to Bangladesh. According to police reports, the accused admitted to being an undocumented migrant and was unable to provide valid identification. Authorities also discovered photocopied documents from Bangladesh in his possession. The drive, initiated on the instructions of Delhi lieutenant governor VK Saxena, aimed to identify Bangladeshi nationals living unlawfully in the city, said Madhup Tiwari, Special Commissioner of Police (Law and Order).

Earlier in the week, two other Bangladeshi nationals, identified as Liyacat (54) and his wife Nasreen (39), were detained during a similar operation by the Safdarjung Enclave Police Station.

Both had been residing illegally in Delhi since 2012 and were deported through the FRRO. In separate drives, the south west district Police arrested two more Bangladeshi nationals.

Iskcon temple employee in Indore flees with lakhs of donation money

A manhunt is underway to arrest an Iskcon employee, who escaped from a temple in Indore with lakhs of donation money. The accused was responsible for collecting and depositing the donations.



New Delhi. An employee at the Iskcon temple in Indore has fled with lakhs of donation money, along with a receipt book, officials said on Saturday. The theft was reported late Friday night when the temple's chief accountant, Vishwa Nam Das, filed an FIR with police.

"An FIR was filed by the temple's Chief Finance Officer Vishwa Nam Das late on Friday night," top-ranked police official Arvind Kumar said, as reported by news agency. Murli Dhar Das, the employee who went missing, was responsible for collecting and depositing the donations, according to temple spokesperson Ravi Lochan Das. "After further investigation, we'll determine the exact amount deposited by him," he said.

Murli Dhar Das, son of Nima Chand Yadav, hails from Madhya Pradesh's Indore, according to the FIR filed at the police station. Along with the money, he took a receipt book containing 32 sheets. A manhunt is underway to arrest the missing Iskcon employee, Murli Dhar Das, and get back the stolen funds.

This isn't the first time such an incident has been reported from the temple. Earlier, a person named Saurav had fled after stealing money donated by devotees and a receipt book. However, he died before authorities could recover the money.

Delhi HC clears doctor accused of foetal gender disclosure, cites lack of proof

NEW DELHI. The High Court has dismissed charges against a doctor accused of illegally revealing a foetus's gender, ruling that there was insufficient evidence to support the claims.

The case, which involved alleged violations of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC and PNDT) Act, hinged on a sting operation conducted in August 2020 at a Hari Nagar ultrasound center.

Justice Chandra Dhar Singh observed, "There is no material on record to establish that the procedure carried out by the petitioner (doctor) violated the law." The court further noted that the alleged gender disclosure was reportedly made by a laboratory employee, not the doctor herself. The FIR had accused the doctor of facilitating the disclosure.

Justice Singh also criticised the delay in the investigation, emphasising the need to prevent further harassment. "The inordinate delay in filing the charge sheet reinforces the view that the FIR is liable to be quashed," the judgment stated.

AAP's 'no Chief Minister face' jab at BJP, party responds with 'aapda' dig

New Delhi. The ruling AAP and opposition BJP were involved in a fresh tussle on social media ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls slated to be held next month. The AAP took a dig at the BJP for not declaring a chief ministerial face, and posted a video humorously showing the absence of a groom ('dulha') on a horse.

Not backing out, the BJP responded with an 'aapda' (disaster) jibe at the Arvind Kejriwal-led party and said it would come to power in the national capital. The saffron party has been out of power since 1998. While announcing his resignation in September last year, Kejriwal said he would return as the Chief Minister only when the people of Delhi gave him a "certificate of honesty" in the upcoming elections. Kejriwal resigned after he got bail in the excise policy case and was in jail for six months.



AAP leader Atishi then succeeded him for the top post. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched a blistering attack on Kejriwal, alleging that the AAP government was steeped in corruption and had turned into an 'aapda' for Delhi. "They have committed a liquor scam, school scam, and pollution scam. They are openly engaging in corruption and even publicising it. It is a disaster ('aapda')

for Delhi, and the residents have declared war against this disaster ('aapda')." PM Modi said at a rally in north-west Delhi's Ashok Vihar. Kejriwal then hit back at PM Modi, asserting that the real disaster lay within the BJP itself. "The disaster isn't in Delhi. It's within the BJP. The first disaster is that the BJP doesn't have a chief ministerial face. The second is that the BJP has no narrative. The third is that the BJP has no agenda for the Delhi elections," he said.

Electoral Commission has not yet announced the dates for the Delhi Assembly polls. The current tenure of the 70-member Delhi Assembly will end on February 23. In the 2015 and 2020 polls, AAP secured a massive majority, winning 67 and 62 seats, respectively. The BJP was reduced to single digits, managing three and eight in the last two elections.

Delivery boy apprehended for stabbing another teenager to death after argument in Delhi

New Delhi. A 17-year-old boy has been apprehended for allegedly stabbing another minor to death after an argument in North Delhi's Timarpur area. Sudhanshu Verma, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police-I (North Delhi), said a PCR call was received at 10.19 pm on December 29, 2024, reporting a man lying injured on the footpath at Lancer Road near Mayor House in Timarpur. Upon arrival, the police found a male with a stab wound to his left chest and blood stains around the scene. The deceased was later identified as a 16-year-old domestic help from Bihar's Madhubani district who had been working in the area for the past one week, he said. The boy's



body was shifted to Aruna Asaf Ali Government Hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. A murder case was registered on December 30, 2024, under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita section 103(1) at Timarpur police station. Through the analysis of local intelligence and footage from 25 CCTV cameras around the crime

scene, the police identified the minor suspect and traced his movements before apprehending him on December 31 from Timarpur.

"During interrogation, he confessed that an argument had escalated into a violent altercation with the victim, leading him to stab the victim," said Additional DCP Verma, adding that the accused worked as a delivery boy and had known the victim for about two weeks. "The victim allegedly harassed him by taking his delivery items."

The police said they recovered from the minor's home the murder weapon—a blood-stained knife—as well as clothes worn by him during the crime. Further investigations are underway in the case.

India becomes world's third-largest Metro network, achieves milestone of 1000 kms

New Delhi. India now has the world's 3rd largest Metro network! The metro rail network in India has increased to 1000 km. With such a large network, India has become the country with the third largest metro rail network in the world after China and America. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the extension of Delhi Metro's Magenta Line on Sunday. He will also inaugurate the 13 km long section of Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Namo Bharat Corridor built between Sahibabad in UP and New Ashok Nagar in Delhi. Metro network's growth in last 10 years



from 28 lakh in 2014 to over one crore now, reflecting a 2.5 times increase. Furthermore, the total distance travelled by metro trains has tripled, climbing from 86,000 kilometres to an impressive 2.75

lakh kilometres. PM Modi shared the milestone on X. "Over the last decade, extensive work has been done in boosting metro connectivity, thus strengthening

urban transport and enhancing 'Ease of Living', his post reads. PM Modi to inaugurate Namo Bharat corridor today

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the additional 13 kilometre Delhi section of Namo Bharat corridor between Sahibabad and New Ashok Nagar on Sunday, officials said. The inauguration will take place around 11 am and PM Modi will likely to travel from Sahibabad to New Ashok Nagar.

The passenger operations will commence from 5 pm onwards on Sunday and trains will be available to the public at a frequency of 15 minutes. The fare from New Ashok Nagar station to Meerut South is Rs 150 for standard coach and Rs 225 for premium coach. Of the newly inaugurated 13 km

section, six km is underground and includes a prominent station on the corridor, Anand Vihar. This marks the first time that Namo Bharat trains will operate in an underground section, the officials stated.

Namo Bharat trains served 50 lakh commuters

To date, Namo Bharat trains have served over 50 lakh commuters. Further construction in other sections -- New Ashok Nagar-Sarai Kale Khan and Meerut South-Modipuram -- is progressing at a rapid pace, they said.

Anand Vihar underground station is one of the largest stations on the Namo Bharat corridor. Commuters will be able to travel from here to Meerut South in just 35 minutes. As a special arrangement for the movement of vehicles and pedestrians at this station, three bridges have been built over the Ghazipur drain. Two of these bridges are to be used for vehicle entry and exit, while one is exclusively for pedestrians.

10 tips for Email Etiquette



However, people often forget that they have to use a different, more formal tone for official email correspondence, and end up peppering their emails with too many emojis and abbreviations. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when you're sending out a work email.

1. INTRODUCTIONS ARE IMPORTANT:

Always introduce yourself if you are

writing to someone you don't know or haven't corresponded with previously. If you've got the sender's address from a mutual friend, mention that in your email. Introducing yourself is especially important if you're sending out a survey or questionnaire to people whose addresses you have got from a database.

2. ALWAYS RUN A SPELL-CHECK:

It's important to run a spell-check for official correspondence, especially if you're sending an email from your phone. You don't want the auto-correct feature to backfire on an official email, after all. Ensure your grammar and punctuation are correct as well.

3. USE THE REPLY-ALL FEATURE SPARINGLY:

Only use the reply-all feature for an email

Don't be a social media addict



This is a question that not many people would like to really acknowledge — are you addicted to social media? Do you spend every other minute of your time checking for updates or the latest happenings on the Internet? Are you guilty of sneaking up to your smartphone during work hours and checking your social networking account to see what your friends are up to? Is your smartphone/ tablet the first thing you check when you wake up? Does the thought of not having your smartphone with you at all times stress you out? You aren't alone. Statistics have thrown up alarming numbers of people who are addicted to smartphones and particularly, social media.

- Letting go of a habit is easier said than done. Don't, therefore, expect miracles to happen overnight. The first step is to acknowledge the fact that you're indeed glued to social media. This self-realisation is the first step in dependence process.

- Don't go on an all-out detox from day one. Allow yourself to gradually stop visiting social media accounts at the drop of a hat. Resist the temptation — as difficult as it may be — and tell yourself you can beat the urge.

- Set times in a day when you allow yourself to spend time surfing social media sites. A 10 to 15 minute break during the day and some time late evening could be one option. Alternatively, you could choose the time depending upon your schedule. However, make sure you stick to it!

- While it is fun to let people see what you're up to, 'checking in' on Facebook every time you're out somewhere 'nice' is simply tacky. Not everyone on your friend list really wants to know if you're watching a movie, having dinner at a fancy place or watching the sunset. Use your discretion. And some common sense! And don't get personal in comments on Twitter. Just because you have the power of anonymity.



that really needs it. If the reply is meant for only one person, just reply to him/her. And don't use it to reply to a sender's greetings for the festive season — you could find yourself being blamed for starting an unnecessary email thread.

4. USE BCC FOR GENERIC MAILED:

Use the Bcc field for when you are sending out mails to a very large number of people who may not all know each other. It's also a way to ensure that all your contacts' addresses are not out there for people unknown to them to access.

5. RESTRICT THE NUMBER OF ATTACHMENTS YOU SEND:

Send heavy files via file-hosting services so that you don't clog the recipient's inbox. You could also zip files or resize pictures. If you know you're sending an email to someone who accesses his/her inbox on the phone, don't send several attachments with it.

6. DON'T OVER-ABBREVIATE:

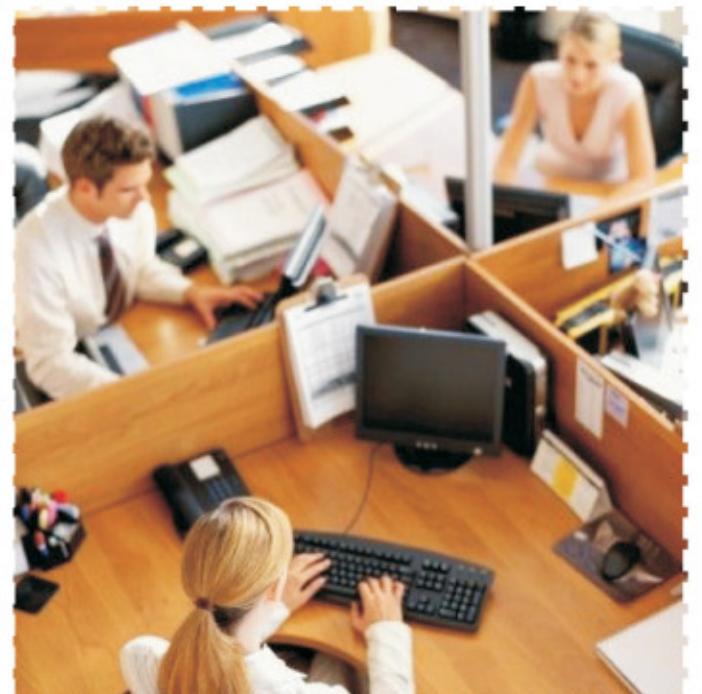
Don't use too many abbreviations or in your email, like FYI, PFA, PDF or FYR. It may confuse the recipient, who may also get the impression that you don't have the time to type out a proper email. If you must use them, restrict it only to the subject line.

7. FORMATTING FUNDAS:

Do not use all caps and bold fonts as this will give the recipient the impression that you are shouting at him/her. The same goes for underlining in the middle of a lot of text. Don't use fancy fonts or multiple font colours either.

8. WATCH YOUR TONE:

Always be careful about how your email sounds. It may be an official email, but it should not sound too abrupt. You shouldn't sound over-friendly either, especially if this is the first time you are corresponding with the recipient.



Moreover, don't send out an email if you're upset. Save it as a draft and re-read it when you're calmer.

9. FIX YOUR FORWARDS:

Make it a point to clean up forwards before you, in turn, forward them to other people. Not only does this make the email look cleaner, but it also ensures that you don't give away anyone else's email addresses.

10. CHECK WHO YOU'RE SENDING AN EMAIL TO:

Always check the To field of an unsent email before you send it. You don't want the wrong email being sent to the wrong person.

What every official email should contain

Subject line: This is the first thing that recipients will see in their inboxes and it will determine whether they will read it or not. It should be

clear and direct.

Salutation: Always start an email by greeting the recipient by using the word 'dear' followed by his/her name. If you aren't on a first-name basis with the recipient, use a title and a surname.

Concise body: Get straight to the point. If you have more than one issue to address, start with the most important, and list the rest point-by-point.

Sign off: Always sign off on your emails. Phrases like 'Yours sincerely' and 'yours faithfully' are acceptable for formal emails. 'Best regards' or 'kind regards' work in most other situations.

Make the most of your Internship



In an effort to market themselves to future employers better, students choose internships that help them further their careers. Times have changed and one no longer has to seek assistance from their well-placed relatives to ask for favours. So how to make the most of the dream internship you've landed up with? Here's taking a look...

- Be prepared and know that you will not be entrusted with the most important jobs. You'll mostly be assisting your seniors and make their lives a li'l easier. But know that this is a part of the process and will help you in knowing things in and out...

- Showing that you can do boring jobs well will help further your chances of being assigned more important tasks.

- Observe how others around you are working and adjust. Don't emulate them completely, but understand what's important - where do they go for lunches (cafeteria, eat at their desks or have a separate lunch room altogether). Speaking to those around you (without disturbing them, of course) will also help you learn quite a lot. Their journey might not be similar

to yours, but approach matters.

- Unless you are a social media intern or just taking a break for a while, avoid using social networking sites. - Ask for reviews.

Be open to suggestions and ready to take in whatever your seniors have to say of your work. It will only enhance your work-style.

- Dress well. And by that, we do

not mean going OTT. But not the way you dress in your college. Ditch those capris, flip-flops, low-waist jeans. It may throw wrong signals. Be fun, be graceful.

We will turn Air India into top-class airline: Tata Sons chief

NEW DELHI. Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran on Saturday said the company is fully committed to transforming Air India into a top-class airline. He said the airline will deliver exceptional service and performance on a global scale. Tata Group acquired Air India in 2022 after the government had signed a share purchase agreement with the group for the sale of Air India for Rs 18,000 crore. Chandrasekaran was responding to a query during a free side chat with TVS Supply Chain Solutions Managing Director Ravi Viswanathan at the Global Alumni Meet of NIT Trichy, Tamil Nadu, on what people can expect from Air India following the acquisition made by Tata Group in 2022. On a lighter note, he appealed to the audience gathered at the venue to urge the aircraft manufacturers Boeing and Airbus to deliver the aircraft as per the orders made by Air India.

Air India Group has given a total order of 470 planes—250 to Airbus and 220 to Boeing. In December 2024, Air India placed an order for 100 more additional wide-body A350 and 90 narrow body A320 aircraft including A321 neo.

OfBusiness plans to invest Rs 3000 cr in next 3 yrs to ramp up steel biz

NEW DELHI. OfBusiness, a b2b commerce and fintech startup, is looking to invest about Rs 3,000 crore into doubling its steel business to more than 4MTPA in the next three years. The company has acquired three steel firms -- SMW Ispat, Shree Sidhbal Ispat and Noble Steel -- in the past and the expansion is lined up in all the three companies. "We are looking forward to investing close to \$350 million, about Rs 3,000 crore, to scale up our steel business from the current 2 million tonne to more than 4 million tonne in the next 3 years. This is also expected to sharply increase the sector EBITDA to 2.5x from the current level. The funding will be a combination of internal accruals and debt & equity financing," Co-Founder and CEO Asish Mohapatra said.

The company supplies steel to companies such as L&T, Adani, J Kumar, Dilip Buildcon, Ashoka Buildcon. OfBusiness also plans to get into new categories such as pre-painted galvanised iron (PPGI) adding onto thermo-mechanically treated (TMT) bars and structures. The company is also planning a \$1 billion IPO in FY26.

"We have been continuously thriving for expansion of our business and be part of India's tremendous growth journey of \$10 trillion economy. To support our expansion plans we are looking forward to our \$1 billion IPO in FY26," Mohapatra said.

OfBusiness has been into the business of steel, non-ferrous metals, bitumen, food products, as well as finished goods such as apparel and footwear, supplying them to its domestic and international clients.

Meet Kevan Parekh: Indian-Origin Executive Named Apple's New CFO With Salary Of Rs...

New Delhi. Indian-origin executive Kevan Parekh has made headlines as he takes over as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Apple Inc., effective January 1, 2025. Parekh steps into the role previously held by Luca Maestri, who served for nearly 11 years. Stepping into his new role as Apple's CFO, he will earn an annual salary of \$1 million (Rs 8.57 crore), marking another milestone in his remarkable career.

An Impressive Journey at Apple
Kevan Parekh joined Apple in June 2013 and has since played a vital role in the company's success. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Michigan and an MBA from the University of Chicago. Over the



years, Parekh has taken on several key responsibilities at Apple, including financial planning, investor relations, and market research. Broad Expertise and Key Mentorship Kevan Parekh's expertise goes beyond finance, with experience in sales, retail and marketing. He worked closely with product marketing and engineering teams. Bloomberg reports that outgoing CFO Luca Maestri has been mentoring Parekh for this role which makes him a natural choice as his successor. While Parekh may not be a household name, he is highly valued within Apple and regularly briefs CEO Tim Cook on critical financial matters.

Career Before Apple
Kevan Parekh, before becoming Apple's CFO played a crucial role in shaping the company's strategies and operations across multiple departments. His career includes senior leadership roles at Thomson Reuters and General Motors before joining Apple. CEO Tim Cook has praised Parekh's sharp intellect, sound judgment, and deep understanding of Apple.

Data protection rules: India Inc says challenges remain

While the industry has broadly welcomed the draft, experts suggest that there is still substantial work to be done to address implementation hurdles, procedural gaps, and areas of ambiguity in the Act.

NEW DELHI. The India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (Ind-Aus ECTA), which completed two years on Sunday, has helped India increase its exports by 14% to the Indo-pacific nation in FY24. However, it is still lower than exports in 2021-22. A press statement by the Ministry of Commerce says since the signing of ECTA, bilateral merchandise trade has more than doubled, surging from \$12.2 billion in 2020-21 to \$26 billion in 2022-23. Total trade, however, moderated in the year 2023-24 to \$24



billion in 2023-24, with India's exports to Australia growing by 14%. "The current fiscal year continues to reflect strong momentum. Total merchandise bilateral

trade from April-November 2024 reached \$16.3 billion," says the statement. However, after signing of the agreement, India's trade deficit with Australia had increased from \$8.5 billion in 2021-22 to \$12 billion in 2022-23. It fell to \$8.2 billion in 2023-24. After the signing of the trade pact, exports of textiles, chemicals, and agriculture goods have shown substantial growth. It has also boosted exports on new lines of products such as gold studded with diamonds and turbo jets, highlighting the diversification enabled by the agreement. When it comes to imports, India has mostly imported from Australia essential raw materials, such as metalliferous ores, cotton, wood and wood products. According to the commerce ministry, imports from Australia have fuelled India's industries, contributing to the win-win nature of this partnership. Imports of electronics and engineering have room for growth. Both the countries are committed to building on the momentum created by the ECTA, and to achieve the target of trade to reach AUD 100 billion by 2030 between India and Australia.

River targets retail expansion in India with 25 new stores by March 2025

NEW DELHI. Electric scooter manufacturer River has announced plans to expand its retail footprint by opening 25 stores across the country by March this year. The Bengaluru-headquartered company inaugurated its first store in Coimbatore, the second such facility in Tamil Nadu after the first outlet in Chennai, which was established in 2024. River is backed by marquee investors including Japan-headquartered Yamaha Motor, Mitsubishi and Company Ltd., Dubai-headquartered Al Futtaim Group among others. As part of its expansion, the company plans to open stores in Vellore, Erode, Tirupur across the State. It would

also set up facilities in Mysuru, Belgaum, Tirupati, Ahmedabad, Pune, Nagpur, and Delhi in



coming months. "After the success of our flagship store in Chennai, we are excited to open (stores) across Tamil Nadu. Many of our employees who have been with us

from the start are from this region. And it is a special market for us," company Co-Founder and CEO Aravind Mani said.

River currently retails its scooter 'Indie' priced at Rs 1,42,999 (ex-showroom). The new store -- Rajdurai E-Mobility -- facility has been set up on a 1,200 sq ft land at Kothari Layout, Trichy Road, Coimbatore. "Our goal is to establish River Indie as a distinctive vehicle in the region, offering both style and convenience together. Our plan going forward is to open 25 River Stores across India by March 2025" he said in a company statement on Sunday.

River currently has nine retail facilities in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Hubli, Visakhapatnam and Kochi.

Nayara Energy to expand retail network by adding one fuel station per day

NEW DELHI. Nayara Energy, India's largest private fuel retailer, plans to add 400 petrol pumps this year to expand its retail network across various states, the firm said on Sunday. With 6,500+ retail outlets across India, Nayara Energy has been adding new retail outlets to its network and has been growing steadily across various states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan. In a statement, Nayara said it "is well on track to add 400 retail outlets this year". In line with its plans to aggressively grow in India, Nayara Energy has also revamped its dealer programme to onboard new dealers and give a boost to local entrepreneurship. It is now inviting applications for new dealerships across the country to open petrol pumps. With over 6,500 petrol pumps, it caters to the need for reliable and safe mobility across the length and

breadth of the country. It recently forayed into petrochemicals sector with a 4,50,000-tonnes a year polypropylene plant. "Being one of the youngest petroleum brands in India, Nayara Energy is reinventing the fuel retailing category to ensure consumer delight. "Customers are always assured of the right quality and quantity of fuel at Nayara Energy's retail outlets," the statement said. Setting new benchmarks in the category, Nayara Energy's fuel stations offer a variety of products and services designed to meet the needs of customers, including high-quality fuels, lubricants, and convenience offerings. With a strategic presence on National Highways and in urban clusters, Nayara Energy's fuel stations are vital links to marketplaces fuelling the aspirations of the rising India well beyond the metros. Commenting on the strategic expansion, Alessandro

des Dorides, CEO, Nayara Energy, said: "Nayara Energy has steadily grown in India and as new-age India prospers, we believe that bolstering our fuel retail network in upcoming towns is integral to the growth of this thriving economy. Our uniquely designed dealer programme believes in creating more avenues for entrepreneurship and will enable in growing our network, by enabling mobility and enhancing connectivity within the underserved markets." In an endeavour to promote transparency in customer loyalty programmes, Nayara Energy is leveraging technology through chatbots and artificial intelligence tools to enhance the quality of its interactions with consumers. Reaffirming its commitment to be India's trusted energy partner and to further aggressively expand its reach

Delivery partners and the new Kunal Kamra unions

NEW DELHI. It's a surrealistic situation out there. There was a time when workers, even the casual and temporary ones, had their trade unions to speak up on their behalf. Things have changed.

It's a hire-and-fire regime now. So much so one needs a stand-up comic like Kunal Kamra to fill the space vacated by traditional leaders.

What do you make of Kamra's latest salvo against quickcomm delivery companies like Blinkit, Zepto and Swiggy for exploiting their delivery workers – euphemistically called 'delivery partners' or 'gig workers'? Responding to Blinkit CEO Albinde Dhindsa boasting of the lakhs of condoms delivered over New Year's eve, Kamra responded with tweets demanding Dhindsa first come clean on how much he pays his 'delivery partners'. Pointing to the dark side of quick commerce, he accused the promoters of operating as "landlords without owning land" and, while portraying themselves as innovative entrepreneurs, failing to provide fair wages and working conditions. A few weeks ago, Kunal Kamra stepped in for consumers of electric 2 wheelers (e2ws) manufactured by Ola.

While it should have been consumer forums who should have called out Ola promoter Bhavish Aggarwal for the poor after-sales services, it fell on the shoulders of a comedian to highlight the plight of thousands of e2w buyers who had been left holding a lemon.

Voice of the voiceless

He's no Datta Samant or a George Fernandes, but more power to Kamra as he steps forward as the voice of the voiceless. Social media is full of delivery groups working for the Zeptos and Blinkits singing their appreciation for Kamra taking up their cause.

But what has happened to the institutional forms of collective bargaining? The trade unions and grassroots organizations who traditionally stood up against workplace exploitation and for consumer rights? A variety of reasons since the dawn of liberalization in 1991 have contributed to the decline of organized trade unionism. The slow erosion of the public sector and its institutionalised trade unions, together with the rise of a large informal, services sector has led to the current laissez-faire regime. High unemployment too has worked against permanent tenures and encouraged 'casualization' of jobs. The government has also contributed to the chaos. Keen on a business-friendly environment, it has through the Labour Codes (Repeal) Act 2021 repealed a clutch of 8 labour laws including The Maternity Benefit Act, 1972 and The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1961 reducing the legal rights of employees.

How Sebi nailed Ketan Parekh

Scam came to light after Sebi report indicated involvement of KP in front-running stocks

MUMBAI. Ketan Parekh, the infamous stockbroker and key associate of scamster big-bull Hashad Mehta of the 2000-01 stock market scandal, for which he was imprisoned for years, is back to do what he is best at—manipulating the stock market. Even as he was under the Sebi ban for 14 years from entering the market since 2003, KP, as he is known for, has been gaming the system—this time through front-running the stocks that Tiger Global holds in domestic companies, and mostly in PB Fintech.

How Sebi nailed him

Tracking the 10 fake phone numbers, including that of his wife Mamta's that he shared with the front office of Sebi during his recent visits. The latest scam came to light on January 2 when Sebi in a 188-page interim order by whole-time member Kamlesh Varshney, banned KP and 22 others including Singapore-based trader Rohit Salgaocar from market and ordered impounding of Rs 66 crore they illicitly gained from the scam. KP didn't do any trade this time too but got his Kolkata-based associates to do the job

for him. KP used to instruct the front-runners using different mobile phones registered under different names and was known as 'Jack', 'John', 'Boss', 'Bhai' among other names. The Sebi report doesn't name Tiger Global, except saying KP and his associates were front-running in stocks held by a large USD-based portfolio investor, named the 'Big Client', BSE and NSE data show the affected fund is Tiger Global. The Sebi used the screenshots of chats on trading instructions given by KP and his henchmen on November 11, 2022, to sell shares of PB Fintech, parent firm of online financial broker Policybazaar, using a slew of operators to front-run trades.

The Sebi has found Parekh, Salgaocar and others were not only front-running trades on Tiger Global stocks, but were on buying side when Tiger Global sold shares of PB Fintech. Front-running is an illegal practice of placing a personal trade based on non-public information about a large upcoming order that may impact the price movements. As the findings, which match data from the exchanges, on November 11, 2022, two funds of Tiger Global (referred to as the Big Client in the report) sold 52.5 lakh shares of PB Fintech, GRID Securities, Salasar Stock Broking and Anirudh Damani (main three front-

runners) have matched their trades with the Big Client for 20.61 lakh shares.

As per the BSE data, two Tiger Global entities—Tiger Global Eight Holdings and Internet Fund III which is a venture capital fund managed by Tiger Global



Management—had together sold 1.23 crore shares of PB Fintech on that day. While Tiger Global Eight Holdings sold 76.13 lakh shares, Internet Fund sold 51.6 lakh shares and on NSE Tiger Global sold over 32.84 lakh shares on November 11, 2022, at a price of Rs 388.34. The order highlighted the chronology of events wherein Salgaocar, with whom Tiger Global used to consult before placing certain orders, passed information to KP who then gave trading instructions in the WhatsApp groups. While the traders of the big client were discussing trades with

Salgaocar to ensure counter-parties for their trading, Salgaocar was using that information to make illegal profits by routing information to KP.

When the information reached KP, he acted in a systematic manner, and trades were executed in different accounts, which generated unlawful profits of Rs 66.77 crore. Before market hours, Salgaocar and trader of the Big Client were discussing about Policy Bazaar and trader of the Big Client confirmed to Salgaocar that they would sell Policy Bazaar that day... from 9:00 am to 9:58 am, KP gave multiple instructions to sell the scrip at various price in the WhatsApp group 'Jack-Saro'.

KP used front-runners

As per Sebi, KP was using 10 mobile numbers to do the act and one of the phone numbers matched the one obtained by KP on his wife's Aadhar card and this was last nail for him even as he was under a Sebi ban since 2003 after the Harshad Mehta scam.

But KP, began his life as chartered accountant in the 1980s and soon launched his own brokerage Grow More, was operating from the shadows, using a network of hawala agents called angadias. But that cover was blown as Sebi followed the trail of his phone numbers, registered on different names.

NEWS BOX

Gautam Gambhir reiterates importance of domestic cricket after Australia series loss

India head coach Gautam Gambhir has once again highlighted the importance of playing domestic cricket after India's series loss against Australia. Notably, India lost the fifth and final Test against Australia in Sydney by six wickets and lost the series by 1-3. It was their first series loss against Australia since 2015 and their second consecutive Test series loss following a recent 0-3 whitewash against New Zealand at home.

Following India's another dismal show in Tests, Gambhir highlighted the importance of playing domestic cricket for Indian players. The India head coach also pointed out that everyone who has the commitment to playing Test cricket should play domestic cricket as it helps one get the desired results in the longest format. "I would always like everyone to play domestic cricket. Not only one game, if they're available and they have the commitment to play red-ball cricket, everyone should play domestic cricket. As simple as it can get, if you don't give importance to domestic cricket, you will never get desired results that you want in Test cricket," said Gambhir in the post-match press conference.

There have been widespread discussions about the compulsion of Indian players to play



domestic cricket since 2024 as players like Hardik Pandya, Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer have been reprimanded in the past for missing domestic games. Ahead of the ongoing Test season, players like Shubman Gill, KL Rahul, Sarfaraz Khan and Kuldeep Yadav amongst others, participated in Duleep Trophy but senior players Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma continued to be missing. India don't play Tests until July 2025. Their lack of preparation came out in the open as both batters had to endure poor form across 10 Tests played since September 2024. Rohit scored 164 runs from eight matches (15 innings) at an average of 10.93 while Kohli scored 382 runs (19 innings) from ten matches at an average of 22.47.

Meanwhile, with the next round of the Ranji Trophy 2024-25 beginning from January 23, it remains to be seen whether the senior players will return to play domestic cricket as the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 is also on the horizon. India don't play any more Test cricket till their tour to England in July. Hence, the senior players will have to find a way to regain their form if they are to elongate their Test career.

India can't be Jasprit Bumrah dependent always: Gautam Gambhir after series loss

New Delhi. India coach Gautam Gambhir has claimed that India can't always be dependent on Jasprit Bumrah to get them results after their Sydney Test loss on Sunday, January 5. Bumrah wasn't in action with the ball on Day 3 of the crucial match due to a back spasm that limited his overs to just 10 in the game across both innings.

This meant that India went into defending the total of 162 without their main weapon in the ranks and Prasidh Krishna and Mohammed Siraj were forced to take up the main workload. Australia were able to nullify the threat from the Bumrah-less attack effectively and ended up winning the match by 6 wickets and claimed the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 3-1. Speaking at the post-match press conference, Gambhir claimed that it wasn't due to Bumrah's absence the team was unable to get the win. The India coach said that they still had a good side and weren't able to get the result.



"First of all, I don't want to say that, since Jasprit Bumrah wasn't there, we couldn't get the result. We had our moments, and it would have been nice if he had been there. We still had 5 bowlers and a good team that shouldn't be dependent on one individual. We didn't get the result, as simple as it gets," said Gambhir. Bumrah ended up picking 32 wickets in the series at a stunning average of 13.06. Gambhir said it was an outstanding performance from the pacer and did everything possible from his side during the series. Gambhir also claimed that Bumrah got support from the other side from Mohammed Siraj and some of the young bowlers.

Messi misses Presidential Medal ceremony with Biden

Messi is the first Argentine to receive the honor and the first male soccer player.

WASHINGTON. Lionel Messi was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the United States, by President Joe Biden on Saturday but did not attend the ceremony at the White House.

The Argentine World Cup winner and eight times Ballon d'Or winner, now plays in the United States for Major League Soccer's Inter Miami. Messi is the first Argentine to receive the honor and the first male soccer player. But while other recipients of the award, including U2 singer and activist Bono, former basketball star Earvin "Magic" Johnson and former Secretary of



State Hillary Clinton, attended the ceremony at the White House, Messi was absent. Messi's representatives said in a statement distributed by Inter Miami that Messi had a prior commitment. "The White House informed FIFA, who

informed the club at the end of December that Leo was going to be awarded with this recognition," the statement read.

"Leo, through the club, sent a letter to the White House saying that he is deeply honored and that it is a profound privilege

to receive this recognition but that due to scheduling conflicts and prior commitments he was going to be unable to attend.

"He appreciated the gesture and noted that he hopes to have the opportunity to meet in the near future," the statement added. The award is given to individuals who have made "exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values or security of the United States, world peace or other significant societal, public or private endeavors," according to the White House. The White House statement said that Messi had been given the award as "the most decorated player in the history of professional soccer. He supports healthcare and education programs for children around the world through the Leo Messi Foundation and serves as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador. Biden handed USA women's soccer star Megan Rapinoe the medal in 2022, the first time a soccer player has been given the honor.

Jasprit Bumrah rues missing out on spiciest pitch of series: Cannot fight my body

Sydney. Stand-in India captain Jasprit Bumrah updated on his injury after the conclusion of the final Test match of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Speaking at the post-match presentation ceremony, Bumrah rued missing out on the spiciest pitch of the series but said that he had to listen to his body and could not keep fighting it. The Indian fast bowler was the standout performer in the series, picking up 32 wickets at a ridiculous average of 13.02. Bumrah said that he felt some discomfort just after lunch on Day 2 of the Sydney Test and had to stop bowling and get things checked. It was reported that Bumrah had a back spasm, and the pacer did not bowl a single ball since.

"Little frustrating, sometimes you have to respect your body, you can't fight your body. So they're a little disappointing at the end that, you know, probably missed out on the spiciest wicket in the series, but yeah, that's the way it is. Sometimes you have to accept what it is and, you know, move forward," Jasprit Bumrah said after the conclusion of the series. AUS vs IND, 5th Test: Day 3 Highlights "There was a little bit of discomfort so I wanted to check it out after the first over of my second spell (Day 2)," he added. He was devastating at times, so it's no surprise to see Jasprit Bumrah named the NRMA Insurance Player of the Series. #AUSvIND pic.twitter.com/7qF1YcjD2d — cricket.com.au (@cricketcomau) January 5, 2025 In the absence of Jasprit Bumrah, India were rolled over by Australia on Day 3 of the Test match. Chasing 162 runs, the side came out with attacking intent and chased down the total in just 27 overs. With the loss in Sydney, India's decade-long domination of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy came to a grinding halt as Australia hammered the Jasprit Bumrah side.

IND vs AUS, 5th Test: Match Report

Bumrah spoke about the series and said that it was a well-fought one. The captain said that India would return home with a lot of learnings, that would help them in the future.

"So the chat was about belief. We picked up wickets in the first innings as well with a bowler short. The chat was that we have to believe we are good enough and if we create enough pressure, we'll be able to do some damage," said Bumrah. "Lots of ifs and buts. The whole series was well-fought. We were in the game today also. It was not totally one-sided... I think yeah it was a well-fought series. A lot of good learning for us and experience that our players have gained, who have come here for the first time... So I think these learnings will help us in the future," the India captain concluded.

Sunil Gavaskar upset he wasn't invited for Border-Gavaskar Trophy presentation

Sydney. Legendary Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar was not invited to present the Border-Gavaskar Trophy to the winners of the series. The India vs Australia Test series - named after the legendary duo of Sunil Gavaskar and Allan Border was won by Australia after a grueling 5-match Test series. The presentation ceremony saw Allan Border get up on the stage and hand the trophy to Pat Cummins' team. An upset Gavaskar let his thoughts known after the conclusion of the series, alleging that he was not called to present the trophy because he was Indian. Gavaskar added that it would have been nice to hand over the trophy alongside his good friend Allan Border.

"I certainly would have loved to have been there for the presentation. After all, it is the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and it is about Australia and India," Gavaskar was quoted



by Code Sports. I mean, I am here on the ground. To me, it should not matter that Australia won when it comes to the presentation. They played better cricket so

they won. That's fine. Just because I am an Indian (I did not present the trophy). I would have been happy to present the trophy with my good friend Allan Border," he added. Gavaskar however mentioned himself that the organisers told him that he was not needed for the presentation if Australia won the series and took back the BGT. Gavaskar said that he was perplexed at the decision given the series was named after him and Border.

"I was told just before the Test started that was going to be the situation. If India didn't win or draw the series I wouldn't be required... I'm not feeling sad, but I'm just feeling a little perplexed. It's the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, both of us should have been there," Gavaskar concluded.

AUS vs IND: Gautam Gambhir slams Australia's Sam Konstas 'intimidation' remark



New Delhi. India coach Gautam Gambhir has slammed Australia's remark that his side was trying to intimidate young opener Sam Konstas during the Sydney Test. Konstas, since making his debut in Melbourne, has been involved in a couple of run-ins with the visitors. The most heated moment came in Day 1 of the match at the SCG when he had an altercation with Jasprit Bumrah. Bumrah would then proceed to celebrate in front of Konstas after dismissing Usman Khawaja off the very next ball as the rest of his teammates joined in. Australia coach Andrew McDonald would comment on the matter after Day 2 and claimed that the Indian side were looking to intimidate the

youngster, which Gambhir denied. During the post-match press conference, the India coach said it is a tough sport played by tough men, and they can't be soft. Gambhir claimed that Konstas had no right to be talking to Bumrah at the moment.

"It's a tough sport played by tough men. You can't be that soft. As simple as it can get," said Gambhir.

"I don't think there was anything intimidating about it. He had no right to be talking to Jasprit Bumrah when Usman Khawaja was taking time. He had no right." "He had no business to be involved with Jasprit Bumrah, that was a job for the umpire."

Australian players have done it in the past

— India coach Gautam Gambhir has slammed suggestions from the Australia camp that his side were trying to intimidate Sam Konstas during the Sydney Test. Konstas was involved in a confrontation with Jasprit Bumrah during the match.

Gambhir would also brush aside the confrontation between Virat Kohli and Konstas in the Melbourne Test and claimed there was no need to make an issue out of it. The India coach said that the Aussie players have done the same in the past.

"I think whatever has happened is history. Whatever happened happened. It is a tough sport played by tough men and these things happen," said Gambhir.

"I don't think we need to make a big issue out of it." "It is not just incidents that have happened in this series. It has happened in the past as well. A lot of Australian players in the past have done it as well. We keep making a big deal out of these things."

NZ vs SL: Young, Henry star as New Zealand thump Sri Lanka in 1st ODI

Will Young and Matt Henry were the stars of the show as New Zealand thumped Sri Lanka by 9 wickets in the first ODI played in Wellington on Sunday, January 5. Sri Lanka were bundled out for 178 and Young's unbeaten 90 set up the chase perfectly for the hosts.

New Delhi. New Zealand dominated Sri Lanka in a commanding nine-wicket victory at the Basin Reserve, with their fast bowlers dismantling Sri Lanka's top order before a clinical batting display sealed the chase. Will Young's unbeaten 90 off 86 balls capped a comprehensive performance on a chilly, wind-swept Wellington day.

On a green-tinged pitch, New Zealand's pacers exploited the conditions to devastating effect, reducing Sri Lanka to 23 for 4 inside the powerplay. Matt Henry led the charge with a sensational spell, finishing with 4 for 19 from 10 overs. He removed Pathum Nissanka with a full, seaming delivery that induced a leading edge, while conceding just six runs in his first five overs. At the other end, Jacob Duffy added to the carnage, unsettling Kusal Mendis with a sharp bouncer that the batter inside-edged onto his stumps. Kamindu Mendis compounded Sri Lanka's woes with a reckless run-out, as Mitchell Santner's pinpoint underarm throw hit the stumps. Captain Charith Asalanka fell for a duck after being undone by Nathan Smith's short-pitched delivery, confirmed on review to have brushed his bat. By the time Janith Liyanage joined Avishka Fernando, Sri Lanka was reeling, struggling to mount a recovery. Avishka Fernando led a valiant

fightback, crafting an enterprising 50 while adding 87 for the fifth wicket with Liyanage. The pair capitalized on the reduced lateral movement, finding boundaries square of the wicket and handling the short ball effectively. However, Liyanage's dismissal for 36, mistiming a Santner delivery to deep midwicket, signaled the beginning of the end. Wanindu Hasaranga contributed a brisk 35, and Chamindu Wickramasinghe chipped in with 22, but New Zealand never relinquished control. Exceptional fielding,

led by Mark Chapman's agility at point, compounded Sri Lanka's struggles as they were bowled out for 178 in the 44th over. The target of 179 was made to look trivial by New Zealand's top three. Rachin Ravindra set the tone with a flurry of boundaries through the off-side during the powerplay, while Will Young punished anything short with authoritative pulls and hooks. The hosts raced to 70 without loss after 10 overs, capitalising on Sri Lanka's inconsistent lines. Ravindra departed for 39, trying to flick a leg-side delivery but failing to a simple catch. However, Young remained imperious, driving and pulling with confidence as he brought up his tenth ODI fifty. Mark Chapman supported him with a steady 32*, and the duo's unbroken partnership of 87 ensured a smooth finish. New Zealand reached the target with 23.4 overs to spare, underscoring their dominance with both bat and ball.

How Samantha Ruth Prabhu Is Setting The Tone For 2025

Like many around the world, actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu has also made some resolutions for 2025. In a new picture shared on her Instagram Stories, the actress is seen basking in the sun on a cold, winter day on a street sparsely covered with people. With her back facing the camera, Samantha is wearing a long coat paired with a beanie. She shared the picture with the song It's Hard to Be Humble by Mac Davis as the background score. She turned on the lyrics of the song, which is particularly garnering much attention. It says, "To know me is to love me. I must be a hell of a man. Oh Lord, It's hard to be humble, But I'm doing the best that I can." Atop the picture, Samantha wrote, "Mood for 2025!! Let's go."

Earlier, the South star gave her fans a glimpse of how she began 2025. Samantha, like many, rang in the New Year by seeking blessings at a religious place. In a picture that the actress posted, she was seen inside a church. Dressed in the same grey-coloured long coat, Samantha stood at the end of a well-lit and decorated church, with her back towards the camera. In the photo, she was seen lighting candles near a stand before praying. While the exact location of the church is not known, it was not occupied by anyone else but the actress.

Atop the photo, she wrote, "Day 1, 2025," followed by a red heart emoji.

While Samantha is on a trip at the beginning of 2025, the Citadel: Honey Bunny actress spent the last few days of 2024 being a couch potato. On December 27, she shared a series of pictures on her Instagram account, giving her fans a glimpse into her low-key Christmas celebration. She also added some snaps of various religious places and beautiful scenery.

In the caption, she wrote, "Maybe it's fine to just sit and stare. Maybe the hustle can wait for a while. Maybe all you need in a busy world is the quiet of a simple life. Maybe having no plan is part of the plan... To wander, to wonder, just because you can. Happy Holidays." Speaking of her professional front, the actress was seen in Prime Video's Citadel: Honey Bunny, co-starring Varun Dhawan, Kay Kay Menon, Saqib Saleem and others. Currently, the 37-year-old South Indian has Raj & DK's Rakt Bramhand – The Bloody Kingdom, a fantasy action series, in the pipeline.



Priyanka Chopra Sizzles In A Red Bikini, Poses With Nick Jonas And Malti As They Welcome 2025

Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas shared her goal for 2025, which is to focus on "abundance" in joy, happiness, and peace. She posted a series of pictures on Instagram with her family, including husband Nick Jonas and daughter Malti Marie. In the first image, Priyanka showed off her toned figure in an orange bikini while standing on the parapet of their luxury villa.

Another picture featured her in a red bikini, posing with Nick on the beach while Malti played in the water. Several other images captured happy moments spent with her family, including one where Priyanka sat on a jet ski and others with her daughter Malti. Check out the photos here: She wrote as the caption: "Abundance. That is my goal for 2025. In joy, in happiness and in peace. May we all find abundance this new year. So grateful for my family. Happy 2025. Thank you @airbnb for such wonderful memories."

On New Year's Eve, Priyanka shared her approach to dealing with people who "give off bad vibes." She reposted a video from empirewellbabe about handling individuals with negative energy. In the clip, a girl is

shown using a spray, with the text reading, "Me to the people who give off bad energy/vibes." Priyanka Chopra has several exciting projects lined up. She will star alongside Idris Elba and John Cena in Heads of State, an action-comedy directed by Ilya Naishuller. Priyanka will also play a 19th-century



Caribbean pirate in The Bluff, a swashbuckling drama set in the Caribbean. The film, directed by Frank E. Flowers, also stars Karl Urban, Ismael Cruz Cordova, Safia Oakley-Green, and Vedanten Naidoo. Priyanka's character, a former pirate, must protect her family when her past catches up with her. Additionally, she will return for the second season of Citadel.

Govinda's Wife Sunita Addresses His Bullet Injury: 'I Would've Shot Him In The Chest, Not Leg'



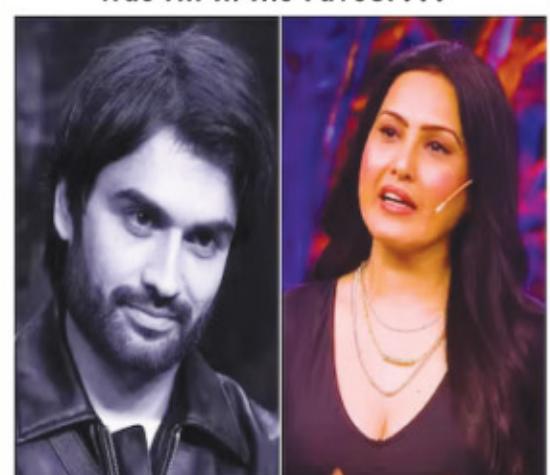
Last year, Govinda accidentally shot himself in the leg while he was cleaning his gun. The actor was rushed to the hospital and kept there for a few days. Later, Shilpa Shetty had jokingly asked the actor if Sunita had shot him. Govinda's wife, Sunita Ahuja, opened up about the injury. Speaking to Hindi Rush, Sunita joked, "Govinda ne aadhi baat boli thi. Maine Shilpa ko bola tha ki agar mai goli maarti toh pair par na maarti, seene par maarti (Govinda told a half-baked story. I told Shilpa that if I had pulled the trigger, I would've shot him in the chest, not on his foot). Kaam karoh toh poora karo, nahi toh mat karo (If you are doing something, do it well, otherwise don't do it)."

Recalling the incident, she said, "I wasn't in Mumbai, and Yash (son) was in Bangkok. I didn't tell him, but I also went to Khatu Shyam to offer prayers. The day he was shot, I was meditating in the morning. He was going to go to Kolkata for Durga Puja in the morning. My driver called suddenly, I generally don't answer calls during my meditation. However, he called twice, I think Govinda must have asked him to call me."

"My first question was, 'Isko maara kisne hai (Who shot him)?' He said, 'No, it was an accident'. I asked him not to panic and immediately rushed there. Even when I reached, I asked him, 'Tune khud hi maara hai kya? Laga bhi toh yahan par, jahan par lagna chahiye tha vahan nahi laga (Did you shoot yourself deliberately? It didn't hit you where it should have)?' He said, 'Khush toh bahut hogi tum (You must be really happy)'. Khush tab hoti jab seene mai lagta (Would have been happy if he was shot in the chest)," Sunita said.

"When he was shot, my servant, driver, and his bodyguard were present at the house. Tina was sleeping in the flat and he was at the bungalow. I called her and she rushed him to the hospital. I was continuously on call, taking regular updates," Sunita also mentioned.

Bigg Boss 18: Kamya Punjabi REACTS To Her Bashing Vivian Dsena; 'This Was All In His Favour...'



Bandish Bandits Season 2 has been one of the most talked-about shows since its release. And all eyes are on the leading lady of the show – Shreya Chaudhary. She has been soaking in all the love and appreciation coming her way. Recently the actress shared her inspiring fitness transformation story. As a young teen, Shreya struggled being overweight, often facing self-doubt. But the turning point in her life came in when she watched her idol Hrithik Roshan openly talk about his journey from struggling with injuries and weight gain to reclaiming his fitness. Shreya says, "I was always the chubby kid in the room. It felt like no matter what I did, I couldn't lose my weight enough. Maybe I wasn't motivated enough. Then came Hrithik Roshan and as a fan girl, his fitness journey has been truly inspiring. He spoke openly about his struggles and how he overcame them and I couldn't be more inspired to win one day at a time. I also wanted to take control of my own fitness." Shreya also shared some inspiring photos of her transformation on her social media and captioned it as, "Story time – I love every version of me, every single one reflects what I was going through mentally. No regrets. No looking back. I have wised up and toughened up too. I did want to be fit though. Not for any other reason to begin with but just health. I was going through some stress and I was constantly advised to be active, and take care of my fitness and health.. I remember reading an article of @hrithikroshan (my forever crush) about being fit and how he handled his ups and downs. I have been one of Hrithik's biggest fans since I was a child and that article changed my life. In hindsight I think I owe my fitness journey to him. So, here it is... an appreciation post for my cinematic idol who inspired me to take care of myself, to make my health a priority. You inspire millions including me."

She added, "Taking care of my health helped me pursue a passion that I always had... acting.. so, here I'm.. punching through the good days and the bad days and keeping my eyes on the prize.. Thank you everyone for the love and the motivation.. ?? Here's to fitter 2025!!!"