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ISRO again postpones ambitious space docking experiment: 'Satellites safe'

New Delhi, Jan 08: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Wednesday again postponed its ambitious space docking experiment using two satellites in orbit.

Earlier, it was postponed from January 7 to January 9. "While making a maneuver to reach 225 m between satellites the drift was found to be more than expected, post non-visibility period," ISRO wrote in an update on X.

experiment using two satellites in orbit. If the ISRO succeeds in its mission, India will become the fourth country in the world to have space docking technology. ISRO had launched the two satellites - SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target) - as part of the mission on December 30 with the help of PSLV C60 rocket from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

two satellites in orbit. The event was scheduled for the morning of January 9. Earlier, it was postponed from January 7 to January 9.

PM Modi launches projects worth over 2 lakh crore in Visakhapatnam

New Delhi, Jan 08: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday led a mega roadshow in Andhra Pradesh's Visakhapatnam. He also laid the foundation stone and launched projects worth ₹2 lakh crore in the city.

realised, then only Andhra will develop, and India will become a developed nation. Therefore, Andhra's development is our vision and it is our commitment



Andhra @ 2047... In this, the NDA-led central govt is walking shoulder-to-shoulder with the Andhra Pradesh govt. "Visakhapatnam will be among the few cities in the world where large-scale green hydrogen production facilities will be established.

Local court to hear Jama Masjid-Harihar temple case on March 5

Lucknow, Jan 08: Sambhal mosque row: A local court in Sambhal has fixed March 5 as the next hearing date in a case related to the Mughal-era Shahi Jama Masjid and its survey.

Delhi court defers judgment on case linked to 1984 riots

New Delhi, Jan 08: A Delhi court is likely to deliver on January 21 its verdict in a 1984 anti-Sikh riots murder case against former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar.

Commenting on woman's body structure amounts to sexual harassment

New Delhi, Jan. 08: The Kerala High Court has held that a comment on a woman's "body structure" is a sexually coloured remark which would constitute penal offence of sexual harassment.

Arvind Kejriwal announces TMC's support for AAP in Delhi election

New Delhi, Jan 08: Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday announced that the Trinamool Congress (TMC) has extended its support to his party for the upcoming Delhi assembly elections.

U have always supported and blessed us in our good and bad times," he said in a post on X.



delhi residents will defeat the saffron party in the upcoming assembly elections. "We hope that the AAP government comes back there and BJP is defeated. The people of Delhi will defeat the BJP!" he said.

Diaspora important pathway to India's global rise: Jaishankar

Bhubaneswar, Jan 08: External affairs minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday said the country has started its journey of Vikashit Bharat with the younger generations shaping significant global changes.

Indians (NRIs) from 50 countries have assembled in Bhubaneswar for the Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas 2025. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the event on Thursday.

of 90,000 startups and over 100 unicorns. "While development itself is a very complex task, it becomes easier when we are confident that nothing is beyond us.

welcomes the visits of person of Indian origin (PIO) journalists to India. "Let me take the opportunity to urge you on behalf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to promote India as a tourism destination.

Akhilesh alleges BJP role in Sambhal violence, calls it a government plot

Lucknow, Jan. 08: Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday unleashed a sharp critique of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), accusing the ruling party of engineering the recent violence in Sambhal as part of a "government conspiracy."

ed. Leader of Opposition Mata Prasad Pandey bolstered Yadav's claims while presenting a report on the incident. He alleged that the mosque survey team included BJP members and accused the police of using excessive force.



fired bullets, escalating tensions and disrupting peace," Pandey said. The violence broke out on November 24 when a team from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) arrived

at the Shahi Jama Masjid. The SP has alleged that the survey, conducted despite legal constraints, was part of a broader scheme to ignite communal unrest.

ED raids in BBMP an outcome of squabbling in BJP: Deputy CM Shivakumar

New Delhi, Jan. 08: Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Wednesday said the ED raids in the 'Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike' was an outcome of infighting in the BJP.



the offices of Engineer-in-Chief B S Prahlad and other engineers in the BBMP in connection with the borewells and Reverse Osmosis plants in the areas where Cauvery water connection has not been provided.

Bureau. The ACB later referred the case to the ED. "It's an internal fight in the BJP. A BJP leader had given a complaint against his own party MLAs because he was denied a ticket (to contest assembly election)."



## NEWS BOX

## HYDRAA gets first dedicated police station

**HYDERABAD.** The Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) now has its own police station to address cases of land grabbing, encroachments, public property damage, defacement and other asset protection matters within its jurisdiction, which spans the ORR limits. An officer of Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) rank will serve as the Station House



Officer, with cases registered upon instructions from the HYDRAA Commissioner. The state government issued orders on Tuesday for the creation of the HYDRAA Police Station at B-Block, Buddha Bhavan, Secunderabad. This station, sanctioned via GOMs No108 dated September 25, 2024, will operate within the Commissionerate's territorial limits, with personnel adjusted on a deputation basis. The notification, citing provisions from the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, officially declared the establishment of the station to streamline the filing and processing of HYDRAA-related cases. HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath emphasized that this dedicated station would enhance efficiency, addressing delays caused by the burden.

## UCO Bank inaugurates new branch in Hyderabad

**HYDERABAD.** On the occasion of its 83rd Foundation Day, the premier public sector bank UCO opened a new branch at Suncity-Bandlaguda Jagir, Hyderabad, on Monday. The branch was inaugurated by M Nagaraju, Secretary, Ministry of Finance, in the presence of Aswani Kumar, MD & CEO of UCO Bank, and N Srikanth, Zonal Manager of the Hyderabad zone. Speaking on the occasion, Srikanth said that this is the 91st



branch in the Hyderabad zone. The zonal manager mentioned that, on the occasion of the bank's foundation day, as part of its corporate social responsibility, the bank donated food items and wireless mic system equipment to Zilla Parishad High School in Hydershakota village. Health check-ups and blood donation camps were organised, and many customers, students, and staff participated, he added.

## VMC launches garbage loader points

**VIJAYAWADA.** The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) has launched a pilot project to enhance sanitation and ensure a healthier environment by introducing garbage loader points in high-waste zones like vegetable markets and residential areas. The initiative was unveiled on Tuesday by VMC Commissioner Dhyanchandra HM during an inspection of the first loader centre on Sambamurthy Road, a busy area near Rythu Bazaar. Under the project, open loader bins have been relocated to specially constructed sheds in designated locations. This measure aims to eliminate the unsightly and unsanitary conditions caused by waste accumulation in open spaces. Dhyanchandra explained that the enclosed bins would prevent open dumping, with waste collection vehicles directly accessing them for timely removal. If the project succeeds, similar facilities will be set up across all city circles. During his visit, the VMC Commissioner also inspected the cattle shed near the Excel Plant, designed to manage stray cattle. He directed Veterinary Assistant Surgeon Dr B Somasekhara Reddy to enforce regulations by relocating stray cattle and penalising negligent owners. He reviewed the performance of hook loader vehicles to improve waste collection efficiency and emphasised daily segregation of dry waste at the Material Recovery Facility (MRF). He also visited the garbage transfer station, where he inspected toilets built for drivers and stressed their proper maintenance under the Swachh Survekshan initiative. Officials present during the inspections included Additional Commissioner (Projects) Dr D Chandrasekhar, Superintending Engineer (Projects) P Satyakumari, Medical Health Officer Dr Suresh Babu.

## Chennai Book Fair: A journey through legacy, politics, and cinema

**CHENNAI.** If you grew up in Chennai, chances are the Chennai Book Fair was one of your earliest glimpses into a world brimming with stories. Maybe it was those class trips where you pooled pocket money to buy a new book or the annual family outing where someone would inevitably negotiate for an extra bag to carry the haul. For me, it was my granddaddy who used to take me, and I'd excitedly grab whatever caught my eye — often a book that seemed cool at the time, like a shiny new Tintin comic. Walking through the fair now, I can't help but feel that same rush of excitement, almost as if I'm back to those simple moments of discovery.

The atmosphere in the halls may have evolved over the years, but the fair still holds onto that same delightful chaos. Stalls fill every corner, offering something for every taste — from adventurous escapes to books that ignite curiosity. In the midst of it all, a child's voice rises, filled with excitement, as he tugs at his mother, begging, "Amma, idhu mattum vaangitha ma!" pointing to the latest Geronimo Stilton book. These little moments capture the essence of the fair, which, this year, showcased three particular stalls that stand out. The first stop was Kavitha Publications, a stall that instantly felt like it belonged in the fair, bridging old traditions with fresh narratives. C Kavitha, the managing director, explains the legacy of her company, started by her father, S



Chockalingam, who transitioned from printing media to publishing. "We've been in this for over 30 years, since my father started the company. His first book was about MGR, and we've grown ever since," Kavitha shares with a smile. The company offers a mix of modern releases alongside classic titles from Tamil literature, like works by Jayakanthan and Vaasanthi, as well as unique cultural treasures like books on Ilaiyaraaja's music. She adds, "We even bring ancient works to the fair. Whatever we have, we make sure to showcase it. If there's a title that runs out of stock, we reprint specifically for fairs like these." With a stock of about 100 titles, the fair always sees a new batch of books from Kavitha Publications — a sign of the company's commitment to nurturing Tamil literature, both ancient and contemporary. Kavitha notes that "since the pandemic, we've only seen about 50 new titles, but this year it's picking up again."

Not too far down the aisle, People's Publishing House has its own draw. An entirely different world, yet just as captivating. Established in 1947, PPH's political and intellectual focus couldn't be more timely, and yet, it's been around long before today's discussions on democracy and left-wing politics came into vogue. Rajan PK, an editor at the stall, explains, "We've been serving left publications long before independence, providing books in major Indian languages and now here, in Tamil. We're popular among young people — IT professionals, those studying for UPSC exams. We offer books like Outsider in the White House by Bernie Sanders and others on topics ranging from economics to philosophy."

Despite only being in their second year at the book fair, Rajan highlights that they were already surpassing sales from last year. "We broke even in the first six days this time, which is fantastic. We cater to all kinds of readers, from casual ones interested in Indian and European philosophy to those wanting to understand political science and economics in a democratic context." The stall offers a wide spectrum of left-wing and democratic literature — essential reading not just for academics but also for anyone interested in engaging deeply with the current social and political climate.

## This LP school farm yields fresh food for thought

**KOCHI.** After class hours, Mercy N George and her students at Government LP School, Neerampuzha, head to the plot of land near the school premises. The children make their way through rows of tomatoes, spinach, pumpkins, ash gourd, cabbage, mangoes, guavas, rambutans, and more. Come harvest time, the little ones here carry baskets and handpick the best yield from the lot. This initiative isn't part of the curriculum. This small school, with just 62 students, has set a healthy example, cultivating fresh produce under the guidance of Mercy and members of the PTA. The 25-cent farm is home to a variety of fruits and vegetables, including noni plants, plantains, jackfruit, and nutmeg, achieving a level of self-sufficiency. The idea of starting a pesticide-free farm near the school wasn't just about the 'go-organic' trend — it arose from a deeper need. The green drive started when the school spearheaded the revival of a two-acre paddy field nearby with support from Krishi Bhavan.



While the locals eventually took over the effort and continue it to this day, the panchayat recognised the school's efforts by declaring it a 'Haritha Vidyalayam' (Green School). The vegetable farm was born as a solution to a pressing concern: better nutrition for the children. "As part of the government's mid-day meal scheme, the funds we received were never enough to provide the children with nutritious food," says Mercy, who has been teaching at the

school since 2020. "We realised the meals were missing vital nutrients. Instead of just complaining about what we lacked, we decided to take action. We came together to start something of our own — an initiative that would directly benefit the well-being of our students. Now, we are so self-sufficient that we only source potatoes, curry powder, and lentils from outside to make sambar."

Mercy credits the faculty and PTA members who have been steadfast in their support to the idea of farming. "Krishi Bhavan helps us with the basics, such as essential agricultural supplies. I simply guided the process to where it stands today — it's truly a collective effort," she smiles. Mercy can often be seen delivering dried and powdered cow dung, along with other manure, on her Activa scooter to the school. Coming from a family deeply involved in farming, the 53-year-old says she felt strongly about providing children with clean, nutritious food.

## Admissions open for Class VIII at Rashtriya Indian Military College

**VIJAYAWADA.** The Rashtriya Indian Military College (RIMC), Dehradun, invites applications from eligible boys and girls for admission to Class VIII for the January 2026 term. The entrance examination will be held on June 1, 2025 (Sunday), at designated centres across State, with Vijayawada serving as the examination centre for Andhra Pradesh. Applicants must be aged between 11½ and 13 years as of January 1, 2026. Their date of birth should be between January 2, 2013, and July 1, 2014, and should either be studying in Class VII or have passed it from a recognised school by the time of admission. The written exam consists of the following subjects including Mathematics from 9.30-11.00 am, General Knowledge from 12.00-1.00 pm and English from 2.30-4.30 pm. Candidates who qualify in the written examination will proceed to a viva-voce,



followed by a mandatory medical examination. The Prospectus-cum-Application Form and old question paper booklet can be obtained by either Online Payment by Paying Rs 600 (General) or Rs 555 (SC/ST) through the RIMC website <http://www.rimc.gov.in>. Submit a written request with a demand draft of Rs 600 (General) or Rs 555 (SC/ST) and a caste certificate (if applicable).

## Thumbi Magazine: A bilingual journey of imagination and storytelling for young readers

**CHENNAI.** Under a canopy of starlight, Twoo Twit, a curious little owl, bids farewell to its mother, who lovingly packs rosehip sandwiches for night school. But school is far from Twoo Twit's mind. As the moonlight casts a magical glow over the fields, Twoo Twit sets out on nocturnal adventures — romping through hay bales, floating Pooosticks down a gentle brook, and embracing the mysteries of the night. Eventually, we find the mischievous owl back at school, ready for lessons with stories to tell. Much like Twoo Twit's whimsical escapades, Thumbi magazine invites young readers into a world where imagination soars and language bridges people. Unlike many contemporary children's publications, Thumbi carves its niche with an innovative bilingual format — text in both Tamil and English — creating a shared space for diverse readers. "For Tamil-speaking children, it is their language. For others, it offers a door into a new linguistic world," says Arun Kumar, staff-in-charge of the magazine stall at the Chennai Book Fair.

Launched in Thiruvannamalai by Sivaraj with a vision for something truly child-centric, Thumbi began as an alternative



to the screens dominating young lives. Arun says, "There is plenty of visual media for children, but hardly anything tactile or readable that sparks the imagination like a children's magazine in regional language. We wanted to create something rich in storytelling and imagery." The editorial team's focus on nature, love, and wonder guides content planning to illustration.

It has been almost eight years since the inception of the magazine and the team notes that the response from children and parents has been heartwarming. By

involving young readers in the creative process — whether through artwork submissions or writing prompts — they foster a personal connection with its audience. When asked about selecting stories and poems, Arun explains, "We prioritise narratives that nurture empathy, curiosity, and a connection to nature."

We look for tales that tell a message. There will also be something for the parents to read and take in. "Since the inception, the team had been participating in the city's book fair.

## Vibrant energy fills House as third Legislature International Book Fair kicks off

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.** A fruitful week lies ahead for bookworms in the city as Newly-released books, including those launched earlier this week, have been stocked across various stalls, ensuring a fresh selection for visitors throughout the fair. "It's a great chance to visit the legislative assembly and shop for books," said Devika K and Rohini R S, who are preparing for competitive exams. Renuka Suresh, a fashion designer, chimed in, "The week-long format is perfect. It allows us to visit more than once and fully enjoy the experience." The book fair promises an enriching blend of literature, culture, and accessibility, continuing to draw avid readers and curious

visitors alike. The 3rd Kerala Legislature International Book Fair kicked off on Tuesday. An enthusiastic crowd made a beeline for the assembly, the fair venue, creating a vibrant atmosphere filled with youthful energy.

Featuring over 50 stalls from renowned Indian publishers, including DC Books, Mathrubhumi Books, Penguin Books, and HarperCollins, the week-long fair is expected to see significant footfall. Special offers like daily lucky draw where winners receive gift vouchers worth Rs 500, which they can redeem on book purchases, add to the attraction. The fair is not just about buying books, but also offers a dynamic



platform for literary engagement. Visitors can enjoy talk shows, interactive sessions, book releases, and "Meet the Author" events. Live book signings by authors have added a special touch, with celebrated writers M Mukundan and Benyamin gracing

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News box

Woman dies as shop goes up in flames, husband escapes

A fire that broke out at a garments store in Chhijarsi claimed the life of a 35-year-old woman early on Tuesday morning while her husband managed to escape unharmed. KS Cloth House and Ready-made Garments went up in flames around 3.40am. Fire department officials said they received a call at 3.47am and dispatched four fire tenders to the spot. The shop owner, Rohit Sharma, and his wife Vinita were sleeping on the ground floor when they noticed sparks from a suspected short circuit on the first floor, which served as their storage area. When they went upstairs to find out what had happened, a few bundles of cloth had already been engulfed by flames by then. The fire spread quickly through the inflammable material and trapped both of them. While Sharma managed to rush out of the building, Vinita was unable to make it. "Sharma lived about 300 metres from the shop with his family, but routinely slept inside his store to prevent theft. This was their usual practice — closing the shop at 10pm, going home for dinner, and returning around midnight to sleep there," said an officer from Sector 63 police station. The fire fighters found Vinita unconscious and rushed her to a nearby hospital, where she was declared dead on arrival. It took about an hour for the fire department team and cops to douse the flames. The couple, who married in 2008, lived in Chhijarsi with their two children and extended family members. The body was released to her family members after an autopsy. Police officials said they had launched an investigation to determine the exact cause of the fire and assess any potential safety violations on the premises.

Arunachal gov urges IPR dept to highlight dvpt, tourism

Itanagar. Arunachal Pradesh governor KT Parnaik on Tuesday advised the officers of the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) to explore new ways to contribute towards the PM's vision of inclusive development in the state. Interacting with the officers at Raj Bhavan, the governor dwelt at length on the areas where considerable progress has been made, including infrastructure, telecommunication, horticulture and tourism. "The developmental stories will create a positive environment and facilitate investments from outside, which will bring prosperity and progress in the state," he said. Parnaik, while talking about his meetings with lakshpati didis, urged the officers to focus on success stories of individuals who have benefited from govt programmes and schemes. It will encourage eligible beneficiaries, particularly the youth and entrepreneurs, to avail benefits from the welfare schemes and programmes of the state and central govt, he said. "With innovation and AI, presentations can attract people's attention to visit Arunachal," Parnaik said. Terming the IPR department as the 'fourth pillar' of the state govt, the governor asked the officers to highlight the issues and responsibilities of the authorities and other departments through appropriate means.

RWA body meets CM, seeks degree college, trauma centre in city

Noida. A delegation of the Federation of Noida Residents Welfare Associations (FONRWA) met the CM at his residence in Lucknow on Monday and submitted a petition seeking the establishment of a trauma centre, an AIIMS-like super speciality hospital, a new degree college and affordable housing for economically weaker sections in Noida. FONRWA president Yogendra Sharma said in case of health emergencies in the city—which houses about 10 lakh people—patients are sometimes referred to hospitals in Delhi and other cities because there aren't enough super speciality hospitals and trauma centres here. KK Jain, secretary general of FONRWA, further raised the demand for a hospital similar to AIIMS. "The city needs a hospital like AIIMS, which provides

Centre questions plan to run three rail systems on 1 track linking Ghaziabad, airport

Noida. The Centre has sent back for revision a detailed project report for the proposed rapid rail corridor connecting Ghaziabad with Noida international airport, raising technical concerns. The project — estimated to cost Rs 20,637 crore — involves a 72.4km elevated corridor providing seamless connectivity between the two points via Greater Noida, with 22 stations proposed along the route. With the Centre now pointing out gaps in the project's design, UP govt has asked the Noida, Greater Noida and Yamuna Expressway authorities and the NCR Planning Board to look into the objections. Sources said the Planning Board would soon convene a meeting of stakeholders to discuss the route alignment and design of stations and incorporate any suggestions made by them. According to officials, a primary concern raised by the central government questions the feasibility of

Centre had specifically objected to the simultaneous operation of semi-high-speed and slow-speed trains on shared tracks. Consequently, the earlier plan to include light rail transit (LRT) could be abandoned, limiting the operations to metro and rapid rail services only, the sources said. The original DPR — submitted in July 2024 — proposed a dual-purpose corridor combining metro and Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) services, with the scope for expansion in the future. The plan included 22 stations, with 11 designated for both metro and RRTS services and 11 exclusively for metro operations. The proposal also identified 13 potential areas where stations could be developed in the future. The corridor incorporated 10km of the Aqua Line metro extension between Char Murti Chowk and Knowledge Park



taxi plan was eventually shelved. In Sept last year, the YEIDA board approved a 14km light rail system connecting the airport with Film City, intended to integrate with the rapid rail route.

every 3.5 minutes, rapid rail after 7 minutes, and light rail every 8 minutes. The state govt approved this comprehensive plan and forwarded it to the Union ministry of housing and urban affairs, which has now raised questions on the concept of unified tracks for different rail services. Initially planned in two phases — 39.4 km from Ghaziabad to Ecotech VI, and 32.9 km from Ecotech VI to Jewar — the rapid rail project will now proceed as a single, unified construction. Officials insisted that addressing the Centre's concerns was crucial for obtaining

Papers not in order, cops seal 192 hotels, lodges in Ghaziabad

Ghaziabad. Police inspected around 400 hotels across the district and found at least 192 were operating without the required documents. A team led by DCP City Rajesh Kumar inspected 122 hotels and lodges on Tuesday and sealed 56 that were not in compliance with regulations. In the rural areas, police teams led inspected 108 hotels, sealing 54 hotels and lodges that lacked proper registration. In the trans-Hindon region, 160 hotels were inspected. Of these 82 were sealed. The inspections followed several complaints regarding illegal hotels operating in the region, some of which have been linked to criminal activities. "We have sealed all these illegal hotels and investigations are underway for further action. In the investiga-

tion, we found that most hotels were partners of a well-known hospitality chain," said Ajay Kumar Mishra, commissioner of police. Mishra said, "From July to Dec 30, 13 sex racketeers were busted in the city, leading to the arrest of 48 people. The number shows how these unregistered hotels are being mis-

used." Nimish Patil, DCP of Trans-Hindon, said that many hotels were operating without registration under the SARAI's Act of 1867, which regulates lodging establishments. Some were also operating in residential areas where commercial activities are not permitted. "We are checking whether

the hospitality chain is verifying all the documents of the hotels it partners with. If not, we will issue notices or ask for further clarification," he said.

Multiple small notices including NAME CHANGE, PUBLIC NOTICE, and NAME CHANGE. Example: NAME CHANGE: I, Hari Narayan S/o. Babu Lal R/O. H.No.94, Pocket-1, Paschim Puri, Paschim Vihar Delhi-110063 have changed my name to Hari Narain.

Multiple small notices including NAME CHANGE, PUBLIC NOTICE, and NAME CHANGE. Example: NAME CHANGE: I, NAVEEN KUMAR KANOJIA D/O Mohan Lal R/O 154/10, DDA Flats Medanagar Ambedkar Nagar, Delhi-110062 Have Changed my name to Navin Kumar for all future purposes.

Multiple small notices including NAME CHANGE, PUBLIC NOTICE, and NAME CHANGE. Example: NAME CHANGE: I, SANJOGATA DEVI Mother of No.15822367, Rank-LINK, Name-NITIN PANWAR residing at VILL-INDRAWALI KALYANPUR, PO-JANDKHERA, TEHSIL-RAMPUR, MANIHARAN, DISTT-SAHARANPUR, UP-247451 have changed my name from SANJOGATA DEVI to SANJOGITA for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 08/01/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

Multiple small notices including NAME CHANGE, PUBLIC NOTICE, and NAME CHANGE. Example: NAME CHANGE: I, KALPANA KUMARY W/o Sajeet Kumar R/o B1003, The View, Ramprastha City, Sector-37D, Garoli Khurd(106) Gurgaon, Haryana-122006, Have Changed My Name To Kalpna Singh for All Future Purpose.

Public notices and notices including PUBLIC NOTICE, NOTICE, and NAME & Date of Birth Changed. Example: PUBLIC NOTICE: BE IT KNOWN THAT MY CLIENTS SMT SUKHRA MISHRA W/O LATE SH. MOHAN MISHRA R/O H.NO. 728, GALI NO. 11, BLOCK 1-2, SANGAM VIHAR NEW DELHI - 110080, WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT HAS WITHDRAWN AND CANCELLED PREVIOUS PUBLIC NOTICE CIRCULATED IN "VEER ARJUN & ANOTHER NEWS PAPER ON 18.08.2017 AND THE SAME BEING DEEMED CANCELLED REGARDING DISOWNING/REVERTING OF THEIR SON, SMT SUKHRA AND HIS WIFE SMT PREETI, DUE TO SOME FAMILY DISPUTE MY CLIENTS DISOWNED THEIR SON AMIT MISHRA AND HIS WIFE SMT PREETI BUT NOW THE FAMILY DISPUTE HAS BEEN RESOLVED AND MY CLIENTS SMT SUKHRA HAS EQUAL RIGHTS IN ALL MOVABLE AND IMMOVABLE AND OTHER ASSETS OF MY CLIENTS.

INDIAN RAILWAYS GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAILWAY BOARD) No. 2025/RS(WTA)-149/Tender/555 New Delhi, dated 08.01.2025 Sub: E-Indigenous Tender No.WTA-555 opening on 10.02.2025 for procurement of 10 nos. of Desktop Simulators for 3-Phase Electric Locomotives.



## NEWS BOX

## All hell will break out if hostages in Gaza are not freed: Trump warns Hamas

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump has warned that all hell will break out in the Middle East if the hostages being held by Hamas are not released by Inauguration Day, repeating the threat four times. Trump did not elaborate on what actions he might take if the captives are not released by the time he takes office. Officials say about 100 hostages, including some Americans, who were seized on October 7, 2023, remain captive in Gaza, though they believe many of them may have died in captivity.

All hell will break out. If those hostages aren't back, I don't want to hurt your negotiation, if they're not back by the time I get into office, all hell will break out in the Middle East, Trump told reporters at a news conference in Mar-a-Lago, Florida. Trump will be sworn in on January 20 as the 47th President of the United States.

He was responding to a question on the status of negotiations with Hamas on the release of American hostages. His Special Envoy to the Middle East Steven Charles Witkoff, who has just returned from the region, told reporters that they are on the verge of it.

I believe we've been on the verge of it. I don't want to discuss sort of what's delayed it, no point in being negative in any way. But I think it's the president, his stature, what he's said he expects, the red lines he's put out there, that's driving this negotiation, Witkoff said.

Noting that they are making a lot of progress, he said: I don't want to say too much because I think they're doing a really good job back in Doha.

I'm leaving tomorrow to go back to Doha. But I think that we've had some really great progress and I'm really hopeful that by the inauguration we'll have some good things to announce on behalf of the president. I actually believe that we're working in tandem in a really good way, but it's the president, his reputation, the things that he has said that are driving this negotiation. So hopefully it'll all work out and we'll save some lives, Witkoff said. Negotiations between Hamas and Israel are ongoing in Qatar, with Hamas this week naming 34 hostages in Gaza including two dual US citizens it would be willing to release in a ceasefire deal, the National Public Radio reported. Trump, in response to a question, warned Hamas to release all the hostages by January 20.

## A seaplane crashes off an Australian tourist island, killing 3 and injuring 3 others

MELBOURNE, Australia: A seaplane crashed during takeoff from an Australian tourist island, killing three people including Swiss and Danish tourists and injuring three others. Only one of the seven people aboard the Cessna 208 Caravan was rescued without injury after the crash Tuesday afternoon on Rottnest Island, police said. The plane owned by Swan River Seaplanes was returning to its base in Perth, the Western Australia state capital 30 kilometers (19 miles) east of Rottnest Island, which is also known by its Indigenous name Wadjemup.

The dead were a 65-year-old Swiss woman, a 60-year-old man from Denmark and the 34-year-old male pilot from Perth, Western Australian Premier Roger Cook said. The dead tourists' partners, a 63-year-old Swiss man and a 58-year-old Danish woman, survived. A Western Australian couple, a woman aged 65 and a 63-year-old man, also survived.

It is not clear which passenger was uninjured. Western Australian Police Commissioner Col Blanch said no survivor sustained life-threatening injuries. The three injured people were flown to a Perth hospital.

Cook said the cause of the crash was not yet known. Reports that the plane had struck a rock at the entrance of a bay on the west side of the island could not be confirmed from video viewed so far, Cook said.

Rottnest Island is renowned for its sandy beaches and cat-sized hopping marsupials called quokkas which are rare on the Australian mainland. The island's tourist accommodation is fully booked during the current Southern Hemisphere summer months. "Every Western Australian knows that Rottnest is our premier tourism destination," Cook told reporters. "For something so tragic to happen in front of so many people, at a place that provides so much joy, especially at this time of the year, is deeply upsetting," Cook added. Blanch said police divers had recovered the bodies on Tuesday night from a depth of 8 meters (26 feet). Wreckage of the plane was still being recovered.

## Man who exploded Tesla Cybertruck outside Trump hotel in Las Vegas used generative AI, police say

World The highly decorated soldier who exploded a Tesla Cybertruck outside the Trump hotel in Las Vegas used generative AI including ChatGPT to help plan the attack, Las Vegas police said Tuesday. Nearly a week after 37-year-old Matthew Livelsberger fatally shot himself, officials said according to writings, he didn't intend to kill anyone else. An investigation of Livelsberger's searches through ChatGPT indicate he was looking for information on explosive targets, the speed at which certain rounds of ammunition would travel and whether fireworks were legal in Arizona.

Kevin McMahill, sheriff of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, called the use of generative AI a "game-changer" and said the department was sharing information with other law enforcement agencies. "This is the first incident that I'm aware of on U.S. soil where ChatGPT is utilized to help an individual build a particular device," he said. "It's a concerning moment." In an emailed statement, OpenAI said it was committed to seeing its tools used "responsibly" and that they're designed to refuse harmful instructions. "In this case, ChatGPT responded with information already publicly available on the internet and provided warnings against harmful or illegal activities. We're working with law enforcement to support their investigation," the emailed statement said.

## Fast-moving wildfires rage across Los Angeles, destroying homes and prompting widespread evacuations

LOS ANGELES. A fast-moving wildfire broke out Tuesday in the inland foothills northeast of Los Angeles, just hours after another blaze tore through the city's Pacific Palisades neighborhood along the coast, destroying many homes and prompting evacuation orders for tens of thousands.

The Eaton fire in Altadena started near a nature preserve just before 6:30 p.m. The flames spread so rapidly that staff at a senior care center had to push dozens of residents in wheelchairs and hospital beds down the street to a parking lot, where they waited in their bedclothes for ambulances and other vehicles to take them to safety.

To the west, the Pacific Palisades fire that started Tuesday morning burned out of control into the night. The Los Angeles Fire Department issued a plea for off-duty firefighters to help fight the flames, which were being pushed by winds topping 60 mph (97 kph) in some places and creating chaotic scenes as residents fled. It was too windy for firefighting aircraft to fly, hampering the efforts. The Pacific Palisades fire swept through a Los Angeles hillside dotted with celebrity residences

Tuesday, burning homes and prompting evacuation orders. In the frantic rush to get to safety, roadways became clogged, and many people abandoned their vehicles and fled on foot, some toting suitcases. A resident of a senior center is evacuated as the Eaton Fire approaches Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025 in Altadena, Calif. The traffic jam on Palisades Drive prevented emergency vehicles from getting through. A bulldozer was brought in to push abandoned cars to the side and create a path, according to the LA Fire Department. California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who was in Southern California to attend the naming of a national monument by President Joe Biden, made a detour to the canyon to see "firsthand the impact of these swirling winds and embers." He said he found "not a few many structures already destroyed." Officials did not give an exact number of structures damaged or destroyed in the Pacific Palisades wildfire, but they said about 30,000 residents were under evacuation orders, and more than 13,000 structures were at risk. The worst could still be ahead. The blaze began around 10:30 a.m., shortly after the start of



a Santa Ana windstorm that the National Weather Service warned could be "life-threatening" and the strongest to hit Southern California in more than a decade. The exact cause of the fire was unknown, and no injuries had been reported, officials said. Firefighters hose down flames as the Palisades Fire destroys a residence in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles, Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025. Firefighters hose down flames as the Palisades Fire destroys a residence in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles, Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025. Photo | AP Advertisement Only about 25 miles (about 40 kilometers) northeast in Altadena, the Eaton fire was

burning. The winds were expected to increase overnight and continue for days, producing isolated gusts that could top 100 mph (160 kph) in mountains and foothills including areas that haven't seen substantial rain in months. "By no stretch of the imagination are we out of the woods," Newsom warned residents, saying the worst of the winds were expected between 10 p.m. Tuesday and 5 a.m. Wednesday. He declared a state of emergency on Tuesday.

As of Tuesday evening, 28,300 households were without power due to the strong winds, according to the mayor's office. About 15,000 utility customers in Southern California had their power shut off to reduce the risk of equipment sparking a blaze. A half a million customers were at risk of losing power preemptively. The Pacific Palisades fire quickly consumed about 4.6 square miles (11.6 square kilometers) of land in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood in western Los Angeles, sending up a dramatic plume of smoke visible across the city. Residents in Venice Beach, some 6 miles (10 kilometers) away, reported seeing the flames.

## Grief and nostalgia in India's 'Jimmy Carter village'

NEW DELHI. In a quiet village tucked in the shadow of India's capital, the late US president Jimmy Carter's name is etched for posterity.

Carterpuri, or the "village of Carter" was abruptly renamed from Daulatpur Nasirabad after an hour-long visit by the Nobel laureate in 1978.

The renaming was suggested by India's then-prime minister Morarji Desai who accompanied Carter on the visit to the small hamlet, some 30 kilometers (20 miles) from New Delhi. "When the proposal was mooted, all the village elders immediately said yes," recalled 71-year-old resident Atar Singh, who vividly remembers the January afternoon from nearly half a century ago. One of the last surviving members from the generation old enough to remember the occasion, Singh said he was "distressed" by Carter's death last month, and played a key role in staging a small tribute ceremony.

A picture of the former president was quickly downloaded from the internet, framed, garlanded and placed at a local war memorial where a group of village elders made offerings of salty porridge



and a newly stitched traditional turban. Singh said the porridge and the turban, along with a condolence message, were then shipped to the US Embassy.

"The entire village grieved because we considered him as one of our own," said Rajiv Kumar, a younger resident who was a toddler when Carter visited.

The body of Carter, who died at the age of 100 last month, is currently lying in state in Washington and will be buried Thursday in his home state of Georgia.

"Such a big man" - Carter's visit to the village, then home to less than 500 people, was not by chance. He was driven by a deeply personal mission: his mother Lillian

had worked in the village as a Peace Corps volunteer in the late 1960s.

The dilapidated mansion where Lillian stayed during her time there no longer exists. It was torn down around 15 years ago to make way for a concrete two-storey structure with a line of tiny shops on its ground floor. Little else from that era survives in Carterpuri, which now has a population of roughly 5,000. The village council office where Carter and his wife Eleanor Rosalynn Carter were feted while bedecked in traditional headgear, is now a community health centre.

Nonetheless, Carter's visit remains firmly imprinted in the memory of Carterpuri's old-timers. "I was a little boy then but I remember everything," said 62-year-old Motiram, who goes by one name. His recollections include Carter smoking tobacco from a hookah and waving at the eager children who looked from the rooftops as he took a tour of the village. But Motiram's nostalgia is tinged with disillusionment. "Despite such a lofty name, our village has seen no progress in all these years," he said.

## Biden administration asks court to block plea deal for alleged mastermind of 9/11 attacks

WASHINGTON. The Biden administration asked a federal appeals court on Tuesday to block a plea agreement for accused 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed that would spare him the risk of the death penalty in one of the deadliest attacks ever on the United States.

The Justice Department argued in a brief filed with a federal appeals court in the District of Columbia that the government would be irreparably harmed if the guilty pleas were accepted for Mohammed and two co-defendants in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. It said the government would be denied a chance for a public trial and the opportunity to "seek capital punishment against three men charged with a heinous act of mass murder that caused the death of thousands of people and shocked the nation and the world."

The Defense Department negotiated and approved the plea deal but later repudiated it. Attorneys for the defendants argue the deal is already legally in effect and that Defense

Secretary Lloyd Austin, who began the administration's efforts to throw it out, acted too late. When the appeal was filed Tuesday, family members of some of the nearly 3,000 people killed in the al-



Qaida attacks already were gathered at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to hear Mohammed's scheduled guilty plea Friday. The other two men, accused of lesser roles in 9/11, were due to enter their next week. Family members have been split on the deal, with some calling it the best resolution possible for a prosecution mired for more than a decade in pretrial hearings and legal and logistical difficulties.

Others demanded a trial and — they hoped — execution. Some legal experts have warned that the legal challenges posed by the case, including the men's torture under CIA custody after their capture, could keep the aging detainees from ever facing verdicts and any possible sentences. Military prosecutors this summer notified families of the victims that the senior Pentagon official overseeing Guantanamo had approved a plea deal after more than two years of negotiations. The deal was "the best path to finality and justice," military prosecutors said. But some family members and Republican lawmakers condemned the deal and the Biden administration for reaching it. Austin has fought unsuccessfully since August to throw out the agreement, saying that a decision on death penalties in an attack as grave as the Sept. 11 plot should only be made by the defense secretary.

## Israeli TV reporter regains his ability to speak with the help of AI

JERUSALEM. When renowned Israeli TV journalist Moshe Nussbaum lost his ability to speak clearly due to ALS, he thought his career might be over. However, with the help of artificial-intelligence software that recreates his iconic gravelly voice, Nussbaum known to generations of viewers simply as "Nussi" is making a comeback. Nussbaum, 71, was diagnosed two years ago with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, a progressive condition that attacks nerve cells controlling muscles throughout the body. At the time, he vowed to Channel 12 News viewers that he would continue working as long as he was physically able. But as time passed, it became increasingly difficult.

It was a devastating blow for the leading reporter, who had spent more than 40 years covering many of Israel's most important stories. Nussbaum had reported from the scenes of suicide bombings, the front lines of wars in Gaza and Lebanon, and covered high-profile scandals and court cases in Israel's parliament. After Hamas' October

7, 2023, attack, which triggered the war in Gaza, Nussbaum was unable to report from the field. It was the first war of his career that he had ever missed. Despite his difficulties with speaking and moving, he launched a segment interviewing injured soldiers in Israeli hospitals. His questions were slow and halting, but he continued for the first half of the war. However, as it became harder to be understood, his interviews became less frequent.

On Monday, Channel 12 announced that Nussbaum would return to the air in the coming weeks, with the help of AI.

"It took me a few moments to absorb it and understand that it is me speaking now," Nussbaum told The Associated Press via text message. "Slowly, I'm understanding the incredible meaning of this device for everyone with disabilities, including me." Nussbaum will write his stories, and an AI programme trained on his voice will allow him to deliver them. He will be filmed as if presenting, with his lips "technologically adjusted" to match the words. Unlike



traditional text-to-speech technology, which sounds robotic, the AI software mimics Nussbaum's intonations and phrasing by using recordings from his lengthy career in TV and radio.

Nussbaum is excited by the possibilities of the technology but also concerned about its potential misuse to spread fake news. In its current form, the technology doesn't work for live broadcasts, so Nussbaum will focus on commentary and analysis on crime and national security, areas of expertise from his decades of reporting.

Ahead of the broadcasts, Channel 12 released a preview featuring snippets of Nussbaum

speaking naturally garbled and difficult to understand followed by the new "Nussi AI," which sounds strikingly like the original Nussbaum, speaking quickly and emphatically. "Honestly, this is my first time sitting here in the studio after more than a year," AI Nussbaum says in the preview. "It feels a bit strange, and mostly, it tugs my heart." AI-powered voice cloning has rapidly advanced in recent years. Experts warn that the technology could enable phone scams, disrupt elections, and violate the dignity of individuals who did not consent to having their voices recreated. However, it also holds great promise for people who have lost their ability to speak clearly. Similar AI programmes have enabled a U.S. congresswoman with Parkinson's disease to deliver a speech and helped a woman who lost her voice due to a tumour. Channel 12 declined to disclose which AI programme it is using. Nussbaum had feared that ALS would rob him of the career he loved. In an interview with Channel 12, he recalled telling his managers.



## NEWS BOX

**Torres investment scam: 3 held, 7.4cr in firm's bank a/cs frozen**

**MUMBAI.** Shivaji Park police on Tuesday arrested two directors and a senior executive of Platinum Hern Pvt Ltd, the company that runs Torres jewellery chain, for cheating more than 18,000 people from Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Thane and Mira-Bhayander of crores of rupees through its investment schemes. Meanwhile, Navghar police in Mira-Bhayander have frozen Rs 9.17 crore maintained by the company in its bank accounts. Thane police and APMC police in Navi Mumbai on Tuesday registered separate cases, even as Kandivli police recorded the statements of 10 investors and forwarded them to Shivaji Park police station, where an FIR has been registered against five accused under the Maharashtra Protection of Interest of Depositors Act, 1999. The case has been taken over by the Economic Offences Wing of city police. BJP's Kirit Somaiya claimed the scam could cross Rs 1,000 crore. The arrested directors, Tania Casatova and Sarvesh Surve, and senior executive Valentine Kumar have been remanded in police custody till Jan 13 by the Dadar metropolitan magistrate's court. Torres has five stores at Grant Road, Dadar, Sanpada, Mira Road, and Kalyan, and had plans to open a sixth one in Kandivli. The accused started the Ponzi investment scheme on Feb 24, 2024, and allegedly lured investors by promising them a high return of 10-12% per week, with additional bonuses for cash investments and referrals. Investors were also enticed with promises of Moissanite diamond gifts and entries into lucky draws offering prizes like luxury cars and flats, said Nilesh Waghela.

**Flower power: City sets Guinness record for world's largest bouquet**

**Ahmedabad.** The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has set a Guinness World Record for the world's largest flower bouquet (in size) at this year's flower show. AMC broke the record for the largest bouquet of natural flowers held by Al Ain Municipality, United Arab Emirates. On Jan 7, a Guinness team recognised AMC's bouquet 10.24m high and having a diameter 10.84m, as the largest in the world. The Al Ain Municipality had created a flower arrangement that stood seven metres tall. The award was accepted by deputy mayor Jatin Patel at an event attended by AMC standing committee chairman Devang Dani and municipal commissioner M Thennarasana. Last year's Flower Show too had set a Guinness World Record, for the longest flower wall, measuring 221m. This structure surpassed the previous record of 166.15m. This year's Flower Show at the riverfront features over 1 million flowers from more than 50 species, including exotic varieties such as roses, lilies, and orchids. The show is segmented into six thematic zones: Growth and Development, Sustenance and Inclusivity, Sustainable Future, Culture and Heritage and Vision for the Future. Visitors can engage with the displays through a new QR code system that provides audio guides in multiple languages, enhancing the overall experience.

**Nine Tamil Nadu fishers rescued after five days stranded in Sri Lankan waters**

**NAGAPATTINAM.** A group of nine Tamil Nadu fishers, stranded in Sri Lankan waters for five days after their fishing boat suffered an engine failure, was rescued in a cross-border operation involving authorities of both nations. Their boat was towed back to Nagapattinam by another fishing vessel on Tuesday. The group, led by S Selvamani from Nagore, had ventured into the sea on December 29 aboard Venkatammal, a mechanised deep-sea fishing boat. Accompanying him were two fishermen from Yanavannahadevi and six others from Nayakkarkuppam in Mayiladuthurai district. "While we were fishing around 90 nautical miles east of Nagapattinam on December 30, turbulence caused water to enter the engine's exhaust, stalling it. The waters were too deep for anchoring, so we deployed a rescue parachute to slow our drift," Selvamani told. Despite contacting fisherfolk representatives and the fisheries department in Chennai through VHF, the boat drifted beyond the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) into Sri Lankan waters on January 2, losing communication. Sri Lankan fishers spotted the boat and informed their authorities. Indian authorities also reached out to their Sri Lankan counterparts seeking permission for rescue mission. On January 3, a team comprising four fishers from Nagore, led by V Saminathan, set out for the search and rescue mission on a deep-sea fishing boat. Relief finally came on January 5 at 3 am when the fishing boat was located 60 nautical miles near Sri Lanka's Trincomalee. Lankan navy and fishers provided food and assistance to the stranded fishers for two days until Nagore fishers arrived, Selvamani said. Both boats reached Nagapattinam at 1 am on Tuesday. "All nine fishers are safe. We are grateful to the Lankan Navy and our fishers," said T Elamvazhudi, joint director of Fisheries.

**Bhubaneswar dazzles with cultural extravaganza for Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas**

**BHUBANESWAR.** The capital city of Odisha stands bejeweled. Glowing in the spirit of the Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD), being hosted in Odisha for the first time, every corner of the city has erupted into a celebration of culture, art, cuisine and more.

Thousands of dignitaries and global Indians have started arriving in Bhubaneswar, which is the venue for the 18th edition of the three-day convention that begins on Wednesday. And both the state government and city administration are leaving no stone unturned to offer them a memorable experience of Odisha's culture and heritage. While walls on the streets have been given a makeover with traditional paintings, several prominent landmarks of the city are decorated with colourful applique works from Pipili and glittering lights. As far as events are concerned, there is something for each of the NRIs who have landed in the city for the convention, be it specially curated visits to museums, dance and music festivals, art camps, food festival and even night flea markets. A majority of these events that coincide with PBD were opened by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Tuesday.



Prior to that, the CM inaugurated the annual flower show at Ekamra Vana which promises to be bigger and brighter than all its previous editions. Showcasing the rich classical dance and music of the state, three festivals - Rajarani music festival, Mukteswar Odissi dance festival and International Odissi dance festival

- began in the city on the day.

The Mukteswar festival was opened in presence of minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar. While all the festivals have an interesting line up of artistes for the next five days, the highlight of International Odissi festival are renowned Odissi dancers and gurus including Kumkum Mohanty, Ileana Citaristi, Durga Charan Ranbir, Jhelum Paranjape and Soren Lewen.

Similarly at the Exhibition Ground, the tribal heritage of Odisha is on the show with the main attractions being tribal villages, tribal haats, art and craft, tribal food, live demonstrations and Bhagwan Birsa Munda pavilion.

Twenty tribal communities have set up their dummy huts at the venue and at the tribal haat, products prepared and sourced by communities are being sold. Besides, there are 16 stalls where locals and NRIs can witness the

jewellery, handloom, utility items and crafts that are central to the tribal communities. PBD commemorates Mahatma Gandhi's return to India from South Africa on January 9, 1915. This year's theme is 'Diaspora's contribution to a Viksit Bharat'.

**Karnataka High Court strikes down Centre's renewable energy promotion rules**

**BENGALURU.** Observing that the power to enact a law to achieve net-zero emission cannot empower the central government to transgress the existing Electricity Act, 2003, the Karnataka High Court struck down the Centre's Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy Through Green Energy Open Access) Rules, 2022, and also the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) (Terms and Conditions for Green Energy Open Access) Regulations, 2022, framed by KERC, for lack of competence to frame the same. The court directed the KERC to frame appropriate regulations if it so desires, in the matter of granting open access to green energy generators and consumers. During this exercise, the court said the KERC will only be guided by the National Electricity Policy and the Tariff Policy framed by the central government, and



should independently consider the interests of all the stakeholders before framing the regulations. Justice N S Sanjay Gowda passed the order while partly allowing a batch of petitions filed by Brindavan Hydropower Private Limited and several others questioning the validity of the rules. The court said the role

of the Centre under the Electricity Act is essentially to frame a policy and it can only issue directions to the regulator, and the regulator can only be guided by such directions and not be bound by it. Taking cognisance of the fact that this order would leave a vacuum till the regulations are framed by the KERC independently, the court said an interim arrangement would therefore have to be made to ensure that the wheeling and banking facilities availed hitherto by the petitioners are facilitated. After the pronouncement of the order recently, an oral request for a grant of stay of this order was made but the court refused it, saying that it has been held that the Centre lacked the competence to frame the rules in question and therefore the question of permitting it to continue would be illegal.

**Shreyas Patel clueless about projects of JDS leaders: JDS MLC Suraj Revanna**

**HASSAN.** Taking Hassan MP (Congress) Shreyas Patel to task for attacking the Gowda family, JDS MLC Suraj Revanna on Tuesday said Congress leaders have a hidden agenda to politically finish off HD Revanna's family.

Suraj, who is Revanna's son, said Patel won the parliamentary election by circulating pen drives that allegedly contained explicit videos of his brother and former MP Prajwal. Suraj said he visited more than a thousand villages in Hassan district and got Rs 50 crore grants for development works among all assembly constituencies in Hassan district. "What was Patel's contribution as a zilla panchayat member?"

He does not have any information on the development work and grants being released for Hassan district when JDS leaders were in power. It is better if he talks after visiting the development projects carried out by JDS leaders. The central government may sanction an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) to Hassan district following the efforts of JDS supremo HD Deve Gowda. If it is sanctioned, the credit should entirely go to Gowda and not Patel," he added. "Patel seems mentally unsound as he often makes silly statements.

He takes Rs 2 lakh to give a letter for official transfer," he alleged. He said people in Malnad taluks of the district are frustrated with the elephant menace and Patel should put in sincere efforts to address the issue by taking the state government into confidence. Referring to an acid attack long ago in which his mother Bhavani and grandmother Channamma were injured in Holnenarasipur taluk, Suraj said truth will come out if the case is handed over to the CBI as local people still suspect the involvement of then Congress leaders.

**Muthaliyarpatti govt school students forced to study under trees, left with no basic amenities**

**TENKASI.** Owing to inadequate infrastructure at Muthaliyarpatti Government Higher Secondary School near Kadayam, many students have to brave the elements daily. They are forced to attend classes under trees or inside a makeshift shed located on a nearby parcel of government land. As a result, several children have developed health issues like allergies and nasty itches. When visited the school, students highlighted the lack of basic facilities such as toilets, a playground, proper laboratories, and drinking water filters.

"Due to the insufficient number of classrooms, teachers take classes under trees, inside the shed, or even on a pathway in front of the headmistress's room. Many of the classrooms that do exist have no fans. The children are also forced to play on a narrow pathway next to the school due to the dearth of a playground," a student said.

A few other children said that the school has only one water purifier to cater to as many as 626 students. They form long queues in front of the purifier, and often, the water runs out before everyone is served. "During power cuts, everyone goes thirsty. Sometimes, we even drink water from a leaking pipeline laid as part of the Combined Water Supply Scheme



near a railway track," another student said. The kids also complained about insufficient toilets, forcing many to urinate in the open. "The school has a small toilet, which is poorly maintained. Those using it often suffer from urinary tract infections," they added. Speaking to M Faridha Banu, chairperson of the School Management Committee, said the shortage of classrooms has also restrained the school from introducing new groups in Classes 11 and 12. "Since the school has no kitchen, food for the students is cooked at a nearby primary school. The children have to walk all the way there to have food. The only sweeper in the school is paid just around

Rs 3,000 per month. Even that payment is made once in six months. How can we expect a clean toilet and premises in this situation?" she asked. Social activist Mohammed Abdul Khader said he repeatedly petitioned officials about the issue. Following his efforts, the Tenkasi Revenue Divisional Officer and Tahsildar visited the school in November 2024 and promised to arrange land for additional classrooms. "However, no action ensued. The state government must expedite the process to prevent students from transferring to private schools," he said. Khader also submitted a petition to District Collector A K Kamal Kishore on Monday.

**Security staff, rickshaw drivers clash over touting at SVPI airport**

**Ahmedabad.** A scuffle broke out late on Monday night between airport security officials and autorickshaw drivers outside the domestic arrivals terminal of the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International (SVPI) airport in the city. What began as an exchange of arguments around 10.30pm took an ugly turn, leading to chaotic scenes that lasted nearly an hour.

The confrontation began when the security officials attempted to stop autorickshaw drivers and cab operators from soliciting passengers and touting for business. Airport sources told TOI that some of the drivers retaliated by hurling abuses and shoving the security personnel.

"In the late hours of Jan 6, 2025, touts and transport providers created a ruckus at the arrivals area of SVPI airport, leading to physical altercations and injuries. The airport team is working with the authorities to investigate and address the incident. Airport operations remain unaffected. The safety of passengers and stakeholders continues to be our top priority," said an SVPI airport spokesperson. According to sources, touting is a persistent issue at the airport and often leads to friction between security personnel and cabbies and autorickshaw drivers. The security agencies hired by the airport operator promptly filed a formal complaint against the drivers at the SVPI airport police station.

With the situation escalating, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) was called in to restore order. A cab driver, Navin Harvani, also filed a counter-complaint alleging that a security guard at the airport hit him on his head with a pipe, causing him to bleed from his mouth.

The complaint further stated that at least five autorickshaw drivers were also attacked by security personnel during the altercation. The city airport operator has been struggling to handle the menace of touting and is seeking stringent regulations to prevent inconvenience to passengers. In the past, four FIRs were lodged by security agencies in addition to 50 complaints over the issue of touting," a source said. The govts in Delhi and Maharashtra introduced anti-touting laws at least 10-15 years ago in their respective states to curb the menace of touting at the airports.

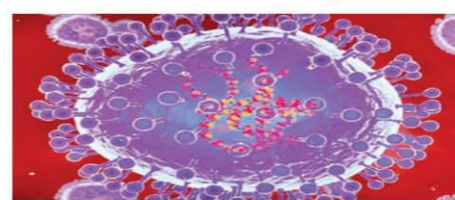
**No HMPV cases, Andhra ready to fight virus**

**VIJAYAWADA.** In response to rising concerns about the spread of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) after the detection of a few cases in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, the State government has geared up to fight the virus. Though no HMPV cases have been reported in the State, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu convened a review meeting with officials of the Health, Medical and Family Welfare Department on Monday. He directed them to raise public awareness, and ensure preparedness for any eventuality.

Following the Chief Minister's directive, Health Minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav and Special Chief Secretary MT Krishna Babu have stepped efforts to combat HMPV. Health authorities have been instructed to procure symptomatic drugs, oxygen

concentrators and oxygen cylinders as part of readiness measures. Director of Public Health K Padmavathi held a virtual meeting on Tuesday with PHC officials, DM&HOs, and programme officers to educate the public on precautionary steps need to be taken to protect themselves from HMPV. Krishna Babu directed the Director of Medical Education to set up 20-bed special wards in government hospitals to treat potential cases, and the hospital authorities have also started arranging special wards.

A five-member specialist committee has been formed to prepare Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and oversee virus management. Ten Viral Research and Diagnostic Laboratories (VRDLs) across the State have been placed on high alert. However, shortage of uniplex, duplex and



multiplex testing kits is said to be a concern. Dr Padmavathi confirmed to TNIE that no HMPV cases have been detected in Andhra Pradesh so far, and people need not to worry. Testing kits need to be imported from Germany, and the DME has filed an indent to expedite their arrival, which are expected within a week. Each kit can conduct 96 tests and 10 kits will be distributed to each lab and two kept as a buffer stock. The DME and Andhra Pradesh Vaidya Vidhana Parishad (APVVP) have been directed to review the

condition of oxygen plants and conduct mock drills. HMPV symptoms resemble the flu, including fever, cough, cold, stuffy or runny nose, sore throat, and shortness of breath. In severe cases, the virus can lead to respiratory complications such as pneumonia and bronchitis, posing risks to young children, the elderly, and individuals with chronic illnesses or weakened immune systems. Dr Padmavathi advised that symptomatic relief can often be achieved by taking prescribed drugs for two to three days. However, respiratory problems warrant immediate medical attention. She explained the importance of preventive measures, including frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and covering the mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.



## Reforms must give us a cutting edge

INDIA's composite defence and military ecosystem is critical for ensuring that national security and sovereignty are not endangered. This domain has been accorded priority by Prime Minister Narendra Modi since he assumed office in 2014.

The need for a holistic review and necessary reforms was long acknowledged — an issue that the late Dr Manmohan Singh often flagged in his interaction with the military top brass — but the institution remained reluctant to go down this path.

During his second term, PM Modi announced the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff. However, the task of initiating defence reforms is mammoth, and it remains a work in progress. The entire organisation that is the responsibility of the Defence Minister is like an octopus, whose many tentacles — some going back to the colonial period (ordnance factories, for example) — are insular, prickly and tenaciously resistant to change. This, incidentally, is not an Indian trait. Most militaries the world over are steeped in tradition and slow to adapt to change — this is part of the institutional DNA.

Thus, it is encouraging to note that in PM Modi's third term, 2025 has been designated as the 'Year of Reforms'. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh highlighted this move at the 67th Foundation Day of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) last week. He dwelt on the crucial role the organisation could play in realising the objectives of these much-needed reforms.

In a nutshell, the core objectives of India's defence reforms are: One, to move the needle of national combat readiness, as warranted by national security and shaped by contemporary technological and geopolitical compulsions; and two, to reduce dependency on external sources that provide critical platforms/inventory items/technology. The DRDO and the larger national scientific and manufacturing ecosystem have a major role in this endeavour. Rajnath Singh exhorted scientists to improve their core competencies and set an ambitious benchmark. He added, "The DRDO should aim to become one of the strongest research and development organisations in the world." He also commended the design team that enabled the success of the Long-Range Hypersonic Anti-Ship Missile, which is the most recent feather in the sparsely burnished DRDO cap. However, the structural constraints and legacy issues related to India's defence R&D and manufacturing need to be addressed if the stated objective is to be realised. India does not figure among the top R&D nations of the world, and the defence sub-sector has a relatively modest record in terms of investments and scientific output over the decades, barring a few islands of innovation. In September last year, DRDO Chairman Samir V Kamat pointed out that India spent only 0.65 per cent of the national GDP on R&D. The contrast with other nations is striking. Their respective R&D spending as a percentage of the GDP is: the US, 2.83; China, 2.14; France, 2.19; and South Korea, 4.8. Kamat added that the government was aware of this insufficiency and that over the next few years, during Modi 3.0, this modest figure will hopefully rise to 1 per cent of the GDP and be doubled to 2 per cent by 2035. But on current evidence, this is a low-probability exigency and may need a major political intervention, especially since the whole defence budget just touches 2 per cent of the GDP.

The legacy challenge for the DRDO and the extended defence-military ecosystem is that India continues to have high dependency on foreign imports to maintain its minimum combat readiness. In the decade from FY 2012-13 to 2021-22, as per a report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence, India's capital expenditure for military inventory acquisitions and modernisation in foreign exchange was above 35 per cent; it hit 49 per cent in one year.

This proportion blunts India's claim to credible strategic autonomy. PM Modi's prioritisation of 'atmanirbharta' (self-reliance) over the past decade is laudable, but the gestation periods are very long and a broad-brush review of the DRDO and defence public sector undertakings (DPSU) indicates a pattern that needs a review.

## Balancing privacy rights and investigative powers

Denying ED access to computers and mobile phones of offenders needs to be examined as electronic and digital devices have almost become an extension of human memory.

THE Supreme Court recently upheld a high court order quashing the arrest of former Haryana MLA Surender Panwar in a money-laundering case, while terming his 15-hour-long interrogation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) as 'high-handedness' and 'inhuman conduct'. In another case, on December 13, 2024, an interim order of the SC drew the red line for the ED over access to and copying the content stored in computers and mobile phones seized from Santiago Martin, the 'lottery king', and his associates. The court did not prescribe any date for lifting the ban in the Santiago case. It ordered that the matter be heard along with other connected cases in which the ED's demand to the applicants to produce electronic devices had been challenged and guidelines were sought for such seizures.

If the interim order in the case becomes a precedent, it would have serious consequences on the powers of the law enforcement agencies (LEAs). However, at the same time, it would be a welcome reminder to the citizens that their fundamental right to life, including right to privacy, and the constitutional guarantee against self-incrimination are sacrosanct and that 'fishing expeditions' by the LEAs under the cover of investigations are not to be allowed. Justice Felix Frankfurter, in *Nardone vs United States* (1939), gave the "exclusionary rule of evidence" and stamped the "doctrine of fruits of the poisonous tree". It postulates that illegally procured evidence becomes inadmissible in court proceedings; if the source of evidence or the evidence itself is tainted, anything gained from it is also tainted and cannot be used against the accused.

Evidence collected by questionable means, like by using unauthorised phone-tapping or recording without the knowledge of the subject, accessing private information and personal secrets contained in electronic gadgets, conducting illegal and unwarranted searches and recording events using secret cameras, etc, certainly fall in the category of tainted evidence. Indiscriminate confiscation of personal laptops and mobile phones by the LEAs and accessing the contents stored therein also run the risk of intruding into privacy, compromising business secrets and fishing into private affairs of individuals; at times, even bringing their personal

and business activities to a halt. On the other hand, tracing the digital footprint and filtering the electronic record of suspects have become a necessity in almost all heinous crimes, including crimes against women, financial scams, money-laundering, drug trafficking and offences against the state and national security, etc. Perhaps, this is the reason the legislature, hitherto, has refrained from subscribing to the doctrine of "fruits of the poisonous tree" in Indian laws.

Accordingly, the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 (BSA), which prescribes rules of evidence, is silent on the admissibility of illegally procured evidence, although it declares confession caused by inducement, coercion, threat or promise irrelevant in

established by law. Under Section 349 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS), the court can force a suspect to give his handwriting and voice sample; Section 53 of the BNSS allows even the extraction of body fluids from an accused person by force to meet the demand of investigations. Electronic and digital devices have almost become an extension of human memory for a majority of the people nowadays. In *Selvi and Others vs State of Karnataka* (2010), the Constitutional Bench of the SC allowed the recovery of information from the mind of an accused after obtaining his informed consent before the court by resorting to 'narco-analysis', 'brain-mapping' and 'lie detection test', as an aid to investigation.

Denying ED access to the computers and mobile phones of offenders needs to be examined in this backdrop, too. The interim order in the case should also be viewed in light of the fact that electronic and digital records are included in the definition of 'document', as contained in the BSA, and Sections 94 to 97 of the BNSS empowers the LEAs to summon, undertake searches and seize documents during investigations. The order has the implication of taking away this power from the LEAs and may halt investigations in those cases where digital and electronic evidence are crucial.

The investigation needs of the LEAs and yardsticks to judge the admissibility of evidence in courts are two separate domains. Whereas a strict law of evidence needs to be applied during the trial, the LEAs deserve freedom, under strict vigilance of the court, to find out and present the truth before the courts. The protection of citizenry from overzealous law enforcers, though, is equally important. Unarguably, the issues at hand in the case are contentious. Finding a balance between the contrary demands of the LEAs for just investigations and safeguarding the constitutional rights of the people, both at the same time, is a tightrope walk. It is, however, a given that any blanket prohibition on the powers of the LEAs would not augur well for public safety and national security. Every case needs to be decided on its own merit.



## The Kejri splurge

House renovation row dents ex-CM's image

For once, the BJP and the Congress are on the same page. Their common rival in poll-bound Delhi is former CM Arvind Kejriwal, who is under fire for having renovated his official residence at a cost of at least Rs 33 crore. According to an audit report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, the expenditure quadrupled — the initial estimate was Rs 7.91 crore — by the time the work was completed in 2022. Moreover, the renovation was done in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, a turbulent period during which many development projects were stalled and the state government was supposed to be protecting Delhi residents from the deadly virus. Now that's what you call a classic case of misplaced priorities.

The damning report has dented Kejriwal's carefully constructed 'aam aadmi' image, giving the BJP and the Congress ample fodder



to target the ruling AAP, which is eyeing a hat-trick in the

upcoming Assembly elections. Splurging Rs 96 lakh on curtains and Rs 66.9 lakh on marble stone for walls, and that too at a time when people were falling ill or dying, is simply unacceptable. Kejriwal, who has projected himself as a commoner CM from the outset, has a lot of explaining to do. The extravagance was avoidable, to say the least.

The CAG report has also put the Public Works Department on a sticky wicket, citing irregularities in the remodelling of the ground-floor accommodation and the construction of an additional storey. A fair and thorough probe is needed to establish the complicity of officials. As of now, the case has become a hot-button poll issue in the Capital. At stake is the credibility of AAP, whose top leaders have been accused of corruption by Central agencies. The party has its work cut out to regain the trust of voters, who gave it a landslide mandate in 2015 and 2020.

## Pakistan punishes Taliban for TTP attacks

Pakistan will continue to face the brunt of TTP attacks, as the latter's crusade is religious and such militant groups seldom abandon their ideological beliefs.

ON December 24 last year, Pakistan launched targeted attacks against Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) hideouts in the Paktia province of Afghanistan, killing dozens of people, mostly women and children. This was in response to the TTP's raids against Pakistani security forces on December 21 in south Waziristan, which resulted in the killing of 16 Pakistan soldiers. As US-made weapons seized during the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 became available to the TTP, it increased its attacks inside Pakistan in 2024, killing 1,612 security personnel and others in 444 terrorist attacks. Last year was the deadliest in terms of terror attacks, as per Pakistani sources. Pakistan's reading of the Taliban — whom it reared and supported for more than two decades against the US-led international security forces in the expectations of having a friendly regime in Kabul, which would provide it with "strategic depth" — has turned out to be completely wrong. The Taliban has accused Islamabad of pocketing much of the international aid it got from the US and other countries in the name of Afghanistan. The two countries have also differed on the installation of a fence by Pakistan in the bordering areas as Afghanistan does not accept the Durand Line marking the border, claiming that it was an artificial line dividing the Pashtuns unfairly on both sides. In 2021, the then Imran Khan government of Pakistan engaged in peace talks with the TTP, which were facilitated by the Taliban. The year-long negotiations, which included a brief ceasefire, failed without the ceasing of attacks by the TTP. According to some Pakistanis, these talks provided useful time to the TTP to regroup and boost its strength. Pakistan has given several warnings to the Taliban at the

highest levels, but the latter has shown no serious intent to control the TTP. The Taliban and TTP share ethnic ties and have fought together against the West for years. The Taliban has ideological sympathy with the TTP's objective of establishing a Sharia state in the tribal areas of Pakistan and uses TTP's militant activities to pressure Pakistan whenever it wants. Also, if the Taliban were to take harsh action against the TTP, the latter's fighters could defect to the Islamic State of Khorasan (ISK), an offshoot of ISIS, with whom they share jihadist beliefs and deep-rooted bonds and which is active in several parts of eastern and north-western Afghanistan. It would, thus, weaken the Taliban and strengthen its enemy. At present, the Taliban has given a decisive blow to the ISK, killing several of its senior commanders and keeping the group's terror activities under check.

The TTP attacks have increased destabilisation and insecurity in Pakistan and encouraged other dissident groups, such as the Balochs and Pashtuns, to fight against the Pakistani state. Pakistan's hopes of attracting foreign investment from Saudi Arabia and the UAE have not borne fruit. China, which is Pakistan's "iron brother" is unhappy about inadequate security arrangements for its 1,200 workers who are building critical infrastructure in Pakistan as the TTP and Baloch separatists have targeted Chinese experts in several attacks. With Pakistan unable to pay China's loans and provide

foolproof security to its personnel, China has stalled work on most projects. The TTP attacks leave Pakistan with few viable options. Pakistan has no desire to mount a full-scale war — which it is



unlikely to win — against the Taliban. It has seen how the Afghans have fought valiantly against the Soviets and Americans in the last four decades. The Taliban may not have a big army like Pakistan, but it has a brilliant record of mounting guerrilla operations, with its human suicide bombers and hit-and-run attacks. Even Pakistan's allies like China and the US would not favour that option for their own reasons. The US would not like the Taliban to be distracted from its fight against the ISK. China

nurtures the ambition to extend its Belt and Road Initiative to Afghanistan and carry out projects in mining, oil exploration and infrastructure sectors. Also, then the Taliban will not be able to control the

China-centric terror group, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, in Afghanistan.

The deterioration in Pakistan's relations with the Taliban has allowed India to reassess its policy towards the Taliban, reopen its embassy and provide emergency assistance to the Afghan people and consider resuming work on its economic projects in Afghanistan. The Afghan Embassy in New Delhi is now being run by the representatives of the Taliban government. Pakistan has taken a few steps to increase the cost for the Taliban in allowing the TTP. These include the repatriation of about 8,00,000 Afghan refugees and disruption of Afghanistan's land trade via Pakistan. These measures were not liked by the US and others as they felt that the Taliban was already facing a grim humanitarian

situation, with a shortage of food, energy and other essential items, and was hardly in a position to look after so many more people. The Taliban has also not relented in any of its policies about broad-basing its government, allowing education to women beyond the middle school or other human rights despite facing severe sanctions and near-total isolation on the world stage. It has enforced its religious codes of conduct in an authoritarian manner, oblivious of the global public opinion.



# Why a visit to the world's Largest river Island in Assam is a must

**Majuli, a hub of the Assamese neo-Vaishnavite culture, has many satras (religious and cultural institutions). After the half-hour ferry ride, you will reach the shrinking island, which is located over 300 km from Guwahati, Assam's main city, and is home to approximately two lakh people consisting of Brahmins, Kalitas, Mishings, Deori and more.**

Assam's Majuli faces flood fury – and the threat of erosion – whenever the mighty Brahmaputra river swells. So take a break from your high-tech lifestyle and hop on that double decker boat to live the simple life in the world's largest river island before it loses the title.

Cruises on luxury vessels can take you to your destination, but to understand the locals' lives, it is best to travel like them on a rickety motor boat, which can also carry cars, bikes and anything that can't swim, from Neemati ghat to Kamalabari ghat. First-timers might fear for their lives but for the frequent travellers, it's like any other public transport. Some are

so carefree that they even play cards. After the half-hour ferry ride, you will reach the shrinking island, which is located over 300 km from Guwahati, Assam's main city, and is home to approximately two lakh people consisting of Brahmins, Kalitas, Mishings, Deori and more. Visitors can stay in various resorts, which might remind you of your

1 days due to availability of only basic amenities, or limited homestays. While driving to your accommodation, you will see paddy and mustard fields, and bamboo plantations along the roads. Out of the various house forms, the bamboo stilt houses – with an open fireplace in the middle – of the Mishing tribe, are quite unique, and you will see women working on looms made with bamboos and a cycle's wheel. Unlike the people of Sualkuchi, a silk-weaving village in Assam, Mishings here make "mekhela chador" and other traditional outfits only for their own use. And men use their physical strength to make beds out of bamboos or other furnitures, when they are not farming.

Majuli, a hub of the Assamese neo-Vaishnavite culture, has many satras (religious and cultural institutions). "Earlier, there were over 60 satras in Majuli but due to erosion, there are currently just 32 satras here. Auniati Satra is the biggest one in Assam. The land measures up to 500 bigha," Anant Kalita, the satra's museum guide, told this visiting IANS correspondent.



which is a traditional form of entertainment through which religious messages are shared. Explaining the process of mask-making, popular mask artist Hem Chandra Goswami's brother Tilak Goswami said: "The masks are made of mud, cotton cloth, cow dung and vegetable colours. One mask takes about 15 to 20 days to make." "Our entire family knows how to make masks. We have been making masks for the last six generations," added the 65-year-old.

After learning the craft here, some even go to Dibrugarh or Guwahati.

"We don't call ourselves monks or pandits. The ones who stay in satras are called Vaishnavs. We worship lord Krishna. We dance, pray and do dramas, which were created by (saint-scholar) Sankardev," he added.

The satra is open to all – Brahmins, Kalitas and people from other communities of Assam. "Even Muslims can come. Ladies can come but can't stay in the satra. After marriage, people need to stay out of the satra. "There are 350 people in the satra. Vaishnavs and bhakhts stay in satras, the ones who are outside are called disciples," said Kalita, who has been here for the past 18 years.

The Samaguri Satra, on the other hand, has kept alive the tradition of mask-making. Its studio houses numerous masks, like those of Narasimha, Ram and Laxman that are used during festivals and Bhaona,

irrespective of their financial condition, they will not let you leave empty handed.

A cup of tea or a plate full of home-made sweets (rice flour pitha) is the least they can offer, and a request: "Please visit again."



The iconic structure of the Howrah Bridge completes 75 years of its existence this month. The historical landmark that has been synonymous with the City of Joy has been a witness to history, both in pre-Independence India and thereafter. The bridge has been not only been a part of history, literature and art, but also a significant part of popular culture — be it in commercial cinema or magazine art and caricature. From Satyajit Ray to Richard Attenborough and Mani Ratnam to Anurag Basu, the popular iconography of Kolkata has been celebrated by film-makers and photographers alike.

Connecting the twin city of Kolkata (earlier known as Calcutta) and Howrah, on either sides of River Hooghly in Bengal, the archetypal structure is one of the busiest bridges on the country. Renamed Rabindra Setu in 1965 after Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, the suspension-type balanced cantilever bridge has a central span of 1500 ft. between centres of main towers. As the bridge completes being functional for over seven decades, here are some interesting facts about the unique structure that you might be interested in.

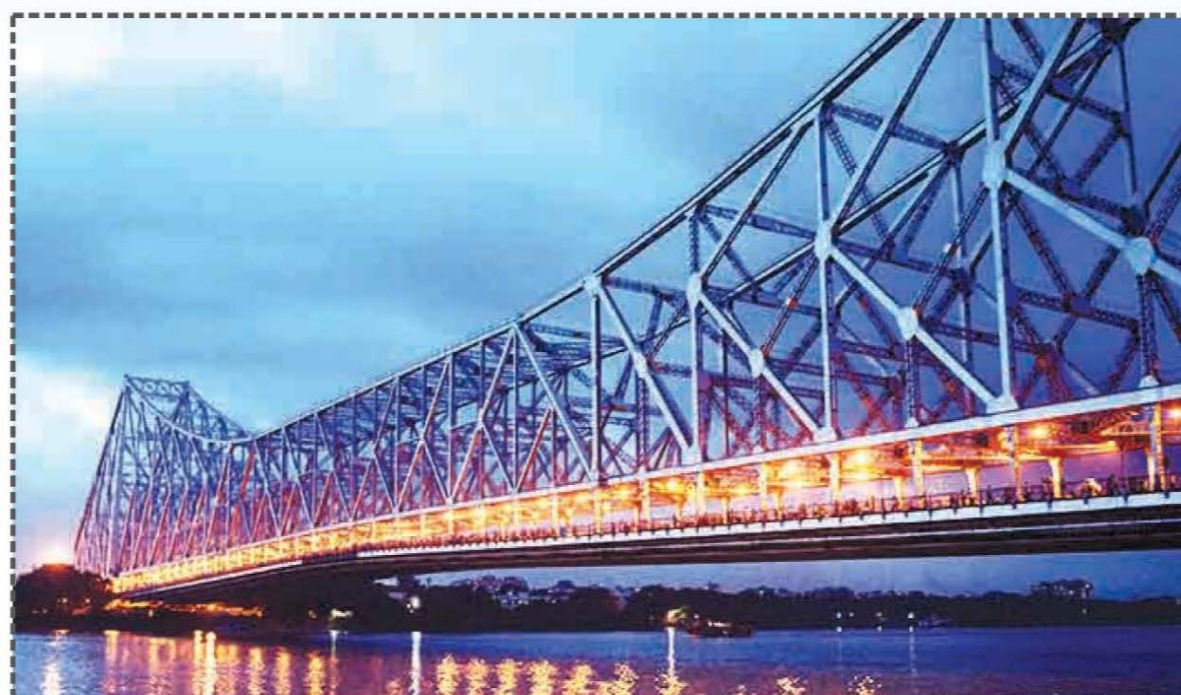
**A bridge without nuts and bolts**  
Hard to believe? Yes, the gigantic bridge spread across the width of River Hooghly does not have a single nut and screw joining the array of metallic structures. Instead, the unique bridge was built by riveting the whole structure, which means a metal piece (rivet) is used to connect two or more plates inserted through the hole in plates and pressed on the other side.

**A suspended bridge**  
If you didn't notice in all the photos of Howrah Bridge, then take a look now and observe how the metal structure hangs above the river with no pillars in between supporting it. It's a suspended-type balanced cantilever bridge, the third longest when it was constructed and now, it's the sixth longest bridge of its type in the world.

**It's the 'new' Howrah Bridge**  
Even though the vintage structure has been around for more than seven decades and even stood witness to the Second World War, it is ironically called the 'New' Howrah Bridge. The reason behind it is that it replaced an old pontoon bridge, which was set up in 1874. As in the 17th century, Calcutta was emerging as a bustling city by the merger of the three villages – Kolkata,

## Kolkata's Howrah Bridge turns 75: Seven lesser-known facts about the iconic bridge

**As Rabindra Setu - popularly known as Howrah Bridge - celebrates its 75th anniversary, here are some interesting and lesser-known facts about the iconic structure. Opened to the public in 1943, in a pre-Independence era historic bridge is an engineering marvel and one of the busiest bridges in the world.**



Sutanati and Gobindapur, there was an urgent demand to link the city with the commercial hub Howrah. And after the Howrah station was built in 1906, the to-fro movement on the bridge began to escalate and engineers at Calcutta Port Trust started brainstorming ideas to build a better and stronger bridge.

**Stalled by First World War**

The bridge has a sad association with World War I (1914-1919). Even though the proposal to replace the old pontoon bridge had begun in the early 1900s, it was delayed owing to the catastrophic war. The bridge was partially renewed in the years 1917 and 1927. However, it was completed until the Second World War.

Even as a marvel for architects, engineers and the Colonials who built the emblematic landmark, it did not even have a formal opening, forget a grand inauguration. It was completed in 1942 and opened to the public in February 1943 but was not highlighted due to a fear of attacks by Japanese planes fighting the Allied Powers. Japan had already attacked Pearl Harbour in 1941 and that instilled fear among the Britishers that this could prove to be a target as well.

**A made-in-India bridge**  
Unlike now, during the British Era, not only the raw materials but even the finished product were made in England and assembled here. Even the former Sir Bradford Leslie's pontoon bridge — different parts were constructed in England and shipped to Calcutta. However, it incurred a huge cost. Owing to the ongoing WWII (1939-1945) all the steel (26,000 tonnes) that was to come from the UK were diverted for the war effort in Europe. Out of total steel required for the bridge, only 3,000 tonnes were supplied from England. The remaining 23,000 tonnes were supplied by India's Tata Steel and even the erection work was reassigned to a local engineering firm of Howrah — the Braithwaite, Burn and Jessop Construction Co.

**Trams used the bridge**  
As lakhs of commuters daily cross the bridge now either by foot on cars and buses, but during its initial days of existence, trams used to ply on the bridge transporting people to and fro from the twin cities. In fact, the first vehicle to use the bridge was a solitary tram. The tram services on the bridge were discontinued in 1993 owing to rise in vehicular traffic.



# Yet to get 40 Tejas ordered in 2010: IAF chief as China tests sixth-gen jets

**Indian Air Force (IAF) chief AP Singh has raised concerns over China's astonishing pace of air force modernisation while expressing frustration over the sluggish pace of the delivery of Tejas jets.**

NEW DELHI. Expressing concern over the snail-paced delivery of Tejas fighter jets, Indian Air Force (IAF) chief AP Singh lamented that it was yet to receive the first batch of 40 aircraft ordered in 2009-2010. Speaking at the 21st Subroto Mukerjee Seminar, the IAF chief asserted that the scale of production had to increase at a time when India's adversaries like China were "investing heavily in its air force". The Air Chief Marshal's scathing remarks come days after China tested its mysterious sixth-generation stealth combat aircraft—a feat not achieved by any other nation. Singh said that the first Tejas jet flew in 2001, while induction started 15 years later in 2016.

## RAISES CONCERN OVER DELAYS IN TEJAS DELIVERIES

"We should go back to 1984, when we conceived that aircraft. The first aircraft flew in 2001, 17 years later. The induction started another 15 years later, in 2016. Today, we are in 2024. I do not have the first 40 aircraft also, so this is the production capability," the IAF chief said, underlining that "technology delayed is



technology denied". The Tejas is a multirole light fighter aircraft being developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). It is being inducted into the IAF to replace the ageing Mig 21 fighter jet, dubbed the "flying coffin" because of its high crash rate. Underscoring the need for production agencies to invest in advanced manufacturing processes, AP Singh called for the need to rope in private players. "I am very convinced that we need to get some private players in. We need to have competition. We need to have multiple sources available so that

people are wary of losing their orders. Otherwise, things will not change," the Air Chief Marshal emphasised.

## CHINA TESTS 6TH GEN FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

His comments come at a time when the Air Force is facing a severe crunch in its fighter strength. It currently has 30 fighter squadrons against a sanctioned strength of 42. A fighter squadron consists of 18 aircraft. China's recent display of two sixth-generation combat aircraft, which took the world and defence experts by surprise, also found a mention in Singh's address.

In contrast, India's fifth-generation fighter jet is still at the design and development stage. A proposal to develop the jet was cleared by the Cabinet only last year, in March. Raising concerns over India's neighbour's astonishing pace of military modernisation, the IAF chief said, "As far as China is concerned, it is not just the numbers, even the technology is growing at a very rapid pace. We just saw the recent flight of the new generation fighter that they have pulled out."

## Tibet rocked by 20 earthquakes in 24 hours: What happened in the Himalayan region

**The Xizang region of Tibet, which experienced a deadly 7.1-magnitude earthquake on Tuesday morning, recorded at least 20 significant aftershocks within 24 hours.**

NEW DELHI. A series of powerful earthquakes rocked Tibet on Tuesday, leaving over 120 dead and more than 400 people trapped under debris as rescue operations continued for the second day on Wednesday. The seismic activity began with a 7.1-magnitude earthquake in the Xizang region, near the Nepal-Tibet border, followed by over 20 tremors within 24 hours. The most recent quake, recorded at 6.58 am on Wednesday, registered a magnitude of 4.0 on the Richter scale. Among the series of earthquakes, 10 exceeded a magnitude of 6, highlighting the region's seismic vulnerability. Tibet, a known earthquake-prone zone, experienced over 100 earthquakes with magnitudes of at least 3.0 last year. However, quakes measuring 7.0 and above are rare, with only nine recorded since the early 20th century.

The epicentre of the disaster was located in Tingri County, near the collision point of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. This tectonic activity



creates extensive fault lines across the Tibetan plateau, resulting in frequent, often devastating earthquakes.

Rescue efforts have been hampered by the region's rugged terrain and remote location. Emergency workers are racing to deliver aid to isolated communities, navigating through debris-strewn streets and damaged infrastructure. Visuals from the affected areas show piles of rubble, crushed vehicles, and devastated homes. More than 1,000 homes have been damaged in the sparsely populated region, leaving many without shelter.

Rescue teams have been seen climbing mounds of rubble and using ladders in heavily affected villages to search for survivors. The high altitude, averaging 4,200 meters (13,800 feet), adds to the challenges faced by emergency responders.

Seismologists are closely monitoring the situation, warning of potential aftershocks and advising residents to remain vigilant.

According to Chinese state media, about 6,900 people reside in three townships and 27 villages within 20 kilometres of the epicentre. The unfolding tragedy underscores the urgent need for disaster preparedness and mitigation in this seismically active region.

## Delhi lawyer allegedly under stress from divorce dies by suicide

NEW DELHI. A 45-year-old Delhi-based lawyer, who was allegedly under stress due to an ongoing divorce case with his wife, shot himself dead with a licensed pistol, police said. The victim has been identified as Sameer Mehendiratta, a resident of Mukherjee Nagar.

According to the police, Mehendiratta, who died in a hospital on Tuesday evening, had been living separately from his wife amid the ongoing case. His family has alleged that Mehendiratta had been suffering from depression as a result of the divorce case.



Authorities have initiated an investigation into the incident. This latest case comes days after Puneet Khurana, a bakery

owner also based in Delhi, died by suicide amid divorce proceedings with his wife. The couple were also engaged in a dispute over the bakery, called For God's Cakes, which they co-owned. According to Khurana's family, he "upset" with his wife. Last month, Bengaluru-based techie Atul Subhash died by suicide. The software engineer left behind a 24-page suicide note in which he accused his wife and her relatives of harassment and also detailed his years-long emotional distress from marital issue.

## Thick fog engulfs Delhi, over 200 flights delayed, temperature to dip further

NEW DELHI. A thick layer of fog blanketed Delhi and neighbouring areas as North India continued to reel under a cold wave. Visibility was significantly reduced at airports across the region, disrupting flight services. At New Delhi's Indra Gandhi International Airport (IGI), 200 flights were delayed, and four services were cancelled. In the latest advisory, the airport authorities stated that while landings and takeoffs continue, flights that are not equipped for low-visibility landings (CAT IIIA compliant) may be affected due to the prevailing weather conditions. Along with IGI Airport, the airports in Amritsar, Jammu, and Agra also recorded zero visibility, affecting services.

Meanwhile, the weather department's 7-day forecast



indicates that from Wednesday, the minimum temperature will start dipping, and by Friday, it is expected to drop to 5 degrees Celsius.

Anticipating dense to very dense fog conditions, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an orange warning for Delhi on Wednesday and a yellow alert for Thursday and Friday. In the past 24 hours, the maximum temperature in Delhi was recorded at 16.2 degrees Celsius, which is 2.8 degrees below normal, and the minimum temperature was 7.4 degrees, which was 5 degrees above normal. It marked a 3.1-notch fall from Tuesday's temperature.

On Tuesday, over 300 flights were delayed, and around 25 train services were disrupted due to blinding fog. States including Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan, among others in the North Indian region, continued to be gripped by an extreme cold wave. In Rajasthan's Nagaur, the minimum temperature was recorded at 2.5 degrees Celsius.

## 'Sheeshmahal' Showdown: AAP vs BJP Over Media Tour Of Chief Minister Home

NEW DELHI. Dramatic scenes played out outside the Delhi Chief Minister's residence today when Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders reached there to "show the truth" about BJP's "Sheeshmahal" charge. Determined to score big in the upcoming Delhi election, the BJP has accused AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal of spending public money on a luxurious upgrade of the bungalow on 6, Flagstaff Road. To turn the tables, AAP said its leaders would visit the Civil Lines bungalow with the media and then head to the Prime Minister's residence on 7, Lok Kalyan Marg, to show the revamp there. When AAP MP Sanjay Singh and Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj reached the bungalow with mediapersons, police stopped them, citing a law and order situation. Mr Singh was seen telling a senior officer why police were stopping them. He also said stopping them amounted to a breach of privilege

of an MP and a cabinet minister.

"Why can't we be allowed inside? BJP is spreading misinformation that there is a golden toilet, swimming pool, minibar, so show us and show them (media)," Mr Singh has heard saying. Mr Bharadwaj was seen asking whose directions they were being stopped on. "Only person above me is the Lieutenant Governor. Who has given you the direction (to stop us)?" The BJP's lie has been exposed, it is now proved that BJP is Bharatiya Jhootha Party. For months, BJP has been saying there is a golden toilet, swimming pool and minibar in this Chief Minister's residence. We brought you here today. Have you seen? For just two people, they have placed water cannons, so many cops. Are we terrorists? Why are they stopping us? This means BJP is lying. We will wait here for 10 minutes, if the BJP is telling the truth, they should open the Chief Minister's residence and allow us

inside," Mr Singh said. Later, the AAP leaders headed to the Prime Minister's residence, but were stopped.

The Delhi Chief Minister's official residence has been vacant since Mr Kejriwal stepped down after being granted bail in a corruption case linked to the now-scrapped liquor policy. The AAP leader has said he would return to the top job only after the "people's court" verdict. The BJP has been targeting the AAP with 'Sheeshmahal' jabs and a CAG report has given it fresh ammo. The report, filed by Girish Chandra Murmu who retired in November, pointed to a four-fold jump between budgeting for the renovation and the final cost. Leading the BJP charge, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, "You will be shocked to know that when Delhi residents were fighting Covid, wandering in search of oxygen and medicines, their (AAP) focus was on the building Sheesh Mahal."

## Simultaneous Polls: Parliamentary Panel Holds First Meeting

NEW DELHI. The parliamentary panel constituted to scrutinise the two bills on simultaneous elections held its first meeting on Wednesday. Officials of the Ministry of Law and Justice are briefing the panel members on the provisions of the proposed laws, sources said.

Headed by BJP MP PP Chaudhary, the 39-member joint committee of Parliament comprises members from all major parties, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra from Congress, Sanjay Jha from JD(U), Shiv Sena's Shrikant Shinde, AAP's Sanjay Singh, and



Kalyan Banerjee from Trinamool Congress.

Mr Chaudhary is a former minister of state for law. The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill

were introduced in the Lok Sabha during the recent Winter Session and referred to the committee.

The government decided to increase the committee's strength from 31 to 39, as more political parties expressed their desire to be part of the exercise to examine the two draft legislations on simultaneous elections.

Former Union ministers Anurag Thakur, Parshottam Rupala and Manish Tewari and several other lawmakers, including Anil Baluni, Bansuri Swaraj and Sambit Patra, are also members of the committee. The panel has 27 members from the Lok Sabha and 12 from the Rajya Sabha.

## Domestic Airlines May Soon Have To Share Weather Data With Weather Office

**The earth sciences ministry secretary said weather forecasts depended largely on the number of observations collected.**

NEW DELHI. The government is planning to make it mandatory for domestic airlines to share weather data captured by aircraft during takeoff and landing with the IMD, which senior officials say will significantly enhance forecasting capabilities. M Ravichandran, secretary in the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences, told PTI that his ministry had been in discussions with the civil aviation ministry on the matter, and providing weather data would be "made mandatory for domestic airlines within a year". "It has to be mandatory... It will not only be

very useful for airline operations but also for weather forecasts everywhere," he said.

The earth sciences ministry secretary said weather forecasts depended largely on the number of observations collected.

"The more observations we have, the better our predictions can be. It is similar to an exit poll -- if you gather data from more places, you will get a clearer picture. In the same way, we aim to collect information on temperature, humidity, and wind wherever possible," he said.

Vertical weather observations (obtained from aircraft and weather balloons) are more important than ground observations because they provide a complete picture of the atmosphere, not just what is happening at the surface, Ravichandran said. Weather systems such as storms form and evolve in the atmosphere, where temperature, humidity and wind conditions at different



altitudes play a key role, he said. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) launches weather balloons from 50-60 stations to collect critical data on temperature, humidity and wind at

various altitudes. Aircraft also record weather data during takeoff and landing. This data is transmitted to the ground in real-time and integrated into forecasting models. Unlike the limited number of weather balloons, thousands of aircraft can relay data. Ravichandran said all aircraft operating on international routes provided weather data because it was required by law.

However, not all domestic airlines do so as it is not mandatory for them.

He said many countries had made it mandatory for their airlines to provide this data and India needed to have a similar mechanism. "The aircraft are already gathering the data. It would be a different issue if they were not doing so," he said.

"Air connectivity is increasing tremendously in India, with each state having 10 to 15 airports. Our prediction capability will improve significantly if all domestic airlines start providing this crucial data," he added.





The age at which children should be given access to social media sites in India has remained a topic of debate for quite some time now. On the occasion of 'Safer Internet Day, citizens engagement platform LocalCircles released the results of a survey that gauges the pulse of citizens on this subject.

The first question was if the government and schools in India should define an age under which children cannot have social media accounts. Seventy-nine per cent respondents agreed with this, 17 per cent did not agree and four per cent were unsure. Citizens are keen that the government defines an age and then enforces this via the Education Boards, Schools and District Administrations.

"In many countries, the minimum age of a person required to join a social media site like Facebook, Snapchat etc. is 13 years. However, it is commonly known that many children tend to declare false age and create profiles," LocalCircles said in a statement.

The second question asked was what should be the minimum age for children in India to have social media accounts. Sixteen per cent said it should be 13 years and 36 per cent said it should be 15 years. Another 36 per cent said the age limit should be 18 years while 12 per cent

# At which age should Children be given access to social media sites?



schools or government should not regulate the social media access of children.

Asked if children in India should be allowed social media accounts between the ages of 11-13 with parental consent, 61 per cent responded in a negative while 34 per cent said it should be allowed. Five per cent were not sure about their choice. Citizens also said that government should use education boards and schools as a medium to disseminate guidelines on parents making sure that children under the defined age do not have any social media accounts.

## Keep boredom at bay



Dog training is like an investment. You will see the returns by sticking with the programme for the long haul. Training can improve not only your dog's quality of life, but your own

### Treasure Hunt

It is a great way to stimulate your pet's brain and teach him to use all his senses. You can hide a treat or a favourite toy. Begin with something simple. Hide a treat/toy somewhere obvious and let your pet see this place. Then ask him to 'find'. Once your pet understands the game and gains confidence, you can increase the difficulty level.

You can add variety to this game by hiding treat under cups or objects and ask your dog to choose the right cup by pawing or nudging.

### Teach them tricks

Every time you are teaching your dog something new, you are providing him with a mental challenge. Search around for new tricks to work on. You can watch some videos on the internet or ask a trainer to help you. You can also purchase dog puzzles or treat dispenser toys or make one at home yourself. If your dog eats packaged dog food, you can give at least one meal of the day as a reward for a puzzle for your dog to work on. This interactive game challenges your dog's brain and sharpens their problem solving and analytical skills.

### Fetch

'Fetch' is one of the most basic and most loved games by dogs. Once your dog knows how to retrieve a toy, you can add variants to the game by adding more commands or tricks to it. You can play this game indoors or outdoors. Playing it on the stairs will keep your pet fit.

### Flirt pole

It is an easy DIY toy that not only helps your dog work on his basic manners and impulse control but also gives him fun workout in just a few minutes. You attach your dog's favourite ball or tug toy to a long object (pipe or rope or old tee). It is like a giant cat toy which you drag around on the ground and your dog chases and tugs on it. There are some rules to the game. Ask your dog to 'Sit' or 'Lie Down' when you start the game. Then tease your dog with the Flirt pole by dragging it around but ask your dog to 'Stay' and not take the toy till you give a release command 'Take It.'. After a little chase, reward your dog by allowing him to catch the toy and play little tug with it until you ask him to 'Drop It'.

### Run errands with your pet

A quick run to the vegetable vendor, a stopover at a friend's house, or a quick car ride in the evening, running errands can be so much fun when you have your furry companion along. It also gives them a chance to explore the world and meet new people.

### Agility at home

Dog agility does not have to be only an outdoor game. You can use chairs, hula hoops and any existing furniture to teach your dog to weave and jump over, or crawl under. You can also teach him weaving forward through your legs or to jump over your legs.

### Travel with your pet

There is nothing as exciting and therapeutic as travelling with your pet. Go for a hike, take him to the beach, or just a laidback picnic near the lake. Let your dog get dirty and enjoy every little moment. It is a great way to bond with your pet and relax.

## The moment I realised My mother is my best friend



### Why my mother is my best friend...

Undoubtedly, there can be nobody like a mother! She is our first friend, first teacher and first caregiver. No matter what happens, she stands next to her children in every situation. Whether it is giving relationship advice, supporting us in our hard times or going the extra mile for our happiness, we all have witnessed some instances in life when she has stepped out of the shoes of a mother and has become a friend to comfort us. We asked people to share the incident when they realised their mother is their best friend and here's what they had to say...

### When I broke up

"I had a terrible break-up after dating someone for four years during my college days. My world had come crashing down but I always bore a fake smile at home and pretended to be normal. But she somehow sensed everything and asked me if something was troubling me. I could not stop myself from confessing everything, and she was all ears throughout the conversation. Rather than raising eyebrows and scolding me, she comforted me with her warm smile. Surprisingly, she gave me a few useful relationship-related piece of advice and helped deal with the break-up. We have been best friends since then."

### When she asked me to speak up at office

"It happened two years ago. I had a very unprofessional manager at the office, and the person had made my life miserable. Hence, I used to behave grumpy at home and told my mother about it. She advised me to be fearless and raise my concern to our seniors. I was scared thinking I would lose my job and



harm my reputation. But I clearly remember what she advised me that night, "I am there for you, don't worry! Don't let anyone treat you like a doormat." Her words gave me all the confidence I needed and I spoke up at my workplace. Fortunately, the matter was solved and I bounced back to my normal, chirpy self."

### When I had problems in my married life

"I was going through a rough phase in my marriage and did not know with whom I should share my troubles. Finally, I decided to pour my heart out in front of my mother. To my surprise, she comforted me like a friend. Rather than getting anxious about my married life and asking me a barrage of questions, she maintained her calm. She was unbiased in her approach and gave me pragmatic solutions for all the issues I was facing. That day, I added a new best

friend to my list!"

### The day I got my first job

"I had a campus placement and was offered a job with the highest package in my entire batch. It was my first job offer and my happiness knew no bounds. Unfortunately, none of my friends were happy for me and in fact, they all secretly envied me. I was really bogged down (and heartbroken) to see such cold response from my closest buddies. Later, I called to share the news with my mother and her reaction made my day! I could sense pride and excitement in her voice, and we chatted for an hour. That day I realised I had a best friend at home."

### During my board exams

"I was really stressed during my 12th standard pre-board exams. I was not performing well, and there was always a pressure to get admission in a good college. My mother became my best friend during those days. She always inspired me to think positive and told me that everything would fall into place if I give my best shot. She confessed how she struggled during her board exams and managed to score enough marks in Mathematics to pass the exam! Thanks to her motivation, I scored a whopping 89 per cent in Commerce, a subject that was no less than a nightmare for me."





## Quadrant Future Tek IPO Day 2: Check latest subscription, GMP and price band

**NEW DELHI.** The Quadrant Future Tek IPO, which opened for subscription on January 7, witnessed strong investor interest, with the issue fully subscribed within hours.

As of 11 am on Day 2, the IPO had been subscribed over 24 times. Retail investors drove the momentum, with the retail portion subscribed 78.58 times, while the non-institutional investor (NII) category saw 36.31 times subscription. The Rs 290-crore IPO is a completely fresh equity issue of 1 crore shares. Investors can bid for the public issue at a price band of Rs 275-290 per share, with a minimum lot size of 50 shares. The bidding window for the IPO will remain open until January 9.

The grey market premium (GMP) for Quadrant Future Tek IPO stood at Rs 210 as of Wednesday, signalling a premium of approximately 73% over the issue's upper price band of Rs 290. While GMP is not an accurate market listing indicator, it reflects positive sentiment in the unofficial market.

### OTHER IPO DETAILS

The IPO's strong response is backed by the company's potential to benefit from robust growth in the Indian specialty cable and train control system markets. Analysts have recommended subscribing to the issue, citing fair valuations and the company's strategic position. Quadrant Future Tek specialises in developing next-generation Train Control and Signaling Systems under the Indian Railways' KAVACH project. It also manufactures specialty cables for railway and naval defence sectors.

The IPO proceeds will fund long-term working capital needs, capital expenditure, loan repayments, and general corporate purposes. The allotment is scheduled for January 10, with the listing expected on January 14.

## Explained: Why Indo Farm Equipment share price rose over 7% in early trade

**NEW DELHI.** Shares of Indo Farm Equipment gained momentum on Wednesday, rising over 7% to hit an intraday high of Rs 292.30 in early trade. The surge follows the company's strong stock market debut in the previous session. However, the early gains were short-lived as profit booking pulled the share price down within an hour. By 10:39 am, the stock was trading at Rs 276.50, just 1.39% higher than its previous closing price of Rs 272.70. On January 7, Indo Farm Equipment's shares closed with a premium of over 27% against the issue price of Rs 215. The stock opened at Rs 258.40 on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), reflecting a 20.18% premium. It surged 33.44% during the session to hit Rs 286.90 before closing at Rs 272.70, marking a gain of 26.83%. On the NSE, the stock debuted at Rs 256, up 19%, and ended the day at Rs 273.69, a 27.29% gain.

The Rs 260-crore initial public offering (IPO) of Indo Farm Equipment received an overwhelming 227.57 times subscription on its final bidding day. Priced in the range of Rs 204-215 per share, the IPO comprised a fresh issue of 86 lakh equity shares and an offer for sale (OFS) of 35 lakh shares by promoter Ranbir Singh Khadwalia. Proceeds from the IPO will be used to expand the company's manufacturing capacity for pick-and-carry cranes, repay debt, and enhance its capital base by investing in its NBFC subsidiary, Barota Finance. Indo Farm Equipment is a leading manufacturer of tractors, pick-and-carry cranes, and other farm equipment, which has positioned it for growth in India's agricultural and construction sectors.

## CoinSwitch to launch Rs 600 cr recovery plan for hack victims



**BENGALURU.** Crypto platform CoinSwitch has launched a Rs 600 crore recovery programme to help users impacted by cyberattack on WazirX. It said this will provide an opportunity to users to recoup losses.

A cyberattack on WazirX in July last year led to the theft of about Rs 2,000 crore worth of funds.

"As an industry leader, we wanted to do our bit to help the ecosystem, especially now, when the market has picked up. We don't want crypto investors in India to miss opportunities. This program is an important step to rebuild what was lost," said Ashish Singhal, co-founder, CoinSwitch. The platform, which has over 2 crore users, said the programme will be rolled out in a way that it delivers maximum value to impacted users. Singhal said users who were affected due to cyberattack can recover losses and re-enter the market. Users can upload their WazirX statements for verification and estimate recovery on CoinSwitch Cares portal. It said eligible users can earn up to 10% of the funds deposited through this program over two years.

# How drug-smuggling detection soared in run-up to Christmas, New Year

**NEW DELHI.** The detection and seizure of weed and cocaine by customs officials across Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and other zones surged in the run up to the Christmas and New Year celebrations, with cases even involving foreign nationals concealing narcotics worth crores in their bodies.

Delhi customs reported registered nearly half a dozen cases in December alone involving foreign nationals arriving at Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) from Kenya, Brazil, the Philippines, and other countries hiding over Rs 50 crore worth of cocaine capsules inside their bodies. Just a week before Christmas, Mumbai customs reported multiple large seizures of hydroponic weed (marijuana) worth crores at Mumbai International Airport. The contraband was hidden in breakfast cereal boxes, passenger baggage, food packets, undergarments, and toys. Earlier last month, Mumbai customs destroyed narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (NDPS), such as heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and charas worth Rs 410 crore, weighing nearly 55

kg, at the Common Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage & Disposal Facility in Navi Mumbai. Meanwhile in Chennai, customs reported that the Air Intelligence Unit seized cocaine worth Rs 14.2 crore, weighing 1,424 grams, from a Kenyan woman traveling from Addis Ababa on December 7.

### Modus Operandi

In what could suggest the involvement of organised crime networks, traffickers could be using identical methods to smuggle cocaine into the country since a number of cases emerged where capsules were hid inside human bodies and required medical extraction at Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital. In one such case, Delhi customs intercepted two passengers, a man and a woman, traveling from Sao Paulo, Brazil, via Paris on December 24. Both passengers exhibited "unusual behaviour" after crossing the green channel and "voluntarily" admitted to



Filipino national traveling from Bangkok via Addis Ababa on December 13. The individual had ingested 90 cocaine capsules, weighing 676 grams and valued at Rs 10.14 crore, which were extracted through medical procedures.

### Intelligence Input

While vigilance and "cutting-edge profiling techniques" are being used to prevent the entry of illicit products into the country, customs officials are also relying on intelligence inputs to identify perpetrators.

For instance, on December 19, Mumbai customs intercepted a passenger arriving from Bangkok and seized hydroponic marijuana worth Rs 11.32 crore. The contraband, weighing 11,322 kilograms, was hidden in vacuum-sealed plastic pouches inside the passenger's trolley bag.

carrying illicit goods. Under medical supervision at Safdarjung Hospital, a total of 105 capsules containing 937 grams of cocaine were recovered from the male passenger, while 58 capsules containing 462 grams of cocaine were recovered from the female passenger. The estimated value of the seizure was Rs 20.98 crore, officials said in a statement. Another case involved a

## Budget 2025: Salaried earners up to Rs 15 lakh may get tax relief. Details here

**NEW DELHI.** The upcoming Budget 2025-26 is likely to introduce significant tax benefits aimed at individuals earning up to Rs 15 lakh annually. These measures are expected to increase disposable incomes, spurring consumption in urban areas where most taxpayers reside. Sources indicate that the government is eyeing tweaks to the new income tax regime, introduced in FY 2020-21, which has attracted over 70% of taxpayers due to its simplified structure and regular enhancements.

### PROPOSED CHANGES IN TAX STRUCTURE

Currently, under the new regime, income up to Rs 3 lakh is tax-free, while earnings between Rs 3 lakh and Rs 6 lakh are taxed at 5%, Rs 6-9 lakh at 10%, Rs 9-12 lakh at 15%, Rs 12-15 lakh at 20%, and above Rs 15 lakh at 30%. A standard deduction of Rs 75,000 ensures that incomes up to Rs 7.75 lakh are tax-free.

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lakh at 30%. A standard deduction of Rs 75,000 ensures that incomes up to Rs 7.75 lakh are tax-free. The changes aim to provide relief to urban taxpayers, who face rising inflation and form the bulk of the consumption-driven economy. Experts believe that revising tax slabs by raising thresholds by Rs 1 lakh each could significantly lower tax burdens, encouraging higher spending.

Sudhir Kapadia, EY India Tax & Regulatory Services partner, while speaking to Financial Express, stated,

"Majority of income taxpayers live in urban areas where most of the consumption also takes place. Given that inflation is hurting people in the lower income strata, each IT slab can be raised by 1 lakh each."

He added, "To boost consumption, especially in urban areas (where the majority of income taxpayers reside), expanding slabs at lower and middle-income levels, that is, up to 20% tax bracket should be considered."

### RISING TAX REVENUES SUPPORT REFORMS

With personal income tax collections rising 25% to Rs 7.41 lakh crore during April-November FY25, the government is in a strong position to implement these reforms. Unlike corporate taxes, personal tax receipts have consistently surpassed targets, providing fiscal space for relief measures. The anticipated changes could be a game-changer, delivering much-needed relief to taxpayers while stimulating economic activity. If implemented, Budget 2025-26 could mark a win-win for individuals and the broader economy alike.

## Sensex, Nifty open lower amid weak sentiments; Reliance jumps 2%

**NEW DELHI.** Benchmark stock market indices fell on Wednesday as government data estimated economic growth in FY25 to decelerate to 6.4%, much lower than the 8.2% in FY24. The S&P BSE Sensex was down 141.64 points to 78,057.47 at 10:09 am, while the NSE Nifty50 was trading 42.60 points lower at 23,665.30. All the other broader market indices were also trading in the red as the situation remains volatile on Dalal Street. High-weightage Nifty IT, Nifty Bank and Nifty Financial were all trading in negative territory. However, shares of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL)

rose over 2% and helped counter the negative trend.

The top five gainers on the Nifty50 were Reliance Industries Limited, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, ONGC, Axis Bank and BPCL. On the other hand, the top losers were Trent, Shriram Finance, Titan, BEL and Adani Ports. Dr. V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services also highlighted that the trend of strong US macros weakening emerging markets is continuing. "The US 10-year bond yield has spiked to 4.67% on better-than-expected jobs numbers and indications of the services sector

doing very well. This means the Fed may hold rates in January leading to further strengthening of the dollar and rising bond yields," he said.

Vijayakumar added that the fall out of this on the Indian macros is that the RBI may hold rates in February against the market expectation of a cut. "In this macro setting, FIIs are likely to continue selling, putting pressure on the market. Large caps, despite fair valuations, may continue to be on the defensive," he said and advised investors to take a slightly long-term view of the market and buy large caps in financials, IT, pharmaceuticals and select autos.

## BP beats Shell to win bid to operate ONGC's Mumbai High fields

**ONGC sought bids from firms with annual revenue of at least USD 75 billion, according to the tender document.**

**NEW DELHI.** BP Plc has won a bid to operate ONGC's giant Mumbai High oil and gas field by offering up to 60 per cent increase in output over baseline, the state-owned firm said on Wednesday. State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) had in June last year floated a tender seeking foreign partners to reverse declining output at its flagship Mumbai High fields, offering a share of revenue from incremental production plus a fixed fee but not any equity stake.

The tender attracted two bidders - BP and Royal Dutch Shell. After the bid evaluation process, BP Exploration (Alpha) Ltd, a wholly-owned step-down subsidiary of BP Plc, UK has been selected as the technical service provider (TSP). "ONGC said in a stock exchange filing. "The TSP will review the field performance and identify improvements in reservoir, facilities and wells to enhance the production from Mumbai High field. The TSP has indicated a

substantial increase in oil plus oil equivalent gas production (up to 60 per cent) from baseline production levels (reputed third-party vetted production estimates with natural decline) over 10 years contract period." ONGC said it had issued an international competitive bidding (ICB) tender on June 1, 2024 to engage a Technical Services Provider (TSP) for Mumbai High Field with expertise in managing complex mature reservoirs and implementing advanced recovery technologies and best operational practices. Through this ICB tender, the company invited bids from international operators with proven technical expertise, financial strength, and a track record in similar projects. ONGC sought bids from firms with annual revenue of at least USD 75 billion, according to the tender document. The TSP would have to do a comprehensive review of the field performance and identify improvements as well as implement suitable technological interventions and practices for improving production and recovery, it said. Bidders were asked to quote quarterly incremental production they can enable over the 10-year contract period as well as the percentage share of the revenue they want from the sale of oil and gas produced over and above the baseline production.

ONGC did not disclose the bid details.

The TSP, which was selected on the basis of one offering the highest incremental production and the lowest revenue share, will also be paid a fixed service fee for its efforts, the document said.

The Mumbai High field (previously Bombay High field) - India's most prolific oil field - lies some 160-kilometer in the Arabian Sea off the Mumbai coast.



It was discovered in February 1974 and started production on May 21, 1976. The field hit a peak of 4,76,000 barrels of oil per day and 28 billion cubic meters of gas in 1989 and has since seen a gradual decline in output. It is currently producing 1,34,000 bpd of oil and 13 bcm (less than 10 million standard cubic meters per day) of gas - accounting for almost 38 per cent of India's production and 14 per cent of consumption. ONGC believes the field

still has a balance reserve of 80 million tonnes (610 million barrels) of oil and over 40 bcm of gas and hence needs partners who can help tap them.

With the field seeing a steady decline in output, a stake sale had been considered on at least two occasions in recent years. A high-level committee headed by the then Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar in late 2018 considered "transferring" western offshore oil and gas fields of Mumbai High as also some fields in Mumbai offshore, Assam, Rajasthan, and Gujarat to private/foreign companies.

But that plan met with strong opposition from ONGC and some quarters within the government, three sources with knowledge of the matter said.

While ONGC opposed giving away on a platter to private/foreign sector what it discovered after years of toil and spending billions of dollars over the last four decades, some in government were not convinced by the incremental potential toyed with to get the proposal through, they said, adding that it wasn't clear how the incremental output numbers were arrived at in the absence of any real basin or field study by the panel.



## NEWS BOX

## Neymar says 2026 World Cup will be his last; hints at reunion with Messi, Suarez

Brazilian football star Neymar has announced that the FIFA 2026 World Cup will be his last opportunity to compete on football's biggest stage. While injuries have limited his impact at Al-Hilal in Saudi Arabia, Neymar remains determined to represent Brazil and is optimistic about earning a spot in the squad for the tournament, which will be jointly hosted by Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Brazil currently sit fifth in the South American World Cup qualifiers, with six matches left to secure a top-six spot for automatic qualification. Neymar, sidelined since October 2023 due to a ruptured ACL and meniscus, remains hopeful about contributing to his national team's campaign. The 32-year-old forward, who recently became Brazil's all-time top scorer with 79 goals, described the upcoming World Cup as his "last shot" at glory. Speaking to CNN, Neymar said, "I will try, I want to be there. I will do everything I can to be part of the national team. This will be my last World Cup, my last shot, my last chance, and I will do everything I can to play in it."

## REUNION WITH MESSI?



Neymar's time at Al-Hilal has been marred by injuries, limiting him to just seven appearances since his move from Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) for a reported fee of €90 million in 2023. His contract with the Saudi Pro League club runs until June 2024, but Neymar hinted at future possibilities, including a move to Major League Soccer (MLS) and a reunion with former Barcelona teammates Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez at Inter Miami. Neymar, Messi, and Suarez famously formed one of football's most celebrated attacking trios, leading Barcelona to a historic treble in 2015 before Neymar's record-breaking transfer to Paris Saint-Germain for €222 million (\$230.39 million) in 2017.

Reflecting on the prospect of reuniting with his friends, Neymar said, "Obviously, playing again with Messi and Suarez would be incredible. They are my friends, we still speak to each other. It would be interesting to revive this trio. I'm happy at Al-Hilal, I'm happy in Saudi Arabia, but who knows. Football is full of surprises."

## Sam Konstas admits provoking Jasprit Bumrah in Sydney Test: It was my fault

New Delhi. Australia's Sam Konstas admitted to provoking Jasprit Bumrah on Day 1 of the fifth Test in Sydney, a move that ultimately backfired when the Indian pacer dismissed Usman Khawaja on the last delivery of the day. With 15 minutes left in the day's play, Australian openers Usman Khawaja and Konstas faced the daunting task of surviving against Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj on a lively SCG track. A minor interruption from Khawaja, who stepped away to slow things down, seemingly irked Bumrah. However, it was Konstas at the non-striker's end who escalated the tension by engaging in a verbal exchange with the Indian stand-in captain. The heated moment ended with the umpire's intervention. On the very next delivery,



Bumrah dismissed Khawaja with a sharp delivery that caught the edge, sending the Indian team into wild celebrations. Bumrah then stepped toward Konstas in celebration but refrained from further escalation.

Reflecting on the incident, Konstas admitted his role in the sequence of events. Speaking to Triple M, he said, "I didn't get too fazed. Unfortunately, Uzi got out. He was trying to buy some time. It was probably my fault, but it happens. It's cricket. Credit to Bumrah for the wicket, but overall, it was a great team performance."

Konstas was a polarising figure in his debut series. From riling up Bumrah to theatrically egging on a crowd of 90,000 after a maiden half-century, the teenager has left his mark. His audacity was further highlighted in Melbourne, where he reverse-ramped Bumrah for four, setting the tone for a memorable debut series. However, his antics haven't always been welcomed. Virat Kohli's shoulder charge in the previous Test aimed at Konstas sparked widespread criticism and earned Kohli a fine.

"No, I was very calm. I was talking to my parents and teammates. Uzi (Khawaja) mentioned my adrenaline was pumped when batting, but I didn't feel it. Still, it was a great debut, and I'm happy with two wins."

## Two-tier Test cricket system proposal fair South Africa great Graeme Smith reacts

**Former South Africa captain Graeme Smith said teams like South Africa, West Indies and Sri Lanka need to be strong to ensure Test cricket remains competitive. The legendary cricketer expressed concerns about the reportedly proposed idea of a two-tier system for the traditional format.**

New Delhi. Legendary South African cricketer Graeme Smith has expressed concerns about the idea of a two-tier system for Test cricket—an idea reportedly under discussion by cricket powerhouses India, Australia, and England, alongside newly elected International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman Jay Shah. Smith pointed out that no other sport limits competition to just the top three teams, while also stressing the importance of ensuring well-matched

contests in Test cricket. Legendary South African cricketer Graeme Smith has expressed concerns about the idea of a two-tier system for Test cricket—an idea reportedly under discussion by cricket powerhouses India, Australia, and England, alongside newly elected International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman Jay Shah. Smith pointed out that no other sport limits competition to just the top three teams, while also stressing the importance of ensuring well-matched contests in Test cricket. "I also do feel for the ICC. I was just looking at a note this morning about how much England and India are playing each other over the next period, and Australia and vice versa. It gets extremely hard for the other nations... India are probably the best because they are commercially so reliable for the other nations. But where do you find the top three nations playing each other all the time? And you can only imagine in the next FTP cycle how that's been tied up in the background," Smith said during an appearance on Sky Cricket.



"How does the ICC create a structure that's fair in the top three's eyes? I think what world cricket needs is South Africa to be strong, the West Indies to be strong, and Sri Lanka to improve. Otherwise, can you see a world where there are only three nations playing cricket in the future?" he added.

## DO WHAT YOU HAVE GOT TO DO: SMITH

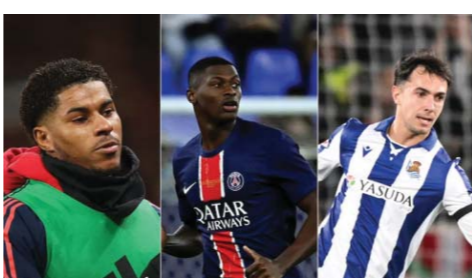
Former cricketers like Ravi Shastri and Michael Vaughan have endorsed the idea, saying Test cricket needs more competitive contests for its survival. The recent blockbuster between India and

Australia, which drew record crowds in Australia, was a great advertisement for the longest format of the game. The former South African captain, who played a pivotal role in the team's dominance in Test cricket during the last decade, emphasised the need for all teams to prioritise the format. He also highlighted South Africa's success in the current World Test Championship (WTC) cycle as an example. "My answer to that would be, we [South Africa] are in the World Test Championship (WTC) final; we've got a chance to win the mace. I think that's the key," he stated. "You've got to do what you've got to do, and South Africa have done that. I think over the last couple of years, their win percentages are actually pretty decent if you go and look over a period of time."

For the first time in history, South Africa reached the WTC final, finishing the 2023-25 cycle at the top of the points table. They are set to face Australia in the final at Lord's in London this June.

## Premier League: 7 potential January transfer deals to watch out for

New Delhi. The January transfer window has long been a source of excitement and intrigue for Premier League fans, known for delivering unexpected twists and marquee signings. While the 2024 window unfolded with little fanfare globally, 2025 promises to reignite the buzz, especially in England's top flight, where key clubs look poised to make strategic moves. Manchester United, eager to rectify their early-season struggles, is expected to be active, with rumors swirling about high-profile arrivals. Liverpool, in the midst of a title race, may seek to fortify their midfield further, ensuring they remain in contention. Meanwhile, Manchester City, grappling with injuries and a packed fixture list, could dive into the market to bolster their squad depth for a grueling campaign. The stakes couldn't be higher, with the second half of the season likely to determine the fortunes of many. From potential big-money arrivals to surprise exits, the Premier League's January dealings seem destined to deliver



drama, leaving fans glued to the headlines as their clubs plot crucial reinforcements. Marcus Rashford's uncertain future at Manchester United has become a hot topic this transfer window. The England star, sidelined by manager Ruben Amorim since December, recently returned for a surprise appearance against Newcastle United but remains on the fringes. With three years left on his £325,000-a-week contract, few clubs can afford Rashford outright. Borussia Dortmund and AC Milan are exploring loan options with a purchase

clause, while PSG also looms as a potential destination. A move could offer Rashford the chance to revive his form and escape Old Trafford's recent turbulence.

## Victor Osimhen - Manchester United/Chelsea

Victor Osimhen has emerged as a potential target for Manchester United in the upcoming January transfer window. The Nigerian forward, on loan at Galatasaray, has been in remarkable form, netting nine goals and assisting three in just 11 Super Lig appearances. While Napoli retain control over the 22-year-old's future, they could recall him next month to facilitate a permanent transfer. Manchester United reportedly view Osimhen as a prime candidate to strengthen their attack and are optimistic about agreeing to personal terms. However, Napoli's €75 million asking price could prove to be a stumbling block in sealing the deal. United's interest underscores their determination to secure dynamic young talent as they aim to enhance their offensive options.

## Didier Deschamps to step down as France manager after 2026 FIFA World Cup

Didier Deschamps, France's longest serving national team coach, will not seek to renew his contract which expires in 2026, the French soccer federation (FFF) told Reuters on Tuesday. Deschamps' deal runs until after the next World Cup, for which Les Bleus have yet to qualify. The 56-year-old took over from fellow 1998 World Cup winner Laurent Blanc in 2012 and led Les Bleus to the World Cup title in 2018, two years after reaching the European Championship final on home soil. Didier Deschamps, France's longest serving national team coach, will not seek to renew his contract which expires in 2026, the French soccer federation (FFF) told Reuters on Tuesday. Deschamps' deal runs until after the next World Cup, for which Les Bleus have yet to qualify. The 56-year-old took over from fellow 1998 World Cup winner Laurent Blanc in 2012 and led Les Bleus to the World Cup title in 2018, two years after reaching the European Championship final on home soil. A defensive midfielder nicknamed 'the water carrier' by Eric Cantona, Deschamps was a

## Sam Konstas reveals surprise chat with 'legend' Virat Kohli after MCG drama

New Delhi. Young Australian opener Sam Konstas has revealed his surprise post-match exchange with Indian batting great Virat Kohli following their fiery encounter during the high-octane Boxing Day Test. Despite the heated moments on the field, Konstas revealed a heartwarming post-match exchange with Kohli and reflected on the lessons from his fiery showdown with India's ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah. The Boxing Day Test was a spectacle from the outset, with 19-year-old Konstas standing his ground against Bumrah, who was in scintillating form. Konstas stunned the crowd with audacious ramp shots, scoring 34 of his 60 runs off Bumrah and proving his mettle on cricket's grand stage. The confrontation escalated when an on-field collision between Konstas and Kohli led to a heated verbal exchange, intensifying the already charged atmosphere. "I had a little chat after the game telling him that I idolise him, and it's obviously a huge honour playing against him," Konstas told News Corp. "He just had that presence about him...[and] he was very down to earth. A

lovely person, just wishing me all the best. I've idolised him from a young age and he's a legend of the game." Konstas described Kohli as "down to earth" and revealed that the Indian stalwart wished him well for the upcoming Sri Lanka tour. "He was very kind

sought a reliable partner for Usman Khawaja at the top of the order, turning to young Sam Konstas for the final two matches of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Konstas rewarded their faith with a scintillating debut, scoring a stroke-filled 60 off just 65 balls. His



and wished me all the best. He even said he hoped I did well if I got selected for the Sri Lanka series. My whole family loves Virat, and he has been my idol from a young age. He's truly a legend of the game."

After David Warner's retirement, Australia

audacious knock included stunning ramp shots that saw him dispatch Jasprit Bumrah for a six and a four, leaving the Indian pacer visibly surprised. Konstas' aggressive approach not only rattled the Indian bowling attack but also sparked heated exchanges with Indian players, particularly Virat Kohli and Bumrah.

Konstas' performance in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy showcased his potential, with 113 runs in four innings at a strike rate of over 81. His standout 60-run knock against Bumrah's fiery spells highlighted his fearless approach. Konstas also made significant contributions during Australia's ICC U19 World Cup 2024 triumph and the preceding Australia A series, underlining his rise as a promising talent in Australian cricket.



winning machine and under his guidance as coach, France were at times boringly efficient and at others brilliant, beating Argentina 4-3 in the 2018 World Cup round of 16 and Croatia 4-2 in the final.

While Deschamps' side has boasted the thrilling attacking talent of Kylian Mbappe, his teams have also shown grit and unmatched defensive ability when it mattered most.

It is uncertain who will succeed him but Zinedine Zidane is the heavy favourite for the job. "It's a wise decision. I didn't send anything and I won't send anything (to Zidane). But of course we all hope it will be him after 2026," Christophe Dugarry, a former teammate of both Zidane and Deschamps and one of the latter's most vocal critics, told RMC Radio.

## Mikel Arteta blames Carabao Cup ball for Arsenal's 0-2 loss to Newcastle United

**Mikel Arteta believes Arsenal's inability to adjust to the Carabao Cup ball played a role in Tuesday's 2-0 semifinal, first-leg loss against Newcastle United.**

New Delhi. Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta made surprising remarks about the match ball following his team's 2-0 defeat to Newcastle United in the Carabao Cup semi-final first leg. The competition uses a Puma ball, unlike the Nike ball used in the Premier League, and Arteta hinted that this difference may have impacted his players' performance. Alexander Isak was pivotal for Newcastle, scoring his 50th goal for the club just before halftime and playing a key role in Anthony Gordon's second-half goal. Despite



Arsenal's dominance in chances—registering 23 shots with only three on target—they failed to capitalise, hitting the woodwork and squandering opportunities, including a glaring miss by

Kai Havertz. Arteta, addressing the missed chances, said, "We also kicked a lot of balls over the bar, and it's tricky that these balls fly a lot, so there are details we can do better." When pressed, he elaborated on the ball's

differences: "It's very different to the Premier League ball. It flies differently, the grip is different as well, so you have to adapt to that." In every other aspect we were the better team but it's about scoring goals," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "Credit to them, they defended their box very well. We had the chances but at this stage, a semi-final, you have to be clinical."

"Isak has been in sensational form recently, netting 10 goals in his last nine appearances for the club. Newcastle United manager Eddie Howe praised the Swedish striker's "electric" first-half display but revealed concerns over a hamstring issue that limited his second-half involvement. Howe expressed hope that Isak would recover in time for the second leg at St James' Park on February 5. "First half he was electric, I thought he played really well. He scored but I just thought his general game was in a really good place," Newcastle manager Eddie Howe said.





# Urvashi Rautela

Gives A Peek Into Backstage Scenes For Daaku Maharaja Song Dabidi Dibidi



The song Dabidi Dibidi from Nandamuri Balakrishna and Urvashi Rautela's upcoming action thriller Daaku Maharaja has set the Internet on fire. The actress' electrifying moves coupled with sizzling looks have fans raving about her, making the song viral among enthusiasts. While the dance number continues to make waves among fans, a video from backstage, showcasing Urvashi practicing the hook step has surfaced online. Her undeniable energy and on-point expressions in the clip are proof of the hard work that she did to nail the choreography and we appreciate that. Shared by Urvashi Rautela on Instagram, the video gave fans a peek into her backstage time with her choreographers of the now viral song. In the clip, we can see her pulling off the difficult dance moves with confidence, grace and perfection worthy of applause. For the practice session, she wore a vibrant pink midi dress featuring full sleeves, a collared neckline, buttoned closure till the waist and a fit and flare silhouette. To ensure comfort, she wore a pair of sneakers but it was her red socks that caught all our attention.

Ever since the song Dabidi Dibidi was released, social media users have been questioning the dance moves, calling them 'cringe'. Before this, social media users also highlighted the age difference between the protagonists of the film Nandamuri Balakrishna and Urvashi Rautela. Addressing the same in an interview, Urvashi earlier told iDivya, "I'm paired opposite Balakrishna garu, and between us, the age gap is... He's in his 60s or 70s, and it's the biggest age gap in the history of Indian cinema."

## Shriya Saran Is A Hands-On Mother To Radha, Video Inside



Shriya Saran is a devoted mother to her adorable daughter Radha, and their bond is simply heartwarming. The actress, often seen cherishing moments with her little one, was recently spotted walking through the streets of Mumbai with Radha. The way she guided her daughter towards a restaurant melted our hearts. In a video that surfaced online, Shriya playfully encouraged Radha to pose for the paparazzi. A little shy, the cute munchkin was reluctant to do so.

The video opens with Shriya Saran and her daughter Radha getting out of their car and making their way towards the restaurant in Bandra. Holding a toy, Radha looked cute in a dress paired with matching sandals. On the other hand, the proud mother donned a red fitted top and printed midi skirt. Her brown espadrilles, open tresses and sleek golden accessories added the finishing touch. Before this, Shriya Saran also shared a heartwarming video of her daughter on Instagram. In the video shared last week, little Radha is seen imitating the iconic dialogue Jhukega Nahi Saala from the blockbuster film Pushpa: The Rise. The film, starring Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna has been a rage with the recent release of its second installment, Pushpa 2, only adding to its fanbase.

Dressed in a cute navy blue outfit, the little bundle of joy perfectly mimics the hand gesture, made by Allu Arjun in the film. Her expressions and confidence as she performed the iconic dialogue are impressive, we must add. In the caption of the video, Shriya wrote, "Radha has got the Pushpa fever on", followed by mentioning that her daughter has not even watched the movie yet.

In terms of work, Shriya Saran last appeared in the Disney+ Hotstar series titled Showtime. Directed by Mihir Desai and Archit Kumar, the web series boasts a star-studded cast including Naseeruddin Shah, Emraan Hashmi, Mahima Makwana, Mouni Roy, Rajeev Khandelwal, Shriya Saran and Vishal Vashishtha. Produced by Karan Johar, Apoorva Mehta, Somen Mishra, and Mihir Desai under the Dharmatic Entertainment banner, the series was released on March 8.

## Janhvi, Khushi Kapoor Drop Fun Video On Loveyapa Song, Boney Kapoor's Cameo Wins Hearts

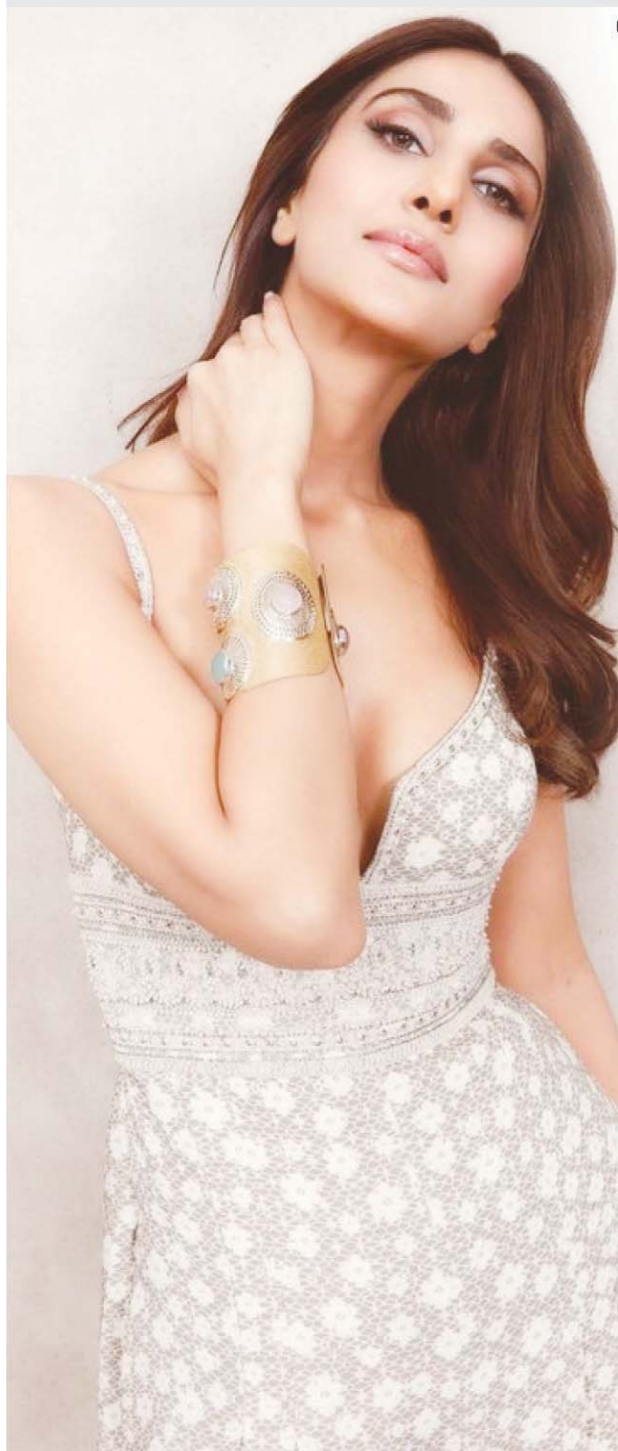


Khushi Kapoor and Junaid Khan will be sharing the screen in their next rom-com Loveyapa. The first song has been released and it has been getting an overwhelming response from the audience. Well, to make it more special Janhvi Kapoor and Khushi dropped a fun video on the song. But what grabbed everyone's attention was Boney Kapoor's cameo. Arjun Kapoor, Varun Dhawan and others also reacted to it. Taking their Instagram handles, Janhvi and Khushi shared a video in which both are seen recreating the hook step of the song. And from the back we can see Boney Kapoor doing 'aaa'. "Nikla tha love karne par papa aagaya #Loveyapa." Arjun Kapoor wrote, "best alapa ever!!!" Varun Dhawan dropped laughing emojis. Aaliyah Kashyap wrote, "too good." Fans called it cute video.

Speaking to ANI, Aamir Khan expressed his admiration for the film and its cast. He said, "I have watched the rough cut. I liked this film. It is very entertaining."

The way our lives have turned out these days due to cellphones, and the interesting things that happen in our life due to this have been shown here. All the actors have done a good job. When I watched the film and saw Khushi (Kapoor), I felt that I was watching Sridevi. Her energy was there, I could see. I am a huge fan of Sridevi." Loveyapa is slated to release on February 7, 2025. Directed by Advait Chandan, who previously helmed Laal Singh Chaddha, the romantic comedy is produced by Phantom Studios and AGS Entertainment, with global distribution by Zee Studios. Touted as a heartwarming modern love story, the film promises lively music, stunning visuals, and unforgettable performances.

Reportedly, Loveyapa is a remake of the 2022 Tamil hit Love Today, which was directed by and starred Pradeep Ranganathan. The film explores how modern relationships are shaped by the omnipresence of technology, a theme that resonates with today's audiences. The first leg of the shoot wrapped in Mumbai, followed by a schedule in Delhi, where Junaid and Khushi filmed key sequences. With their chemistry already sparking excitement, Loveyapa is shaping up to be one of the most anticipated releases of the year.



# Vaani Kapoor

Is All Set To Make 2025 Unforgettable

Bollywood actress Vaani Kapoor has multiple projects in her pipeline this year. And it seems she has already begun working. Recently, the actress was spotted outside the Maddock Films production house, which left us wondering about her upcoming collaboration. Reportedly, she has four diverse films in her kitty— Navjot Gulati's Badtameez Gill, Ajay Devgn starrer Raid 2, a romantic comedy Abir Gulaa and Maddock Films' Sarvagunn Sampann. In a video making rounds on the Internet, Vaani Kapoor

was spotted interacting with the paps outside the Maddock Films production house in Santacruz, Mumbai. She was seen waving at the paps and flaunting her radiant smile, which echoes the emotion of the actress that she is content with her work and life. She looked stylish in a black V-neck top layered with a matching-hued jacket and a pair of denim pants. The Shamshera fame accessorised her look with a pair of block heels, subtle makeup, and open hair. She also carried a mini leather arm candy to amp up her style game. Earlier, in an interview with ANI, Vaani Kapoor shared her



excitement about her upcoming projects. She said, "I'm absolutely thrilled about the upcoming cinematic year in 2024, where I'm fortunate to be involved in four diverse projects." The actress further explained, "One of the highlights is Raid 2, a project alongside the legendary Ajay Devgn, promising to be a tremendous learning experience that will undoubtedly enrich my journey as an actor," adding, "Simultaneously, I've embarked on a monumental venture with a top-tier superstar, but unfortunately, the project's announcement is shrouded in secrecy, preventing me from divulging details."

Vaani then went on to talk about her collaboration with Sarvagunn Sampann and said, "Sarvagunn Sampann, a film where I take on the lead role, which is set to hit the screens, offering audiences a glimpse into one of my most challenging multifaceted roles." In Sarvagunn Sampanna, Vaani will be essaying the role of a porn star lookalike, as per ANI. The film is set in the 90s and blends comedy with a fresh perspective on contemporary issues. Not only this, the Khel Khel Mein actress also has an OTT project lined up in her pipeline. She is set to make a web series debut

with Mandala Murders, bankrolled by Yash Raj Films. Talking about the same, in the same conversation, she expressed, "Furthermore, I'm stepping into the world of streaming with YRF's tentpole series of the year, Mandala Murders, helmed by the ingenious Gopi Puthran, known for his work on Mardaani 2 (also the writer of Mardaani)," adding, "The anticipation is high and I'm eager for audiences to witness the diversity and strength I like to bring as an actor. Here's to crossing my fingers for the success of these exciting releases."