

Mahayuti seat-sharing for BMC polls intensify. Sena, BJP battle it out, NCP missing

Mahayuti has decided to bench Ajit Pawar's NCP, paving the way for only the BJP and Shiv Sena from the alliance to contest in the Mumbai civic body elections, sources told.

New Delhi (Agency)

Seat-sharing talks have begun among the ruling Mahayuti parties in Maharashtra ahead of the all-important Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections on January 15. According to sources, the alliance has decided to bench Ajit Pawar's NCP for the BMC elections and make Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis-led BJP and Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena take the centre stage.

Sources told India Today that the Shiv Sena has demanded 125 of the 227 seats in the Mumbai civic body after fierce brainstorming among the Mahayuti allies. The BJP, however, has termed the demand simply a proposal and a number. A final decision is pending and if needed, BJP sources said, the party will intervene on the matter. Fadnavis's side is hoping to contest in 140 to 150 seats, while a formula is being proposed to give Sena between 80 and 90 seats. But Shinde's side

wants more and is pressing for additional seats, arguing that it has a strong foundation in Mumbai and can win the core Marathi vote bank. A final decision on the seat-sharing will be made by a coordination committee. The alliance's strategy is to capture the BMC, which has been a stronghold of the undivided Shiv Sena.

Besides the BMC elections, the Mahayuti has decided to fight all other local body polls in the state together, following the same formula. Hence, the BJP and Shinde Sena will contest in Mumbai and Thane, while in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad, an alliance featuring the NCP will be decided upon. The seat-sharing picture regarding Nashik remains unclear, and a possibility of a friendly fight has not been ruled out. The Mahayuti, meanwhile,



has set a statewide target of securing of 51 per cent of the vote share across all municipal bodies in Maharashtra. Following internal clashes in the past, the ruling alliance has issued strict instructions to contest all local body elections together. Mahayuti strategists believe practical seat-

sharing and robust coordination among workers will be crucial in posing a strong challenge to the Maha Vikas Aghadi and its INDIA bloc allies.

THACKERAY COUSINS UNITE

Meanwhile, Uddhav Thackeray's Sena and his cousin, Raj Thackeray's MNS, are expected to officially announce their alliance on December 23. The decision came following a meeting between Raj Thackeray and Uddhav Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Tuesday. The filing of nominations for the BMC elections will begin on December 23 as well. According to sources, the delay in officially announcing the alliance between the Thackeray cousins is to prevent potential disappointment and dissent among aspiring candidates from both the Uddhav Sena and MNS, who may not receive tickets due to a fear that they could join the Mahayuti.

CM Rekha Gupta Inaugurates Metro Museum

The Sikh Times
Simmi Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, 17 December 2025

The Chief Minister of Delhi, Rekha Gupta, yesterday inaugurated the state-of-the-art Delhi Metro Museum at the Supreme Court Metro Station. On the occasion, the Chief Minister lauded the Metro's contribution to the environment and public transport, stating that the Metro has played a significant role in reducing the number of private vehicles on Delhi's roads and in strengthening pollution control efforts. She congratulated the Metro team and recalled that when former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee approved the Delhi Metro project, few believed that a metro system in India would achieve such widespread success.

Cabinet Minister of the Delhi Government Dr. Pankaj Kumar Singh, Managing Director of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Dr. Vikas Kumar, and other senior officials were present at the event. The museum vividly showcases the 30-year journey of the Delhi Metro, India's most advanced urban transport system. The Chief Minister said that the Metro has played a vital role in maintaining a healthier environment in Delhi and in

modernising the city's transport system. Recalling Vajpayee's Metro vision, she said that today the capital has an approximately 400-kilometre-long Metro network with 289 stations, serving 3.5-3.7 million passengers every day. This achievement has made travel and daily life significantly easier for the people of Delhi.



The Chief Minister reiterated that the Metro has helped reduce the number of private vehicles on Delhi's roads and has made an important contribution to pollution control. She appealed to the public to make greater use of the Metro and other public transport systems so that Delhi can become a cleaner, greener and more sustainably developed city. She said that the Delhi Metro model is a major asset in building a clean, green and self-reliant Delhi. The

Chief Minister added that the inauguration of the Delhi Metro Museum is not only a celebration of the Metro's achievements, but will also serve as a source of inspiration for future generations in the fields of urban transport, engineering and innovation. She said that the Metro has guided Delhi towards becoming a "future-ready city", and through this museum, coming generations will be able to understand its important achievements and journey.

Speaking on the occasion, Delhi's Transport Minister Dr. Pankaj Kumar Singh said that the importance of the Delhi Metro is most keenly felt when one needs to reach a destination quickly, highlighting how accessible commuting in the capital has become. He said that today the Delhi Metro stands as a proud symbol of modern infrastructure in New India and is a milestone in realising the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, inspiring citizens and future generations alike. He added that the museum will document the growth of the Metro as the lifeline of urban life in Delhi.

The newly inaugurated Metro Museum will be open to the public from 19 December 2025, from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. It will remain open from Tuesday to Sunday and will be closed on Mondays and public holidays. The entry fee has been fixed at a nominal amount of ₹10 per person.

'Banned 'Beef' Because Of Title': Shashi Tharoor On Kerala Film Fest Row

Shashi Tharoor has said the original list of films not cleared was longer, and many were cleared after he met I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw

New Delhi (Agency)
Senior Congress leader and Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor has slammed the Centre's decision to block the screening of 19 films at the International Film Festival of Kerala, saying the list suggests an "extraordinary degree of cinematic illiteracy on the part of the bureaucracy".

Tharoor has said the original list of films not cleared for screening was much longer, and many were cleared after he met Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw at the request of Resul Pookutty, Oscar-winning sound designer and chairman of the festival. "To deny clearance to a classic like 'Battleship Potemkin', a 1928 film on the Russian Revolution which has been viewed by literally hundreds of millions around the world (and in India) over the last century, is laughable. Denying permission to some Palestinian films reflects bureaucratic over-cautiousness rather than the cultural breadth of vision that should be involved when it comes to world cinema," Tharoor said in a post on X.



"I have urged both I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and EAM (External Affairs Minister) Dr S Jaishankar to grant expeditious clearance and avoid any further embarrassment in the eyes of the cinema lovers of Kerala, and of the world," Tharoor said.

The Congress leader also spoke to on the issue.

"I really think this is an unfortunate development. Kerala has a very knowledgeable cinematic culture. Clearance has never been an issue before."

"No film should be denied (permission). Some of these films have actually been screened in India before. So it is petty of us to bring in these kinds of considerations. Some of the earlier films that were banned or prevented from getting clearance... it was laughable. There was a film that's 100 years old that is available on YouTube. How can you suddenly say, don't show it in the film festival?" he said. "You have a film called Beef. It is not about cow slaughter. It is actually about a rap artist. They banned it because they saw the title. Our bureaucrats have to develop a more refined sensibility because it is India's image that is at stake," Tharoor said.

Rs 2,185 crore NABARD funding cut has hit farm credit flow: CM Siddaramaiah

The CM pointed out that the cut has led to regional imbalances in fund allocation, particularly impacting constituencies with significant SC/ST populations.

BELAGAVI (Agency)

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday disclosed that the state has suffered a Rs 2,185-crore cut in low-interest National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) funding for 2024-25, dealing a blow to the state's agricultural credit system. While Karnataka was entitled to Rs 5,600 crore from the Centre-backed NABARD, only Rs 3,415 crore has been released so far, the CM informed the Assembly on Tuesday.

Replying to a question raised by Kunigal MLA Dr HD Ranganath during the Question Hour, Siddaramaiah said that the funding shortfall has severely affected the disbursal of subsidised farm loans through Primary Agricultural Credit Cooperative Societies across several Assembly constituencies.

The CM pointed out that the cut has led to regional imbalances in fund allocation, particularly impacting constituencies with significant SC/ST populations. He said that Madhugiri has a 26% SC/ST population, while Kunigal has 8%, and admitted that disparities have crept into NABARD fund distribution. Assuring corrective action, the CM promised that the imbalance would be rectified in the coming year, with adequate NABARD allocation ensured for Kunigal.

Providing loan disbursal details, Siddaramaiah said that in 2024-25, the Tumakuru DCC Bank set a target of extending Rs 40.33 crore in short-term crop loans to 14,850 farmers in Kunigal taluk. Of this, 10,833 farmers have already received Rs 38.40 crore. Additionally, 11 farmers were extended Rs 1.58 crore in medium- and long-term agricultural loans. For 2025-26, a target has been set to provide Rs 40 crore in short-term loans to 13,750 farmers.

Modi, Shah must resign: Kharde on court refusal to take cognisance of ED complaint in National Herald case

New Delhi (Agency)

The Congress on Tuesday welcomed a trial court's refusal to take cognisance of the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) complaint in the National Herald case, describing the development as a vindication of its long-held stand that the case was driven by political vendetta. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the objective of the case had been to "harass the Gandhi family" and target the Opposition.

"We welcome the judgment. Truth always triumphs," Kharge said, adding that the case had been pursued with a "vindictive

mindset". "I want to say that after this judgement Modi and Shah should resign because it is like a slap on their face. They should give resignation as they should not harass people like this," Kharge said at the press conference, which he addressed with party leaders K C Venugopal, Abhishek Singhvi, Jairam Ramesh, and Pawan Khera. "They should know that if they do such things people will not tolerate it," he said. He alleged misuse of central investigative agencies for political ends. Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal

echoed the charge of vendetta politics and said the party cadre across the country was agitated over what it viewed as sustained targeting of Opposition leaders. "We will expose vendetta politics. The entire Congress cadre is agitated and will demonstrate its strength across India," he said. A Delhi court on Tuesday declined to take cognisance of the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) money laundering charges against Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, along with five others, in the National Herald case. The Court said the Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing has already lodged an FIR in the case, and hence it will be premature to adjudicate on ED's arguments.



"The 2 Gandhis Are Fighting": BJP Minister's Wild Rahul-Priyanka Rift Claim

Gandhi siblings Rahul and Priyanka are known to back each other in politics and in life

New Delhi (Agency)
Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu has claimed a rift between Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, and his sister and Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Bittu, who was earlier with the Congress and switched to the BJP before the general election last year, has claimed that Rahul left for Germany during the Parliament's Winter Session because he was upset with the comparison between his and Priyanka's speeches in the House. "The two Gandhis are fighting. I have to come to know that people have compared the speeches of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi in the House. This has upset Rahul Gandhi, so he has fought with the family and the party

and left," Bittu told this morning. No Congress leader has responded to these wild claims yet. The Gandhi siblings are known to back each other in politics and in life. In fact, before the Vande Mataram debate, Rahul Gandhi told the media, "Priyanka ka bhaashan sunna (listen to Priyanka's speech)". Priyanka, the elder sister, regularly defends Rahul against the BJP's political attacks. In fact, she had also responded to the questions surrounding his ongoing trip to Germany. "(Prime Minister) Modi spends almost half his working time outside the country. Why are they raising questions on the Leader of the Opposition travelling," she told the

media. While Rahul Gandhi has been an MP for over two decades now, Priyanka Gandhi was elected to Lok Sabha for the first time in the general election last year. Gandhi is in Berlin from December 15 to 20 to attend an event of the Indian Overseas Congress. The ongoing Winter Session of Parliament ends on December 19. The Indian Overseas Congress has described Rahul Gandhi's trip as a significant outreach initiative aimed at strengthening the party's global engagement. "We are honoured to welcome Shri Rahul Gandhi Ji, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Member of Parliament, who will be engaging with the Indian diaspora in Berlin on December 17, 2025. The event will bring together all Presidents of the Indian Overseas Congress from across Europe, providing a unique platform to discuss key issues with Shri Rahul Gandhi, particularly on strengthening the Congress Party, NRI issues and further exploring.



News box

Absent, dead, shifted: Ahead of SIR draft roll, Ghaziabad flags 10 lakh voters as deleted; Noida lists 4.5 lakh**Noida.(Agency)**

Before the final draft electoral roll is published on Dec 31, after completion of the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise, Ghaziabad and Noida administrations have uploaded polling station-wise lists of absent, shifted, dead or duplicate (ASD) voters, allowing residents to check whether their names figure in the category.

The list has been prepared based on verification data from booth-level officers (BLOs) till Dec 10.

According to officials, Ghaziabad has more than 10 lakh voters marked as absent, shifted or dead during the enumeration process, while Noida has 4.5 lakh voters in this category. These are names that will be deleted in the draft roll if no objections are filed.

Ghaziabad additional DM (revenue) Saurabh Bhatt, who is also the deputy district election officer, said the list was uploaded in a searchable format on the district's website to ensure transparency and better public access. "The absent list also includes voters who were found to have shifted from their enlisted addresses, have died or appear as duplicate entries during verification.

"If a registered and eligible voter finds their name on the absent list, they must contact their BLO, fill the enumeration form, submit it and obtain an acknowledgement receipt," he said.

In Noida, the list of ASD voters has been uploaded on the district's official website. "The objective is to allow voters to verify their status and correct any discrepancies identified during house-to-house verification," additional district election officer Atul Kumar said.

Till Dec 12, Noida accounted for the highest share of ASD entries within the district. Of its 7.7 lakh voters, 27% have been flagged: over 1% as deceased, 11% as untraceable, 13% as permanently shifted and more than 1% as duplicate entries. In Dadri, which has 7.3 lakh voters, 19.5% fall in the ASD bracket, while Jewar has marked 19% of its 3.7 lakh voters in the category.

ECI data shows, over 75% enumeration forms have been digitised and 86% of voters have been mapped with the

YEIDA plans Rs 22 lakh topographic survey for industrial sectors abutting Noida airport**Noida.(Agency)**

To streamline infrastructure planning, YEIDA will undertake a detailed topographical survey of newly developing industrial sectors near the Noida International Airport. An expression of interest has been issued to appoint a consultant for the exercise, officials said. The survey will cover industrial sectors 8A to 8F, among the most critical upcoming zones in the YEIDA region. Located close to the airport, these sectors are expected to emerge as major industrial and logistics hubs, making accurate ground-level mapping essential ahead of large-scale development.

Officials said the exercise will involve comprehensive on-site mapping of land parcels, road networks, drains, water bodies, vacant plots, ongoing construction and other physical features. The aim is to create a precise snapshot of existing conditions, identify infrastructure gaps and enable phased, need-based execution of development works. "The survey will give us a clear understanding of ground realities in these fast-developing sectors. With accurate data, infrastructure projects can be planned better and implemented without avoidable delays," a senior YEIDA official said.

The estimated cost of the survey is around Rs 22 lakh and consultant firms have been invited to submit bids by December 26. The authority said the findings will serve as a critical base document for future development, helping translate plans into on-ground execution more efficiently. YEIDA has also initiated the process of preparing a comprehensive service master plan for 46 newly notified sectors under Master Plan 2041. A separate RFP has been floated to engage a consultant for this assignment.

Clean air funds gather dust as Noida spends only 16% in 3 years**Noida.(Agency)**

As the city's air quality plunges into hazardous territory every now and then and threatens public health, an RTI query has revealed that Noida Authority has spent just 16% of funds allocated to it under National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) over the past three years.

In response to the Right To Information (RTI) query filed by Amit Gupta — a resident of Prateek Wisteria in Sector 77 — Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) confirmed that between 2022 and 2025, Noida was allotted Rs 55.7 crore for clean air initiatives. The Authority has, however, utilised only Rs 9 crore so far, placing the city among the worst performers in the country for NCAP funds use.

CPCB's reply — dated Dec 3 — also noted that the city's PM10 levels had dropped by 32% since 2017-18. However, residents and experts argued that the progress was far too slow given the city's persistent air quality emergencies. Asked about the dismal use of funds, Noida Authority CEO Lokesh M acknowledged the backlog but insisted that action was now underway. "We have asked the departments to ensure the complete and timely utilisation of funds received under NCAP," he said. SP Singh, general manager (health) at the Authority, disputed the figures. "While the govt allotted Rs 55 crore, only Rs 32 crore was actually released. Of that, we have spent around 80% already," he said, adding that the remaining amount would be utilised soon and updated details shared with the Centre and CPCB.

Despite these assurances, the PRANA dashboard — a portal for monitoring NCAP progress — shows that only Rs 8.9 crore has been spent out of Rs 55.7 crore released for Noida as of Tuesday.

MCG revokes ex-councillor's building plan for home over ownership row in Gurgaon**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

MCG has revoked the sanctioned residential building plan of a house belonging to a former municipal councillor. This action was taken after officials found that the approval was allegedly obtained by "concealing facts" related to property ownership and a pending dispute. According to official orders issued by the planning branch of MCG in June this year, the residential building plan for the house — in Laxmi Garden belonging to Kapil Dua — was approved on June 24, 2024, through the Haryana Online Building Plan Approval System (HOBPAS) portal under the self-certification category. However, after a complainant from Hisar filed a plea with MCG and planning department in Sept 2024, a subsequent examination revealed that information regarding ownership and the legal status of the property was allegedly suppressed at the time of approval. The complaint sought

registration of an FIR, claiming that the use of forged documents to obtain official permissions amounts to a "cognisable offence". The case has been examined by multiple authorities, including the tehsildar, municipal officials and the chief town planner. A senior MCG official said, "We cancelled the building plan after a complaint was filed and we found out that there is a dispute going on between the family members. A counter representation was also given by the former councillor in this case. The revenue ownership of the property is a matter under investigation by the revenue department. The reason further action in terms of demolition has not taken place is because an inquiry into the matter is underway." A letter issued by the MCG town planning department to the house owners said, "It has been observed that you wrongly got approved the said building plan by hiding the facts related to the ownership of the property. An



ownership dispute/court case was involved in this case and you undertook that if any court case or property dispute was found to be involved, the applied building plan would be deemed null and void... you are further directed to remove the construction raised at the site." The

order says that the applicant submitted an undertaking declaring that no court case or ownership dispute was pending. The former councillor said he has now challenged the cancellation of the building plan in Punjab and Haryana high court. Dua said, "It is a deliberate attempt to frame me by a blackmailer, who is a complainant in this case. There are more than 50 houses in my lane, which have violated the building norms. However, no action has been taken against them. I have contested the order in the HC and I am sure to get justice." Later scrutiny revealed that a property dispute was involved, making the approval invalid under Clause 4.7 of the Haryana Building Code, 2017, read with the Haryana Municipal Corporation Act, 1994. As a result, the building plan was revoked with immediate effect and the property owner was directed to remove the construction raised at the site.

Hotel served show-cause notice for violating building norms in Gurgaon**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

The district town planner has issued a show-cause notice to a hotel alleging serious violations of norms.

Bright Star Hotels has been asked to appear before the district town planner (enforcement) — in connection with a hotel-cum-commercial complex in Sikanderpur — "to show cause why coercive action should not be initiated".

The firm has also been asked to submit copies of approved layout and building plans, the occupation certificate and any other permissions or relevant documents in its defence. M/s Bright Star Hotels Pvt Ltd faces "possible demolition, sealing or registration of an FIR if violations are not satisfactorily explained", according to the notice issued under Section 10(2) of the Haryana Development and Regulation of Urban Areas Act, 1975. According to the notice, the town and country planning (Haryana) director had granted change of land use (CLU) permission in Jan 1995 for construction of a hotel-cum-commercial complex over land measuring around 16,000 sq yards, falling in multiple khasra numbers in Sikanderpur Ghosi. The permission was issued in favour of Bright Star Hotels Pvt Ltd, with its registered office in Greater Kailash Enclave-I, New Delhi.

However, enforcement officials have said the company allegedly subdivided the building into multiple units, shops and offices and created third-party rights by selling these units to different persons. The notice says this was done without obtaining the mandatory licence from the DTCP, as required under Section 3 of the Act. Such subdivision, authorities say, amounts to unauthorised development of a commercial colony. The notice explains that Section 3 of the Act mandates that any owner intending to convert land into a colony must apply for and obtain a licence from the director, except in cases specifically exempted under Section 9. It further exempts Section 2(c), which defines a "colony" as land divided into plots or



falsely claimed that Rajaram was intoxicated. They demanded Rs 25,000 for his release before disconnecting the call," police spokesperson Sandeep Kumar said. The brother immediately

alerted the police.

Taking advantage of a slowdown near a turn, Rajaram managed to escape with his phone, though his purse remained with the kidnappers. He later approached the Sector 65 police station with his brother and filed a complaint. An FIR was registered under sections 140(3) (wrongful confinement), 308(2) (extortion), and 3(5) (act done by multiple persons) of the BNS.

The accused were arrested the same day from Baliawas village. They told police that they worked as drivers and had targeted Rajaram after spotting him alone on the road. The vehicle used in the crime belonged to Deepak. The accused were produced before a court on Sunday and sent to two days of police remand. They were remanded to judicial custody on Tuesday.

How a passport forgery ring facilitated international escape for gangsters & their aides**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Haryana Police has requested regional passport officers (RPOs) in Delhi, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Amritsar and Ghaziabad to revoke a total of 77 passports that its investigations showed were issued based on forged documents. Investigators said among those involved in the nexus to have passports issued through forged documents was a Delhi Police SI responsible for passport verification in Ashok Nagar. Of the 77 passports, 46 were issued by Delhi RPO, six by Ghaziabad RPO, 10 in Chandigarh, six in Dehradun, two in Bareilly, five in Amritsar, and two in Lucknow. The network was exposed last year when Haryana Special Task Force (STF) received a tip-off that Ankit Narwal, an aide of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, had obtained a passport using a fake Delhi address and was planning to flee the country. Narwal, who is from Sonipat's Kathura, was arrested and an FIR was registered on Dec 14, 2024 at Baroda police station in Sonipat. As the probe

unfolded, it was found that the Delhi Police SI involved in passport verification in Ashok Nagar was in criminal conspiracy with agents orchestrating the racket. The investigation also revealed involvement of 70-year-old Bijender Kumar Jain, a passport agent from Delhi's Shahdara. He has been accused of facilitating issuance of 43 of the 77 forged passports. Jain charged up to Rs 3 lakh per passport. Investigators found that Jain had a prearranged agreement with the SI. When an applicant approached Jain, he would contact the SI, who then instructed him or her to prepare documents for addresses within his jurisdiction, primarily in East Delhi's Ashok Nagar, to ensure police clearance. The officer charged around Rs 40,000 for providing these addresses and approving verification. To procure forged documents required for the passports, Jain roped in Sunny Kumar from UP's Saharanpur. Sunny produced fake Aadhaar cards, voter IDs, birth certificates, and marksheets of

classes 10 and 12 using CorelDRAW software for Rs 1,500 per document. For counterfeit bank statements, Jain turned to Mohammad Junaid alias Sonu from Shahdara, who also arranged fake rent agreements and address proofs. Based on these papers, Jain submitted passport applications, cops said. Once the passports were dispatched to post offices, Jain and other agents collected them directly from post offices by presenting forged Aadhaar cards of applicants. Investigators also found that in place of postmen, who are supposed to deliver passports to applicants' homes, Jain and his associates went to the post office themselves to retrieve them. Police have arrested Jain, Sunny, from whose computer three folders containing passport details were recovered, and Junaid. Several gangsters exploited the network, said investigators. Narwal, who is previously charged with the 2019 murder of two college students in Chandigarh and facing multiple extortion cases.

Delhi pollution crisis: Govt restricts non-BS VI vehicle entry; commuters slam abrupt move, metro faces extra pressure

96,210 petrol and 41,067 diesel vehicles — comprising about 1.5 lakh BS-III petrol cars and over 36,000 BS-IV diesel vehicles. The city also counts more than 47,000 commercial BS-IV diesel vehicles and over 2,000 BS-III petrol vehicles, along with around 2,200 BS-III and IV buses. In addition, some 92,000 diesel vehicles in Gurgaon have already crossed the 10-year age limit.

The story is similar in Noida, where the ban will affect over 4 lakh vehicles. Out of nearly 10 lakh registered vehicles in the city, 1.4 lakh are BS-III models —

as a single unit. "Lakhs of people from Gurgaon and Faridabad travel to Delhi daily for work and other purposes. This order will obstruct the free flow movement of people," he said. Subhangi Sharma, from Sector 40, echoed the sentiment, criticising the govt for resorting to what she described as "quick fixes" instead of addressing the root causes of pollution. "Putting restrictions on vehicles is the only thing our govt knows when it comes to dealing with pollution," she said.

Noida's assistant regional transport officer, Nand Kumar,

explained that the ban is in line with the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) III, which requires NCR states to restrict BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel vehicles. "Now, Delhi govt has gone a step further and imposed a ban on all categories of vehicles below BS-VI. Traffic police teams have been deployed at all Noida-Delhi borders. Such vehicles will not be allowed to enter Delhi. Violators will be fined and their vehicles seized," he said. Alok Singh, a resident of Greater Noida's Alpha 1, pointed out the lack of alternatives for those affected. "The govt enforces rules and bans old vehicles in a random manner. But what alternative modes of transport are available for people to commute during such bans? Nearly half of the population does not own BS-VI vehicles and will be badly affected. This will also put additional pressure on metro services, which are already overloaded," he said.

Singh, who owns both a BS-IV and a BS-VI vehicle, questioned whether such bans alone can improve air quality, given the multiple factors involved.

In Noida, Rahul Saha from 7X sectors accused the govt of using older vehicles as scapegoats. "It is trying to arm twist people into buying BS-VI cars."

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Govt launches mist spray system at ITO to curb rising air pollution

The Sikh Times

New Delhi: Commuters make their way as water droplets are sprayed through the new mist spray system, installed to curb air pollution, in New Delhi. Tribune Photo: Mukesh Aggarwal Intensifying its campaign against air pollution, the Delhi government on Thursday started the

NAME CHANGE

I hitherto known as AMARJIT SINGH alias AMARJEET SINGH RAWAT S/o RAGHUBIR SINGH RAWAT, R/o House No. 817, Near Traffic Police Station, R K Puram Sect-1, South West, Delhi, R.K.Puram, 500055, Delhi-110022, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as AMARJEET SINGH RAWAT, for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I, MOHAMMAD NAUSHAD S/O Usman Anwar R/O E-11, 25ft Road, Shri ram Colony Delhi 110094, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Mohd Naushad.

NAME CHANGE

I, MUKESH S/o MAHEDER R/o House No-1024, S-Block, Mangal Puri, N Block, North West Delhi, Delhi-110083, have changed the name of my minor son OM SHARMA alias ROUNAK aged 05 years and he shall hereafter be known as ROUNAK.

NAME CHANGE

I, NARESH DEVI wife of JC-676902A, Rank-SUB, NAME-MAJUET SINGH residing at VPO-ISSAPUR, TEHSIL-NAJAFGARH, DIST-SOUTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110073, have changed my name from NARESH DEVI to NARESH KUMARI for all future purposes, in my husband's service record my date of birth wrongfully mentioned as 10/04/1985 instead of my correct date of birth as 10/04/1975. Vide Affidavit dated 17/12/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

NAME CHANGE

I, Sajida @ Shanista W/o Sarfaraz Khan R/o J-Extn., 16 Abdulla House Gali No.12, Ramesh Park, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi-110092 have changed my name to Sajida Khan.

NAME CHANGE

I KM JYOTI RANI KAMBOJ W/O RAJ KUMAR KAMBOJ R/O TOWER-8/408 AURIC CITY HOMES NEAR SPRU BUILDING SECTOR-82 BHATOLA (115) FARIDABAD HARYANA have changed my name to RUCHI for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE

I, Sajida @ Shanista W/o Sarfaraz Khan R/o J-Extn., 16 Abdulla House Gali No.12, Ramesh Park, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi-110092 have changed my name to Sajida Khan.

NAME CHANGE

I, SHALINI AGRAWAL W/O RAVI PRAKASH R/O 136, 3 Rd FLOOR RAM NAGAR KRISHNA NAGAR DELHI-110051 , I have changed my name to SHALINI Permanently for all Future purpose

NAME CHANGE

I ASHAR S/O HAKIM ALI MUNIRI R/O H.NO-X-179, 80 J J COLONY CAMP NO - 1, NANGLOI DELHI-110041, I have changed my name to ASGAR ALI Permanently for all Future purpose

NAME CHANGE

I AKADEM S/O ASGAR ALI R/O H.NO-X-179, 80 J J COLONY CAMP NO - 1, NANGLOI DELHI-110041, I have changed my name to AKADEM MUNIRI Permanently for all Future purpose

NAME CHANGE

I, GAUROO KUMAR S/O MAHENDER SINGH R/O BERI NISFI SOHNA (9) MEWAT HASANPUR HARYANA -122105, I have changed my name to GAFOOR ALI Permanently for all Future purpose

NAME CHANGE

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installation of mist-spray systems across the city. The first system has been set up at ITO, one of the national capital's most polluted hotspots. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta inspected the newly-installed setup and said the government is working on a war footing to tackle every source of pollution. During the visit, the Chief Minister reviewed the technical specifications of

the system and directed officials to ensure the sprays operate as per schedule. "We are committed to permanent dust-free roads in Delhi. Solutions must be effective and accountable," she said, adding that public participation will be a key determinant of success. Cabinet minister Ashish Sood and senior officials were present during the inspection. Gupta said pilot

experiments of mist-spray systems in the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) area have yielded promising results, paving way for large-scale replication. She said over 300 systems are expected to be installed across major hotspots in the coming months. The system, mounted on electricity poles and equipped with high-pressure pumps and ultra-fine nozzles, uses RO-treated water to reduce suspended dust and airborne pollutants. Nine pollution hotspots have been selected in the first phase. The Chief Minister issued directives to all civic agencies, including the Municipal Corporation,

Public Works Department (PWD) and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), for coordinated monitoring and enforcement. She appealed to residents to report pollution-related issues, including

NAME CHANGE

I, KAPIL KAUSHIK S/o VINOD SHARMA, R/o 4594/13, Jai Mata Market, Budh Nagar, Tri Nagar, North West, Delhi, Delhi-110035, 03 years and she shall hereafter be known as LAVISH KAUSHIK.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, for general information that I, TARUN CHAUHAN S/o J S CHAUHAN R/o V-1037, Street No. 15, Near Little Flower Public School, Vijay Park Moujpur, PO: Seelampur, District North East, Delhi, Delhi-110053, declare that name of mine and my father has been wrongly written as TARUN SINGH CHAUHAN in my minor son name YUVRAJ SINGH CHAUHAN aged 16 years in his 10th class educational documents. The actual name of mine is TARUN CHAUHAN which may be amended accordingly.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, for general information that I, KARTAR SINGH S/o Dhan Singh R/o 1/195, Janak Puri, A-Block, Janak Puri, Janakpuri B-1, West, Delhi, Delhi-110058 declare that name of mine and my father has been wrongly written as Kartar Singh and D Singh in my Driving Licence No-DL04 1988036331. The actual name of mine and my father are Kartar Singh and Dhan Singh.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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NEWS BOX

Brazil Senate to debate bill to slash Bolsonaro's jail term amid nationwide protests

BRASILIA. (Agency)

Brazil's Senate will on Wednesday begin debating a bill passed by the lower house of Congress that could slash the jail term of former president Jair Bolsonaro, a move that sparked nationwide protests over the weekend. Bolsonaro, 70, began serving a 27-year prison sentence in November after his conviction for a botched coup bid after his 2022 election loss. After months of jockeying by his supporters in Congress for some sort of amnesty for the far-right leader, the conservative-controlled lower house last week approved a bill that would significantly reduce sentences for several crimes, including coup d'état. This opens up the prospect that Bolsonaro could serve only two years in jail. Under current rules, he is expected to serve about eight years of his sentence in effective incarceration before being eligible for a looser regime under judicial supervision, according to an estimation by the Brasilia Sentencing Enforcement Court. The bill was approved in a chaotic session, which saw a leftist lawmaker forcibly removed from the house by police.

The passage provoked protests in cities across Brazil on Sunday, where demonstrators chanted "no amnesty" and held up banners reading: "Congress, enemy of the people." Political forces are more evenly balanced in the Senate, where several lawmakers have warned they will amend the text of the bill. Bolsonaro is serving his sentence in a special room at a police facility in the capital Brasilia, after a dramatic start to his jail term when he took a soldering iron to his ankle monitoring bracelet while under house arrest.

With the end-of-year recess looming, if the Senate does not approve the bill before Friday, the debate will be postponed until 2026.

Another cop killed in attack on polio vaccination team in Pakistan

PESHAWAR. (Agency)

Unknown gunmen on motorcycles shot and killed a police official and his brother after the officer had completed duty with a polio vaccination team in northwest Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, local police said. The constable had finished his polio duty and was travelling to his village with his brother when the assailants opened fire near the Chwarz Khel area in Lakki Marwat district on Tuesday.

The bodies of Amir Nawaz and Ameer Mohammad, who were siblings of former district councillor Ali Gul, were taken to the district headquarters hospital. Following the incident, a large police contingent arrived at the scene and initiated a search operation



in the area to apprehend the perpetrators.

Later in the evening, funeral prayers for the slain constable and his brother were held, attended by District Police Officer Nazir Khan, Deputy Commissioner Hamidullah Khan, SP Investigation Murad Ali Khan, other senior police and district administration officials, as well as a large number of relatives of the deceased. Earlier in the day, another constable on duty with a polio team and a passerby were also killed by gunmen in the Bajaur district.

AI Romance Blooms As Japan Woman Weds Virtual Partner Of Her Dreams

Okayama, Japan. (Agency)

Music played in a wedding hall in western Japan as Yurina Noguchi, wearing a white gown and tiara, dabbed away her tears, taking in the words of her husband-to-be: an AI-generated persona gazing out from a smartphone screen. "At first, Klaus was just someone to talk with, but we gradually became closer," said the 32-year-old call centre operator, referring to the artificial intelligence persona. "I started to have feelings for Klaus. We started dating and after a while he proposed to me. I accepted, and now we're a couple." Many in Japan, the birthplace of anime, have shown extreme devotion to fictional characters and advances in artificial intelligence carry such ties to new levels of intimacy, prompting debate over the ethics of AI use in romantic matters.

A year ago, Noguchi took ChatGPT's advice about what she said was a fraught relationship with her human fiance and resolved to break off their engagement.

Then, one day this year, she asked ChatGPT on a whim if it was familiar with Klaus, a handsome video game character with a mop of flowing, layered hair. Trial and error eventually captured his way of talking to a tee, said Noguchi, who then fashioned her own version of the character, naming him Lune Klaus Verdure. Previously interviewed by Japanese media using a pseudonym, Noguchi agreed to be identified by her real name. At her wedding ceremony in October, human staff fussed over her gown, hair and make-up, as they would at any traditional event.

Wearing augmented reality (AR) smart glasses, Noguchi faced Klaus on her smartphone placed on a small easel atop a table, and went through the motions of placing a ring on his finger.

Trafficked, exploited, married off: Rohingya children's lives crushed by foreign aid cuts

UKHIYA. (Agency)

In moments when she is alone, when there is a break in the beatings from her husband, the girl cries for the school that was once her place of peace in a world that has otherwise offered her none. Ever since the military in her homeland of Myanmar killed her father in 2017, forcing her to flee to neighboring Bangladesh with her mother and little sisters, the school had protected Hasina from the predators who prowl her refugee camp, home to 1.2 million members of Myanmar's persecuted Rohingya minority. It had also protected her from being forced into marriage. And then one day in June, when Hasina was 16 years old, her teacher announced that the school's funding had been taken away. The school was closing. In a blink, Hasina's education was over, and so, too, was her childhood. With her learning opportunities gone, and her family worried that foreign aid cuts would make their fight for survival in the camps even more perilous, Hasina — along with hundreds of other girls under the age of 18 — was quickly married off. And, just like Hasina, many of the girls are now trapped in marriages with men who

abuse them. "I dreamed of being something, of working for the community," Hasina, now 17, says softly. The Associated Press is withholding her full name to protect her from retaliation by her husband. "My life is destroyed." The sudden and severe foreign aid cuts imposed this year by US President Donald Trump, along with funding reductions from other countries, shattered thousands of the camps' schools and youth training centers and crippled child protection programs. Beyond unwanted marriages, scores of children as young as 10 were forced into backbreaking manual labor, and girls as young as 12 were forced into prostitution. With no safe space to play or learn, children were left to wander the labyrinthine camps, making them increasingly easy targets for kidnappers. And the young and desperate were picked off by traffickers who promised to restore what the children had lost: Hope. In a sweltering building not far from the cramped shelter where her husband tortures her, Hasina plays nervously with the strap of her pink mobile phone case, emblazoned with the words "Forever Young."

She is still young, she says. But the aid cuts



forced her into womanhood and into a nightmare. Not long after marrying her husband, she says, he isolated her from her family and began to beat and sexually abuse her. She daydreams daily of school, where she was a whiz at English and hoped to become a teacher. Now, she is confined largely to her shelter, cooking and cleaning and waiting with dread for the next beating. If she had any way to escape, she says, she would. But there is nowhere to go. She cannot return to Myanmar, where the military that killed thousands of Rohingya in 2017 during what the US declared a genocide

remains in charge of her homeland. Now, her husband is in charge of her future, though she no longer sees one. "If the school hadn't closed," she says, "I wouldn't be trapped in this life." Life has always been dangerous for the 600,000 children languishing in these chaotic, overcrowded camps, where a squalid jumble of bamboo and tarpaulin shelters are jammed onto landslide-prone hills. But Trump's decision in January to dismantle the US Agency for International Development has made it even more so, the AP found in interviews with 37 children, family members, teachers, community leaders and aid workers. Violations against children in the camps have risen sharply this year, according to UNICEF, the United Nations' children's agency. Between January and mid-November, reported cases of abduction and kidnapping more than quadrupled over the same time period last year, to 560 children. And there has been an eightfold increase in reports of armed groups' recruitment and use of children for training and support roles in the camps, with 817 children affected.

An MIT professor was fatally shot at his home and police launched a homicide investigation

BROOKLINE, Mass. (Agency)

A professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was fatally shot at his home near Boston, and authorities said Tuesday they had launched a homicide investigation. Nuno F.G. Loureiro, a 47-year-old physicist and fusion scientist, was shot Monday night at his home in Brookline, Massachusetts. He died at a local hospital on Tuesday, the Norfolk District Attorney's Office said in a statement. The prosecutor's office said no suspects had been taken into custody as of Tuesday afternoon, and that its investigation was ongoing. Loureiro, who joined MIT in 2016, was named last year to lead MIT's Plasma Science and Fusion Center, where he aimed to advance clean energy technology and other research. The center, one of the school's largest labs, had more than 250 people working across seven buildings when he took the helm. Loureiro, who was married, grew up in Viseu, in central Portugal, and studied in Lisbon before earning a

doctorate in London, according to MIT. He was a researcher at an institute for nuclear fusion in Lisbon before joining MIT, it said. "He shone a bright light as



a mentor, friend, teacher, colleague and leader, and was universally admired for his articulate, compassionate manner," Dennis Whyte, an engineering professor who previously led MIT's Plasma Science and Fusion Center, told a campus publication. The president of MIT, Sally Kornbluth, said in a statement that Loureiro's death was a "shocking loss."

The homicide investigation in Brookline

comes as police in Providence, Rhode Island, about 50 miles away, continue to search for the gunman who killed two students and injured nine others at Brown University on Saturday. The FBI on Tuesday said it knew of no connection between the crimes.

A 22-year-old student at Boston University who lives near Loureiro's apartment in Brookline told The Boston Globe she heard three loud noises Monday evening and feared it was gunfire. "I had never heard anything so loud, so I assumed they were gunshots," Liv Schachner was quoted as saying. "It's difficult to grasp. It just seems like it keeps happening."

Some of Loureiro's students visited his home, an apartment in a three-story brick building, Tuesday afternoon to pay their respects, the Globe reported. The US ambassador to Portugal, John J. Arrigo, expressed his condolences in an online post that honored Loureiro for his leadership and contributions to science.

All We Know About Trump's \$10 Billion Lawsuit Against BBC

United Kingdom. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump has filed a defamation lawsuit against the BBC, seeking \$10 billion in damages over a misleading edit of his 2021 speech before the US Capitol riot.

Here's what we know about the row:

Why Florida? Trump filed the lawsuit in a federal court in Miami, Florida, the state where he is a legal resident and where he has filed previous lawsuits against US media outlets. His lawyers argue that many of the scenes in the Panorama documentary -- which aired in Britain in October 2024 -- were shot in Florida, including around Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort. He was too late to file a libel claim in the UK, which generally has a one-year time limit to bring such cases.

What are the arguments?

The documentary spliced together two separate sections of Trump's speech on January 6, 2021 in a way that made it appear he explicitly urged supporters

to attack the Capitol, where lawmakers were certifying Joe Biden's 2020 election win. The lawsuit alleges that the edit was a deliberate attempt to give a "false, defamatory, deceptive, disparaging, inflammatory, and malicious depiction" of Trump to try to "interfere and influence" the 2024 presidential election. They say it harmed Trump's reputation as a "politician, leader, and businessman", even though he went on to win the election and his team was apparently unaware of the broadcast for about a year. Can Trump win?

While the BBC has previously apologised for its "mistake", it insists there is no basis for a defamation case and said on Tuesday it would fight the lawsuit. The broadcaster contends that the documentary did not air in the United States and its streaming platform cannot be accessed outside the UK. Trump is arguing that people in Florida would have been able to

view the documentary through the use of VPNs and the broadcaster's US distributor.

But Canadian company Blue Ant, which owns the rights to the documentary outside the UK, told AFP on Tuesday that "none" of its buyers "have aired it in the US". Legal experts say the BBC has a strong case.

"Defamation cases are difficult to win," University of Richmond law professor Carl Tobias told AFP, noting a 1964 Supreme Court ruling that "requires plaintiffs to prove actual malice, which is an onerous proof burden". Trump has launched several recent legal actions against media companies, including CNN and The New York Times, but these have not yet gone to court.

The BBC could choose to settle, but Mark Damazer, a former BBC Radio 4 controller, said it would be "damaging" to the BBC's reputation not to fight the case.

'No evidence of terrorist training', says Philippines after Sydney gunmen's visit

MANILA. (Agency)

The Philippines said Wednesday there was no evidence that the country was being used for terrorist training, a day after it was revealed the men behind Australia's Bondi Beach mass shooting had spent November on a southern island known for Islamist insurrections. "(President Ferdinand Marcos) strongly rejects the sweeping statement and the misleading characterisation of the Philippines as the ISIS training hotspot," presidential spokeswoman Claire Castro said at a press briefing. "No evidence has been presented to support claims that the country was used for terrorist training," she added, reading from a National Security Council statement.

"There is no validated report or confirmation that individuals involved in the Bondi Beach incident received any form of training in the Philippines."

On Tuesday, the country's immigration office confirmed that Sajid Akram and his son Naveed, who killed 15 people and wounded dozens of others at a Hanukkah celebration on Sydney's Bondi Beach, entered the country on November 1 headed for the southern province of Davao. The island of Mindanao, where Davao is located, has a long history of Islamist insurrections against central government rule.

Australian authorities are investigating whether the two men met with extremists during the trip.

The Philippine military, however, said Wednesday that armed Muslim groups still operating on Mindanao had been largely degraded in the years since the siege of Marawi. The five-month battle for the city that pitted government forces against pro-Islamic State Maute and Abu Sayyaf militants claimed more than 1,000 lives and displaced hundreds of thousands of people.

"We have not recorded any major terrorist operations or training activities... since the beginning of 2024," Philippine military spokeswoman Colonel Francine Padilla said at a morning press briefing.

"They are fragmented, and they have no leadership," she added of the insurgent groups. Colonel Xerxes Trinidad told reporters the father-and-son duo's November trip to the Philippines would not have provided adequate time for significant training. "Training cannot be acquired in just 30 days... especially if you are to undergo marksmanship (training)," he said. But Rommel Banlaoi, a Manila-based security analyst, told AFP that while many insurgent groups were "on the run", they were far from eradicated. "There are still many active training camps in (central) Mindanao. Those did not disappear," he told AFP, adding even weakened insurgent movements maintained connections "locally and globally online."

Israel blocks a Canadian delegation from visiting the occupied West Bank

The Israeli Embassy in Canada said the group was denied entry because of its links to Islamic Relief Worldwide, a nongovernmental organization that Israel lists as a terror group.

OTTAWA, Ontario. (Agency)

Israel on Tuesday blocked a private Canadian delegation that included six members of Parliament from entering the occupied West Bank. The Israeli Embassy in Canada said the group was denied entry because of its links to Islamic Relief Worldwide, a nongovernmental organization that Israel lists as a terror group. Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand said in a post on social media that Canada has expressed its "objections" regarding the mistreatment of these

Canadians. Ontario Member of Parliament Iqra Khalid, from Prime Minister Mark Carney's Liberal party, said she was part of the delegation and was shoved several times by Israeli border officials. She said she was pushed after trying to check on a member of the roughly 30-person delegation who was pulled aside for additional questioning after the group had been at the Allenby border crossing between Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Khalid said the border officials were able to see she was a lawmaker as they had taken her special passport, which looks different from a standard Canadian document. The Israeli Embassy statement said Israel "will not allow the entry of organizations and individuals who are associated with designated terror entities." The delegation, sponsored by the group The Canadian-Muslim Vote, had planned to meet with displaced



Palestinians in the West Bank, where the Israeli government recently approved the construction of 764 new homes in Jewish settlements. The Israeli statement said The Canadian-Muslim Vote receives the vast majority of its funding from Islamic Relief Canada, a subsidiary of Islamic Relief Worldwide that is listed as a terror entity by

In Ottawa, the National Council of Canadian Muslims said the Israeli government's refusal to allow Canadian parliamentarians into the country raises serious concerns about transparency and accountability.

British Columbia New Democrat Member of Parliament Jenny Kwan said the entire delegation had electronic travel authorizations to enter the West Bank but they were revoked "on the day of our arrival." In September, Canada joined several other countries in recognizing a Palestinian state, a significant shift in its policy and a move that came despite opposition from the United States. At the time, Canada said it hopes the recognition paves the way for peace based on two states living side by side.

NEWS BOX

HP: Mid-Day Meal Scheme faces funding crunch, schools run on credit as grants remain unreleased

Shimla. (Agency)

At a time when billions of rupees are being pumped into the education sector under centrally sponsored schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Universalisation of Education programme, serious gaps are emerging from Himachal Pradesh in the implementation of welfare schemes meant for school children. Fresh reports indicate that funds allocated for students' nutrition, uniforms, and basic infrastructure are either delayed or missing, triggering a crisis at the grassroots level.

Over the past few years, the state education department has been rocked by several financial irregularities, including scholarship scams, fake degree rackets, and recruitment of teachers with forged qualifications. The current situation surrounding the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme has raised fresh concerns about governance and financial management within the department.

Thousands of government school students across the state are presently being served mid-day meals on credit, as no funds have been released under the scheme since November. Teachers allege that the prolonged delay in grants has made it increasingly difficult to ensure regular meals for children, with many schools forced to procure rations and cooking materials on credit from local shopkeepers. However, the situation has worsened as shopkeepers citing mounting dues have begun refusing further supplies. In several areas, ration dealers have completely stopped extending credit, creating a looming threat of suspension of the mid-day meal programme in government schools in several places.

ISRO-funded earthquake forecasting project launched at IIT Mandi

Shimla. (Agency)

In the wake of Himachal Pradesh being classified entirely under Seismic Zone-VI, the highest risk category in India's updated earthquake map, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mandi has launched a major scientific initiative to enhance earthquake preparedness in the Himalayan region.

Funded by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the three-year project aims to develop time-independent forecasting models for earthquakes of magnitude 6 and above. Initially focused on Mandi, the study will later expand across the Himalayas to identify areas with higher probabilities of seismic events.

The three-year project is being undertaken at the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, IIT Mandi, and is led by Mahesh Reddy, with Dericks P. Shukla and Dhanya J. serving as co-principal investigators. One of its defining features is the integrated use of conventional seismic records with advanced satellite-based technologies.

Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) data will track tectonic plate movements with millimetre-level precision, while Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR) will detect land deformation, uplift, subsidence, and stress accumulation along fault zones across large areas. Together, these tools will enable scientists to track slow geodynamic changes that often precede major earthquakes.

During the 36-month study period, researchers will analyse geological formations, slope stability, rock composition, and historical seismicity of Mandi and the surrounding regions. According to Associate Professor Dericks P. Shukla, the project will result in a scientifically validated model capable of improving seismic risk assessment and planning. The findings are expected to feed directly into state and national disaster-management strategies, revision of earthquake-resistant building norms and infrastructure audits, particularly critical as Himachal witnesses rapid expansion of tunnels, hydropower projects, rail lines, and four-lane highways.

Domestic dispute turns deadly in Shamli: Father kills wife and children

Shamli. A man allegedly murdered his wife and two minor daughters following a domestic dispute in Garhi Daulat village under Kandhla police station area of Shamli district, police said on Wednesday.

Police said the accused, Farooq, confessed during interrogation that he killed his 32-year-old wife Tahira and daughters Afrin (12) and Sareen (5) on December 10. He buried their bodies in a pit about nine feet deep inside his house.

The victims had been missing for six days. Suspicion arose after Farooq's father, Daud, filed a complaint with the police on Tuesday evening. Farooq was taken into custody and initially tried to mislead investigators before confessing. According to Superintendent of Police Narendra Pratap Singh, Farooq shot his wife and elder daughter, while the younger daughter was strangled to death.

Heart patient dies on road in Bengaluru after hospital allegedly denies ambulance, pleas for help ignored

Eventually, her sister-in-law arrived at the spot and managed to request a cab driver, who took them to a nearby private hospital.

BENGALURU. (Agency)

BENGALURU: In a heart-wrenching incident that has raised serious concerns about public apathy and humanity, a 34-year-old mechanic died after suffering a cardiac arrest on the road, allegedly following the failure of a private hospital to provide him an ambulance.

His wife's desperate pleas for help from passersby for nearly 10 minutes went unanswered. The incident occurred in the early hours of December 12 at Kadirenhalli in Banashankari. The deceased, Venkataraman, is survived by his wife Roopa, five-year-old son, and a one-and-a-half-year-old daughter. Roopa on Tuesday said that their ordeal began around 3:30 am when Venkataraman vomited at home and complained of mild chest discomfort.

Hospital didn't provide meds, ambulance facility to heart patient Suspecting a heart problem, he



decided to go to a hospital alone. However, Roopa insisted on accompanying him, and the couple left on a two-wheeler, with Venkataraman riding the vehicle.

"We first went to a nearby private hospital, but the staff told us no doctors were available. We

then went to another private hospital, where an ECG was conducted. After seeing the report, the doctors advised us to go to Jayadeva Hospital," she said.

She alleged that despite the seriousness of the condition reflected in the ECG report, the hospital neither administered any medication nor provided ambulance support. "We requested for an ambulance, but they refused.

Out of fear and panic, we decided to head to Jayadeva Hospital on the two-wheeler," she said. While on the way, Venkataraman complained of severe chest pain and collapsed on the road even as he was riding the vehicle. Roopa fell along with him and sustained minor facial

injuries.

"I cried and pleaded with every passerby, two-wheelers, cars and other vehicles for help," she said, breaking down. "For nearly 10 minutes, no one stopped. If even one person had helped us, my husband might have been alive today."

Eventually, her sister-in-law arrived at the spot and managed to request a cab driver, who took them to a nearby private hospital. But it was too late by then, and doctors declared Venkataraman brought dead.

Venkataraman's younger sister, Subhashree, who appealed to the public to show humanity, said, "My brother always helped others, but when he needed help, no one came forward. For the sake of humanity, please help people in distress on the road. Helping each other strengthens humanity."

Amidst all the grieving, the family donated Venkataraman's eyes, though they could not proceed with organ donation as valuable time had been lost. "He had no bad habits and no major health issues except gastric problems," his wife said.

Eyeing political, religious and tribal connect, Congress to launch 2nd phase of 'Jan Akrosh Yatra' in Central Gujarat

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

After the first phase in North Gujarat, the Congress Tuesday announced the second phase of its 'Jan Akrosh Yatra' in Central Gujarat. The yatra will be flagged off on December 20 from Bhathiji Maharaj Temple in Fagvel Kheda district, where the then Chief Minister Narendra Modi launched his state-wide Gujarat Gaurav Yatra in 2002. The yatra will conclude on January 6 at Kamboi Dham in Dahod-Samadhi of Shri Govind Guru, a revered figure of tribals and freedom fighter, who passed away in October 1931.

In Jhalod taluk, Shri Govind Guru Dham memorial is a place of importance for the tribals. Born as Govind Giri Banjara, Shri Govind Guru was a social and religious leader as well as a freedom fighter. In March 2024, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi began the 55th day of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra with a visit to the Kamboi Dham in Dahod. Bhathiji Maharaj Temple that attracts a large number of devotees including Hindus and Muslims is dedicated to Bhathiji Maharaj, who according to folklore sacrificed his life to protect village's cows from attackers during his

wedding. The Kshatriya Thakor community worships him as kuldevata (family deity). Addressing a press conference at the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee headquarters



Rajiv Gandhi Bhavan here, GPCC president Amit Chavda said the yatra will cover seven districts of Central Gujarat – Kheda, Anand, Vadodara, Chhota Udepur, Panchmahal, Mahisagar and Dahod (three municipalities, 55 talukas and 37 municipal areas).

The problems of Central Gujarat will be raised and "corruption in the area" will be exposed during the 1400-km yatra, Chavda said.

The first leg of Jan Akrosh Yatra held in North Gujarat between November 21 and December 3, covering a distance of 1300 km, has received widespread public support, the GPCC president said. "During the first leg of the yatra, the public has openly expressed their anger against corruption, mismanagement, discrimination and injustice that have become widespread during the three decades of BJP rule in Gujarat. The Pradesh Congress Committee had started the Jan Akrosh Yatra to give voice to the questions, pain and voices of the public," Chavda said.

Stating that the Akrosh Yatra is not an election march, but a fight for the rights of the people, Chavda said: "The government collects taxes, but does not listen to the voice of the people. Therefore, people from all sections of society should join this march to give a voice to the people."

Barnala: Cars clash into divider amid fog, three of family killed

The deceased were identified as Sunil Masih (31), a Border Security Force (BSF) jawan who was on leave for his sister's wedding, and his cousins Arshdeep Masih (21) and Anu (18).

Ludhiana. (Agency)

Three persons were killed and five others of a family were injured in a road accident on the Barnala-Moga highway Tuesday, as the cars clashed into the central divider amid low visibility due to dense fog. Police said the family was travelling to Sirsa, Haryana, for their daughter's shagun ceremony.

The deceased were identified as Sunil Masih (31), a Border Security Force (BSF) jawan who was on leave for his sister's wedding, and his cousins Arshdeep Masih (21) and Anu (18). The woman whose shagun was scheduled suffered a fractured leg, while four other members suffered serious injuries. The injured were rushed to the Barnala civil hospital, where they are currently undergoing treatment, police said.

The family, residents of Tarn Taran, was travelling in two cars. According to police, the accident occurred near the Mallian toll plaza, where both vehicles rammed into the central divider amid poor visibility



due to dense fog. One of the cars was badly damaged in the collision. The second car crashed into the first one apart from hitting the divider. Emanat Masih, father of the deceased jawan, told the media that his son was on leave to attend his sister's ceremony. "My son and nephew were travelling with other family members to Sirsa when the accident happened due to fog. We lost three members of our family."

Another relative, Daljit Singh, alleged negligence on the part of the toll plaza authorities. "There were no proper signboards or warning indicators near the toll plaza. Because of the fog and lack of signage, both vehicles hit the divider," he alleged. Confirming the incident, Baljinder Singh, in-charge of the local police post, said preliminary investigations indicate dense fog as the primary cause of the accident. "Three members of the same family have died, while five others sustained serious injuries. Further action will be taken based on statements from the victims' family," he said.

Mahindra Tractors ramps up to meet surging 4WD demand

Kochi. (Agency)

Mahindra Tractors, India's number one tractor brand and the world's largest tractor manufacturer by volume, is scaling up to meet rising demand for its four-wheel-drive (4WD) tractor range, as farmers across the country increasingly adopt high-power, high-efficiency mechanisation solutions.

The surge in demand is being driven by higher agricultural and haulage activity and the growing use of specialised farm equipment in key states such as Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal.

Farmers are turning to 4WD tractors for improved traction, productivity and versatility across diverse operating conditions. Mahindra offers one of the broadest portfolios of 4WD tractors in the 20–70 horsepower segment, across its Arjun, Novo, YuvoTech, Jivo and OJA series. Designed and developed in India, the tractors cater to both small and large farms and are engineered to perform reliably in varied soil types and challenging terrains. Built with a rugged and muscular design, Mahindra's 4WD

tractors feature heavy-duty axles, larger tyres and higher ground clearance.

Optimal power transmission to all four wheels ensures superior grip on wet, uneven and hilly fields, while advanced engine technology delivers higher fuel efficiency, longer engine life and reduced wear and tear, helping farmers lower operating and maintenance costs.

The range also focuses on operator comfort and safety, offering improved ergonomics, advanced suspension systems and user-friendly controls.

These features enable better manoeuvrability, faster headland turns and efficient handling of heavy loads of up to 2–3 tonnes, while reducing fatigue and enhancing safety during long working hours.

Industry observers note that the adoption of 4WD tractors, a global farming trend, is steadily gaining momentum in India.

Greater awareness, supportive government policies and subsidy schemes are encouraging farmers to upgrade to 4WD technology that delivers higher long-term productivity.

Maharashtra minister Manikrao Kokate's MLA status at risk after court upholds 2-year sentence in 1995 fraud case

The development marks yet another setback for NCP leader Manikrao Kokate, whose ministerial tenure under the Devendra Fadnavis government has been punctuated by repeated controversies.

Mumbai. (Agency)

The Maharashtra government found itself facing fresh controversy on Tuesday after a sessions court in Nashik upheld the two-year prison sentence awarded to state Sports Minister and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Manikrao Kokate in a case involving the illegal acquisition of a government flat using forged documents. The ruling has put Kokate's status as a legislator in jeopardy.

As per the law, any MLA convicted of an offence and sentenced to imprisonment of two years or more stands automatically disqualified from holding an elected office or contesting the polls. The provision flows from Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, and was reinforced by a landmark Supreme Court judgment in 2013. With his political future now hanging in the balance, and uncertainty over whether he

will be allowed to retain his seat until a higher court re-examines his conviction, the development marks yet another setback for the NCP leader, whose ministerial tenure has been punctuated by repeated controversies since he joined the Devendra Fadnavis-led government.

What the case is about In February this year, a Nashik district court sentenced Kokate to two years' imprisonment in a nearly 30-year-old case involving forgery and fraud related to the illegal allotment of flats under the chief minister's discretionary quota.

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on Kokate. His brother, Sunil Kokate, was similarly convicted. The case dates back to 1995 and was filed by former minister Tukaram Dighole, who accused the

Kokate brothers of forging documents to fraudulently acquire two flats in the Nirman



View Apartment on College Road in Yeolekar Mala, Nashik. Dighole, a three-term MLA and former Congress leader, was defeated by Kokate in the 1999 Assembly

elections when Kokate won his first term as a legislator. Dighole passed away in 2019.

According to the prosecution, the Kokate brothers falsely claimed that they belonged to the low-income group and did not own any other property, enabling them to secure flats under the 10 per cent discretionary housing quota of the chief minister. Subsequent investigations found that the documents submitted in support of their application were forged.

Kokate challenged the conviction, but the sessions court upheld the district court's verdict, though it set aside the order directing him to hand over the flat to the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA). He now has one month to approach the Bombay High Court.

Why IndiGo must learn the lesson Ambassador failed

Low-cost airlines typically fly more hours—hopping from city to city with quicker turnarounds—than full-service carriers. That should translate into more pilots per aircraft for IndiGo than for Air India. It's also true that there is a huge shortage of captains in India. Recruiting a foreign captain takes 4–6 months, as they must obtain security clearance from intelligence agencies. That cannot be compromised on, especially after 9/11. After Home Ministry clearance, foreign captains must take the DGCA examination.

Even retired Indian Air Force pilots take substantially longer to be cleared to fly our civilian aircraft than a Lufthansa or Air France captain takes under European regulations. These cumbersome regulations are systemic issues that our regulator must simplify, in line with global standards, to lower costs and enable faster recruitment. Thousands of young Indian pilots are languishing without jobs—that remains a separate but urgent discussion. But the ground reality today is that Indian airlines have to plan keeping these bottlenecks in mind. While Air India, SpiceJet, and Akasa complied with the new rules in time, IndiGo cocked a snook at the regulator. Why? Simply because it thought it could, and sweating fewer pilots for longer hours increases profits—and stock prices. But after being chastened by the horrific fatal crash of Air India's Ahmedabad–London flight earlier this year and increasing minor accidents reported across airlines, the new Director General of Civil Aviation refused to budge on the new rules. IndiGo was caught flat-footed. The initial trickle of disruptions turned into a flood and soon into a tsunami, with about 1,500 flight cancellations on December 5, impacting a staggering million-plus passengers over just a few days. Thousands of bags are still stuck at airports across the country.

The scale of anxiety, stress, and suffering it caused—for missing funerals, exams, job interviews, and weddings—cannot be fathomed. The hapless IndiGo ground staff at airports were abandoned to face a mob by the airline's senior management. What is glaring is that the CEO, the chief operations officer, and the head of the operations control centre—all expats—did not appear on the scene for a full five days. The expat senior leadership is on a few-weeks-on, few-weeks-off contract. But managing director Rahul Bhatia was missing in action, too. The ship was caught rudderless in the storm without its key leaders. Finally, after a week of misery inflicted on passengers, the IndiGo management apologised and explained the combination of factors that led to the chaos. The IndiGo board has a stellar composition, packed with high-profile civil servants, a former highly regarded corporate honcho as chairman, a former Air Chief, and a couple of foreign airline CEOs. But, as is well known among many large Indian companies, board membership is often treated as a mere statutory requirement. It helps to pack a board with honourable people who can open doors.

But the managing director should have been at the forefront, holding himself accountable instead of remote-controlling. Legend has it that when Napoleon rested in his bivouac during his imperial campaigns, he would tell his aide, "Don't disturb me to give me good news. It can wait. But when there are bad tidings, rush to me and wake me up. There is no time to lose." Had the managing director and his CEO heeded such advice, they would have held town hall meetings with the pilots, the pilot rostering staff, and the software professionals who provide the crew roster software. And then IndiGo could have averted the worst of this disaster. The bigger question is: how could one company's breakdown bring India's entire aviation sector to a screeching halt? The answer lies in how little competition there is.

NEARLY five years after it usurped Aung San Suu Kyi's election victory with a brazen coup, the Myanmar junta is embarking on a futile quest for legitimacy through an election that begins on December 28 and continues till January 2026. The poll will not give the junta what it wants. It is also likely to worsen the chaotic conditions within the country. The main political party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), and many others are not contesting this election. The NLD has been dissolved by the military rulers because it refused to register itself under a new law that effectively disqualified Suu Kyi, the imprisoned party leader and the face of the country's democratic aspirations, from participating. With the military unable to establish control over the entire country since its 2020 coup, the election cannot be held in many areas of its diverse and fragmented expanse, where the junta remains locked in battles with pro-democracy militias and Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs). The Suu Kyi-led NLD had swept the 2020 election. Under the Constitution (drawn up and adopted by the military in 2008 at a time when Suu Kyi had not yet been freed from house arrest and the West was pushing the junta to loosen its grip), 25 per cent of the 476 seats in the combined houses of the national parliament are reserved for the military. But the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), the party of the military, fared badly. Myanmar is a federation of seven regions and seven states. The NLD won more than 80 per cent of the seats in these assemblies too. Rattled by the results, the military chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, started dropping broad hints that he would not accept the results. As such, the coup was not a surprise. The last-minute power grab took place just a few hours before the newly elected parliamentarians were to take the oath of office. Suu Kyi's promise to the country in 2020 was that she would reform the Constitution and complete the transition to democracy that had begun five years earlier. From her point of view, the army's meddling in governance was preventing a ceasefire with EAOs and a functioning federation. After she won the election, it was expected that her first move would be to clip the military's wings. It was not to be. The military preempted her. But then, neither could the junta establish itself firmly. It tried its best to impose its writ across the country but failed. It has jailed thousands of pro-democracy activists (no one knows for sure where Suu Kyi has been imprisoned) and shot dead hundreds of others at protests, used aerial bombardment against its own citizens and burnt entire villages to bring the people to heel. The most recent attack from the skies was just

last week on a hospital in Rakhine state, in which 30 people were killed and 70 injured. But the "Spring Revolution", the pro-democracy movement, which includes armed resistance by groups called "People's Defence Forces" (PDFs), allied to the National Unity Government (NUG)—it has proclaimed itself as the country's real government, and its leaders operate from hiding or exile in other countries—has been determined to deny the military full control. Some of the EAOs also joined hands with the PDFs in the resistance. Only from mid-2025, after China brokered a ceasefire with a major EAO, has the military been able to reverse some of its losses. It is unclear how polling will



be held in parts of Myanmar that the junta does not control. The election has been denounced by the NUG and other critics as "fraudulent" and a "sham". The USDP is poised to win most of the seats in what promises to be a moth-eaten election, and will in turn prop up the junta. India has reportedly provided EVMs for the election, but has made an ambiguous statement about the poll itself. Last week, the MEA spokesperson said New Delhi "supports Myanmar's transition to democracy and is of the view that participation of all political stakeholders is important for the credibility and stability of the electoral exercise, which needs to be free, fair and inclusive. India will continue to support all efforts that advance peace, dialogue and a return to normalcy in Myanmar." Delhi knows that all "stakeholders" are not participating; it knows that the poll will be far from free and inclusive. And it would be surprising if the election paves the way for dialogue, and a return to a political settlement to the violent impasse in Myanmar, let alone democracy. For India, which shares a 1,643-km-long

border with Myanmar spanning four states in the North-East, the developments in that country are of importance because typically, what happens in Myanmar spills over into India. After the coup, thousands of refugees fled military rule into Mizoram. Soldiers of the Myanmar army have fled into India for protection as their posts got taken over by the ethnic militia in Chin state. During the aerial bombardment in Chin state, Indian villagers close to the border in Mizoram had to flee at a moment's notice. Not only this, with direct implications for Indian security, the Myanmar army, hit by desertions, is known to have co-opted North-East insurgent groups in Sagaing, another border region, to fight pro-democracy groups. In Rakhine, the ethnic Arakan National Army has taken control of the entire state except three areas: the capital Sittwe, with its India-developed port; further to the south, Kyaukphyu, which has a port developed by the Chinese as part of their Belt and Road Initiative; and an offshore site that pumps gas to Kyaukphyu from where it goes all the way to China. While the Arakan militia seems to have exercised caution with regard to the interests of two of Myanmar's big neighbours, the uncertainty in the province has jeopardised India's highly vaunted Kaladan multimodal connectivity project to the northeastern states via Myanmar, bypassing Bangladesh. Another ambitious project, the Trilateral highway, aiming to connect India to South-East Asia, remains incomplete because of the unsettled conditions in Myanmar.

Plainly put, India, which has engaged with an exceptionally cruel junta at the expense of the goodwill of those fighting for democracy in Myanmar in the hope of securing its interests, has not got its money's worth. The government even blames the unrest in Manipur on "infiltration" from Myanmar. It is now building a fence along the India-Myanmar border, making the same mistake that the British rulers made with the Durand Line in Afghanistan. A line that divides homes, families, villages and ethnic groups will never be accepted by the people living on either side. Meanwhile, China has used ethnic groups to protect its own mining and infrastructure projects, and given the junta what it wants in arms and ammunition to take on the militias. A bit late in the day, India has begun engaging with the pro-democracy groups, permitting them to carry out low-key activities in the country. The poll results are a foregone conclusion, just like the time when Gen Pervez Musharraf held a referendum to make himself the President of Pakistan. For India, the security and diplomatic challenges from the wars within Myanmar and the increasing Chinese footprint in that country are set to continue. And Act East will remain a dream.

Banishing night too risky a plan

Life insurance remains under-represented in India, with penetration at about 3 percent, compared with a global average of 5.4 percent. General insurance fares at only 1 percent, far below the global level of 4.7 percent. Opening the door to higher foreign ownership is likely to bring in much-needed capital

The Union Cabinet, on Friday, finally bit the bullet and cleared a proposal to raise the FDI cap for insurance companies to 100 percent from 74 percent. On Monday, the government may table the Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2025, in Parliament. It wants to attract long-term global investors and bolster the insurance sector's capital base. This decision had remained in limbo for a long time. In 2022, the government floated a draft Insurance Amendment Bill that raised the FDI cap to 100 percent. However, with the general election due in 2024, it decided not to move ahead with the politically sensitive legislation. After the NDA returned to power that year, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in last year's Budget that the FDI limit would be raised to 100 percent for insurers that invest their entire premium income in India. The latest decision signals the government's intent to move to the next phase of reforms, driven by the need to increase insurance penetration. Rightly so, as life insurance remains under-represented in India, with



penetration at about 3 percent, compared with a global average of 5.4 percent. General insurance fares even worse, at only 1 percent, far below the global level of 4.7 percent. Opening the door to higher foreign ownership is likely to bring in much-needed capital, enabling insurers to grow, reach more customers, introduce new offerings,

and raise service standards. Increased investment and competition could also push insurers to cover more people, create jobs, and make the sector work more efficiently. In 1999, when insurance was opened up, the FDI cap was 26 percent and was later raised to 49 percent, giving Indian companies time to build capabilities and scale. Global insurers largely entered through joint ventures with domestic firms. Over the years, groups such as Bajaj, SBI, ICICI, Max, and HDFC have established strong market presence. With a 100 percent FDI limit, foreign insurers are expected to take on a bigger role, including by offering more innovative solutions suited to Indian conditions. The proposed Bill is also expected to introduce composite licensing, allowing insurers to offer both life and non-life products under a single licence. The challenge now lies in ensuring that regulatory oversight keeps pace with increased foreign participation, so that wider coverage and consumer interests remain central to the reform's agenda.

The evolving politics of cess

The Health Security se National Security Cess Bill is the Centre's latest attempt to reduce fiscal devolution to the states. Fixed monthly levies on installed capacity can debilitate smaller enterprises. No independent mechanism has been proposed to audit outcomes

In moments of national anxiety, language hardens. Words like security, emergency, and national interest acquire a near-sacred aura, demanding assent rather than scrutiny. India has witnessed this transformation before. We are seeing it again in the Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025—a legislation that asks parliament to accept a new fiscal instrument in the name of collective safety, while quietly reordering the relationship between the Union, the states, and citizens who bear the cost. At first glance, the Bill announces an unimpeachable aim: mobilising resources for health preparedness and national security. Who could dispute the importance of either? The title itself offers a clue. Why does an English statute use the word 'se'? It is neither legally necessary nor linguistically neutral. Laws are not advertisements; they are contracts between the State and the people. When legislative titles begin sounding like slogans, something deeper is at work. This is governance by signalling, where persuasive tone takes precedence over constitutional clarity.

At its heart, this legislation introduces yet another cess. This time in the name of health preparedness and national security. India is no stranger to such levies. Jawaharlal Nehru had warned parliament decades ago: "Taxation must never become a substitute for planning." Yet today, the Union increasingly relies on cesses that accumulate revenue without a clear, democratic plan for its use. What unites them is not their intent, but design: cesses sit outside the divisible pool, beyond the guarantees of revenue sharing with the states. This shift has been gradual but decisive. Today, a growing portion of Centre's revenue is raised in ways that circumvent fiscal devolution. The Bill deepens this imbalance.

States are expected to deliver frontline health services, manage outbreaks, regulate industries, and respond to environmental crises, but with shrinking fiscal space and limited voice over the funds raised. Nowhere is this contradiction clearer than in Tamil Nadu. For decades, the state's public health achievements have rested on a simple principle: decentralised capacity. Primary health centres are staffed and trusted, Anganwadi networks embedded in communities, disease surveillance rooted in district-level administration. As Chief Minister M K Stalin has repeatedly argued, "Strong states do not weaken the nation; they are the foundation of a strong Union." Our public health outcomes prove this truth, born of the Dravidian understanding—welfare is not charity, but a right. Against this backdrop, a centrally-retained cess for 'health security' feels less like support and more like erasure. Equally troubling is the design of the cess. The Bill levies charges not on production or consumption, but on the capacity of machines used in specified manufacturing processes. In plain terms, factories are taxed for what their machines can produce, not for what they actually do. Even when units are shut, under maintenance, or operating below capacity, the cess liability persists. Relief exists, but through a cumbersome abatement mechanism that places the burden of proof squarely on small manufacturers. This is taxation divorced from economic reality. For large corporations, fixed monthly levies are an inconvenience. For smaller enterprises, they can be existential. Tamil Nadu's economy is sustained by nearly 10 lakh smaller businesses—many clustered in food processing, packaging, and allied sectors. Their

resilience lies in flexibility: scaling up and down when needed. A rigid cess negates that flexibility. What is presented as regulation risks becoming eviction.

There is a deeper irony here. If health is truly the concern, discouraging harmful products through pricing and



regulation is one route. Taxing machines regardless of output neither reduces consumption intelligently, nor strengthens health systems directly. The Bill equips the State with the full grammar of coercion—search, seizure, sealing, confiscation, and even arrest. Powers that might be justified as exceptions are here written into routine law, stripped of strong

judicial guardrails. Small manufacturers in Tamil Nadu recognise this terrain well. When regulation speaks the language of fear, formality becomes a luxury many cannot afford. What is perhaps most striking is what the Bill omits. No statutory commitment to share proceeds with the states. No independent mechanism to audit outcomes. We are asked to believe that resources raised will automatically translate into preparedness. History gives us little reason for such faith. This is where the politics of the present moment persist.

Since 2014, centralisation has increasingly been framed as efficiency and federalism as inconvenience. The language of one nation is often deployed to justify narrowing the space for states' autonomy. Yet public health crises do not unfold uniformly. Pollution in Delhi, heat stress in Tamil Nadu, floods in the northeast, drought in central India, each demands local intelligence and fiscal freedom. Dravidian thought has long resisted the concentration of power disguised as unity. It insists that democracy does not weaken when power is shared; it deepens. Health security, like food or educational security, emerges from proximity: from the states empowered to plan, spend, and respond without waiting for permission or compensation.

India does need investment in health systems and preparedness. But revenue must be raised through instruments that are proportionate, transparent and sharable. Funds must follow responsibility. And laws must speak the language of rights as much as they speak of risks.

Tribal student bodies to protest against CM's statement against Roman script for Kokborok

Agartala. (Agency)

The student wings of the ruling BJP's alliance partner Tripura Motha Party, TIPRA Indigenous Students' Federation (TISF) and Tripura Students' Federation (TSF), announced a state-wide protest on Thursday to advocate for the adoption of the Roman Script for Kokborok.

They will hold Torch rallies in each subdivision in the evening, culminating in a central protest rally at the Swami Vivekananda Stadium to the State Museum in the city. TISF leaders stated that the protest initiative is a direct response to recent comments made by Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha, rejecting Roman Script for Kokborok.

"Through these rallies, we intend to communicate our sentiments to both the state and central governments. The issue of script selection has, over the years, turned into an annual spectacle. We strongly oppose the state government's lackadaisical approach towards our legitimate and earnest demands. The BJP promotes the slogan of 'Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas,' yet in our state, development appears to be skewed," said TSF Secretary Sajra Debbarma.

According to him, TSF leaders have shown their complete support for the demands regarding the Roman Script, and activists from both organisations are prepared to take to the streets with the same determination to protect the indigenous language.

"The Chief Minister sounded like a typical BJP activist. A party activist bears no responsibilities, but when a Chief Minister speaks, he must be accountable for every word he utters. We anticipate that a Chief Minister will approach matters with a problem-solving mindset rather than the opposite," Debbarma pointed out.

Security forces and police nab extremist elements, seize weapons in different operations in Manipur

Imphal. (Agency)

Security forces and Manipur police continued intensified operations across the state, recovering arms and arresting multiple individuals in connection with extortion and unlawful activities yesterday. In a search operation conducted in the general area of Khaopijang village cemetery under Churachandpur Police Station in Churachandpur district, security forces recovered four firearms.

The seized items included one AK rifle with magazine, one MA-3 MK II rifle with magazine, one INSAS rifle with magazine, and one .315 rifle with magazine.

In a separate operation, security forces arrested an active extortions from Umathel Mathak Leikai under Waikhong Police Station in Kakching district. A mobile phone was seized from the individual during the arrest.

Meanwhile, Manipur police arrested an active cadre from his residence at Kumbi Khugawangma under Kumbi Police Station in Bishnupur district. The arrest was part of ongoing efforts to curb unlawful activities in the state. Continuing its drive against organised crime, Security Forces arrested another active cadre from the Waikhong Uyung area under Waikhong Police Station in Kakching district. A mobile phone was recovered from his possession.

In Imphal West district, Manipur police arrested an active cadre from Thongju Boroi Makhong under Singjamei Police Station. A mobile phone was seized during the operation.

Ludhiana jail inmates clash with each other; superintendent, other officers sustain injuries

Chandigarh. (Agency)

A violent clash between inmates inside the Central Jail, Ludhiana, on Tajpur Road on Tuesday evening has once again drawn attention to persistent security challenges in Punjab's prison system. The incident left jail superintendent Kulwant Singh Sidhu and several officers injured, raising questions over inmate management.

According to preliminary information, the disturbance erupted during a routine evening inspection when two groups of prisoners came to blows. Sources revealed that the clash initially involved five inmates—two on one side and three on the other—but soon escalated as prisoners allegedly picked up bricks and stones lying in the jail garden and used them as weapons.

Several jail officers were injured as they intervened to control the situation. Sources said the exact number of injured inmates and staff is yet to be officially confirmed. Notably, the injured officers were rushed to a private hospital instead of being taken to the Ludhiana Civil Hospital for medical legal examination. During the chaos, Superintendent Kulwant Singh Sidhu reportedly sustained a head injury after being hit by a brick. Inspector Gagandeep Singh, a deputy superintendent of police (DSP), and a few other jail officers were also injured in the melee.

NFR Strengthens Safety Measures at Level Crossing Gates across the Zone

The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 17th December: Safety is the cornerstone of train operations, and Level Crossing (LC) gates play a crucial role in ensuring safe and seamless interaction between rail and road traffic. Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) accords the priority towards strengthening safety mechanisms at its LC gates through systematic upgradation of signalling systems, adoption of modern technologies and periodic maintenance practices. These initiatives are aimed at minimising human interventions, enhancing reliability and ensuring the safety of passengers, road users and railway operations across the zone. As part of this safety-driven approach, NFR has been progressively upgrading Interlocked Level Crossing gates, which ensure that the movement of trains and road traffic is governed through safe signalling and interlocking arrangements. At present, NFR has 624 nos. interlocked LC gates across the zone, out of which a total of 8 nos. are installed during the cur-

rent FY-2025-26, reflecting a strong safety footprint in railway operations. In addition, sliding

ing booms are incorporated at LC gates in the zone till date. NFR has also made substantial



boom arrangements have been provided at 10 LC gates across Kathiawar, Rangia and Tinsukia Divisions of the zone. Sliding booms enhance visibility and physical obstruction at LC gates, significantly improving safety for road users during train movements. A total of 582 nos. of sliding

progress in replacing conventional mechanical lifting barriers with Electric Lifting Barriers (ELBs), which offer higher reliability and quicker response. A total of 500 ELBs have been commissioned across NFR, marking a major milestone in LC gate safety upgradation. Division

wise, ELBs have been provided extensively at all the Divisions, while a new ELB has been commissioned in Rangia Division, further expanding the coverage of modern, automated safety systems. A total of 14 nos. of ELBs are replaced from MLBs during this FY. These efforts reduce dependence on manual operations and enhance safety at busy and sensitive LC locations. To further reinforce safety, System Integrity Testing (SIT) has been carried out at 220 LC gates across various divisions to ensure the robustness and fail-safe performance of signalling and interlocking systems. Additionally, Signalling Cable Meggering has been conducted at 32 LC gates, enabling early detection of electrical faults and ensuring the healthy functioning of critical signalling infrastructure. Through these comprehensive and sustained measures, NFR reaffirms its unwavering commitment towards safety, continuously working for safer train operations and enhanced protection for the public at LC gates across the region.

Four days after 'assault' on govt officials in Banaskantha village, no arrests yet

Chandigarh. (Agency)

Four days after police and revenue officials of the Gujarat government were attacked allegedly by armed villagers, an uneasy calm had descended on Padalya village. Around 1,000 tribals had gathered on an open ground when The Indian Express visited this village of Danta taluka in Banaskantha district, occupied largely by tribals. Many of the residents were not willing to talk about the incident in which over 40 officials were injured.

Among those to visit the village on Tuesday were Congress MLA from Danta, Kanti Kharadi, and BJP leader Ladhubhai Parghi. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Chaitar Vasava has said that he would also visit the village. Tension began on December 5 when forest officials went to Padalya for a tree plantation exercise and were allegedly prevented by people belonging to a group that went by the name of 'AC Bharat Sarkar Sangathan'.

According to a government release on Sunday, a mob stopped the tree plantation exercise on December 11, following which the range forest officer reported in writing to the Danta

Mamlatdar and Deputy Conservator of Forest. On December 13, when forest officials reached the spot along with police and Danta Mamlatdar for the plantation drive, a mob of around 500 people staged protests. The leaders of this mob



allegedly instigated people and suddenly an "attack" was launched on the government officials with "stones, bow and arrows, swords and axes" and hurdles were created on the exit road by cutting trees and throwing stones, injuring 47 government officials, some of them seriously.

Kharadi alleged that the police "instigated" the tribals and demanded that an FIR be registered against the government officials on a complaint by tribals in connection with the incident. He also warned of launching an indefinite public protest at the office of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) in Danta.

The FIR, on the basis of a complaint filed by a forest official in the Saturday incident, names 26 persons and the 'AC Bharat Sarkar Sangathan' as being behind the "attack", sources told The Indian Express. According to official sources, this group believes that they are the "original owners" of the land and "does not believe in elected bodies, such as the Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha."

Kharadi told The Indian Express on Tuesday, "The land in question is considered to be that of the forest department. However, a widow and her ancestors have been living there since before 2006. They are entitled to rights on the land (under the provisions of Forest Rights Act). The forest department has demolished her hut on the land while also filling a well on the land with earth without any notice."

Tension grips Tripura over suicide of courier boy

Agartala.(Agency)

Northern town of Tripura, Dharmanagar, along the Assam border, has been gripped by intense tension for two days following the suicide of a courier boy, allegedly after being humiliated and badly assaulted by a group of youths led by a lady teacher of a private school in public.

The people stormed the street, cutting across party affiliation, demanding action against the perpetrators who induced him to commit suicide. However, Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha today asserted that an investigation has been launched and nobody will be spared if anyone is found guilty.

He urged the citizens to maintain peace and tranquillity to help the administration with a proper inquiry into the unnatural death of Prasenjit Sarkar (23), a resident of the Kamleshwar area of Dharmanagar, a delivery worker employed with a private company.

According to allegations, Prasenjit was publicly assaulted after a dispute with a group of young men and women. A video of the incident later went viral on social media, subjecting him to severe humiliation. Unable to cope with the mental trauma and emotional distress caused by the incident, Prasenjit reportedly took his life by hanging on Dec 14.

In protest against this tragic death and demanding exemplary punishment for those responsible, the youth of Dharmanagar took to the streets since December 15 holding banners seeking justice.

The protesters first staged a road blockade at the Dharmanagar Old Motor Stand area. Later, they marched towards the office of the Superintendent of Police. They warned that if the accused were not arrested, the youth of Dharmanagar would launch a larger agitation.

The deceased, Prasenjit Sarkar, a resident of the Dharmanagar Kameswar area, was working as a delivery boy with a private courier company, Blue Dart. According to allegations, a woman identified as Sangita Bhattacharjee, a school teacher by profession, physically assaulted him in public over a delivery-related issue.

12 years on, CBI court acquits Haryana judge, parents in wife's death case

Chandigarh. (Agency)

More than 12 years after a 28-year-old woman, the wife of a Haryana judicial officer, was found dead with bullet injuries in Gurugram, a special CBI court in Panchkula on Tuesday acquitted her husband and his parents of charges of dowry death, criminal conspiracy and cruelty.

The acquitted include the woman's husband Ravneet Garg, who was then posted as chief judicial magistrate, his father K K Garg, a retired sessions judge, and his mother Rachna Garg. Additional district and sessions judge Rajeev Goyal, special judge for CBI cases, acquitted the three of offences under Sections 304B (dowry death), 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 498A (cruelty by husband or his relatives) of the Indian Penal Code. A detailed judgment is yet to be released.

According to the prosecution, Geetanjali, a resident of Sector 8, Panchkula, was found dead on July 17, 2013, at the Gurugram police lines with multiple bullet injuries. A post-mortem examination reported three bullet injuries and a head injury. Her family alleged she had been harassed for dowry and murdered. An FIR was initially registered at the Civil Lines police station in Gurugram on the complaint of her brother, Pradeep Aggarwal. The investigation was later transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation on the family's request.



In September 2016, the CBI arrested Ravneet Garg, then posted as civil judge (senior division) in Kaithal, in connection with the case. He was subsequently granted bail. In December the same year, the agency filed its chargesheet, alleging that Garg and his parents had caused Geetanjali's death for dowry.

During the trial, public prosecutor Amit Jindal argued that a licensed revolver belonging to Garg was found near the body and that a ballistic report indicated the bullets recovered from the victim had been fired from the same weapon. The prosecution also pointed to live cartridges recovered from Garg's residence and alleged dowry demands to support its case.

The defence, represented by Terminder Singh, Manbir Rathee and Parmod Bali, countered that the accused had been falsely implicated and had no role in Geetanjali's death. They argued that while the CBI continued to investigate the case as one of murder and medical opinion also pointed in that direction, the agency changed the charge to dowry death under Section 304B at the time of filing the chargesheet.

Senior counsel Terminder Singh further submitted that evidence during trial showed Geetanjali had spoken to her parents on the day of the incident and had made no complaint against her husband, undermining allegations of dowry harassment and cruelty.

Three co-accused granted bail in Chaitanya case

The Sikh Times

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Saturday granted bail to three co-accused in a sexual assault case involving self-styled godman Swami Chaitanya Saraswati, who remains in judicial custody. Judicial Magistrate First Class Animesh Kumar ordered the release of Shweta, Bhavana and Kajal on bail upon furnishing surety bonds of Rs 20,000 each. Chaitanya Saraswati, accused of sexually harassing 16 students at a private management institute in southwest Delhi, was arrested from Agra on September 27. The former chairman of the institute is alleged to have molested several women. Earlier, Delhi Police filed a

detailed 1,077-page chargesheet naming 43 witnesses. Investigators reportedly recovered significant digital evidence, including WhatsApp chats from Saraswati's mobile phone. In one group, he was allegedly seen making objectionable remarks about photographs of female students. Police also seized a sex toy and five pornographic CDs from his room. Police also seized a sex toy and five pornographic CDs from his room. Charges have been filed under Sections 75(2), 79, 351(2) and 232 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The court has already taken cognisance of the chargesheet. Investigators allege that Saraswati targeted female students from economically weaker backgrounds and behaved inappropriately with them. He purportedly accessed

the institute's CCTV system and had cameras installed near the washroom under the pretext of security, enabling him to monitor students closely. Besides allegations remarks about photographs of female students. Police also seized a sex toy and five pornographic CDs from his room. Charges have been filed under Sections 75(2), 79, 351(2) and 232 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The court has already taken cognisance of the chargesheet. Investigators allege that Saraswati targeted female students from economically weaker backgrounds and behaved inappropriately with them. He purportedly accessed

STORES E-PROCUREMENT

E-Procurement Tender Notice No.: S/32/2025-26, Dtd: 15-12-2025. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following works.

SI.No.:1; Tender No. : 50/25/5015A/OT/192/2025-26;

Closing/Opening Date: 31-12-2025

Brief Description : (1) Supply of Underground Railway Signaling Cable of size 12 core x 1.5 Sq. mm copper conduct or PVC insulated Armoured unscreened Under Ground cable to spec no-IRS S-63/2014 (Rev 4) or latest. (Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery) UVAM Item ref: Item ID:- 3100054-3100054 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Qty- 550.00 Kilometre for SSE/SIG/C/Guwahati, NFR (Assam). P.L.No - 400500800289. (2) Supply of Underground Railway Signaling Cable of size 12 core x 1.5 Sq. mm copper conduct or PVC insulated Armoured unscreened Under Ground cable to spec no-IRS S-63/2014 (Rev 4) or latest. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] (Item Id :- 3100054 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001-PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Qty-50 Kilometre for SI/Silguri Jn., NFR (West Bengal). P.L. No-400500800290. (3) Supply of Underground Railway Signaling Cable of size 12 core x 1.5 Sq. mm copper conduct or PVC insulated Armoured unscreened Under Ground cable to spec no-IRS S-63/2014 (Rev 4) or latest. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] Item Id - 3100054 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Qty-6.00 Kilometre for SSE/SIG/Bongaigaon, NFR (Assam). P.L. No. - 539809945078. (4) Supply of Underground Railway Signaling Cable of size 12 core x 1.5 Sq. mm copper conduct or PVC insulated Armoured unscreened Under Ground cable to spec no-IRS S-63/2014 (Rev 4) or latest. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] Item Id - 3100054 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Qty-6.00 Kilometre for SSE/SIG/Goalpara Town, NFR (Assam). P.L. No.-539809945091. (6) Supply of Underground Railway Signaling Cable of size 12 core x 1.5 Sq. mm copper unscreened Under Ground cable to spec no-IRS S-63/2014 (Rev 4) or latest. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] Item Id - 3100054 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Qty-5.00 Kilometre for SSE/SIG/Goalpara Town, NFR (Assam). P.L. No. - 539809945078. (7) Supply of Underground Railway Signaling Cable of size 12 core x 1.5 Sq. mm copper conduct or PVC insulated Armoured, unscreened, Underground cable to spec no-IRS S-63/2014 (Rev 4) or latest. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] Item Id - 3100054 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Qty-3.00 Kilometre for SSE/SIG/Goalpara Town, NFR (Assam). P.L. No.-539809945091. (8) Supply of Underground Railway Signaling Cable of size 12 core x 1.5 Sq. mm copper unscreened Under Ground cable to spec no-IRS S-63/2014 (Rev 4) or latest. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] Item Id - 3100054 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Sub Item Id:- 3100054001 - PVC Insulated Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signaling Cable, Qty-12.00 Kilometre for SSE/SIG/Malda Town, NFR (West Bengal). P.L. No - 5050909591.

SI.No.:2; Tender No. : 6/25/5433A/OT/193/2025-26;

Closing/Opening Date: 12-01-2026

Brief Description : Tungsten Carbide Tamping Tool for DTE Machines as per specification no. TM/HM/6/320 (REV-3) July 2019 & One set consist of- 1. Drawing No-RDSO/TM/15A/16, PLASSER PT. NO-CU30.8820-FR I= 32 NOS. 2. Drawing No - RDSO/TM/15E/16, PLASSER PT. NO-CU30

How Beijing tackled pollution: China shares step-by-step guide for Delhi

Noting that China and India know the struggle with air pollution, the Chinese embassy has offered help to Delhi by posting a step-by-step guide on how Beijing came out of the crisis.

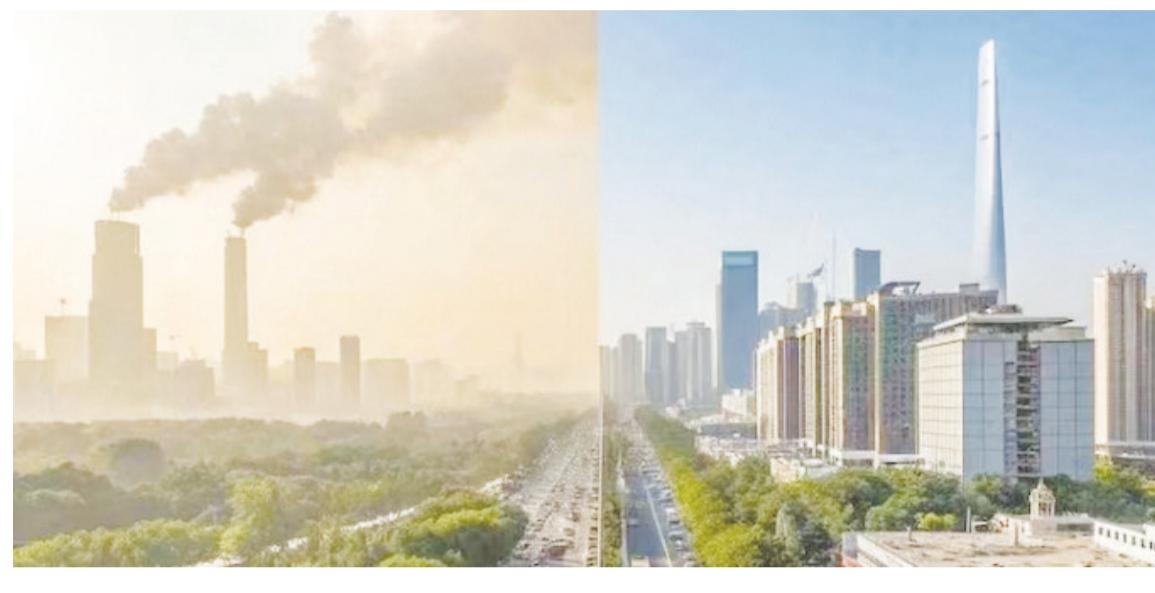
New Delhi.(Agency)

Hazardous air quality, dense smog, and a rise in respiratory illness - it's the same story every winter in Delhi. On the other hand, China's capital, Beijing, once notorious as the "smog capital of the world", has improved its air quality in just over a decade. With the air quality staying severe for most of the week, the Chinese embassy has offered help to Delhi by posting a step-by-step guide on how Beijing tackled pollution. In an extensive post on X, along with before and after images of Beijing, Chinese embassy spokesperson Yu Jing underscored that both China and India know the struggle with air pollution amid rapid urbanisation.

"Both China and India know the struggle

with air pollution amid rapid urbanisation... Cleaner air doesn't happen overnight — but it is achievable," Jing tweeted, along with a series of steps to control vehicle emissions and industrial restructuring. Her post included screenshots of the air quality reading in both cities on December 15, which showed an AQI of 447 in Delhi, while Beijing was breathing significantly cleaner air (AQI 67). Breaking down Beijing's approach to controlling vehicle emissions, Jing said China adopted ultra-strict emission standards comparable to Euro 6 norms while phasing out old, high-emission vehicles. India has already made it mandatory for all vehicles manufactured after April 1, 2020, to

comply with BS-VI emission norms. However, enforcement remains an issue. While Delhi has been battling toxic air since Diwali this year, the government banned the entry of non-BS VI vehicles only earlier this week. The Chinese embassy spokesperson also suggested measures like license-plate lotteries, odd-even and weekday driving restrictions, alongside massive investments in metro and bus networks. Yu Jing also called for a rapid adoption of electric mobility. She underlined that these efforts were possible due to coordinated policies across the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region to prevent pollution spillover from neighbouring areas.



Bangladesh envoy summoned after threat to India mission, Seven Sisters remark

The summons to the Bangladesh High Commissioner comes a day after a Bangladeshi leader threatened to isolate the Seven Sisters, referring to the north-eastern states.

New Delhi.(Agency)

India on Wednesday summoned Bangladeshi High Commissioner M Riaz Hamidullah to convey strong concerns about a "deteriorating security environment" in Bangladesh over security threats to the Indian High Commission in Dhaka. The Ministry of External Affairs said that the envoy's attention was drawn to "activities of some extremist elements who have announced plans to create a security situation around the Indian Mission in Dhaka". The MEA also said that India "rejects the false narrative sought to be created by extremist elements regarding certain recent events in Bangladesh". "It is unfortunate that the interim government has neither conducted a thorough investigation nor shared meaningful evidence with India regarding the incidents," the MEA also said without elaborating on the incidents in the question.

Incidentally, High Commissioner M Riaz Hamidullah was summoned a day after a Bangladeshi leader threatened to isolate the Seven Sisters, referring to the north-eastern states. The MEA, however, did not directly mention this provocative remark in its statement on Wednesday.

The summons also comes amid rising anti-India rhetoric in poll-bound Bangladesh, whose ties with New Delhi have been under strain following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League regime last year.

RISING ANTI-INDIAN RHETORIC

On Monday, National Citizen Party (NCP) leader Hasnat Abdullah, a vocal critic of India, threatened to isolate the "Seven Sisters" and provide refuge to separatists if Bangladesh was destabilised.

Before Abdul Kalam, BJP floated Atal Bihari Vajpayee's name for President: Book

Ashok Tandon, who served as Vajpayee's media advisor, related the episode in his book Atal Smaran, published by Prabhat Prakashan.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Before considering APJ Abdul Kalam for the eleventh presidential candidate of India, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) suggested Atal Bihari Vajpayee's name for the President's post and hand over the prime ministerial to Lal Krishna Advani. However, the then-prime minister refused, stating that his becoming President by virtue of his majority would set a wrong precedent. Ashok Tandon, who served as Vajpayee's media advisor, related the episode in his book Atal Smaran, published by Prabhat Prakashan.

Kalam was elected the 11th President in 2002 with the support of both, then ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the Opposition. He served in this position until 2007.

Tandon, who served as the ex-prime minister's media advisor from 1998 to 2004, writes that Vajpayee, on the other hand, flatly rejected his party's suggestion that he should move to Rashtrapati Bhavan and hand over the prime ministerial to his second-in-command, Lal Krishna Advani. According to Tandon, "Vajpayee was not ready for this. He believed that for any popular prime minister, becoming President by virtue of majority would not be a good sign for Indian parliamentary democracy. It would set a very wrong precedent, and he would be the last person to support such a move." Tandon writes that Vajpayee invited leaders of the main opposition party, the Congress, so that a consensus could be built for the post of President.

I remember that Sonia Gandhi, Pranab Mukherjee, and Dr Manmohan Singh came to meet him. Vajpayee officially revealed for the first time that the NDA had decided to nominate Dr APJ Abdul Kalam as their candidate for the presidential election... There was a moment of silence in the meeting. Then Sonia Gandhi broke the silence and said that they were surprised by his choice, and that they had no option but to support him, but they would discuss his proposal and then make a decision," he says.

Delhi Police on high alert after intelligence warns of possible terror threat to Israeli, Jewish sites during Hanukkah

Officials cautioned that groups such as Shia militias, Islamic State (IS), Al-Qaeda, and their regional affiliates could be planning attacks targeting Israeli and Jewish interests worldwide, including in India.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi Police have stepped up security across Israeli and Jewish establishments in the national capital following an intelligence warning of possible terror threats during the ongoing Hanukkah festival, observed from December 14 to 21.

The latest warning comes in the wake of a December 14 terror attack in Sydney, Australia, where 15 people were killed during a Hanukkah celebration at Bondi Beach. Two gunmen, identified as Sajid Akram, 50, and his son, Naveed, 24, were identified as those behind the Bondi Beach attack, which has raised concerns among international security agencies about coordinated threats to Jewish communities.

According to officials, the alert, issued by central intelligence agencies, cautioned that groups such as Shia militias, Islamic State (IS), Al-Qaeda, and their regional affiliates could be planning attacks targeting Israeli and Jewish interests

worldwide, including in India. In Delhi, the Special Cell of the police has directed all 15 district units, as well as the Delhi Metro and Railway police, to conduct immediate security reviews at sensitive locations.

"These include the Israeli embassy and



consular offices, synagogues, Jewish community centres, Chabad houses, and popular tourist destinations frequented by Israeli nationals. Field formations have been asked to maintain extra vigil, especially around large gatherings, religious events, and sensitive premises," a

senior police officer said. "Periodic security reviews and coordination meetings are being held at the district level to ensure preparedness," the officer said.

Authorities have also strengthened security at hotels, restaurants, and business establishments associated with Israeli interests in the city. Quick Response Teams (QRTs) have been placed on standby for immediate deployment, officials said.

"Following the alert, patrol frequency has been increased, and additional deployment has been made at vulnerable points," the officer added.

Apart from Delhi, major metropolitan areas, including Mumbai and Goa, both of which host significant Israeli tourist and business activity, are under special watch. Police units in these regions have been instructed to intensify surveillance around community centres and tourist hotspots.

VB-G RAM G Bill vs MGNREGA: 5 big changes explained

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Centre is overhauling India's flagship rural jobs scheme under the two-decade-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). For the revamp, the Narendra Modi government has proposed the Viksit Bharat Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeekva Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025, referred to as the VB-G RAM G Bill. Tabled in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, the Bill seeks to replace the MGNREGA, a landmark law enacted in 2005 that guaranteed 100 days of wage employment to rural households.

The new Bill proposes to increase the guaranteed employment from 100 days to 125 days per financial year for rural households. But that's not the only difference. And the differences aren't even restricted to the omission of Mahatma Gandhi's name in the proposed Bill, which Congress leaders

like Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi criticised.

While the government said that the new Bill aligns with the Viksit Bharat @2047 vision, the Opposition, however, argued that it dilutes the rights-based core of MGNREGA, centralises decision-making, and weakens workers' entitlements. Here are the key differences explained for quick, crisp understanding of what would change in India's rural employment framework after the Bill is passed.

1. VB-G RAM G TO INCREASE GUARANTEED WORKDAYS, BUT CONCERN EXISTS OVER ACCESS

One of the most visible points in the VB-G RAM G Bill is the increase in guaranteed employment from 100 days to 125 days per financial year for rural households. On paper, this appears to be an expansion of benefits and an

acknowledgement that the 100-day limit under MGNREGA often functioned as a hard ceiling rather than a minimum guarantee.

Supporters of the Bill from the Treasury benches argue that the "reform" addresses long-standing gaps, especially for vulnerable groups, and builds on past relaxations such as additional days for Scheduled Tribe households in forest areas or during droughts. The government also claims that the revised structure will improve predictability and planning of work.

Critics, however, point out that MGNREGA's strength lay not just in the number of days but in the enforceable right to demand work. Under the new framework, they argue, guaranteed days might not translate into guaranteed access, as employment is tied to pre-approved plans rather than worker demand. Opposition leaders have warned that a higher.

DU struggles to fill undergrad seats again: V-C backs CUET admissions, colleges to share data

New Delhi.(Agency)

For the third consecutive year since the adoption of the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for admissions, Delhi University has failed to fill all its undergraduate seats, despite colleges conducting multiple mop-up rounds. As of September, more than 7,000 seats of the total 71,624 on offer had remained vacant. Officials said colleges have now been asked to submit detailed data on course-wise vacancies. In a statement Wednesday, Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh defended the university's centralised admissions system. "After CUET, the university's admission process has become more logical, transparent and accountable with a centralised system," Prof Singh said in the statement.

"Now every stakeholder is aware of the status of every seat. In DU's CSAS [Centralised Seat Allocation System] admission system, every allocation is made public, for which a very scientific method is adopted." He added that allocations are carried out solely on the basis of preferences submitted by candidates and the CUET scores at which seats are offered. On criticism that CUET has led to widespread

vacancies, the V-C said the phenomenon pre-dates the entrance test and was present even when admissions were conducted through Class 12 cut-offs.

Citing data from the university's admission branch, Singh said in 2019 — a pre-CUET, pre-Covid year — only 68,213 undergraduate seats were filled against a total sanctioned strength of 70,735, leaving 3.56% of seats vacant. In contrast, in 2025, under the CSAS, 72,229 admissions were made against 71,642 available seats, amounting to admissions that were 0.65% above the sanctioned strength.

Singh also pointed to instances where colleges admitted more than 200 students against a sanctioned strength of just 11 seats — an over-admission of nearly 1,745% — arguing that such discrepancies made it difficult to track or regulate actual enrolments.

Addressing concerns that prolonged vacancies could lead to closure of courses, Singh said the university had advised all colleges to revisit their seat matrices and propose ways to fill seats that remain vacant despite repeated rounds of allocation.

While colleges may explore reshuffling

combinations under BA Programme, Singh said, "The University is clear that no course will be closed."

Why vacancies persist

The Vice-Chancellor's statement comes

months after DU officials themselves

acknowledged that thousands of seats remained vacant as the admissions cycle entered its final stages.

In August, with more than 9,000 undergraduate seats still unfilled, Haneet Gandhi, Dean of Admissions at DU, had told The Indian Express that the vacancies were largely the result of students not filling their preferences strategically in the initial rounds. By September, DU data showed that

seats were unfilled not only in evening and off-campus colleges, but also in some of the university's most sought-after institutions — St Stephen's, Hansraj, Ramjas, Miranda House, Daulat Ram and Indraprastha College for Women on the North Campus, as well as women's colleges such as Lady Shri Ram, Gargi and Jesus & Mary.

Many vacancies were concentrated in Language courses that have seen declining student interest in recent years, though a few science programmes were also affected.

In the online mop-up round held between September 4 and 7, only around 1,600 seats were filled. When colleges subsequently moved to on-the-spot admissions, more than 7,000 seats across categories remained vacant, including 1,439 unreserved seats, 2,136 OBC seats, and 1,092, 1,528 and 1,263 seats in the SC, ST and PwBD categories respectively.

In women's colleges, a significant proportion of vacancies were in reserved categories, while in Christian minority institutions such as St Stephen's and Jesus & Mary, several seats remained vacant under the minority quota.

NEWS BOX

IPL auction: Sarthak Ranjan, son of Congress leader Pappu Yadav picked up by KKR

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Kolkata Knight Riders had a busy outing at the IPL 2026 mini-auction in Abu Dhabi, strengthening their squad with 13 new signings. While the franchise made headlines with big-money buys, one name stood out for reasons beyond cricket — Sarthak Ranjan, the son of former MP and Congress leader Pappu Yadav. KKR entered the auction with the biggest purse of Rs 64.30 crore and spent heavily, highlighted by the signing of Australian all-rounder Cameron Green for Rs 25.20 crore. Among the other additions, Sarthak Ranjan was picked up for Rs 30 lakh, a move that quickly drew attention. Soon after the auction, Pappu Yadav took to social media platform X to congratulate his son. Sharing an emotional message in Hindi, the Bihar politician praised Sarthak and encouraged him to play



freely, trust his talent and make a name for himself through cricket. The post was widely shared as fans reacted to the proud father's message following his son's IPL selection. Sarthak Ranjan plays domestic cricket for Delhi and is still at an early stage of his career. He has featured in two First-Class matches, four List-A games and five T20s. His domestic record includes 28 runs in First-Class cricket, 105 runs in List-A cricket at an average of 26.25, and 66 runs in T20s. Despite modest numbers so far, KKR opted to add him to their squad as part of a broader rebuilding exercise. KKR's auction strategy was led by their large purse, allowing them to make several key additions across departments. Cameron Green emerged as their biggest buy, while the franchise also strengthened its squad depth with multiple players to support the core group. Among those 13 new faces, Sarthak Ranjan's inclusion ensured the focus stayed firmly on the personal moment shared by Pappu Yadav, as his son earned an opportunity in the IPL with the Kolkata-based franchise.

Auqib Nabi's 8.4 crore deal in IPL auction gives J&K cricket the hope it needs

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Better late than never is a phrase that fits Auqib Nabi Dar like a perfectly upright seam. At 29, when most fast bowlers are either firmly established or quietly being overlooked, the pacer from Jammu and Kashmir arrived the hard way, through patience, persistence and a refusal to let geography dictate his ceiling.

His journey has never followed the straightest of lines. Fittingly, neither does the sharp outswing that has come to define him, a delivery that helped carry him to a staggering Rs 8.40 crore deal at the IPL auction in Abu Dhabi with the Delhi Capitals. For the Valley, it was a moment of validation. For Nabi, it was the culmination of years spent waiting to be seen. Nabi hails from Kreeri, a tehsil tucked beyond Baramulla, distant not just in kilometres but



in access. It is not the sort of place that can easily produce professional cricketers. Nets are hard to come by, pitches not so reliable and exposure almost non-existent. For a young fast bowler with ambition, Kreeri offered little in the way of infrastructure. What it did offer was resilience, forged by necessity. At home, realism often trumped romance. His father, Ghulam Nabi Dar, a school teacher, urged him to prioritise academics, wary of a sport that came with no guarantees, especially in a region where opportunities are limited and fleeting. Cricket, in those early years, survived in the margins, squeezed between studies and responsibility, but fuelled even more by belief. It is only over the past two seasons that Nabi has truly come into his own. The turning point arrived with a hat-trick in the Duleep Trophy, a spell that announced him to the wider domestic circuit.

Australia and England cricket teams paid respects to the Bondi beach attack victims on Day 1 of the third Ashes Test at the Adelaide Oval. Fifteen civilians were killed and dozens injured on Sunday at Bondi Beach after two men opened fire, targeting members of the Jewish community.

BRISBANE. (Agency)

Players from the Australia and England cricket teams came together to pay their respects to the victims of the Bondi Beach tragedy in Sydney on the opening day of the third Ashes Test at the Adelaide Oval on Wednesday, December 17. Both teams wore black armbands as a mark of mourning and observed a moment of silence before the start of play. Fifteen civilians were killed and dozens injured on Sunday at Bondi Beach



after two men opened fire, targeting members of the Jewish community who were celebrating Hanukkah. The gesture from both teams served as a show of solidarity from the cricketing fraternity following the tragic events that unfolded in Sydney, which is also scheduled to host the fifth Test of the

series. The tribute preceded the commencement of play, with players, officials and spectators standing in silence to honour those who lost their lives.

The Adelaide Oval crowd also joined in, acknowledging the tragedy and offering their condolences to the victims and their

families. Earlier, Cricket Australia and the England and Wales Cricket Board released a joint statement condemning the terrorist attack and expressing their condolences to the affected families.

"Everybody at Cricket Australia and the England & Wales Cricket Board is horrified by the tragic events at Bondi Beach yesterday evening. All of our thoughts are with the victims, their friends and families, the Jewish community, and the people of Australia at this deeply distressing time. Our condolences go out to all those affected. We stand with you," the statement read.

Australian captain Pat Cummins also issued an urgent public appeal for blood donations across New South Wales in the aftermath of the attack. Meanwhile, Cummins returned to the Australian playing XI for the third Test after missing the first two matches due to a bone stress injury. However, Steve Smith was ruled out on the morning of the fixture because of illness, paving the way for Usman Khawaja to earn a place in the playing XI.

Prithvi Shaw's 2nd chance: DC co-owner on why they bid for Maharashtra batter

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Delhi Capitals co-owner Kiran Kumar Grandhi explained the reason why they decided to bring back Prithvi Shaw to the franchise during the IPL 2026 auction. Shaw was initially bought by DC in 2018 after he helped India win the U-19 World Cup as the captain of the national side. Tipped as one of the bright prospects for the future, Shaw spent seven seasons with the Capitals before being released ahead of the 2025 mega auction. None of the teams were interested in getting the now-Maharashtra batter into their squads last season, which saw him get no bids despite having a base price of 75 Lakhs. A similar trend followed in the initial part of the IPL 2026 auction, as he went unsold in the main draw and was brought back a couple of times during the accelerated process. It was in the final stage that Delhi decided to bring Shaw back home for his base price.

Speaking after auction, Grandhi said that this was a chance for Shaw to make a strong comeback in the IPL. The DC co-owner said he hopes that Shaw will take this



second chance seriously and give his best for the side. Prithvi has done well for Delhi Capitals in the past. Every player goes through ups and downs, and this is an opportunity for him to make a strong comeback. We see this as a second chance for Prithvi, and I'm really looking forward to seeing him return to Delhi, take this opportunity seriously and give his best for

the team," said Grandhi. Shaw played 79 matches for DC and scored 1892 runs for the franchise during his first stint. DC made some smart buys at the start and then splashed the cash on J&K all-rounder Auqib Nabi Dar and got him in the side for Rs. 8.4 Crore. Grandhi felt that all the bases were covered by the franchise during the auction and they have well-balanced squad for the new season. "We went into the auction with a clear plan and were able to secure most of the players we had identified. We targeted experienced overseas batters like David Miller and Ben Duckett, which helped us strengthen those slots, while also investing in the future with a young talent like Sahil Parakh. In addition, we picked up a very promising bowler from Jammu and Kashmir in Auqib, who has been performing consistently. Overall, I believe we've covered most bases and built a strong, well-balanced squad. If we play as a unit, show courage on the field and make the most of our opportunities, we have a very good chance this season. Our fans deserve nothing less," said Grandhi.

IND vs SA 4th T20I: Suryakumar, Gill under the pump as India eye series win in Lucknow

LUCKNOW. (Agency)

Having made a comeback in the series with an emphatic win in the third T20I, India will aim to seal the five-match rubber against South Africa in the fourth fixture on Wednesday, December 17, at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow. India produced the perfect response after being outplayed in the second match, as their bowlers came to the fore to bundle out the Proteas for just 117. In the batting department, Abhishek Sharma once again began in his usual attacking style and set up the chase for the hosts, who reached the modest target in just 15.5 overs. While India's bowling returned to its best despite the absence of Jasprit Bumrah and Axar Patel, concerns remain over the batting form of Suryakumar Yadav and Shubman Gill. The captain and vice-captain once again failed to make an impact, being dismissed for 12 and 28 respectively. With only seven matches remaining in the build-up to the T20 World Cup, scrutiny over their form has intensified as India prepare to defend their title on home soil. Meanwhile, South Africa endured a forgettable outing in the third T20I, with



nothing clicking for the visitors. The Aiden Markram-led side will be keen to treat it as an aberration and move forward with a positive mindset, with everything still to

play for in the series in Lucknow. **Will Samson get a chance?** Following Shubman Gill's continued struggles, questions have been raised over his place in the side despite his role as vice-captain. Gill was recalled to the T20I team during the Asia Cup 2025, replacing Sanju Samson at the top of the order, despite Samson enjoying a strong run in that role. Since Gill's return, Samson has not

received regular opportunities, with constant reshuffles in the batting order affecting his rhythm. Gill has failed to register a single 50-plus score in 15 innings since his comeback, prompting growing debate over whether the team management should consider reinstating Samson at the top. With just seven matches remaining before the T20 World Cup, the question continues to dominate discussions.

The management may refrain from making drastic changes just two months ahead of the tournament, but the noise around Gill's form is only set to grow louder if he fails again in Lucknow.

When and where to watch?

The fourth T20I against South Africa will begin at 7:00 PM IST at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow. The match will be broadcast live on Star Sports, with live streaming available on JioHotstar.

Ekana stadium pitch report

A total of six T20Is have been played at the Ekana Stadium, with teams batting first winning on five occasions.

GREEN AN OUTSTANDING BUY FOR KKR

Ashwin said the five-time champions lacked clear intent in the bidding, while praising KKR for decisively securing a marquee signing.

"We conducted a mock auction, and that's when it became clear there was virtually no chance of him going over Rs 30 crores. In fact, had KKR been a little more patient—like some other franchises, Punjab for instance, who took their time while bidding—things might have played out differently," Ashwin said in a video on Ash Ki Baat. "If that had happened, CSK would likely have let Cameron Green go much earlier. I had a sense that CSK were bidding more out of necessity than intent; it didn't feel like they were fully committed to acquiring him. Personally, I felt Cameron Green would have been a terrific addition to CSK, and in that sense, they may have missed a small trick. That said, this isn't about the price point."

Joe Burns snubbed for Italy's maiden T20 World Cup campaign in India and Sri Lanka

T20 World Cup 2026: The Italian Cricket Federation has confirmed Wayne Madsen as the new captain of the men's T20 team, replacing Joe Burns, who will not be part of the squad for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Joe Burns, the former Australia international who captained Italy to a historic first-ever ICC Men's T20 World Cup qualification, will not be part of the Azzurri squad for the global tournament in India and Sri Lanka next year. The Italian Cricket Federation confirmed on Tuesday that Burns has been left out following the conclusion of discussions around his availability, with no

final agreement or contract reached between the two parties. Burns' omission marks a significant turning point for Italian cricket, coming just months after he led the side through a landmark qualifying campaign in the Netherlands in July 2025. Under his leadership, Italy secured their maiden berth at a Men's T20 World Cup, a breakthrough moment for a nation still finding its footing on the global cricketing map.

In the same announcement, the Federation revealed that Wayne Madsen has been appointed captain of the Italian men's T20 team. The experienced batter will lead Italy on their upcoming T20I tour of Ireland before taking charge at the World Cup finals, officially replacing Burns as skipper. Madsen has previously represented Italy and is regarded as a central figure in both the squad and the national team's broader coaching and development project. While Burns'

exclusion may come as a surprise given his recent role, the Federation stressed that the decision was driven by the need for stability,



harmony and continuity as Italy prepares for the most significant event in its cricketing history. Internal technical and organisational evaluations, it said, identified Madsen as the

most suitable leader at this stage, with long-term team balance prioritised over short-term considerations. The Italian Cricket Federation also paid tribute to Burns' contribution, acknowledging his impact both on and off the field. Burns wore the Italian jersey during tournaments in Rome and Uganda in 2024 and captained the side throughout the decisive qualification campaign. His role in guiding Italy to the World Cup was described as a major milestone in the growth of the national team.

Italy's World Cup journey will begin with an opening match against Bangladesh in Kolkata on February 9. The Federation added that it would not comment further on individual matters, choosing instead to focus fully on preparations for the tournament and ensuring a calm build-up for the squad ahead of their historic debut on cricket's biggest stage.

Planning to exit NPS? Here's how the new rules affect your retirement payout

New Delhi.(Agency)

Non-government NPS subscribers will now get much greater freedom over their retirement savings. Under new rules notified by the pension regulator, subscribers can withdraw up to 80% of their retirement corpus as a lump sum at the time of exit. In some cases, even 100% withdrawal will be allowed.

The changes come through the PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under the National Pension System) Amendment Regulations, 2025, notified on Tuesday, December 16, 2025. The rules apply to non-government subscribers, including those under the All Citizen Model and Corporate NPS. **WHAT HAS CHANGED FOR NPS SUBSCRIBERS?**

The biggest change is a sharp cut in the compulsory annuity requirement. Until now, most non-government NPS subscribers had to use 40% of their retirement corpus to buy an annuity at exit. Under the new rules, the mandatory annuity portion has been reduced to 20% in specified cases. This means subscribers can now access a much larger part of their savings upfront.

WHAT DOES THE 20% ANNUITY RULE MEAN?

An annuity is a product that gives regular pension income after retirement. The new regulations say that, depending on the size of the retirement corpus, subscribers must use at least 20% of their accumulated pension wealth to buy an annuity.

The remaining amount can be withdrawn as a lump sum or through staggered withdrawals such as systematic unit withdrawal (SUR). This rule applies at normal exit, such as at 60 years of age, and also for exits between 60 and 85 years.

NPS Exit Rules: Get more retirement cash & flexibility from PFRDA

New Delhi.(Agency)

There is news of great relief for those who invest in the National Pension System (NPS). PFRDA has notified changes in the rules related to exit from NPS. Under the new rules, non-government investors will now have to pay less money to buy annuities. This will allow you to get more money in hand at the time of retirement. The purpose of the rules is to give investors more flexibility. Especially those who have been investing in NPS for a long time will benefit.

NPS annuity

According to the new rules, non-government NPS investors will now have to invest only 20 percent of the total deposit amount in annuity. Earlier this limit was 40 percent. This facility will be available to those who have completed at least 15 years in NPS. Apart from this, this rule will also be applicable on completing 60 years of age or retiring from a job. The investor can withdraw the remaining 80 percent of the amount in lump sum or in installments.

This will make retirement planning easier.

NPS Withdrawal Rules: Benefits for Small Investors If the total pension amount deposited by an investor is Rs 8 lakh or less, then he will not need to buy an annuity. In such a situation, the entire amount can be withdrawn simultaneously or in installments. If the total amount is more than Rs 8 lakh and less than Rs 12 lakh, then the option of lump sum withdrawal of up to Rs 6 lakh will be available. The remaining amount can be taken as a regular payment. This rule is considered a big relief for small investors.

No relief to those who quit NPS prematurely

Strict rules have been kept for investors who want to exit NPS before the stipulated time. 80 percent of the amount will have to be invested in annuity before completing 15 years or before 60 years of age. However, if the total deposit amount is Rs 5 lakh or less, then the entire amount can be withdrawn. The government's objective is to promote long-term savings.

Rupee rebounds! Currency recovers on likely RBI intervention after opening at 91.07 vs US dollar; biggest single-day gain in 7 months

New Delhi.(Agency)

Rupee stayed under pressure on Wednesday, opening at a record low of 91.07 against the US dollar, down 0.05% from its previous close, before clawing back part of its losses, likely supported by intervention from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Reuters reported. The central bank stepped in aggressively after the currency hit record lows for four straight sessions, triggering its strongest intraday recovery in about seven months. The rupee had been weighed down by sustained portfolio outflows and an ongoing stalemate in US-India trade talks. After opening near 91.07, the rupee rebounded sharply, rising to an intraday high of 89.75 on the interbank order matching system from levels close to 91 seen before the intervention. Market participants noted that Wednesday's intervention mirrored RBI actions in October and November, when it stepped in on multiple occasions to curb one-way moves in the currency. Earlier on Tuesday, the domestic currency breached the 91-per-dollar mark for the first time during intraday trade, touching an all-time low of 91.14 before recovering partially to close 15 paise weaker at 90.93.

Traders said the decline came despite weakness in the US dollar and a sharp fall in global crude oil prices. Rupee has been under sustained stress in recent sessions. It slipped past the 90-per-dollar level on Monday and has hit fresh record lows for the third straight session, driven by concerns over a prolonged deadlock in India-US trade talks and persistent portfolio outflows. Over the past 10 trading sessions, the currency has fallen from around 90 to 91 against the dollar, losing nearly 1% in just the last five sessions.

Vedanta shares in focus as it gets NCLT approval for demerger. Check details

Vedanta share price: The approval clears a key legal hurdle and allows the company to move ahead with splitting its businesses into multiple listed entities.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Vedanta shares are in focus on Wednesday after the metal and mining major received approval from the National Company Law Tribunal for its long-awaited demerger plan. The approval clears a key legal hurdle and allows the company to move ahead with splitting its businesses into multiple listed entities. Vedanta shares gained slightly in early trade but later turned flat. At around 10:40 am, the stock was trading at Rs 571.85, up 0.4%. The movement came after the company

informed stock exchanges that the Mumbai bench of the NCLT had sanctioned its demerger scheme.

NCLT APPROVAL DETAILS

According to the company's filing, the NCLT order dated December 16 has approved the Scheme of Arrangement, subject to compliance with certain directions. This approval allows Vedanta to proceed with its plan to split into multiple sector-focused listed companies. The demerger will still need other regulatory and shareholder approvals before it is completed. Vedanta's demerger will result in five separate listed companies. Four new companies will be carved out, while the existing Vedanta Limited will continue as a listed entity. The aim of the move is to give each business sharper focus, independent management, and easier access to capital markets. The five entities that will emerge after the demerger are Vedanta Aluminium, Vedanta Oil and Gas, Vedanta Power, Vedanta Iron and Steel,

and Vedanta Limited. The residual Vedanta Limited will continue to house Hindustan Zinc and also incubate new and emerging businesses. Vedanta Aluminium

operations. Vedanta Limited will retain Hindustan Zinc and future growth businesses.

WHAT SHAREHOLDERS GET

The company said existing Vedanta shareholders will receive proportional equity shares in each of the newly listed companies, in addition to their current holdings. This structure is designed to ensure continuity of ownership while allowing each business to grow independently based on its sector needs. Commenting on the development, Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal said the NCLT approval marks a key step in the group's transformation. He said the move will help create focused companies that are better aligned with India's growth goals and global demand for resources, energy, and technology.

Agarwal added that each entity has the potential to attract strategic investment and deliver better value, especially as these sectors are seeing double-digit growth.



will operate as a fully integrated aluminium producer with a focus on low-carbon and value-added products.

Vedanta Oil and Gas will function as India's largest private sector upstream oil and gas exploration company. Vedanta Power will house the group's power generation assets. Vedanta Iron and Steel will manage iron ore, steel, and related ferrous

Sensex, Nifty open marginally higher as banking stocks rally in early trade

The S&P BSE Sensex was up by 91.32 points to 84,771.18, while the NSE Nifty50 added 44.40 points to 25,904.50 as of 9:22 am.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Benchmark stock market indices opened marginally higher on Wednesday, despite the rupee again touching a record low. However, PSU banking stocks rallied in early trade to provide support. The S&P BSE Sensex was up by 91.32 points to 84,771.18, while the NSE Nifty50 added 44.40 points to 25,904.50 as of 9:22 am. Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said that the recent sharp fall in the rupee and crude has been attracting the attention of investors. "Decline in crude, on poor demand from China and the US, is good news for India's macros, which are already in a Goldilocks setting. However, sustained

fall in the rupee is accelerating FII outflows, thereby hurting the market. This kind of sharp depreciation in the rupee was not expected particularly after the November trade data showed sharp decline in trade deficit at \$24.5 billion vs 41.5 billion in October," he added. He further explained that one possible reason for the RBI's non-intervention in the currency market to stem the rupee slide is that the rupee depreciation is not hurting the economy. Among the top performers at the opening bell, Eterna led the gains, rising 1.85%, followed by State Bank of India which moved up 1.41%. TVS Motor Company gained 1.09%, Bajaj Finance added 0.96%, and Axis Bank was up 0.94%, offering some support to the

index in early trade. On the other hand, the pressure on the market was clear on the losing side. ICICI Bank emerged as the biggest laggard, falling 0.82%, followed by Trent which slipped 0.41%. HDFC Bank declined 0.30%, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries was down 0.24%, and Kotak Mahindra Bank lost 0.23%. With the ongoing weakening of the AI trade, FIIs are likely to turn buyers in India sometime in 2026. If, along with this, a US-India trade deal happens, FIIs will turn buyers in India. There is a likelihood of rupee strengthening in H1 2026. Therefore, while FII selling is depressing stock prices now, investors should buy in anticipation of a 2026 rally," said Vijayakumar.

Bharat Taxi app to launch in Delhi from January 1



NEW DELHI.(Agency)

The Bharat Taxi app will be launched in Delhi from January 1 as part of an initiative supported by the Government of India. The new platform aims to offer an alternative to existing cab-hailing services and address long-standing concerns around high surge pricing. The app is expected to provide relief to passengers who often face sharp fare increases on platforms such

as Ola and Uber during peak hours. Bharat Taxi plans to follow a more transparent pricing structure, with a focus on stable fares. One of the key highlights of the Bharat Taxi app is its revenue model for drivers. Drivers will receive more than 80% of the total fare, which is significantly higher than what most private cab aggregators currently offer. The move is expected to improve driver earnings and reduce dependence

The app is expected to provide relief to passengers who often face sharp fare increases on platforms such as Ola and Uber during peak hours.

on high commissions. Interest among drivers in Delhi has been strong. Around 56,000 drivers have already registered on the platform ahead of its launch, indicating wide acceptance within the driver community.

The Bharat Taxi app will offer transport services across auto-rickshaws, cars and bikes, allowing users to choose different modes of travel based on their needs. The initiative is aimed at creating a fairer ecosystem for both passengers and drivers, while promoting a government-backed alternative in the urban mobility space.

ICICI Prudential AMC IPO allotment today: Check status, GMP, expected share price

Investors who applied for the IPO can check their allotment status through the registrar, Kfin Technologies, or the BSE website once the allotment is finalised.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Allotment of shares for the ICICI Prudential AMC IPO is expected to be finalised today after the public issue received strong demand across investor categories during its three-day bidding period. The IPO saw heavy participation from institutional investors, pushing overall subscription close to 40 times, even as retail interest remained relatively muted. The ICICI Prudential AMC IPO was subscribed 39.17 times overall. The retail

portion was subscribed 2.53 times, while qualified institutional buyers excluding anchor investors subscribed a massive 123.87 times. The non-institutional investor category was booked 22.04 times by the end of bidding on December 16.

HOW TO CHECK ICICI PRUDENTIAL AMC IPO ALLOTMENT STATUS

Investors who applied for the IPO can check their allotment status through the registrar, Kfin Technologies, or the BSE website once the allotment is finalised. To check on the Kfin Technologies website, applicants need to visit the IPO allotment status page, select ICICI Prudential AMC from the dropdown menu, choose their preferred option such as application number, PAN or demat account number, enter the required details, complete the captcha verification and submit the request to view the allotment result.

Investors can also check the status on the BSE website by selecting equity as the issue type, choosing ICICI Prudential

AMC from the list of IPOs, entering the application number or PAN, completing the verification process and submitting the request.

ICICI PRUDENTIAL AMC IPO GMP AND LISTING EXPECTATION



The grey market premium for ICICI Prudential AMC IPO remains strong ahead of allotment. The latest GMP stands at Rs 355, as of the morning of December 17. Based on the upper price band of Rs 2165 and the current GMP, the IPO is expected to list around Rs 2520 per share.

This suggests a potential listing gain of about 16.40% for investors, although grey market trends are unofficial and can change quickly closer to listing day.

ICICI Prudential AMC IPO is a book-built issue worth Rs 10,602.65 crore. The issue is entirely an offer for sale of 4.90 crore shares, meaning the company itself will not receive any fresh capital from the listing. Existing shareholders will pare their stake through the IPO.

The IPO opened for subscription on December 12 and closed on December 16. The allotment is expected to be finalised on December 17, while the shares are scheduled to list on the BSE and NSE on December 19. The price band for the IPO was fixed at Rs 2165 per share. The lot size was six shares, requiring a minimum investment of Rs 12,990 for retail investors. For small non-institutional investors, the minimum application was 96 shares amounting to Rs 2,07,840, while big non-institutional investors need to apply for at least 462 shares worth Rs 10,00,230.

Priyanka Chahar Choudhary

Brings Christmas Engery To Red Carpet In White Shimmery Dress

Television and OTT star Priyanka Chahar Choudhary garnered attention and sparked social media with her eye-catching red carpet presence at the star-studded Filmfare OTT Awards 2025. She chose a stylish white off-the-shoulder dress and combined style with a daring attitude. Within minutes of her arrival, pictures and videos began to go viral on social media. Both fashion critics and fans applauded her calm yet bold demeanour, praising not only her attire but also the confidence with which she wore it. Priyanka's appearance soon became one of the evening's most talked-about moments, generating praise and excitement on social media.

Instagram account Viral Bhayani shared a clip of Priyanka walking the red carpet, while confidently posing for the photographers present there. "Priyanka Chahar Choudhary and her style lessons effortlessly lessens the burden off the shoulders of many," the caption reads. Priyanka Chahar Choudhary's Standout Statement on Red Carpet Priyanka Chahar Choudhary made an impact with her presence at the Filmfare OTT Awards, which went beyond basic fashion. The actress stood out amid the glamorous lineup of the evening by selecting a white off-the-shoulder dress and minimal accessories that expertly combined elegance with a new, contemporary edge.

Online fans soon praised Priyanka for her easy charm and sense of style. Celebrities at the event wore a variety of styles, but Priyanka's choice garnered special attention due to its sophistication and popularity on social media. One user commented, "FASHIONISTA PCC."

"Giving bollywood heroine vibes," a second comment read. "Back to back Filmfare red carpet omggg gurlrrr ruling and how!!" exclaimed another. While several celebrities complimented her on being one of the night's best-dressed actors, they admired her for being authentic. In a business where trends and fads rule, Priyanka's ability to be delightfully distinct without trying to do so has kept her ahead.

Fashion Highlights from Filmfare OTT 2025

The 2025 Filmfare OTT Awards red carpet transformed into a stunning show of fashion diversity as the celebs arrived, showcasing everything from polished gowns to sartorial menswear. Other fashion highlights on the red carpet were the elegant classic menswear worn by Jaideep Ahlawat and Vikrant Massey. They presented a sophisticated counterpoint to the evening's colourful fashion story with their classic appeal.

Jaideep Ahlawat chose a black shirt and a pinstriped dark suit for a timeless but dominating appearance. Meanwhile, Vikrant Massey wore a black bandhgala with metallic buttons and a pocket square to embrace traditional sophistication. The stunning Palak Muchhal attracted attention with her black tights and scarlet sequin outfit. A chic purse and golden shoes finished her look.



Sonakshi Sinha

Slams Air India Over 6-Hour Flight Delay, Later Removes Post

Sonakshi Sinha briefly took to social media to express her frustration over a delayed flight with national carrier Air India, but later removed the post. On Tuesday (December 16), Sinha shared an Instagram story from the airport detailing that her early morning flight had been postponed multiple times. She explained that she had arrived at the airport at 4 am to board a 5 am flight, which was subsequently delayed until 11 am without explanation.

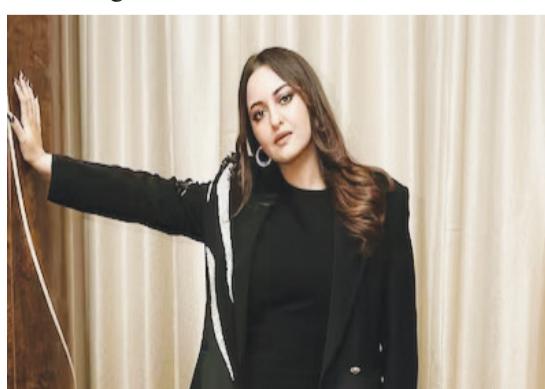
"Absolutely HATE you @airindia. Been at the airport since 4 am to catch a 5 am flight which has been pushed to 11 am hour by hour for NO DAMN REASON. National carrier it seems. Do better," she wrote, alongside a photo taken at the airport. The actress deleted the story shortly after posting it. While she did not provide a reason for removing the post, screenshots of the story began circulating online.

At the time of reporting, Air India has not responded publicly to Sinha's remarks.

Sonakshi Sinha has had a prominent career in Hindi cinema since making her acting debut in the 2010 action film Dabangg, for which she won the Filmfare Award for Best Female Debut. Over the years, she has appeared in popular films such as Rowdy Rathore (2012), Son of Sardaar (2012), Dabangg 2 (2012), Holiday: A Soldier Is Never Off Duty

(2014), and Mission Mangal (2019). She also received critical acclaim for her performance in the period drama Lootera (2013).

In recent years, Sinha has transitioned to digital platforms, earning praise for her roles in the Amazon Prime thriller series Dahaad (2023) and the Netflix period drama Heeramandi (2024), winning a Filmfare OTT Award for the former.



Beyond acting, she is a well-known celebrity endorser and has also explored singing and television judging, including on shows like Nach Baliye (2017).

On the personal front, Sonakshi married actor Zaheer Iqbal in a civil ceremony on June 23, 2024, in Mumbai, followed by a grand wedding reception. The couple frequently shares moments from their relationship on social media.

Akash Jagga On Working With Rani Chatterjee In Beendani: 'It Has Been A Delight'



Actress Rani Chatterjee made a power-packed entry into Sun Neo's popular show Prathaon Ki Odhe Chunari: Beendani. Known for portraying strong, impactful women, especially in Bhojpuri films, she joins the show as Jwala. Her arrival is set to introduce a powerful twist that could redefine the storyline, bringing a fearless and formidable woman into the spotlight. Now, Akash Jagga, who plays Kundan in the show, opened up about working with Rani Chatterjee, considered one of the highest-paid actresses in the Bhojpuri film industry.

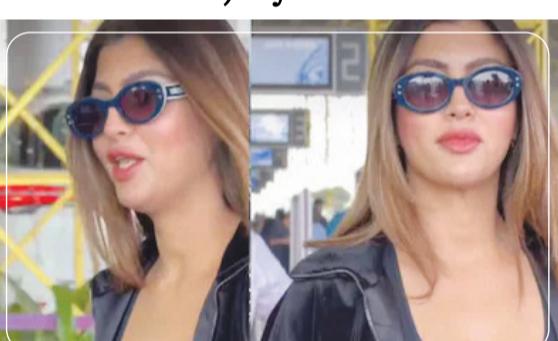
Akash Jagga on Working With Rani Chatterjee
In an interview with The Times of India, Akash shared, "Working with Rani Chatterjee has been an absolute delight. She's incredible with her craft and doing scenes with her was refreshing; there was so much genuine give and take. With her entry as Jwala, the energy on set has gone up a notch. I'm sure the audience is going to love this track, it's something very fresh and exciting!"

Rani Chatterjee On Playing Jwala in Prathaon Ki Odhe Chunari: Beendani

Rani Chatterjee also spoke about stepping into this fiery role in the show. She said, "The show has already been on air for the last five to six months, but I can confidently say that after my entry, the entire story will take a powerful turn. My character, Jwala, will bring a big change to the narrative. Even the name 'Jwala' reflects how strong and fiery this character is.

She carries a kind of fire and strength that personally inspires me as well. 'Jwala' is especially meaningful to Rani, as the role reflects her real-life persona. She is strong, fearless, and independent. She shared, I'm real life too, I have always been an independent and strong woman. I don't want to play roles where women are only shown crying or silently suffering," she explains. Rani believes television needs more portrayals that highlight courage rather than victimhood.

Akanksha Puri's Airport Look Is All About Comfort, Style And Toned Abs



Akanksha Puri never fails to impress, whether it's with her style or her dedication to fitness. The actress, admired for her radiant looks and enviable physique, once again caught everyone's attention during a recent paparazzi spotting. Spotted at the airport, Akanksha kept things effortlessly chic. Her outfit struck the perfect balance between comfort and style, but it was her perfectly toned midriff that truly stole the show.

Akanksha Puri Spotted At The Airport
At the airport, the Bigg Boss OTT contestant was spotted in a velvet black tracksuit with the zip left open, effortlessly flaunting her perfectly toned midriff. Her sculpted abs instantly grabbed attention. She paired the look with sleek, straight tresses, stylish goggles, and classic white sneakers. Exuding confidence, she posed for the paparazzi and waved at them before heading towards the gate to complete her verification formalities.

A user wrote, "Lovely queen." Someone added, "Gajab." A user commented, "She is hot." Another remarked, "Stunner."

Akanksha's Show-Stopping Paparazzi Moments
Not just this one moment, Akanksha Puri's paparazzi appearances are consistently stylish and captivating, and her fashion choices speak for themselves. Whether she's attending a star-studded bash or stepping out casually, the actress knows exactly how to make heads turn.

Akanksha was recently spotted at Farrhana Bhatt's Bigg Boss celebration bash, where she looked nothing short of stunning in a red satin dress. The rich colour and luxe fabric complemented her beautifully, making the look effortlessly glamorous. She styled the outfit with soft waves, a chic gold bag, and golden heels, striking the perfect balance between elegance and glam.

At yet another event, the actress once again proved her fashion prowess when she stepped out in a white-and-gold ensemble that highlighted her toned midriff. The outfit featured sleek white trousers paired with a statement cape and a striking golden blouse, creating a bold yet classy look that instantly caught attention.

And it's not just event wear where Akanksha shines, her casual outings are equally on point. She looked effortlessly stylish in a shirt adorned with white embroidery, which she paired with a mini skirt and trendy goggles. Completing the look with sneakers, Akanksha showed how to keep things chic, comfortable, and fashion-forward all at once.

What's your style of Parenting?

How you are as a parent does play a very important role in forming the personality of your child as s/he goes into adulthood. We tell you more

Do you pride yourself as one of those new age parents, indulgent yet strict as per the needs of the situation? Do you worry endlessly and even stays up till your kid get home from a night out with friends? Are you constantly going through your child's belongings - cupboard, books, online profile, SMSes, etc? Do you always tell your child what to do and what not to just to 'keep them safe'?

All parents have their own style of parenting - their way of bringing up their children. According to Bela Raja, child guidance counselor, one's parenting style, if negative, can have an adverse effect on the psyche of the child even to the point of causing damage. "A good style of parenting is one where parents respect the needs and emotions of their child as much as the child respects the parents. It's also important for parents to encourage the development of the child's self-esteem. They need to teach him/her to feel good about themselves. Moreover, no matter how silly or insignificant it may seem, a child's concerns have to be addressed, even if it's just the fear of entering a room alone," she says.

Bela adds that since the child's first social interaction is with the parents, the style of interaction used here will have a significant bearing on the child as a grownup. TV anchor Mini Mathur, mother of seven-year-old Vivaan opines that she is a moderate parent. "I guard

against being over protective so that he learns to fight his own battles. For now I am playing the role of a guide, protector in the hope that he learns to be independent and take his own decisions as an adult," she explains. And though at times she does get 'extremely over-indulgent', she is also the disciplinarian in the family.

"Kabir is the indulgent, knowledge imparting, fun type of parent, so the task of balancing things out and keeping Vivaan in check is left to me. Thankfully he's growing up to be a well balanced, sensitive and grounded kid, so I guess I'm doing something right somewhere," she says.

If you're worried that your college going kid is splurging too much on clothes or shoes, this behaviour could be the result of you saying no to them every time as kids or if your child hesitates to take any decision on his own, it could be the result of you being an over-protective or dominating parent in their younger days or if people complain that your child is overly arrogant and rude, it could be because you did not correct these faults in his/her childhood itself.

Here are some parenting styles and what



potential outcome could be like:

Over-protective parents: Leads to clingy adults

A child growing under overprotective parents faces severe detachment problems as an adult. If you don't let him/her face life in all its shades, they will grow up to be excessively dependent, weak and seek help for trivial matters.

TIP: Such behaviour can restrict your child's emotional intelligence. Give them an opportunity to explore the world without constant interference.

Suspicious parents: Leads to lying, distrustful adults

It's okay to keep a check on your child, but overdoing it can hamper their trust instinct.

The child will then panic at the sight of your call or message. To save face, they may even resort to lying.

Over suspicious parents envision fear by putting this fear in their child, they raise suspicious adults with low confidence.

TIP: If you have an excessive urge to check on your kids, have a frank talk with them and look for a

solution. For instance, they can call you every time they

reach their friend's house, instead of the other way round.

Abusive parents: Leads to an extreme personality

It's all right to point out your child's mistakes, but use of emotional or physical violence can scar them for life. Abusive parents permanently damage their child's cognitive development leading to low self-esteem and confidence. Such children grow up to be extreme personalities - a total rebel or a doormat.

TIP: Identify the first signs of losing your temper.

See if it's the way your child talks or their mistakes that annoys you. Take precautions at this very stage.

Pushy parents: Leads to suicidal adults

Pushy parents who want their kids to be winners all the time put kids under extreme pressure leading to nervous breakdowns or even suicidal tendencies. Such parents find it hard to digest failure and they crush the child's personality. Even as an adult, such kids strive

to conform to others expectations, which, when unfulfilled, will create a feeling of worthlessness.

TIP: Share positive feelings with your children. Encourage kids even if they don't win a competition.



Comparing parents: Leads to a show off

Parents, who don't empathise with their child are quick to deform their child's personality. This leads to adults who harbour excessive feelings of worthlessness, low self-esteem and self-pity.

TIP: Even if you disagree with your child, use positivity. Avoid comparing siblings and phrases that hurt.

Passive parents: Leads to arrogant adults

Parents, who don't participate in their child's activities or those who feel too sorry for being hard on their child, turn them into difficult adults. Such parents are often unable to say 'no' and the child grows up to be an overconfident person, who cannot accept mistake or accept criticism positively.

TIP: Spend quality time with your kids. Do things together, such as painting, story telling, going to the park, etc. In case they make a mistake, point it out gently. Do not give in to your child's whining, crying or temper tantrum, as it only reinforces the behaviour.



Experts debate if 'brexting' affects

Mom-child bonding

Even as new mothers try to cope with challenges of taking care of their newborns while being scrutinised for their every act, here's another activity they are being made guilty of indulging in — brexting. In the past few months, many are being told how breastfeeding while texting or using the smartphone is a bad idea.

Away to shame new moms? "I nurse my two-month-old daughter seven times a day and every session lasts for a minimum of 20 minutes. Though I love looking at her when she is feeding, there are times when I just zone out. So, I don't think surfing the web at that time is a crime," reasons Natasha Dhillon, a PR manager.

Anusha Robert, a child counsellor, reasons, "Every mother has a different way of feeding her baby. That doesn't mean one is right and the other is wrong. I was suffering from



post-natal depression after giving birth to my daughter and needed to occupy myself even when I was feeding her. I used to read comics to keep myself busy and listened to songs as well. I think it's unfair to shame me or make me feel guilty for indulging in little pleasures while nursing. There is too much pressure on new mothers and we don't need more dos and don'ts to add to the burden."

Why brexting can be a bad idea

According to studies, using gadgets

while feeding your child can cut into the attention you give him/her. Studies suggest that a nursing mother should make eye contact with the child and when you are distracted by gadgets, it affects the bonding. Though brexting as a term refers only to the use of smartphones, the new buzz word encompasses all activities that could divert a mother's attention from the child during those important 30-minute sessions — speaking on the phone, watching TV, reading, writing, sorting bills and sometimes simply staring at a spot on the wall.

Dr Neha Kumar, a gynaecologist, says, "Indulging in other activities while feeding a baby diverts your attention away from the child. Although constantly making eye contact is not needed, you must realise that this is an excellent opportunity to spend quality time with your newborn. When you

look at the child, he/she will feel calm. You will also start understanding your little one's body moves and start taking cues."

Dr Manan Gill, a paediatric and a gynaecologist, couldn't agree more. He adds, "The first few months of breastfeeding is the most important phase in a child's life. If you are busy on your phone or doing other activities, you could be ignoring important messages from your little one. Most of the time, babies look at their mother's face while feeding. So, when you are glued to the gadget screen while he/she is trying to communicate with you through silence, it sends out wrong signals."

However, Ribhu Chatterjee, a psychologist, believes, "It's alright to be distracted by phones, books or the TV. Yes, you need to establish an emotional connection with the child, but putting too much pressure on mothers will drive them over the brink."

Ways to keep yourself from reaching for the phone
Put your mobile in another room or on charge

Are you suffering from depression? If yes, then your teenage kid may be prone to higher risk-taking and rule-breaking behaviour that can make them rebellious and disobedient, says a study.

According to researchers, parental depression contributes to greater brain activity in areas linked to risk taking in adolescent children, leading to more rule-breaking behaviours.

"This is the first evidence to show that parental depression influences children's behaviour through the change in the adolescent's brain," said lead study author Yang Qu from University Of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

There are a lot of changes happening in the teenage years, especially when we are thinking about risk-taking behaviours, added another researcher Eva Telzer.

The study, published in the journal

Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, analysed 23 adolescents aged 15 to 17, with cognitive testing and brain imaging at the beginning and end of the 18-month study.

To measure parental depression, the team collected data from the parents on their own depressive symptoms and who were not currently being treated for clinical depression.

They also collected information on the adolescents' rule-breaking behaviours, such as sneaking out without parental permission, substance abuse and partying.

The findings indicated that adolescents whose parents had greater depressive symptoms increased their risk-taking over the course of the study.

"Even if you are not clinically depressed and seeking out help, your teenager is probably picking up on the negative emotions that you may be experiencing," Telzer noted.

Depressed parents can turn kids into troublemakers

