

Rahul Gandhi's 'MGNREGA' Praise In Protest Over 'G RAM G' Clearing Parliament

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New Delhi .(Agency)
Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi has snubbed the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Employment and Livelihood Mission (Rural) Bill, dubbed the 'G RAM G' bill, as "anti-state" and "anti-village" after it cleared the parliament amid bitter protests by the opposition. The G Ram G Bill is meant to be an updated version of the UPA government's flagship MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act) that will likely replace it once the President gives her assent. Gandhi slammed the parliament approval despite the opposition demanding the Bill's scrutiny by a standing committee. "This law was bulldozed through Parliament without proper scrutiny. The opposition demand to send the bill to a Standing Committee was rejected. A law that rewrites the rural social contract, affecting crores of

workers, should never be rammed through without serious committee scrutiny, expert consultation, and public hearings," the Congress leader thundered. Directing his criticism at the Modi government, he underlined that the proposed law "demolishes" the rights-based and demand-driven guarantee and turns it into a rationed scheme controlled from Delhi. "Last night, the Modi government demolished twenty years of MGNREGA in one day. VB-G RAM G isn't a 'revamp' of MGNREGA. It demolishes the rights-based, demand-driven guarantee and turns it into a rationed scheme which is controlled from Delhi. It is anti-state and anti-village by design," the Congress MP fumed. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "targets are

clear: weaken labour, weaken the leverage of rural India, especially Dalits, OBCs and Adivasis, centralise power, and then sell slogans as 'reform,'" he added, intensifying his



RAM G Bill weakens the scheme for the rural poor.

"With real options (under MGNREGA), exploitation and distress migration fell, wages increased, working conditions improved, all while building and reviving rural infrastructure.

That leverage is precisely what this government wants to break. By capping work and building in more ways to deny it, VB-G RAM G weakens the one instrument which the rural poor had," he alleged as he praised the UPA-era MGNREGA law. The Congress MP also recalled how the MGNREGA prevented crores of people from slipping into hunger and debt during Covid, arguing that rationing a jobs programme first impacts the women, Dalits, Adivasis, landless workers, and the poorest OBC communities.

Amid PM Modi's Assam Visit, Congress To Launch Manifesto Consultations

As part of the yatra, senior Congress leaders, supported by MLAs, MPs and key party functionaries, will reach out to grassroots communities across Assam to gather feedback and suggestions

New Delhi.(Agency)
Even as all eyes remain on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Assam on December 20 and 21, the main opposition Congress has announced a parallel statewide outreach, kicking off manifesto consultations and a mass outreach yatra on December 20. During his visit, Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to attend several key programmes linked to infrastructure, connectivity, investment, industries and Assam's history. The visit will also mark his maiden trip to the new Assam BJP headquarters in Guwahati, where he will interact with party leaders and functionaries ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

Coinciding with the Prime Minister's visit, the Congress has chosen December 20 to directly engage with citizens, stakeholders and party workers across all regions of the state. The party will launch its outreach initiative under the ongoing people-centric campaign 'Rajior Podulit Rajior Congress', aimed at preparing a people-driven



manifesto through a structured, state-wide consultation process. As part of the yatra, senior Congress leaders, supported by MLAs, MPs and key party functionaries, will reach out to grassroots communities across Assam to gather feedback and suggestions.

"As a first step, we are seeking guidance and suggestions on Assam's higher education system, which is closely linked to human resource development. My interactions with students from colleges and universities across Assam show that

significant work is still needed to improve quality, strengthen research and innovation, and empower students to become self-reliant," Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Gaurav Gogoi said.

The party plans to place around 4,000 suggestion boxes at high-footfall locations such as marketplaces, tea garden lines, tea stalls and bus stops to collect opinions from citizens. Meanwhile, on the same day in the evening, Prime Minister Modi will reach the Assam BJP headquarters in Guwahati through a roadshow. During his visit, he will interact with around 250 BJP functionaries, including state office-bearers, ministers, MPs, MLAs, heads of various morchas, district presidents, senior and veteran leaders, and party workers. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said the BJP is preparing to contest around 102 to 123 seats in the upcoming Assembly elections. "All preparations are done, our talks with allies are almost settled. Our workers are already on the ground. Our target is to secure over 50 per cent of the vote share.

On the final day of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly session in Belagavi, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah asserted on the floor of the House that he continued to be the Chief Minister and rejected claims of any "two-and-a-half-year" power-sharing agreement.

Responding to repeated questions and interruptions from the Opposition over his tenure, Siddaramaiah said there was no such arrangement and clarified that he would remain in office until the party high command decided otherwise. "The people must bless us first. Then the legislators elect the leader in the Legislative Party meeting, and after that the high command decides. That is all I have said. Even now, I am the Chief Minister, and I will remain the Chief Minister until the high command decides otherwise," he said. Leader of the Opposition R Ashok countered by stating that Siddaramaiah was elected for five years by the Legislative Party and questioned the reference to two-and-a-half years. Siddaramaiah responded that he had never spoken about a two-and-a-half-year term and reiterated that no such agreement existed. Meanwhile, dinner politics in Karnataka continued in Belagavi on the final day of the Assembly session amid the ongoing Chief Minister versus Deputy Chief Minister

churn within the Congress. Senior Congress leader and Minister Satish Jarkiholi hosted a dinner for leaders seen as part of the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah camp at his residence in Kuvempu Nagar on Thursday night. Those present included Siddaramaiah, Home



Minister G Parameshwara, Minister HC Mahadevappa, Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan, MLA Ponnanna and a few other MLAs. Siddaramaiah and Mahadevappa arrived together in the same vehicle, signalling coordination within the camp. Responding to questions regarding the dinner meeting, DK Shivakumar said, "Let them do dinner meetings. I am happy. Why should I respond? What is wrong in meeting for dinner?"

Disruptions unbefitting of MPs, says Rajya Sabha Chairman as Winter session ends

Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan read out a synopsis of the legislative and other business transacted during the 15-day sitting of the Winter session before adjourning the proceedings sine die.

New Delhi .(Agency)
Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan on Friday strongly disapproved of disruptions by Opposition members during the passage of the rural employment guarantee bill (G RAM G), terming the conduct "unbecoming of Members of Parliament", and urged them to introspect and refrain from such behaviour in future.

Radhakrishnan read out a synopsis of the legislative and other business transacted during the 15-day sitting of the Winter session before adjourning the proceedings sine die.

Adjourned sine die (Latin for "without a day") means suspending a parliamentary session indefinitely, without setting a specific date to reconvene. It's used when legislative bodies end a session without naming a future date for reassembly. The Winter session of Parliament started on December 1.

"Disruption created during yesterday's sitting by the Opposition Members by shouting slogans, displaying placards, disrupting the Minister replying to the discussion, tearing up papers and throwing them in the well of the House showed conduct unbefitting of Members of Parliament. "I earnestly hope that Hon'ble Members would introspect and not repeat such unruly behaviour in future," he said. The Rajya Sabha sat past midnight on Thursday to pass legislation that replaced the 20-year-old rural employment scheme -- the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) -- by boosting the number of guaranteed workdays to 125, up from the current 100 days per household for unskilled manual labour.

Thackerays, For Once, Seem To Have A Plan Ahead Of Mumbai Local Body Polls

Mumbai .(Agency)
For the last 20 years, every election in Mumbai has come with a whisper - will the Thackerays unite this time? Not just elections, this question has cropped up during moments of crisis too, political or personal, and disappeared just as quietly.

This winter, though, the question hits differently, not because of any dramatic visual of a family meetup, but because of



something far more unusual for the Thackerays: planning.

In the last four months, joint protest rallies, carefully curated messaging, and workers from both parties sharing the same

stage have replaced last-minute hassles for political adjustment. For a family known more for appealing to emotion, the new approach is hard to miss. And it raises a larger question: have the Thackerays finally learned from their earlier mistakes?

Politics built on emotion more than planning

To understand the importance of this moment, one must go through the history of the 'Thackeray brand'.

Since the creation of the state, political power in Maharashtra has largely oscillated between national forces. The Congress dominated the early decades, with a formidable opposition in the socialists. Later, the Bharatiya Janata Party rose, given the fertile ground created by the Janata Party and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Besides all of these, Mumbai also produced another force, one that did not fit into any of these boxes.

Chouhan tears into Opposition over din in LS, calls 'conduct' by INDIA MPs a blot

New Delhi .(Agency)
Union Agriculture Minister Shrikrishna Singh Chouhan on Thursday flayed the Congress and other INDIA bloc parties for disrupting the Lok Sabha during the introduction of the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeekya Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill. The Lok Sabha was adjourned amid protests, and the minister spoke to the media at the BJP headquarters just hours before the Bill was taken up in the Rajya Sabha. Chouhan said, "The conduct displayed by the Congress and INDIA Alliance MPs in the Lok Sabha today has badly stained democracy and torn apart parliamentary decorum. They turned the democracy into mob rule and thuggery."

Calling the Opposition's actions "disgraceful", Chouhan said, "There was a discussion on the Bill. The discussion began on Wednesday, but today the Opposition's indecent conduct - tearing and throwing

(MGNREGA). Hitting back, Chouhan asked whether Mahatma Gandhi would have accepted such "disgraceful" conduct. The minister said he had listened patiently to 98 MPs who spoke during the debate in the Lok Sabha and stressed the importance of discussion. "I was fully prepared to give my reply. But they did not allow me to complete my reply and disrupted the House's proceedings. I am deeply hurt by the behaviour of the opposition," he said. Accusing the Congress of indulging in political theatres, the minister claimed that during the UPA government's tenure, only 1,660 crore human-days of work were generated, while the NDA government had created 3,210 crore human-days. He also said the Congress-led government spent ₹2.13 lakh crore on MGNREGA, compared to over ₹8.53 lakh crore spent by the NDA government.

Priyanka Gandhi, other opposition leaders join PM Modi, Om Birla over tea

New Delhi .(Agency)
At the end of the Winter Session on Friday, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla held a meeting with leaders of the Lower House in his chamber at Parliament House, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi also in attendance.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was seen seated next to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the meeting, sharing a cup of tea, a moment that drew attention amid an otherwise stormy session of Parliament.

Earlier in the day, amid continued Opposition protests over the passage of the VB-G Ram G Bill, the Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die after the national song Vande Mataram was played in the House. Speaker Om Birla formally brought the session to a close.

The Rajya Sabha was also adjourned sine die shortly after it convened at 11 am, with Chairman and Vice-President CP Radhakrishnan expressing strong disapproval of disruptions witnessed during the session. Referring to protests during a minister's reply a day earlier, Radhakrishnan said the conduct of members including tearing of papers, was "unbecoming of the House" and urged them to reflect on their behaviour.

Earlier on Thursday, Priyanka Gandhi had sought an appointment with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari during Question Hour in the Lok Sabha to raise concerns related to highway projects in her Wayanad constituency, highlighting continued engagement between Opposition leaders and the government despite the acrimony that marked the session's final days.

News box

Met factors keep air in poor zone for 2nd day

Noida.(Agency)

The city recorded a marginal improvement in air quality on Thursday, though pollution levels remained in the poor category. The average AQI stood at 276, slightly lower than 279 a day earlier. Among monitoring stations, Gwalpahari remained the worst affected with a very poor AQI of 317. Air quality was poor in Sector 51, where the AQI was 290, while Vikas Sadan recorded a lower reading of 204, though still in the poor range. The AQI at Teri Gram could not be calculated due to insufficient data. According to System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (Safar), air quality is likely to deteriorate further and move into the very poor to severe category in the coming days. Weather conditions are expected to trap pollutants close to the ground. The weather department has forecast a partly cloudy sky, with dense to very dense fog at several places during morning hours, which may reduce pollutant dispersion. Wind conditions are also expected to remain unfavourable. Surface winds are likely to blow from the northwest at speeds of up to 10kmph in the morning, increasing to around 15kmph from the west in the afternoon. Wind speeds are expected to fall below 5kmph by evening and night. The maximum mixing depth is forecast at around 800 metres, while the ventilation index is expected to be about 3,000 m²/s on Friday. A ventilation index below 6,000 m²/s, combined with average wind speeds of less than 10kmph, is unfavourable for the dispersion of air pollutants, "Safar noted. Experts have advised residents to limit outdoor exposure, particularly during early morning and late evening hours. On Thursday, fine particulate matter levels remained high across all monitoring stations. PM2.5 concentrations reached 500 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in Sector 51, followed by Gwal Pahari at 487 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and Vikas Sadan at 243 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. PM10 levels were also elevated, with Sector 51 recording 500 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, Gwal Pahari 468 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and Vikas Sadan 153 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. These readings remain well above the CPCB's annual safe limits of 60 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for

Vigilance to probe Rs 70 lakh 'scam' in on-screen marking in Haryana

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Board of School Education Haryana (BSEH) has ordered a high-level vigilance inquiry into alleged financial irregularities in the implementation of the on-screen marking (OSM) system during the 2024 Class X and XII board examinations. This move is estimated to have caused a loss of around Rs 70 lakh to the state exchequer. According to the official documents, around 1 lakh answer sheets were evaluated digitally at a rate of Rs 70 per copy by a private firm, whereas the traditional manual marking system followed by the board costs approximately Rs 15 per answer sheet, leading to a sharp and unjustified escalation in expenditure.

The probe was initiated after current board chairperson Pawan Sharma reviewed past decisions and flagged the outsourcing of answer sheet evaluation to the firm — MS Learning Private Limited — at "significantly higher rates" compared to the board's existing manual system. The BSEH chairperson has described the episode as "open loot" and confirmed that the matter has been handed over to a state govt vigilance officer. The chairman has asserted that "responsibility will be fixed" and strict action will follow against those found guilty.

In April 2024, the board said digital evaluation was being started from the next academic session to "improve transparency and efficiency in assessment". On-screen marking involves the evaluation of answer scripts through digitising the answer scripts first and then enabling the same through software applications.

Sharma pointed out that the board currently lacks adequate infrastructure such as computer labs and trained manpower for large-scale digital evaluation, noting that many teachers have already objected to the on-screen marking mode.

AQI worsens, inches back towards 'severe' in Noida

Noida.(Agency)

The air quality deteriorated further in the 'very poor' range on Thursday. A thick layer of fog greeted residents in the morning. Noida's AQI rose considerably to 397, only a couple points for reaching 'severe', from 331 the day before, while Greater Noida's AQI rose to 344 from 310. In Ghaziabad, the AQI was recorded at 339, up from 308 on Wednesday. In Delhi, the AQI was 373 on Thursday, up from 334 the previous day. According to CPCB data, the Sector 1 air monitoring station recorded the worst AQI in the city at 422 (severe), while Sector 125 logged an AQI of 400 — only one point from the 'severe' range. Sector 116 (AQI 390), and Sector 62 (AQI 355) also recorded air quality in the mid to high range of the 'very poor' category.

In Greater Noida, Knowledge Park V (AQI 360) and Knowledge Park III (AQI 327) both recorded 'poor' air. In Ghaziabad, Vasundhara recorded the highest AQI at 414, in the 'severe' category, while Indirapuram (AQI 325), and Sanjay Nagar (AQI 317) were both in the 'very poor' range. Loni recorded the lowest AQI in the city at 299 (poor). Maximum temperature on Thursday was 20.1 degrees Celsius, two degrees below normal. It was 4.6 degrees lower than Wednesday's maximum due to the overcast skies. The minimum stood at 9 degrees Celsius, one degree above normal. The Met department said moderate fog is likely at most places. There are chances of dense fog at isolated places in the early morning hours of Friday, Sunday, and Monday.

IMD said that due to a western disturbance that is expected to impact Delhi till Dec 23, clouds were seen in the region on Thursday. "Under its influence, heavy rain is likely in Jammu and Kashmir on Dec 21 and moderate fog in Himachal Pradesh. Delhi is likely to record cloudiness," Kumar said. According to the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, the predominant surface wind on Thursday came from the northwest direction with a wind speed of up to 10 kmph during the afternoon hours. The wind speed decreased to less than 8 kmph during the evening and night.

Dead man alive: How a lawyer pulled off Rs 60L land fraud

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A lawyer was arrested for allegedly masterminding a land scam by assuming the identity of a man who died more than 30 years ago. Navin Rana, a 40-year-old practising lawyer, allegedly used forged documents to pose as Om Prakash, a Bajghera resident who passed away in 1993, in order to sell his land and siphon off nearly Rs 60 lakh. Police said Rana's fraud began in Dec 2015, when he walked into Axis Bank's Palam Vihar branch and opened an account, presenting forged documents to establish himself as Om Prakash. Just two days later, Rs 46 lakh was deposited into the account as payment for land sold to Angel Buitelch Private Limited, a real estate company. The unusually large transaction triggered the bank's internal checks, and the account was promptly frozen on Jan 1, 2016. But the scam didn't end there. In Oct 2016, the account was quietly transferred to Axis Bank's Sadar Bazar branch. For

two years, the transaction remained under the radar till 2018, when Palam Vihar branch officials reached out to Angel Buitelch to verify the land deal. Sensing something amiss, the company traced Om Prakash's family, only to discover that he had died in 1993 and that his family had long since moved from Bajghera to sectors 4 and 7. Angel Buitelch alerted authorities, suspecting they had been cheated. A police investigation soon confirmed their fears. The bank account and sale deed had been created using forged documents, all orchestrated by Rana. Meanwhile, Om Prakash's family filed a cheating and forgery complaint at Bajghera police station in 2018, leading to an FIR against Rana. A senior police officer said, "A compromise was later reached between the parties, following which the FIR was quashed by the Punjab and Haryana high court." However, Angel Buitelch pursued a civil case to recover its money. In 2023, the court ordered Axis

Bank to return the funds, but it emerged that Rana had already withdrawn the entire amount. Using more forged



paperwork, he had managed to get the previously frozen account active, then transfer the money to IDFC Bank, and siphon off Rs 59 lakh — including accrued interest — into his own accounts via NEFT and IMPS transactions.

The fraud finally came to a head in Sept 2024, when the manager of Axis Bank's Sadar Bazaar branch filed a complaint

after noticing suspicious activity and missing funds. The case was handed to the economic offences wing, which arrested Rana on Wednesday. During questioning, Rana admitted to knowing Om Prakash personally and being aware of his death in 1993. "He confessed to selling Om Prakash's land in Bajghera by impersonating him, opening a bank account in the deceased's name in 2015 to receive the sale amount, and later using forged documents to get the frozen account unfrozen and transfer the money in 2023. He is currently practising as a lawyer in Gurgaon courts," said Sandeep Kumar, a police spokesperson. An FIR was registered against Rana under several sections of BNS, including criminal conspiracy, cheating by personation, forgery, and criminal breach of trust. Police said the investigation will now focus on tracing possible accomplices, recovering the siphoned money, and seizing any remaining forged documents.

Smuggler who got opium from Pakistan via drones & couriered it to US held in Tarn Taran by Gurgaon police

Nuh.(Agency)

A 23-year-old man from Punjab, who allegedly smuggled opium from Pakistan via drones and dispatched them in courier parcels to the US, was arrested by city police on Tuesday. Lakhbir Singh (23), a resident of Kot Data in Punjab's Tarn Taran, was wanted in a 2023 case when Haryana State Narcotics Control Bureau received an alert from DHL Express in Gurgaon about a suspicious international parcel that contained narcotics.

Lakhbir, who had been on the run for over two years, was declared a proclaimed offender by a local court in Feb 2025, with a Rs 5,000 reward announced by the Haryana DGP for his capture. He was arrested from Tarn Taran by a team led by SI Lalit Kumar of the crime branch unit in Sector 40. Narcotics control bureau received the alert from DHL Express at Udyog Vihar on May 25, 2023 after the parcel was flagged during X-ray screening. A special team, which rushed to the company's office, found it to contain clothes and two 1kg boxes of chyawanprash, which concealed 842 grams of opium wrapped in plastic. The parcel documents listed Lakhbir as the sender, with a foreign address as the recipient. A case was registered at Udyog Vihar police station under sections of the NDPS Act.

During police custody, Lakhbir confessed to being part of an organised international drug trafficking gang since 2022. The gang reportedly sourced narcotics from Pakistan, located just 4km from Singh's village, and distributed them in the US through a network of people who migrated illegally via the 'donkey route'. Lakhbir allegedly dispatched parcels to fake or borrowed addresses, hiding drugs inside food items like chyawanprash and laddoos. These parcels were booked through DTDC in Punjab and sent abroad via DHL Express. According to police, Lakhbir earned between Rs 2 lakh and Rs 5 lakh per parcel.

More AQI monitors to enhanced dust control: Gurgaon to step up measures to combat toxic air

Gurgaon.(Agency)

MCG commissioner Pradeep Dahiya on Thursday directed officials of the civic body, city's metropolitan development authority (GMDA), urban development body (HSVP), police department, the state pollution control board (HSPCB), PWD and GMCBL to work in coordination for better implementation of the city's action plan to tackle air pollution.

He directed HSPCB officials to increase the number of air quality monitoring systems in the city. Gurgaon currently has 5 air quality monitoring systems, including one in Manesar. He also emphasized on better cleaning of roads and the lifting of C&D waste, horticulture waste, dust, and soil in accordance with the city's action plan. A discussion was held on the annual action plan for 2025-26 regarding air

pollution control, and necessary directions were given to concerned departments. Dahiya said that this plan covers major areas like transport, construction and demolition activities, road dust control, solid waste management, increasing green cover, and public awareness. "Strict provisions have been made for dust control at construction sites. Arrangements have been made for the disposal and reuse of large quantities of debris daily through the C&D waste processing plant located at Basai. New processing plants are also proposed, which will curb illegal dumping," Dahiya said. He added that with better coordination and cooperation from the citizens, the city would see an improvement in the air quality in the coming years. Under the action plan, special attention will be given to the

beautification and greening of roadside green strips, central verges, and footpaths. Awareness campaigns, street plays, social media campaigns through schools, RWAs, colleges and citizen groups are also being planned. TOI reported on Thursday that MCG presented an extensive annual action plan before union environment minister Bhupender Yadav, a substantial portion of which focused on road redevelopment to control dust pollution.

These include over 722 km of road revamp by multiple agencies (over 600 km for MCG), EV charging points, augmentation of city bus services to control vehicular pollution, additional sprinkling machines, large mechanical road sweeping machines, 4 medium sweeping machines and planting native Indian shrubs on unpaved surfaces. MCG

Temperature falls to 17.3 degrees, visibility drops to 100m as dense fog grips Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

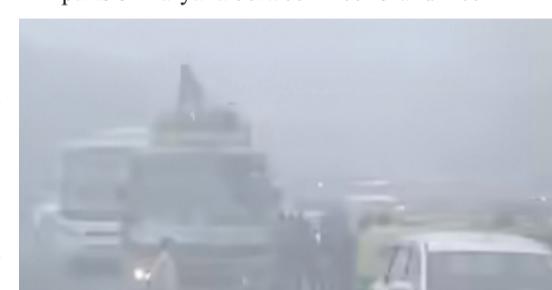
The city felt the winter chill on Thursday as daytime temperatures fell by nearly 7 degrees Celsius. The maximum temperature dropped to 17.3 degrees Celsius from 24.2 degrees Celsius a day earlier. Sunshine appeared briefly during the day, but haze kept conditions cold. India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the conditions do not qualify as a 'cold day', as this requires the drop in maximum temperature to continue for at least two consecutive days at a station. The minimum temperature also declined by around 3 degrees in the past 24 hours and was recorded at 7.3 degrees Celsius on Thursday, making it the coldest day of the season so far. Dense fog covered the city during the early morning hours, reducing visibility to about 100 metres. Visibility improved after 8.30am to around 150m and increased further by afternoon to nearly 800m. "The fog was so dense that even nearby vehicles were barely visible.

Everyone was driving cautiously," said Rohit Yadav, a resident of Sector 45. The weather department warned that dense to very dense fog is very likely across several parts of Haryana between Dec 19 and Dec

said, advising commuters to be cautious while travelling.

Similar foggy conditions are expected across Chandigarh, Panchkula, Yambanagar, Karna, Mahendragarh, Rewari, Jhajjar, Mewat, Palwal, Faridabad, Rohtak, Sonipat, Panipat, Sirsa, Fatehabad, Hisar, Jind, Bhiwani and Charkhi Dadri. Meanwhile, a western disturbance is likely to affect northern parts of India from Dec 20, though meteorological officials said its impact will not be felt in Haryana. Rainfall is expected over northern parts of Punjab, while Haryana and Chandigarh

are likely to remain largely dry. The IMD said no major change in minimum temperatures is expected over the next 24 hours, followed by a gradual rise of about 2 to 3 degrees Celsius across Haryana and Chandigarh, even as foggy mornings are likely to continue.



21. An orange alert has been issued for the city for the next three days, cautioning residents about prolonged low visibility during night and early morning hours.

"Calm winds and high moisture levels are creating favourable conditions for fog formation, particularly during late night and early morning hours," an IMD official

Pressure cooker, dupatta and a red suitcase: How tenants killed their landlady in Ghaziabad flat

Noida.(Agency)

A 48-year-old woman was allegedly murdered by her tenants at a Raj Nagar Extension housing society on Wednesday night after she confronted them over five months of unpaid rent.

Police said the tenants — a couple, Aakriti Gupta and her husband Jay — strangled Deepshikha Sharma with a dupatta and struck her on the head with a pressure cooker during an altercation that broke out. The duo stuffed her body inside a suitcase and hid it in the bed box as they plotted a way to get rid of the body. Deepshikha and her husband Umesh Sharma, a general manager with a private firm in Gurgaon, owned two flats at Aura Chimera. While the Sharmas lived in Tower M, they had rented out their fifth-floor flat in Tower F to the couple this Feb. According to police, the couple had repeated altercations with Deepshikha over their rent as they began defaulting on payments soon after moving in. On Wednesday evening, when Deepshikha visited the tenants' flat to demand the



overdue rent, she was accompanied by her domestic help Minni. "It was around 5.30pm when madam and I went there. Aakriti said her husband was not at home and went out to arrange for the money. She asked us to come back a couple of hours later," Minni said. When Deepshikha went back later in the evening, Minni wasn't with her. "She called me and told me she was going to Jay and Aakriti's flat to collect the rent. I told her not to go alone and said I would finish my work and join her. But she was determined to collect the rent this time and

found the body after she forced her way into the flat and searched the rooms. "I suffered the shock of my life when I found madam inside, soaked in blood," Minni said.

Police said they received a call around 11.15pm. Neighbours said they had seen Jay and Aakriti trying to leave with the suitcase in an autorickshaw. They had even taken the staircase, but abandoned the plan and returned to their flat when there was an unrelated heated exchange between two families on the ground floor.

According to police, scenes in the Tower F flat turned ugly when Deepshikha pressed the couple for immediate payment. "Jay confessed there was a massive argument before it escalated into a physical fight. He told us that his wife and the landlady got into a scuffle," said a senior police. Jay told police Deepshikha had insulted Aakriti, which enraged the couple. "Both were involved in killing her. Aakriti strangled Deepshikha with a dupatta and Jay struck her on the head with a

cooker that he brought from the kitchen," the police officer

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Lowering salt intake to 5 gm a day won't affect iodine levels: Study

The Sikh Times

New Delhi: The study conducted by Centre for Chronic Disease Control in Delhi and Haryana is one of the first in India to simultaneously measure daily salt and iodine intake using 24-hour urine samples. Reducing daily salt intake to the World Health Organisation's recommended level of 5 grams per day does not lower iodine levels among adults in India, a new study by the Centre for Chronic Disease Control has found. The findings address a long-standing concern that lowering salt consumption, which is crucial for preventing hypertension, might affect iodine intake in a country that relies on mandatory iodised salt for deficiency control. The study conducted in Delhi and Haryana is one of the first in India to simultaneously measure daily salt and iodine intake using 24-hour urine samples, which is considered the global gold standard. The Centre for Chronic Disease Control (CCDC) researchers said the results provide strong support for the recommendations made by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Government of India to reduce population salt intake as part of efforts to curb incidence of hypertension and car-

diovascular diseases. According to the study, the average salt intake among par-

ticipants aged 20 years and above was 8.07 grams per day, which is significantly above the recommended limit. The research showed that iodine levels

remained adequate even when salt intake was at or below 5 grams a day. "One findings address a long-standing concern that lowering salt consumption, which is crucial for preventing hypertension, might affect iodine intake in a country that relies on mandatory iodised salt for deficiency control. The study conducted in Delhi and Haryana is one of the first in India to simultaneously measure daily salt and iodine intake using 24-hour urine samples, which is considered the global gold standard. The Centre for Chronic Disease Control (CCDC) researchers said the results provide strong support for the recommendations made by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Government of India to reduce population salt intake as part of efforts to curb incidence of hypertension and car-



major concern around reducing salt intake has iodine levels among adults in India, a new study by the Centre for Chronic Disease Control has found. The

Christmas carnival puts spotlight on inclusion, community participation

New Delhi: A Christmas carnival, at a Janak Puri special education centre, brought together students, families and visitors for a day of inclusive celebrations

participation and showcasing the abilities of children. Students also set up stalls, displaying handmade Christmas goodies created by them. Tanu Rajput,

grateful to be sharing such a meaningful and festive moment with them. It makes me so proud of my kids, who are special but no less than anyone, they are talented, smart and extremely kind and loving." According to the organisers, around 125 children on the autism spectrum and over 90 students from lower income groups are supported at the centre on a daily basis. They added that more than 5,000 families have received assistance through the organisation since 2009, and efforts are underway to develop income generation avenues for students trained in various skills. The gathering brought together parents, caregivers and community members, marking a day of shared celebration and awareness around inclusion.

on Thursday. The event, hosted in the spirit of World Disability Day observed globally on December 3, featured winter themed activities and interactive sessions aimed at encouraging par-

Founder, UDAI Working Together Works, said, "Celebrating this day with our children was truly heart-warming. Their enthusiasm and energy filled the entire space with happiness. I feel

877 held, 360 FIRs filed during crackdown on cybercriminals

New Delhi: The Delhi Police arrested 877 people during its 48-hour "CyHawk" operation conducted across the national capital, registering 360 new FIRs against identified cyber fraudsters, officials said on Friday. Officials said more than Rs 1,000 crore, reported as defrauded through cyber complaints on the NCRP portal, was traced to multiple URLs, which have been rising sharply across the country. The operation began on Wednesday and concluded on Friday morning, marking one of the largest coordinated actions against cybercrime networks across multiple districts in Delhi. Joint Commissioner of Police (JCP) Rajneesh Gupta stated that 877 accused were arrested or bound down based on technical and financial evidence, 509 notices were issued under Section 35 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita to those linked to backward financial chains, and 360 new FIRs were registered against identified cyber fraudsters. A total of 3,777 NCRP complaints were successfully linked to identified mule accounts and mobile networks, significantly strengthening investigative leads. Several illegal call centres were also neutralised, preventing ongoing and potential frauds, Gupta added.

NAME CHANGE

I MOHAMMAD AMJAD S/O MOHAMMAD GAFFAR R/O H.NO: 153 VIGYANA MUZAFFARNAGAR UTTAR PRADESH - 251309, I have changed my name to MD AMJAD Permanently for all Future purpose

NAME CHANGE

I ABHISHEK KUMAR KASHYAP S/O BHARAT KISHOR R/O E2/64 , E2-BLOCK 5th PUSTA, SONIA VIHAR, DELHI-110094 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ABHISHEK KASHYAP

NAME CHANGE

I, BHARAT KUMAR KASHYAP S/O JAGDISH PRASAD R/O E2/64, GALI NO-5, 5th PUSTA, SONIA VIHAR, DELHI-110094 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BHARAT KISHOR

PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to general public that large that our client Mrs. Rihana Parveen is the absolute owner of Freehold Residential House area No. 15680257/ARank-HAV Name-ISHWAR RADDERATTI residing at VPO-KHANATTI, TEHSIL-MUDALAGI, DIST-BELAGAVI , KARNATAKA-591312, have changed my name from MALLAPPA RADDERATTI to MALLIKARJUN RADDERATTI for all future purposes vide affidavit dated 19/12/2025 from Notary Public Delhi.

NAME CHANGE

I, MEENA DEVI W/O VINOD GANDHARV/R/O 6135 NIRANKARI KOLONY, NORTH WEST DELHI-110028, have changed my name to MEENA GANDHARV for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I, ANURADHA SHARMA wife of No. 911125X, Rank-HAV, Name-SOHAN LAL residing at P.O.-GHARATALLI, P.S.-AKHNOOR, TEHSIL-MAIRA MANDRI, DIST-JAMMU, JAMMU & KASHMIR-181201, have changed my name from ANURADHA SHARMA to ANU RADHAR for all future purposes, in my husband's service record my date of birth wrongly mentioned as 27/04/1990 instead of my correct date of birth as 27/02/1991. Vide Affidavit dated 19/12/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

NAME CHANGE

I, MADHUMITA KUMARI PANDEY S/O SACHIDANAND PANDEY R/O HOUSE NO-58, 2ND FLOOR, DLF PHASE-3, NATHUPUR (67), GURGAON, HARYANA-122022, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO MADHUMITA PANDEY FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES

NAME CHANGE

I, MONTU S/O PHOOL SINGH R/O 103, BLOCK-14, D- AMBEDKAR NAGAR, DAKSHIN PURI, PUSHPA BHAWAN, SOUTH DELHI, DELHI-110061 have changed the name of my minor son PARNAV SINGH aged 14 years and he shall hereafter be known as PARNAV. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as SAVITRI VERMA alias SAVITRI DEVI W/O ISHWAR SONI, residing at 375, Haveli Haider Kuli, Chandni Chowk, North Delhi-110004, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAJENDER PRASAD.

NAME CHANGE

I, Sapana Barwar W/O Nand Kishor R/O H2/111, 2nd floor sector -16, Rohini delhi 110085 changed my name to SAPANA DEVI.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as RAGHUVER alias RAJENDER PRASAD S/O BARELAL R/O B-33, D-Block, Ishwar Colony, Ajun Park, Najafgarh, South West Delhi, Delhi-110043, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAJENDER PRASAD.

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NEWS BOX

Hong Kong mourns firefighter Wai-ho killed in city's deadliest fire in decades

HONG KONG. (Agency)

Hong Kongers offered flowers and bowed outside a funeral parlor on Friday to pay tribute to a firefighter who was among the 160 people killed by the city's deadliest fire in decades. Ho Wai-ho lost his life battling the massive blaze that engulfed seven buildings of a housing complex on Nov. 26. He was 37. The fire services department has posthumously awarded him the title of senior fireman.

An array of wreaths lay outside the Universal Funeral Parlour, with thank-you cards from residents put up on its wall. Top officials, including Hong Kong leader John Lee, were among the funeral attendees. After the ceremony, they stood outside the parlor to send off the hearse, which carried Ho's portrait at the front. Dozens of firefighters raised a salute as Ho's coffin, draped with a Hong Kong regional flag, departed.

Before the funeral, some black-clad residents laid flowers at a mourning area outside the venue. One woman cried when she paid respect, and a man made a salute gesture. Resident Andy Fong, who brought yellow flowers with him, said he hoped Ho could rest in peace. "It's heartbreaking. Although we have never met, it has saddened every Hong Konger," he said.

Retiree Tse Pak-yin praised Ho for his bravery. "I hope he will be happy. He still hasn't got married and it's such as pity," he said. Ho is survived by his parents, his two brothers and his fiancée.

The hearse headed to Wang Fuk Court, the site of the fire, for another ceremony before proceeding to Ho's fire station. At the station, colleagues paid their last tributes, with some officers marching on both sides of the hearse as it moved. He was laid to rest at Gallant Garden, a burial ground for civil servants who die in the line of duty.

US says price increases eased last month but data may be distorted and Americans aren't feeling it

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

At a time when Americans are frustrated and angry over the high cost of living, the government released a report Thursday showing that inflation had cooled unexpectedly in November. But economists quickly warned that that last month's numbers were suspect because they'd been delayed and likely distorted by the 43-day federal shutdown. And most Americans have not felt any let up in the high prices they are paying for food, insurance, utilities and other basic necessities. The Labor Department reported Thursday that its consumer price index rose 2.7% in November from a year earlier. Yet, year-over-year inflation remains well above the Federal Reserve's 2% target. Americans, dismayed by high prices, handed big victories to Democrats in local and state elections last month. The inflation report was delayed eight days by the shutdown, which also prevented the Labor Department from compiling overall numbers for consumer prices and core inflation in October and disrupted the usual data-collecting process. Thursday's report gave investors, businesses and policymakers their first look at CPI since the September numbers were released on Oct. 24. Consumer prices had risen 3% in September from a year earlier, and forecasters had expected the November CPI to match that year-over-year increase. "It's likely a bit distorted," said Diane Swonk, chief economist at the tax and consulting firm KPMG. "The good news is that it's cooling. We'll take a win when we can get it."

Still, Swonk added: "The data is truncated, and we just don't know how much of it to trust." By disrupting the economy — especially government contracting — the shutdown may have contributed to a cooling in prices, she said.

Trump signs into law defence policy bill backing 'deeper engagement' with India including via Quad

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump has signed into law an annual defence policy bill that highlights broadening America's engagement with India, including through the Quad to advance the shared objective of a free and open Indo-Pacific region and address the challenge posed by China. The National Defence Authorisation Act for Fiscal Year 2026, signed into law Thursday, also states that the Secretary of State shall establish and maintain within the US-India Strategic Security Dialogue a joint consultative mechanism with the Indian government in connection with the Nuclear Liability Rules. It authorises fiscal year appropriations for the Department of War (DoW), the Department of Energy national security programmes, the Department of State, the Department of Homeland Security, the Intelligence Community, and other executive departments and agencies.

"The Act will enable the DoW to carry out my Peace Through Strength agenda, protect the homeland from domestic and foreign threats, and strengthen the defence industrial base, while eliminating funding for wasteful and radical programmes that undermine the warfighting ethos of our Nation's men and women in uniform," Trump said in a statement. The Act outlines 'sense of Congress on Defence Alliances and Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region'. Under this, the Secretary of Defence should continue efforts that strengthen US defence alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region to "further the comparative advantage of the US in strategic competition with China."

'Can't breathe': Bangladesh erupts as protesters hit streets, torch top dailies after 2024 uprising activist dies

WORLD. (Agency)

Violence erupted in Bangladesh's capital early on Friday after Sharif Osman Hadi, a key figure in last year's pro-democracy uprising, died in a hospital in Singapore following an assassination attempt. Thousands of protesters poured onto the streets of Dhaka after news of the 32-year-old activist's death, demanding the arrest of his killers. Several buildings, including offices housing the country's two leading newspapers, were set on fire, trapping journalists and staff inside, authorities said. Hadi, a senior leader of the student protest group Inqilab Mancha, was shot by masked assailants on December 12 as he was leaving a mosque in Dhaka. After initial treatment in Bangladesh, he was airlifted to Singapore in critical condition, where he died on Thursday. At least three cases of arson were reported across the capital as news of his death spread, a spokesperson for the Fire Brigade and Civil Defence said. Fires broke out at buildings housing the English-language Daily Star and the Bengali-language Prothom Alo, the country's largest newspapers.

The papers have previously faced protests from groups accusing them of being aligned with neighbouring India, where former prime minister Sheikh Hasina has been living in self-imposed exile since being ousted in last year's uprising. Zyma Islam, a Daily Star reporter, said she was trapped inside the burning building. "I can't breathe anymore. There's too much smoke. I am inside. You are killing me," she wrote on Facebook. Firefighters brought the blaze at the Daily Star building under control at around 1:40 am (1940 GMT Thursday), officials said, though dozens of employees were still inside at the time. Staff were later evacuated. "We took refuge at the rear of the building and could hear them chanting slogans," Daily Star reporter Ahmed Deepo said. Protesters also attacked Chhayanaut, a leading cultural institution in Dhaka devoted to Bengali culture, while elsewhere crowds blocked a key highway out of the capital. In the southeastern port city of Chittagong, demonstrators attacked the residence of a former minister, according to local

television footage. Hundreds of protesters surrounded the residence of India's deputy ambassador to Bangladesh in Dhaka, attempting to stage a

Earlier Friday, Singapore's foreign ministry confirmed Hadi's death.

"Despite the best efforts of the doctors..., Mr Hadi succumbed to his injuries," it said in a statement, adding that it was assisting Bangladeshi authorities with repatriating his body. Bangladesh's interim government, headed by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, confirmed the death shortly afterwards. "His demise is an irreparable loss for the nation," Yunus said in a televised address. "The country's march toward democracy cannot be halted through fear, terror, or bloodshed."

The government announced special prayers at mosques on Friday and declared a half-day of mourning on Saturday. Authorities said Hadi's body was expected to arrive in Dhaka later on Friday. Hadi was an outspoken critic of both Hasina and India. He had planned to run as an independent candidate in the next national elections, scheduled for February 2026, in a major Dhaka constituency.



Trump suspends green card lottery program that let Brown University, MIT shootings suspect into US

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

President Donald Trump suspended the green card lottery program on Thursday that allowed the suspect in the Brown University and MIT shootings to come to the United States.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said in a post on the social platform X that at Trump's direction she is ordering the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to pause the program. "This heinous individual should never have been allowed in our country," she said of the suspect, Portuguese national Claudio Neves Valente. Neves Valente, 48, is suspected in the shootings at Brown University that killed two students and wounded nine others, and the killing of an MIT professor. He was found dead Thursday evening from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, officials said. Neves



The diversity visa program makes up to 50,000 green cards available each year by lottery to people from countries that are little represented in the United States, many of them in Africa. The lottery was created by Congress, and the move is almost certain to invite

legal challenges. Nearly 20 million people applied for the 2025 visa lottery, with more than 131,000 selected when including spouses with the winners. After winning, they must undergo vetting to win admission to the United States. Portuguese citizens won only 38 slots. Lottery winners are invited to apply for a green card. They are interviewed at consulates and subject to the same requirements and vetting as other green-card applicants.

Trump has long opposed the diversity visa lottery. Noem's announcement is the latest example of using tragedy to advance immigration policy goals.

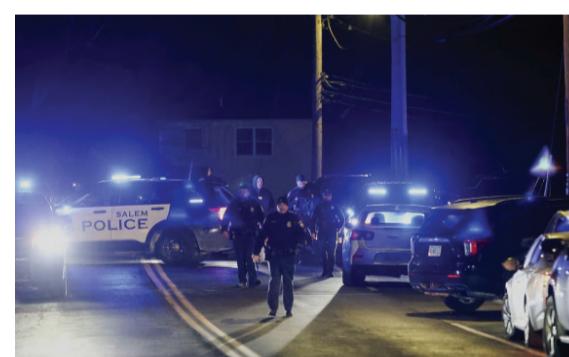
After an Afghan man was identified as the gunman in a fatal attack on National Guard members in November, Trump's administration imposed sweeping rules against immigration from Afghanistan and other countries.

Brown University shooting suspect found dead in New Hampshire, officials say

PROVIDENCE. (Agency)

A man who is suspected of killing two and wounding several others at Brown University has been found dead in a New Hampshire storage facility, officials said. Claudio Neves Valente, 48, a Brown student and Portuguese national, was found dead Thursday evening from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Col. Oscar Perez, the Providence police chief, said at a news conference. Investigators believe Valente is responsible for both the shooting at Brown and the killing of a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor who was fatally shot in his Brookline home Monday, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press. Authorities have not formally confirmed a connection between the two shootings. The official could not publicly discuss details of the ongoing investigation and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity. Two people were killed and nine were wounded in

the mass shooting Saturday at Brown University. The investigation had shifted Thursday when authorities said they were looking into a connection between the Brown mass shooting and an attack two days later near Boston



that killed MIT professor Nuno F.G. Loureiro. The FBI previously said it knew of no links between the cases.

How the Brown investigation has unfolded it has been nearly a week since the shooting at Brown.

Frustration mounted in Providence that the person behind the attack managed to get away and that a clear image of their face hadn't emerged.

A second individual who was identified in proximity to the suspect came forward after Wednesday's press conference and helped "blow the lid" off the case, Rhode Island Attorney General Peter Neronha said. "When you crack it, you crack it. That person led us to the car, led us to the name," Neronha said. Although Brown officials say there are 1,200 cameras on campus, the attack happened in an older part of the engineering building that has few, if any, cameras. And investigators believe the shooter entered and left

through a door that faces a residential street bordering campus, which might explain why the cameras Brown does have didn't capture footage of the person.

A look at US military's unusually large force near Venezuela amid Trump's pressure campaign on Maduro

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

The US military has amassed an unusually large force in the Caribbean Sea and the waters off the coast of Venezuela since this summer, when the Trump administration first began to shift assets to the region as part of its anti-drug trafficking operations. In all, US Southern Command says there are around 15,000 personnel operating in the area, in the largest military buildup in the region in generations. It is part of the Trump administration's escalating pressure campaign on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, who has been charged with narco-terrorism in the US, and includes a series of strikes on alleged drug-running boats that have killed more than 100 people since early September. Here is a look at the ships, planes and troops in the region.

The Navy has 11 warships in the region — the nation's largest aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford, as well as five destroyers, three amphibious assault ships, and two cruisers. The three amphibious assault ships make up an amphibious readiness

group and carry an expeditionary unit of Marines. As a result, those ships also have on board a variety of Marine helicopters, Osprey tilt rotor aircraft and Harrier jets that have the capability of either transporting large numbers of Marines or striking targets on land and sea.

The USS Ford has multiple squadrons of fighter jets as well as other aircraft and helicopters. While officials have not offered specific numbers, destroyers and cruisers typically deploy with a missile loadout that contains Tomahawk cruise missiles, which can strike hundreds of miles from their launch point.

A US Navy submarine also is operating in the broader area of South America and is capable of carrying and launching cruise missiles.

Planes and drones

A squadron of advanced US Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II jets has been sent to an airstrip in Puerto Rico. The planes were first spotted landing on the island territory

in mid-September. More recently, US Navy EA-18G "Growler" electronic warfare jets were photographed flying out of Puerto Rico. MQ-9 Reaper Air Force drones,



capable of flying long distances and carrying up to eight laser-guided missiles, also have been spotted operating out of Puerto Rico by commercial satellites and military watchers, as well as photojournalists, around the same time in September. It has been widely reported that the Navy also is operating P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft out of the region. In

October, the military released a photo of a US Air Force AC-130J Ghostrider, a heavily armed plane capable of firing ground targets, sitting on the tarmac in Puerto Rico.

There has been a multitude of other military aircraft that have temporarily flown through the region as part of military operations there. The US Air Force has repeatedly flown B-52 Stratofortress and B-1 Lancer bombers to the region in what the Pentagon has said were training flights. However, at least one such flight was dubbed a "bomber attack demo" in photos online. Recently, the US military also flew a pair of F/A-18 fighter jets over the Gulf of Venezuela in what appears to be the closest American warplanes have come to the South American country's airspace since the start of the campaign.

The gulf is bounded by Venezuela and only about 240 kilometers at its widest point. The planes spent more than 30 minutes flying in the area.

NEWS BOX

Kolhapur journalists stage protest against VBA president Prakash Ambedkar

Kolhapur. (Agency)

City journalists on Thursday staged a protest demonstration at the historic Dasara Chowk against Vanchi Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) president Prakash Ambedkar for his objectionable statements on media owners and journalists.

Ambedkar made the comments on Wednesday while addressing a rally.

City journalists led by Shital Dhanvade, Kolhapur Press Club president and other KPC office bearers, gathered in front of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj statue and shouted slogans against Ambedkar for his objectionable statement on daily newspapers' owners, journalists and media camerapersons who were present at the rally. The journalists demanded that Ambedkar seek pardon publicly.

While addressing the gathering, Dhanvade said Ambedkar must apologise to the people of Kolhapur for his objectionable statement against media persons and warned no such incidents will be tolerated in the future.

Maha: Two persons arrested for gang rape of 8th standard school girl

Sangli (Maharashtra). (Agency)

Two persons were arrested on Thursday in connection with the gang rape of an 8th standard school girl in Maharashtra's Sangli district. According to Ishwarpur police, on the night of December 16, the two suspects took away the victim girl on their two-wheeler to a sugarcane field and began to undress her. After she resisted, they started beating and raping her. When she started to shout, both suspects fled the spot.

Later, as the victim was walking towards her home without clothes, some people provided her a dress and handed her over to the police.

After the victim's mother filed a complaint, police arrested the two suspects identified as Ruthik Dinkar Mahapure (26) and Ashish Jayant Khambe (27), both residents of Ishwarpur. They have been booked under Child Sexual Offences Act, rape and abduction.

Manikrao Kokate resigns as Maharashtra Minister following arrest warrant; Ajit Pawar confirms acceptance

Mumbai. (Agency)

Manikrao Kokate has submitted his resignation as Maharashtra Minister for Sports, Youth Welfare and Minority Affairs, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar confirmed on Thursday.

The resignation follows the issuance of an arrest warrant against Kokate in connection with an alleged scam involving four residential flats acquired under the Chief Minister's Discretionary Quota.

Ajit Pawar stated here that Kokate's resignation has been accepted in principle, in line with the party's long-standing stand that the rule of law is supreme. "Keeping with our party's long-standing philosophy that the rule of law is paramount and above all individuals, the resignation has been accepted in principle," Pawar wrote in a post on X.

The Deputy Chief Minister also shared a copy of Kokate's resignation letter. In the letter, Kokate said he was resigning while accepting moral responsibility and respecting the judgment delivered by the Nashik District and Sessions Court on December 16. He added that his resignation was subject to the final decision of the High Court and requested that it be accepted.

According to a statement from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis accepted Kokate's resignation and forwarded it to Governor Acharya Devvrat for further necessary action.

Operations against militants continue in Manipur, IED recovered

Imphal. Security Forces intensified searches around Churachandpur district from where coordinated attacks were launched by Kuki militants on internally displaced persons.

So far no arrests have been made after Kuki armed militants launched an attack on a village in Bishnupur district using bombs. An FIR has been filed so far by Manipur Police.

Security Forces on Thursday recovered sixteen abandoned ANFO (paste type) IED at Lungdeipha Leinom village junction, Kangvai area under Churachandpur-PS, Churachandpur district. The IEDs have since been neutralized by bomb disposal squad.

Security Forces also destroyed a total of 119 acres of poppy plantation at LM Block, Yaolen Chepu and Lamla Chingphei area. About 24 huts found at the plantation sites were also burnt. Meanwhile, security forces arrested members of a militant outfit from various locations in Imphal West district. The arrestees had hijacked a truck loaded with boxes of iced fish from the Maharabi-Pheidaing stretch, under Sekmai police station, earlier in the day.

Karnataka Assembly passes Hate Speech Bill amid din

LoP Ashoka said the Bill could be used as a weapon for political animosity and cautioned the Congress that it could boomerang on them in future.

Karnataka. (Agency)

The State Assembly on Thursday passed The Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crime (Prevention) Bill amidst din with an amendment on punishment.

Home Minister G Parameshwara told the House that the Bill was necessitated in the wake of a direction by the Supreme Court, which stated that any attempt to spread communal hatred and hate speech should be dealt with strongly. He said the Bill could bring substantial changes and help in preventing the dissemination, publication or promotion of hate speech and crimes.

The minister suggested an amendment to the punishment clause. The punishment for subsequent or repetitive offence was amended to be not less than two years, which may extend to seven years, as it was earlier 10 years. Opposition leader R Ashoka said the Bill is against freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The BJP leader said that nothing more could be expected from the party that imposed Emergency on the country. He said all the Bill's proposals are part of BNS. He said the goal is to target the opposition parties and media.

He said the Bill could be used as a weapon for political animosity and cautioned the Congress

that it could boomerang on them in future.

Ashoka dubs Bill as 'No Bail, Go to Jail' Ashoka said since the violation of the Bill could be a cognizable and non-bailable offence, the government could use it as a tool to send its



detractors to jail, before they were proved. Since jails could be filled with opposition members and media persons but the government cannot afford to build new jails, as it has become bankrupt, Ashoka mocked. He termed the bill the 'No Bail, Go to Jail' Bill and raised objections to the terminology used in the Bill. When Urban Development Minister Bharati Suresh tried to intervene, he was opposed by the BJP members. Angered by this, Suresh remarked that those who set the coastal area on fire need not speak about hate, which infuriated the Opposition, and they objected to

the minister's remark and demanded his apology.

At first none of the ruling party members came to Suresh's defence, but later, a few members came to his support, which led to uproar in the House. As it continued for a while, the Speaker asked the Home Minister to move the bill for passage. The Opposition insisted on sending the Bill to the House Committee. The Speaker did not accede to their demand and it was passed with both Opposition and ruling party members raising slogans against each other.

Amidst the din, Ashoka tore the copy of the Bill and threw it towards the chair. The BJP members said the approach of the Speaker was unconstitutional. When the House was reconvened, the BJP members insisted on a discussion on the Bill despite it being passed. As the Speaker did not allow it the Opposition boycotted the House. Earlier, the House unanimously passed the Karnataka Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, 2025, with a slight modification, which empowers the police to take suo moto cognizance. The House also passed the Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Just a trunk's distance away: Maharashtra steps in to reunite Omkar with mother

Mumbai. (Agency)

In a swift response to environmentalists' appeal, the Maharashtra government on Thursday moved to reunite the young elephant Omkar with its mother, dropping plans to translocate the animal to Gujarat, as the matter heads for a crucial hearing before the Bombay High Court.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis directed the Forest Secretary to examine the plea within five hours of receiving representations from the NatConnect Foundation.

Acting with notable urgency, Forest Secretary Milind Mhaiskar responded within 15 minutes of the Chief Minister's Office email, instructing Deputy Secretary Niketa Pande to handle the matter.

The development gains urgency amid field reports from activists tracking Omkar's movement in the Konkan region, which indicate that the elephant's mother, Gowri, along with four other elephants, was recently sighted in the Ghatiye-Bambarde stretch of the Western Ghats, close to Ghotage village in Kudal taluka of Sindhudurg district. Omkar was last seen in the same village earlier this week, raising fresh hopes of a natural reunion in the wild.

The NatConnect Foundation, which has been actively pursuing Omkar's case, has written to both the Prime Minister and the Maharashtra Chief Minister, urging them to instruct forest officials to work out a plan to gently guide the calf back towards its mother instead of pursuing the proposed translocation to the Vantara Elephant Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre in Gujarat. Welcoming the rapid administrative response from Mantralaya, NatConnect director B N Kumar said the email trail reflects that the communications were promptly marked to the appropriate officers, signalling seriousness at the highest level.

Opposing the Forest Department's plan to shift Omkar outside Maharashtra, Kumar warned that the elephant would struggle to adjust to an alien environment.

'Pak Zindabad' slogans: 12 cases filed in three years, says Karnataka Home Minister Parameshwara

The home minister said that 19,143 suo motu cases have been filed this year in other cases, and of them, 2,963 cases are under investigation.



BELAGAVI. (Agency)

Karnataka Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara has said that 12 cases have been filed in the last three years against those raising 'Pakistan Zindabad' slogans in the state. Of these 12 cases, six were suo motu cases.

Replying to BJP MLC CT Ravi in Question Hour in the Council on Thursday, the minister said that besides suo motu cases, six more cases have been filed for the same reason after the complaint was filed against the accused. He said that of these 12 cases, in five cases, chargesheets have been filed; in two cases, 'B' reports have been filed; three cases are under investigation; 'C' reports have been filed in one case; and one case has been referred to the forensic lab.

The minister said that 19,143 suo motu cases

have been filed this year in other cases, and of them, 2,963 cases are under investigation.

Replying to MLC TA Sharavana, Dr Parameshwara said that cases against 88 police personnel have been filed for their alleged involvement in criminal activities such as theft or robbery. "We have already suspended several personnel. I have directed the top police officers to dismiss them from the service if their charges are proved," he said, adding that internal vigilance is also being conducted regularly.

Dr Parameshwara further said that the police have seized 60 mobile phones from Parappana Agrahara Central Prison in Bengaluru in a recent raid. He said drugs worth Rs 507 crore were seized in the last three years.

Goa-Ahmedabad IndiGo flight gets bomb threat, lands safely

A spokesperson of the SVPIA said, "A security threat note was reported on an arriving flight from Mopa (GOX) to Ahmedabad (AMD). The aircraft landed safely at 1900 hrs and is undergoing checks as per protocol. Airport operations remain unaffected."

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

A Goa-Ahmedabad IndiGo flight allegedly received a bomb threat on Thursday. A bomb threat note was found on board IndiGo Airlines flight 6E 6208 that took off from Mopa airport in Goa to Ahmedabad. The flight made a safe landing at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport (SVPIA) in Ahmedabad at 7 pm. A spokesperson of the SVPIA said, "A security threat note was reported on an arriving flight from Mopa (GOX) to Ahmedabad (AMD). The aircraft landed safely at 1900 hrs and is undergoing checks as per protocol. Airport operations remain unaffected."

A detailed security check of the aircraft was subsequently carried out by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), the Airport Police as well as

the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) and Dog Squad at the airport.

Zone 4 DCP Atul Bansal was unavailable for comment.



On December 4, an international IndiGo Airlines flight 6E 058, flying from Madinah, Saudi Arabia, to Hyderabad, Telangana, made an emergency landing in Ahmedabad after its office received a bomb threat by email. The investigation of that case is being carried out in Hyderabad.

At least 30 schools in Ahmedabad city,

Ahmedabad Rural and Gandhinagar, apart from Sabarmati Central Jail and Gandhi Ashram received bomb threats a day earlier, on December 17. Investigation into those threats are underway at cybercrime police stations in the respective jurisdictions.

Zero tariffs, unmatched opportunities for engineering exports from India to Oman: EEPC India

Kolkata. (Agency)

The EEPC India has lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Minister of Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal for successfully concluding the landmark Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Oman during their visit to the southwest Asian nation.

EEPC India chairman Pankaj Chadha in a statement on Friday said the signing of the India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) is a significant development.

The free trade pact paves the way for zero-duty access for Indian engineering goods in Oman once the agreement comes into effect. "This is yet another key trade deal that will help the engineering industry diversify and deepen its presence in the export market," he pointed out.

Being the key gateway to the Middle East and Africa, the trade pact with Oman promises a lot of business opportunities, especially for MSMEs. "The landmark agreement is expected to further strengthen

Indian firms' integration into the global supply chain. The zero-duty access on 2,123 engineering tariff lines is expected to boost the competitiveness of Indian engineering goods and help exporters expand in Oman. This measure is set to help exporters in industrial machinery, electrical equipment, auto parts, metals, and other engineering products.

He said Indian engineering export to Oman is projected to experience robust growth, potentially reaching approximately USD 1.3 to USD 1.6 billion by 2028. This milestone reflects India's growing stature as a trusted global trade partner and further deepens its strategic and economic engagement with the Gulf region.

Under the CEPA, Indian goods receive zero-duty access on over 98 percent of Oman's tariff lines, covering more than 99 pc of India's exports by value. The agreement unlocks significant opportunities for labour-intensive sectors, MSMEs, and manufacturing, while providing a strong impetus to India's engineering exports.

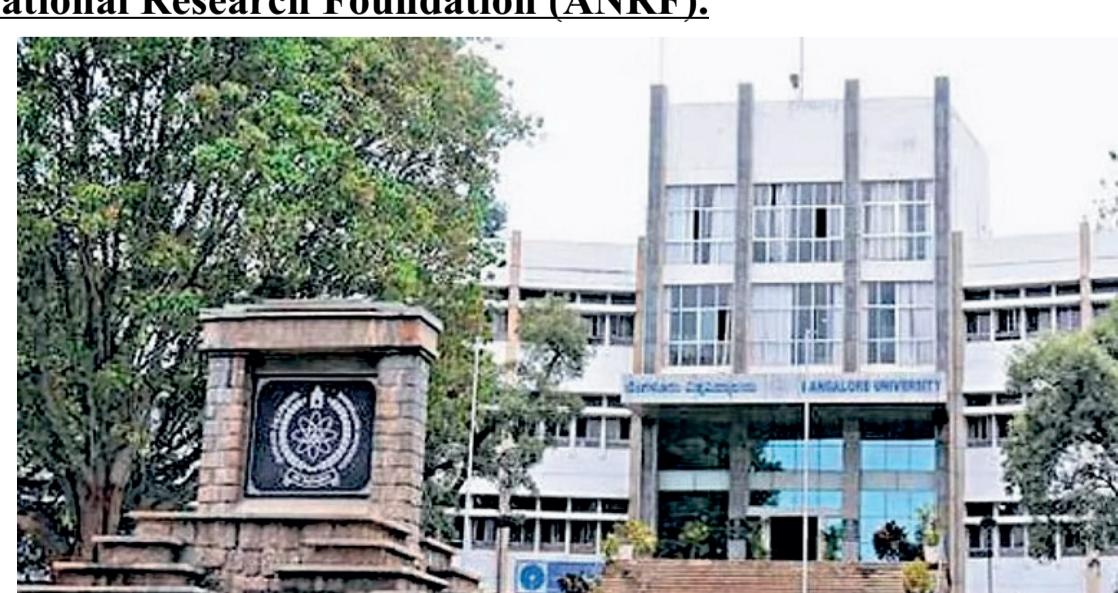
Bangalore University joins eight-institution consortium for Advanced Materials Research

The national programme -- Partnerships for Accelerated Innovation and Research (PAIR) -- is funded by the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).

BENGALURU. (Agency)

Bangalore University has been selected as a key partner in a national programme -- Partnerships for Accelerated Innovation and Research (PAIR) -- funded by the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), the Government of India's apex institution for advancing research, innovation and entrepreneurship.

As part of this programme, Bangalore University has joined a powerful scientific consortium coordinated by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc). Around eight institutions, including IISc, Bangalore University, IIEST Shibpur, NIT Nagaland, Pondicherry University, Shivaji University (Maharashtra), the University of Calcutta and a technical unit of ANRF are working for a collaborative project



Disability rights: Behind bars, but not barred

Legal scholar Upendra Baxi has often said that the term social action litigation (SAL) is more appropriate for what is commonly known as public interest litigation (PIL). This is because these cases aim at social uplift and don't merely reflect public interest. Yet, more than the change in nomenclature, there must be a qualitative transformation in the very idea of SAL. Constitutional morality must take centre-stage in such cases and SAL judgements should reflect the ideals of the nation's fundamental document.

Two such judgements have recently come from the Supreme Court, both touching the lives of an extremely vulnerable group of society—the disabled inmates of Indian jails. In L Muruganantham (2025) the court issued a slew of directives to the Tamil Nadu government to ensure systemic changes that meet the specific needs of disabled prisoners in the state. In the more recent Sathyam Naravoor (2025) judgement, the court expanded the Muruganantham directives' scope to the whole country and added another set of directives. The facts of the Muruganantham case are unique. L Muruganantham, a lawyer from Tamil Nadu, suffered degenerative locomotive disability. A civil dispute in his family led to the registration of a crime that was later quashed by the Madras High Court. Meanwhile, he was remanded to the Central Prison in Coimbatore by a magistrate. Though he was released on bail after 9 days, this period of incarceration demonstrated the fragility of Indian prison ecology in terms of the rights of the disabled. The radical legislation to ensure the well-being of the differently-abled that parliament passed in 2016 was practically fenced out of the jail. Muruganantham was denied proper food, medical treatment, infrastructural amenities, and personal care. The prison environment was insensitive to the special needs of such inmates. Muruganantham filed a complaint before the State Human Rights Commission, seeking compensation for what he had suffered. A meagre recompense was awarded by the commission. It also recommended disciplinary action against one of the erring officers. Muruganantham was not quite convinced. He moved the high court stating that the commission had not fully heeded his request. Significantly, apart from personal reliefs, he essentially sought implementation of the provisions of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act in Tamil Nadu. The high court allowed his writ petition in part. Again, dissatisfied with that verdict, Muruganantham approached the Supreme Court. He fought a long battle. And it was not in vain. Being a lawyer, he argued the case on his own in the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court did a comprehensive examination of the jurisprudence on India's disability and prison laws. Yet, more than personal relief to the appellant, the focal point of the judgement was the plight of the disabled who are incarcerated. Justice R Mahadevan, who wrote the judgement, referred to precedents on jail reforms like the Sanjay Suri (1988), Rama Murthy (1997), D K Basu (2015), and In re: Inhuman Conditions in 1,382 Prisons (2016) cases. Even earlier, in the Sunil Batra (1979) case, Justice Krishna Iyer famously wrote that the fundamental rights do not part company with the prisoner at the gates.

The Supreme Court, in its July 15 directives on Muruganantham, asked for identification of the disabled and providing them with the necessary amenities like physiotherapy and psychotherapy, if required. Periodic audits, training of officers on disability rights, revision of the Prison Manual in tune with the RPWD Act, inclusive policies, and constitution of monitoring committees to conduct periodic inspection in prisons find a place among the Muruganantham directives. These constituted a radical leap on the subject. However, as a case that arose from a Madras High Court judgement, the directives, though impactful, were limited to Tamil Nadu. Human rights are universal, as are their violations. Prisons across the country tell almost the same story. American lawyer Edwin M Baum once pointed out that physically disabled prisoners are punished for two categories of crime: the one for which they were convicted by the court, and the 'crime' of being disabled.

EVEN as the dust settles on the mysterious six-day delay in notifying Field Marshal Asim Munir as Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), the omnipotent military establishment has not been able to comfortably push the narrative of smooth governance and stability on the political and economic fronts. The confusion temporarily led to speculation about former PM Nawaz Sharif's unease over Munir's assumption of absolute powers. However, saner counsel seems to have prevailed as the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) will have to keep relying on the army leadership's assistance for long-term political survival — the CDF will now remain in place for nearly two years beyond the next general election.

On December 11, announcing the verdict of the much-delayed Field General Court Martial (FGCM) against Faiz Hameed, now divested of military rank, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) indicated that the FGCM had found him guilty on all four charges — engaging in political activities, violating the Official Secrets Act in a manner "detrimental to the safety and interest of the state", misuse of authority and government resources, and causing wrongful loss to individuals. It emphasised that "all legal rights, including the right to a defence team of his choice" had been complied with. Significantly, in a thinly veiled threat to implicate former PM Imran Khan in a future military trial, the ISPR elaborated that Hameed's "involvement in fomenting vested political agitation and instability in cohorts with political elements and in certain other matters" would be dealt with separately.

The stiff sentence of 14-year rigorous imprisonment was unexpected. Apart from suggesting that senior army Generals were not exempt from accountability, its timing marked a warning against possible voices of dissent opposed to Munir's extended coterminous tenure as CDF and Army Chief. It also left open scope for Hameed to turn approver against Imran at a later stage. The army leadership changed its strategy of providing regular access to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders and Imran's relatives to meet him in Adiala jail. After a long gap, when rumours surfaced about his well-being and possible shifting to an undisclosed location, one of his sisters was allowed to see him. Imran's ex-wife Jemima Khan complained in a tweet on X to Elon Musk about his sons not being allowed to communicate with him. This

Munir tightens grip on unstable Pakistan

The military establishment is struggling to push the narrative of smooth governance

allegation was strenuously denied by the Foreign Office. While Imran has not relinquished his posture of confrontation, a new 23-member political coordination committee of the PTI was set up to act as an interface with the military establishment. Headed by advocate Salman Akram Raja, it comprises more moderates and only a sprinkling of known hardliners. Mehmoond Khan Achakzai, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, was included. On the other hand, Sohail Afridi, newly-appointed Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), has been tasked with upping the ante of public protests in his province. Addressing the National Ulama Conference in Islamabad on December 10, Asim Munir urged religious scholars to help foster national unity and provide better quality education in madrasas. Referring to persisting terrorism in KP and Balochistan, he cautioned that in an Islamic state, only the State could declare jihad. The question-answer

has fared no better on the economic front. Though the International Monetary Fund approved \$12-billion disbursement under its existing Extended Fund Facility, there were stern strictures focusing on inadequate combating of corruption and inability to prevent siphoning of funds by business elites.

Embarrassingly for the military establishment, well-known US-based Pakistani-origin economist Atif Mian argued in his hard-hitting writeup (December 9), 'Five for Fifty: Toward an economic vision for Pakistan', that the average Pakistani could earn as much as any other citizen of the world for the next 50 years if only it sustains average per capita income growth of 5 per cent a year. He believes what has held Pakistan back is not a lack of talent or effort, but absence of a clear, sustained economic vision. The country needed a regime change to realise its potential, Atif wrote, qualifying that he meant this "not in political terms necessarily, but in strategic policy". Referring to the

Special Investment Facilitation Council, which has failed to significantly open up foreign investment channels despite being under direct military supervision, Atif pointed out that Pakistan's policy establishment still misunderstood what investment was, repeatedly mistaking inflows of borrowed dollars for growth-generating capital. The economic partnership with China had not been well-designed, he felt, built on technology transfer, skills and higher domestic productivity. Instead, policy leaned on fossil-fuel power plants, often in the wrong places and with high fixed and operating costs in dollars. This resulted in a zombie power sector, which the government is now trying to rescue by taxing electricity! He lamented poor policy choices that had locked Pakistan into a stagnation regime, citing examples of "real-estate-driven elite capture, institutional

support for negative-sum games of sectarianism", even the "most recently appointed special czar for crypto!". Meanwhile, after abolishing the post of Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Munir has still not announced who will be promoted to the four-star slot of Commander, Strategic Forces. Among his most trusted lieutenants, Lt Gen Asim Malik, continues as DG, ISI, though his four-year term on this rank ended in October. Others from the 80th Pakistan Military Academy course batch of seniormost three-star Generals await this decision anxiously.

Telangana's Vision 2047 must enrich all citizens

The vision, rooted in the wisdom of a diverse array of economic experts, charts clear interim milestones, including \$1 trillion in state gross domestic product in a decade

The Vision 2047 document unveiled on the final day of the Telangana Rising summit lays out a transformative blueprint for the state's future. Coinciding with the Congress government's two-year anniversary in office, the event broke the mould of conventional investment gatherings by focusing less on chasing capital and more on setting the wheels of economic metamorphosis in motion. Its goal was to propel Telangana towards a \$3-trillion economy by 2047. It was an icing on the cake that the summit drew in memorandums of understanding worth over 25.75 lakh crore, promising 13 lakh jobs.

The vision, rooted in the wisdom of a diverse array of economic experts, charts clear interim milestones, including \$1 trillion in state gross domestic product in a decade, more than four times the current GSDP of roughly \$210 billion. Hitting the \$3-trillion mark will require compounded growth of about



12.9 percent. It's indeed a steep climb, but not a pipe-dream if the reforms being initiated remain on course. Former RBI Governor Duvvuri Subbarao threw his weight behind the ambition, highlighting Telangana's rise

from a region once shackled by feudal structures to one of India's fastest-growing states. He also sounded a gentle warning bell: the state must sustain 8-9 percent annual growth while ensuring that prosperity trickles down from the top.

At the heart of the blueprint are three interlinked plans: the core urban region economy positioning Hyderabad as a global innovation powerhouse; the peri-urban region economy developing the outer belt for industrial corridors and infrastructure; and the rural agri region economy focusing on technology-enabled agriculture and sustainability. The catalysts would include green mobility, life sciences, and creative industries—aimed at accelerating growth while steering the state towards net-zero targets.

The lingering question is whether the state's execution muscle can match its lofty ambitions. Anand Mahindra remarked at the event that humility and curiosity will be the wind beneath the state's wings. The real test will be in the thunderous announcements triggering a rain of riches on every citizen.

Corporate governance | When all aboard are flying blind

Company boards have to act with imperfect information at times. Decades ago, a Unilever tea company in troubled Assam refused a ransom demand from the militant outfit ULFA. It then decided to covertly airlift the company's managers and their families with the help of the armed forces

The IndiGo turbulence has again brought the issues of corporate governance and marquee boards into public discourse. This article, however, is not about the airline. It explores ways for directors to engage with business crises and issues. From having little or no understanding of this expression 30 years ago, everybody nowadays comments on the subject. Having served over 25 boards in five countries over the last 40 years, I realise that board directors should be among the earliest to pick up signals of misgovernance—though, not necessarily, proof. It is only thereafter that the matter likely leaks into the public domain, regulators, courts, and the due process of law. I have written earlier that "directors can be the first to hear the canary in the coalmine". They should not ignore the signals. Though non-executive directors possess imperfect information, their work is expected to be effective, for which they have powers and resources. When untoward events occur, people realise that board directorship is no safe sinecure for retired professionals. Discharge of board duties requires sound experience, judgement, and deep intuition. Non-executive directors can be imperfect individuals who work with incomplete information, but the public expectation from them is high. It remains that other than a competent, well-intentioned, alert, and united board of directors, no better corporate governance system has yet been invented.

Let's delve into some examples of crisis management by Indian boards. Around 2001, the regrettable Tata Finance fraud occurred within the Tata Group. No sooner had a whistleblower alerted the group that Ratan Tata received resignations from the existing directors of Tata Finance. He then deputed Tata Sons' finance director Ishaat Hussain to chair the company and constitute a new

board. Ishaat led the investigation and recovery efforts. Ratan Tata publicly apologised early. There followed lots of bad publicity, hits on Tata Sons' profits, and shareholder angst before the episode got behind the group. I have written about an internal fraud that occurred at C G Power in 2019. The independent directors of the then Thapar group company read the early signals of suspicious arithmetical ambiguities in the accounts for three years, though critics feel that they responded too late. They blew the whistle and invited the regulator to do a forensic audit. The promoter-chairman was removed and various other actions followed.

Thanks to the actions of the board, the company was rescued handsomely. Under the Murugappa Group, which acquired it, C G Power was resurrected to achieve a very high valuation. It's true that companies feel hassled when they are struck by so-called black swan events—rare, unpredictable occurrences with big impacts that are often rationalised later as foreseeable.

In November 1990, when I was on the Hindustan Lever board, Assam was very disturbed politically. Unilever's tea plantation subsidiary Doo Doo Assam received a ransom demand from a militant outfit, the United Liberation Front of Assam, for 235 lakh plus a surcharge of 22.5 per kilo of tea sold. The company stood firm on not paying the money, but it was deeply concerned about the safety of its plantation executives.

connected with the appropriate officials and arranged to secretly airlift the plantation managers and their families. It was a colossal task of coordination with Army and Air Force commanders, but it was accomplished without the state government even being aware of the operation. In my experience, this was a rare example of a board getting involved and responding to a



black swan event despite imperfect information. During the 2000s, when Ratan Tata chaired Tata Chemicals, I served as vice chairman. The company had for many years sought a way to manufacture 'natural' soda ash in addition to the existing 'synthetic' variant. Natural would be cheaper, less energy-intensive, and attractive to customers. Finally, around 2008, an opportunity arose

when Tanzania's government invited Tata Chemicals to invest in a facility on the banks of Lake Natron. The company management made proposals to explore feasibility and the board readily sanctioned the expenditures. While such financial commitments were ongoing, a credible word came to the board that the edges of the lake Natron were natural nesting sites of the annual migratory Lesser Flamingo birds.

This posed a dilemma to the board. The management collected evidence of the fact, but it was still unclear how a project for natural soda ash would affect the birds' nesting sites. The subject was discussed by the board and the management on four occasions over several months. Finally, the board unanimously decided to write off the expenditure incurred—which shocked shareholders when the next quarterly results were announced—and abandon the project on the grounds of the precautionary principle of sustainability. Rightly or wrongly, the directors decided to avoid a potential crisis. If they did not act then, the

company could be firefighting if issues cropped up after the project was set up. The purpose of mentioning these examples is not to suggest that these boards took the right decisions. Rather, it is to illustrate how boards should anticipate issues and deal with them collectively, even though there are uncertainties. These are the times wisdom is called for.

You have created doubts: Supreme Court blasts Shani Shingnapur temple management

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant questioned the size of the establishment, asking why the Shani Shingnapur temple needed 2,400 employees, and observed that the trustees seemed to wield significant political influence.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Supreme Court on Friday flagged serious concerns over the management of the Shani Shingnapur temple in Maharashtra, saying the trust had "created so much doubt" about the administration that judicial intervention was necessary to protect the shrine. Hearing a dispute between the Maharashtra government and the temple management trust, the Supreme Court stayed a Bombay High Court judgment passed on December 12, as well as an order issued by the Collector of Ahilyanagar. The case relates to control over the temple's administration and finances.

"You have created so much doubt about the management of the temple that we need to protect the temple," the Supreme Court observed, underlining the need for immediate safeguards in the administration of the Maharashtra shrine. During the hearing, the Maharashtra government told

the court that the temple has more than 2,400 employees on its rolls and that over Rs 2.5 crore is spent every month on salaries and related expenses. The state alleged serious financial mismanagement, saying the trust members are facing charges before the Charity Commissioner.

The trust's counsel rejected the allegations, calling them politically motivated and linked to the upcoming elections. He said the temple has been managed by the trust for years and that the Charity Commissioner had already examined the accounts. The counsel also pointed out that the Collector had taken over the accounts in September and issued notices to the trust on December 12.



Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, while questioning the scale of operations, asked why the temple required 2,400 employees

anyway," the CJI observed, adding that the court was not making conjectures at this stage.

The Solicitor General told the court that rules governing the temple trust were framed and came into effect on December 12, and alleged serious malfeasance, stating that the government may have to recover money. The CJI noted that biometric records of employees existed and stressed the need for proper management.

With the trust committee's term set to expire on December 31, the Supreme Court directed that the Commissioner of the Aurangabad division be appointed as the administrator of the temple trust. Two officials of sub-divisional magistrate rank will also be part of the administrative committee. The administrator will continue

until a new trust committee is constituted under the relevant temple trust law. The state government has been asked to file detailed status reports.

The trust's counsel argued that the government was seeking executive control of the temple and warned that past appointments of administrators had led to non-payment of salaries and provident fund dues. The CJI responded that bureaucrats were being appointed because they could at least be held accountable.

The court also raised questions over the sequence of events following the High Court's December 12 order. The CJI noted that the Collector moved swiftly to invite the trust to take charge and questioned why no time was given to the state to approach the Supreme Court. "We may have to look into his conduct also," the Chief Justice said. The matter has been adjourned and will be listed again in the third week of January.

More than 5 shooters involved in south Delhi's Aya Nagar murder case: Sources



New Delhi.(Agency)

The November 30 Aya Nagar murder of a 50-year-old man in south Delhi was carried out by more than five shooters and five of the shooters fired 69 bullets at the victim, sources said. Some notorious gangsters, who are operating from jail, are also suspected to be involved in carrying out the murder, and police is also investigating whether gangsters sitting outside India were given the contract to kill the victim.

52-year-old Rattan Lohia was shot multiple times on November 30 in Delhi's Aya Nagar in an ongoing rivalry between two families of the locality since 2024. Assailants fired at Lohia from a car, and 69 bullets were recovered from his body.

The investigation carried out by the Delhi Police has revealed that 72 rounds of firing were done by the assailants and 69 bullets have been recovered from Lohia's body.

The investigation carried out by the Delhi Police has revealed that 72 rounds of firing were done by the assailants and 69 bullets have been recovered from Lohia's body.

Leopard enters building in densely populated area near Mumbai, injures three

The residents immediately called the fire brigade, and they took swift action by saving a girl in a building where the leopard had entered.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The fear of leopards hit the urban pockets of Maharashtra, as a leopard was seen in the densely populated residential area of East Bhyandar in Thane district. On Friday morning, the leopard suddenly came into the locality and, as per information, has injured three people so far by jumping into a building. The presence of the leopard has caused a major panic among the residents. However, they have been able to confine it in a local building named Parijat, where the leopard accidentally entered. The residents called the fire brigade, which rushed to the spot and recovered a girl from the building who was injured by the leopard.

The leopard crisis in Maharashtra has witnessed a sharp increase in the last few months. Several places in Western Maharashtra's sugar belt witnessed regular leopard attacks, following which several people lost their lives. Fourteen farmers have died in Junnar, Nashik, Ahilyanagar, and Pune, in the last two months in leopard attacks.

The increasing number of attacks has compelled the state administration to take serious steps. The forest department officials, including the minister Ganesh Ramachandra Naik, held a meeting in the mid-week of November to protect the interests of farmers. The officials approved the idea of sterilising leopards along with catching them and leaving them in the jungle. The state administration also decided to take the help of artificial intelligence (AI) to inform the villagers about the movement of the leopards.

The Wildlife Department has received permission from the Central Government as per the laid-down conditions, and that too only for the Junnar division," Naik said in November. He also noted that the state administration would ask for sterilisation permission across all the state.

Sudha Murty's Deepfake Video Used For Investment Scam, She Reacts

New Delhi.(Agency)

A deepfake video of Rajya Sabha MP and Infosys Foundation chairperson Sudha Murty has gone viral on social media, which shows her urging people to click a link for "investment opportunities".

The link, however, led to a fake news website in an attempt to steal the user's personal details.

"A number of investors have already joined and are earning from Rs 10 lakh per month. Unfortunately, we are now forced to stop the registration, as our team is no longer able to handle the influx of new clients. All those who wish to join will have a chance to register only until the end of this day and only through the link that I will request to be placed below this video. If the link is still active, you are able to access it; congratulations. You still have the opportunity to become an investor,"



she can be heard saying while addressing a crowd in the deepfake video.

The video then shows screenshots of a fake website promoting an investment platform named "Quantum AI India". Murty on Friday confirmed that it was a deepfake and she was "really concerned" about such videos.

"I am really concerned about fake messages using my face and my voice to promote investments promising 20 or 30 times returns. This is all fake and driven by AI and a

cunning mind behind it," she told reporters outside Parliament.

"I will never talk about investments anywhere, anytime. If you see my face or hear my voice promoting investments, do not believe it. This is hard-earned money - please think carefully, verify with a bank or trusted source, and only then decide," she said.

It was not the first time that Sudha Murty has been targeted.

In February, a deepfake video had gone viral showing Murty talking about an investment platform and guaranteeing results while encouraging people to invest Rs 21,000 immediately.

A 59-year-old man from Pune reportedly had fallen prey to a deepfake video of Murty and her husband, Narayana Murthy, and lost Rs 43 lakh. The man said he saw an advertisement on Instagram promising a return of Rs 17 lakh on an initial investment of Rs 21,000.

Love marriage turns tragic as Rajasthan bride, groom's families attack each other

New Delhi.(Agency)

An incident of a love marriage turned tragic in Rajasthan, as the family members of the woman attacked the groom's brother and cut off his nose. In retaliation, the groom's family members attacked the woman's uncle with an axe and cut off his legs.

The incident occurred on Wednesday. Nearly two-and-a-half years back, 25-year-old Shravan Singh, a resident of Barmer, had a love marriage with a woman from his neighbourhood. The woman's family members, who had been

seeking revenge for the past two-and-a-half years, got the opportunity on Wednesday as Dharam Singh, the woman's uncle, attacked UK Singh, Shravan's elder brother, with a knife when the latter went to see the castor crop in his field.

In the scuffle, Dharam Singh and his accomplices cut UK Singh's nose with the jab of the knife.

The incident followed retaliation, as upon learning UK Singh's experience, the other family members attacked Dharam Singh when he was



on his way home. They allegedly used an axe while

beating Dharam, and as a result, the latter sustained serious injuries in one hand and leg. Dharam was taken to a nearby hospital for further treatment.

Following the incident, a senior police officer from the district said that the police had taken swift action and had arrested seven people so far. From Shravan's family, the police arrested Narayan Singh, Alam Singh, and Jalam Singh, and from the woman's family, the police arrested Shankar Singh, Shaitan Singh, Tan Singh, and Sumer Singh.

How Bangladesh is secretly trying to provoke India in Bay of Bengal

Recently, a Bangladesh navy vessel hit an Indian fishing trawler. A fisherman was killed by a spear-like object. Moreover, an increasing number of Bangladeshi fishing vessels are crossing into Indian waters in the Bay of Bengal. Is Bangladesh trying to provoke India ahead of elections?

New Delhi.(Agency)

As anti-India protests rage across Bangladesh on land, tensions are also flaring at sea. Over the past two months, an unusual pattern has grabbed the attention of India - an increasing number of Bangladeshi fishing vessels crossing into Indian waters in the Bay of Bengal. Matters came to a head on December 15, when a patrol vessel of the Bangladesh navy allegedly hit an Indian trawler carrying 16 fishermen, leading it to capsize. The developments coincide with rising anti-India sentiments in Bangladesh as it goes to the polls in February next year.

Ever since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina regime, Bangladesh, under Muhammad Yunus, has tried to expand its influence in India's backyard - the Bay of Bengal. In fact, Yunus has previously claimed that Bangladesh is the "guardian of the ocean for all of this region", much to

India's unease.

The issue has raised concerns over the safety of Indian fishermen operating near the international maritime boundary. Tensions rose on Monday after a Bangladeshi navy vessel allegedly collided

the Indian trawler to detect it in the night.

The trawler, identified as FB Parmita, capsized, throwing all the fishermen into the sea. It was only around 6 am that the Indian Coast Guard managed to rescue 11 of the fishermen. Five of them are still missing, with a report in saying that one fisherman was killed with a "spear-like weapon".

The survivors have alleged that there was an attempt to kill all on board the fishing trawler, according to the report. It claimed that the Bangladeshi vessel hit the trawler as the fishermen were preparing to cast a net. One Rajkul Ali Sheikh was killed with a "spear", a fisherman told Police have launched a probe after the Sundarban Marine Fishermen's Workers Union complained. However, the Indian Coast Guard has not confirmed whether the fishing trawler crossed the marine border or whether the Bangladeshi navy ship entered the Indian waters. Meanwhile, Bangladesh

has called reports misleading, claiming its patrol vessel was 12 miles away from the incident. The unprecedented incident has generated chatter on social media. "Provocation. They want a confrontation with India. The only way out for their miserable existence," foreign affairs expert Raman Murti tweeted. Another expert posted, "This is called pre-planned provocation and intend to lure us into ambush."

BANGLADESH VESSELS IN INDIAN WATERS

It comes at a time when an increasing number of Bangladeshi fishing vessels are found to be crossing deep into India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Bay of Bengal.

As recently as December 16, the Indian Coast Guard intercepted two Bangladeshi fishing boats that had crossed deep into Indian waters.



with an Indian trawler carrying 16 fishermen from Bengal, near the maritime boundary. Reports said the Bangladeshi vessel had its lights switched off, making it impossible for

NEWS BOX

New Zealand cricket chief resigns citing disagreement on T20 future

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

New Zealand Cricket is preparing for a change at the top after chief executive Scott Weenink announced he will step down from his role, citing irreconcilable differences over the future direction of the game. Weenink will officially leave office on January 30, 2026, bringing an end to a two-and-a-half-year tenure that delivered strong on-field results but was increasingly marked by strategic disagreements off it. The decision follows months of tension between Weenink, several of New Zealand's six member associations and the New Zealand Cricket Players' Association (NZCPA), particularly over long-term priorities and the place of T20 cricket in the country's domestic structure. Speaking in a media statement, Weenink acknowledged that alignment with key stakeholders had broken down. "After careful



consideration. It has become clear that I hold a different view from several member associations, and the NZCPA [New Zealand Cricket Players' Association], on the future priorities for NZC, including the long-term direction of the game and the best role for T20 cricket in New Zealand. Given these differences, I believe it is in the best interests of the organisation that new leadership takes NZC forward from here," Weenink said in a statement. "While I am saddened to leave after such a successful period, I do not wish to create ongoing instability by continuing without the support of some key stakeholders. I depart with pride in the excellent progress made by NZC during my time as CEO, and confidence in the people in NZC who will carry the game forward," he added. Weenink was appointed NZC chief executive in August 2023, and his tenure coincided with a productive period for New Zealand cricket. During that time, the White Ferns lifted the Women's T20 World Cup, the men's team secured a landmark Test series win in India in 2024, and reached the final of the Champions Trophy in 2025. His resignation comes amid growing momentum behind plans to launch a new franchise-based T20 league, provisionally titled NZ20, by January 2027. The proposed competition would operate under a licensing model similar to the Caribbean Premier League, with independent management and foreign investment, and would replace the existing Super Smash tournaments for both men and women.

Ashes: Ben Stokes jumps in frustration, berates himself after Starc ripper

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Ben Stokes and his peculiar quirks after being dismissed in Test cricket were once again on display. The England captain was at his animated best after his firm resistance in the first innings of the third Ashes Test in Adelaide ended in heartbreak.

Stokes's excellent vigil came to an end on the morning of Day 3 after he had helped steer



England out of trouble. Batting on 83, having stitched together a vital 106-run ninth-wicket partnership with Jofra Archer, Stokes was bowled by Mitchell Starc, who delivered a near-unplayable ball that sneaked through the gap between bat and pad. After seeing his stumps rattled, Stokes jumped in frustration on the crease. The disappointment was written all over his face as he had been determined to push England closer to Australia's first-innings total of 371. Visibly upset, Stokes berated himself as he began the long walk back to the pavilion. He was seen talking to himself throughout the walk to the dressing room and did not acknowledge fans who stretched out their hands as he approached the stands. Nonetheless, the Adelaide crowd showed admirable sporting spirit by giving Stokes a warm ovation for his battling effort, especially after England had slumped to 168 for 8 on the afternoon of Day 2. Stokes and Archer put together a resistance that England have rarely managed in this Ashes series, which they trail 0-2. Their partnership gave the visitors a lifeline at a critical juncture of the match.

HOW STOKES WAS OUTFOXED

Stokes's frustration was understandable. It was the 12th time he has been dismissed by Starc in Test cricket. The Australian left-arm and India's R Ashwin (13) are the only two bowlers who have dismissed Stokes more than 10 times in red-ball cricket.

Portugal still needs Cristiano Ronaldo: Bruno Fernandes ahead of FIFA World Cup 2026

Bruno Fernandes has shut down claims that Portugal play better without Cristiano Ronaldo. The midfielder insists Ronaldo's presence still shapes games, even as tactical debates resurface before the 2026 World Cup.

BRISBANE. (Agency)

Portugal and Manchester United midfielder Bruno Fernandes has stepped into the ongoing debate around Cristiano Ronaldo's role in the Portugal national team, firmly rejecting the idea that the side functions better without its all-time great. With discussions resurfacing ahead of the 2026 World Cup, the Manchester United captain has offered a measured defence of Ronaldo's value, insisting that the forward continues to bring qualities few others in the squad can replicate. The conversation gained traction after Portugal thrashed Armenia 9-1 in their final World Cup qualifier while Ronaldo was suspended, a result that followed a disappointing loss to the Republic of Ireland. Speaking to Canal 11, Fernandes explained



that judging Portugal's effectiveness purely on whether Ronaldo is present oversimplifies a far more complex tactical picture, stressing that different players bring different strengths to the team. "Cristiano inside the box continues to be a very high-level player... I know what people think, that it's clear we play better without Ronaldo, that the players are freer and more fluid," Fernandes said. "I think that, if that happens, it's partly our fault. We can't worry if



Cristiano is on the pitch, because Cristiano can give us things," Bruno said. "If Cristiano doesn't play and Goncalo (Ramos) does, Goncalo is strong in pressing and good at diagonal runs," he added. Ronaldo, now 40, remains the leading goalscorer in men's international football, with 143 goals in 226 appearances since his debut in 2003. His international future briefly appeared uncertain during the 2022 World Cup, when he was benched by then-

Unsold at IPL auction, Devon Conway smashes 226 vs WI in Mount Maunganui

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Devon Conway delivered a powerful response to his IPL auction disappointment by scoring a career-best 227 that put New Zealand firmly in control of the third Test against the West Indies in Mount Maunganui. Conway, who went unsold at the IPL 2026 auction earlier in the week, batted for more than seven hours and turned scrutiny into a statement performance before finally falling lbw to Justin Greaves. New Zealand started day two at 334 for 1, with Conway unbeaten on 178 after batting through the entire first day. His opening stand of 323 with Tom Latham carried the hosts into a dominant position. Latham contributed 137 and provided the stability that allowed Conway to settle and flourish. Nightwatchman Jacob Duffy joined Conway at stumps and added eight more runs in the morning before edging behind for 17 off Jayden Seales. Kane Williamson followed and walked in after more than 90 overs of

waiting. The former captain looked rusty and struggled to find rhythm early in his innings. He eventually worked his way to 31 from 60 balls with five boundaries before edging a delivery that moved away



late, giving the West Indies a breakthrough. Conway remained the anchor. He reached his double century from 316 balls and hit 28 fours. The milestone surpassed his debut double century at

Lord's in 2021, which had remained his highest score through 58 Test innings. With Kemar Roach off the field due to a hamstring strain, the West Indies attack lacked penetration. Conway had a brief moment of fortune when he was dropped on 206 by Kavem Hodge at short cover. For the most part, he showed patience outside the off stump and punished anything loose. His resistance ended at 227 when Greaves trapped him in front. The ball nipped in from around the wicket and stayed low, striking him on the back pad. Conway immediately accepted his fate and walked off without a review. Teammates, crowd and opposition players offered applause for an innings of immense control and concentration. New Zealand lead the series 1-0 after a draw in the first Test and a nine-wicket victory in the second. Conway's innings reinforced his value in red-ball cricket and provided a timely rebuttal to the IPL auction outcome that had briefly overshadowed his week.

More pressure on Shubman Gill Ishan Kishan smashes 49-ball 101 before selectors

QUITO. (Agency)

Ishan Kishan's explosive return to form in domestic cricket has once again put India's T20I opening combination under the spotlight, with fans already taking to social media to call for his return to the national side. With the T20 World Cup just 50 days away, the timing of Kishan's resurgence could not be more significant, as it adds fresh pressure on Shubman Gill's place at the top of the order and sharpens a growing selection dilemma for the team management. The left-hander's strongest statement came in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy final, where he blasted a stunning 101 off 49 balls against Haryana. Leading Jharkhand from the front, Kishan powered his side to a massive 262/3, delivering a knock that combined fearless strokeplay with sustained intensity. Crucially, the innings was played under the watchful eyes of selectors Pragyan Ojha and RP Singh, further amplifying its impact. Kishan finished the tournament as the leading run-scorer with 517 runs from 10 innings, capping off a dominant SMAT campaign



that also followed a century in the Duleep Trophy. After his brilliant performance, fans quickly took it to social media to call for a return of the 27-year-old in the T20I mix, especially ahead of the T20 World Cup. Kishan's domestic surge carries extra weight given his prolonged absence from the India setup. The wicketkeeper-batter has been out of the national T20I side since 2023 after being dropped on disciplinary grounds during Rahul Dravid's tenure as head coach, with Ajit Agarkar heading the selection panel. After Jharkhand's title triumph, Kishan admitted that the period away from international cricket was mentally taxing, making his recent run of

form all the more significant. "When I was not selected in the Indian team, I felt quite bad because I was doing well. But I told myself that if I am not selected with this sort of performance, then maybe I have to do more. Maybe I have to make my team win. Maybe we have to do well as a unit," Kishan told Sportstar. "It's important that you don't allow the frustration to get to you. This is my message to all the youngsters - frustration is something that will take you one step down, but at the same time, you need to put in a lot of hard work and believe in yourself and just focus on what you need to achieve," he added.

Pressure on Shubman Gill

Gill, meanwhile, is facing scrutiny from a different angle. While firmly established across formats and trusted as India's vice-captain, his T20I returns have been inconsistent. His return to the shortest format after missing the ODI series against South Africa due to a neck issue was expected to offer a fresh start. Instead, it added to the debate.

IND vs SA, Predicted XI: Will Samson return to open in Ahmedabad in Gill's absence

IND vs SA: Sanju Samson's long wait could finally end in Ahmedabad after fog denied him a Lucknow return. With Shubman Gill injured and the series secured, India may finally unleash Samson at the top.

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Sanju Samson could finally get his opportunity in the series finale as India consider reshuffling their top order for the fifth T20I against South Africa in Ahmedabad. With Shubman Gill unlikely to be fully fit after

picking up a foot injury, the team management may be forced to look beyond their first-choice opener. That scenario places Samson firmly in the frame, with the wicketkeeper-batter expected to return to his preferred role at the top of the order if Gill is ruled out for Friday's clash at the Narendra Modi Stadium. The possibility of Samson's return is not entirely new. There was already considerable buzz around him being drafted into the playing XI for the fourth T20I in Lucknow after Gill injured his foot during the series. Samson was widely tipped to replace the vice-captain and open the innings, a role in which he has enjoyed his most consistent success in T20 cricket. However, the game in Lucknow was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to dense fog and poor visibility, denying Samson what could have been his first appearance of the series and forcing him to remain on the sidelines. Despite the washout, India's position in the series remains strong. The abandoned fourth match extended their unbeaten run in T20I series to 11, with the



hosts already sealing the series outcome. That security gives the team management some flexibility heading into the Ahmedabad T20I, especially with concerns lingering over the fitness of both Gill and Jasprit Bumrah. If Gill is indeed unavailable, India have limited like-for-like options in the squad. This makes Samson a logical choice, not just as a replacement but as a proactive move to maintain balance at the top. He is expected to partner Abhishek Sharma, allowing India to retain an aggressive approach in the powerplay without

unsettling the rest of the batting order. Suryakumar Yadav is likely to continue at number three. The captain has maintained that his lean run is a matter of timing rather than form, and the final T20I offers another chance to regain momentum. Tilak Varma has cemented his place at number four with assured performances, while Shivam Dube, Hardik Pandya and Jitesh Sharma are set to handle the middle-order duties, ensuring depth and firepower.

Bumrah uncertain for Ahmedabad T20I

In the bowling department, Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy are expected to lead the spin attack. Bumrah's availability remains uncertain after he missed the third T20I for personal reasons and was never tested in Lucknow due to the abandonment. With workload management in mind, India may persist with Arshdeep Singh and Harshit Rana as the frontline pacers, supported by the all-rounders. For Samson, the Ahmedabad T20I could be more than just a replacement role.

I-T Department Clarifies On Taxpayers Grievances Over AIS Mismatch Emails

New Delhi.(Agency)

Amidst confusions of taxpayers regarding auto generated emails related to mismatch in their Annual Information Statement (AIS), the Income Tax Department has clarified that such communication is 'just an advisory'. The Tax Department in a post on X has acknowledged that some references have come to the notice of the Income Tax Department regarding recent communication sent to taxpayers pertaining to transaction(s) made by them. I-T Department has tweeted, "Taxpayers may please note that such communication is to facilitate the taxpayers & make them aware of the information available with the ITD regarding the transactions reported by the Reporting Entities during the year." It added that such communication is just an advisory and is being sent in only those cases where there is an apparent significant gap between disclosures in the ITR & information as received from the Reporting Entities. "The objective of the communication is to provide an opportunity to taxpayers for voluntary correction by reviewing their AIS & facilitate them to provide their feedback online on the Compliance Portal of Income Tax Department &, if necessary, revise their Returns already filed OR to file the belated Return if not filed, so far," I-T department wrote. It also reminded that the last date for revising or filing belated return for AY 2025-26 is 31st December 2025. The I-T Department has requested taxpayers to respond promptly via Compliance Portal if discrepancies exist or ignore if their filing is correct.

Gold Slips On MCX After Bank of Japan Rate Hike

MUMBAI.(Agency)

Mumbai: Gold prices slipped in the domestic futures market on Friday morning, as investors booked profits after the Bank of Japan's latest policy decision. Softer inflation data from the United States also weighed on prices, even though gold is usually seen as a hedge against rising inflation. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for February delivery were trading 0.56 per cent lower at Rs 1,33,772 per 10 grams during early trade. Gold has support at \$4275-4245 while resistance is at \$4355-4385. Silver has support at \$64.40-63.75 while resistance is at \$65.60-66.15," experts said.

"In INR terms, gold has support at Rs 1,33,850-1,33,110 while resistance is at Rs 1,35,350-1,35,970," they added. Silver futures for March were also under pressure and were down 0.26 per cent at Rs 2,03,034 per kg at the same time. "Silver has support at Rs 2,02,450-2,00,280 and resistance at Rs 2,05,810, 2,07,270," analysts stated. The decline came after the Bank of Japan raised its key policy rate to 0.75, the highest level since September 1995. While the rate hike was largely expected by the market, it triggered some profit booking and is likely to impact yen-carry trades, which in turn influenced global commodity prices. International gold prices also moved lower after US inflation data came in below expectations. Consumer prices in the US rose 2.7 per cent year-on-year in November, which was lower than the 3.1 per cent increase predicted by economists. Lower inflation reduces the appeal of gold as a hedge, putting pressure on prices. Adding to the weakness, the dollar index edged up by 0.10 per cent and hovered near one-week highs. A stronger dollar usually makes gold more expensive for buyers using other currencies, which further dampens demand for the yellow metal.

Analysts said that the mix of global cues, including central bank actions, softer US inflation data and a stronger dollar, led to a fall in gold and silver prices in early trade on Friday.

TikTok signs deal to form new US unit with investors, including Oracle, Silver Lake

SAN FRANCISCO. (Agency)

TikTok has signed agreements with three major investors—Oracle, Silver Lake and MGX—to form a new TikTok U.S. joint venture, ensuring the popular social video platform can continue operating in the United States. The deal is expected to close on Jan. 22, according to an internal memo seen by The Associated Press. In the communication, CEO Shou Zi Chew confirmed to employees that ByteDance and TikTok signed the binding agreements with the consortium.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued dedication and tireless work. Your efforts keep us operating at the highest level and will ensure that TikTok continues to grow and thrive in the U.S. and around the world," Chew wrote in the memo to employees. "With these agreements in place, our focus must stay where it's always been—firmly on delivering for our users, creators, businesses and the global TikTok community." Half of the new TikTok U.S. joint venture will be owned by a group of investors—among them Oracle, Silver Lake and the Emirati investment firm MGX, who will each hold a 15% share. 19.9% of the new app will be held by ByteDance itself, and another 30.1% will be held by affiliates of existing ByteDance investors, according to the memo. The memo did not say who the other investors are and both TikTok and the White House declined to comment. The U.S. venture will have a new, seven-member majority-American board of directors, the memo said. It will also be subject to terms that "protect Americans' data and U.S. national security." U.S. user data will be stored locally in a system run by Oracle. The memo said U.S. users will continue "enjoying the same experience as today" and advertisers will continue to serve global audiences with no impact from the deal.

TikTok's algorithm—the secret sauce that powers its addictive video feed—will be retrained on U.S. user data to "ensure the content feed is free from outside manipulation," the memo said. The U.S. venture will also oversee content moderation and policies within the country. American officials have previously warned that ByteDance's algorithm is vulnerable to manipulation by Chinese authorities, who can use it to shape content on the platform in a way that's difficult to detect.

Japan's central bank raises rates to 0.75%, highest in 30 years

The Bank of Japan raised its short-term policy rate to 0.75% from 0.5%, its first rate hike since January. In a statement, the Bank of Japan said that even after the hike, financial conditions would remain supportive for the economy.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Japan's central bank raised interest rates on Friday to their highest level in three decades, marking another big step away from years of ultra-loose money policy. The move signals that policymakers believe inflation and wage growth are now strong enough to support higher borrowing costs. The Bank of Japan raised its short-term policy rate to 0.75% from

0.5%, its first rate hike since January. The decision was widely expected and was taken unanimously by the central bank's board. In a statement, the Bank of Japan said that even after the hike, financial conditions would remain supportive for the economy. "Real interest rates are expected to remain significantly negative after the policy change, and accommodative financial conditions will continue to firmly support economic activity," the central bank said, as quoted by Reuters. The move takes interest rates to levels last seen in 1995, a period when Japan was dealing with the aftermath of a major asset bubble collapse. The rate hike shows growing confidence that Japan can finally sustain inflation around its long-held target of 2%, backed by steady wage increases. The central bank also signalled that more rate hikes could follow if its outlook for growth and prices plays out as

expected. "Given that real interest rates

delicate task, as moving too slowly could weaken the yen, while moving too fast could hurt Japan's still-fragile economy.

Japan's inflation has stayed above the central bank's target for nearly four years, helped by higher food prices. Data released on Friday showed core consumer inflation stood at 3.0% in November, well above the 2% target, Reuters reported.

Recent yen weakness, which raises import costs, has also added pressure on policymakers to act.

At the same time, business confidence has improved, with firms continuing to plan wage hikes next year, offering further support for the rate increase. The Bank of Japan ended its massive stimulus programme last year and has now raised rates twice since, showing a clear shift towards normalising policy after decades of easy money.



Ola Electric shares fall over 60% this year: What should investors do

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shares of Ola Electric Mobility Ltd continued to remain under pressure on Friday, December 19, as founder and promoter Bhavish Aggarwal sold shares for the third straight session. The repeated stake sales have kept investor sentiment weak and pushed the stock to fresh lows. The stock has now fallen nearly 63% in calendar year 2025, making it one of the worst-performing newly listed technology stocks this year. Ola Electric shares hit a fresh 52-week low of Rs 31.54 on Thursday. The sharp fall in Ola Electric shares is largely linked to continued promoter stake sales over the past three days. Between December 16 and December 18, Bhavish Aggarwal sold a total of 9.62 crore shares through block and bulk deals on the NSE. On December 16, Aggarwal sold 2.60 crore shares at an average price of Rs 34.99 per share. This was followed by another sale of 4.19 crore shares on December 17 at an

average price of Rs 33.96 per share. On December 18, he sold an additional 2.83 crore shares at an average price of Rs 31.90 per share. In total, the three-day selling raised around Rs 324 crore.



The shares were sold well below Ola Electric's IPO price of Rs 76, which has added to investor concerns. The three-day sale represents around 2.2% of the company's equity.

WHY THE PROMOTER SOLD SHARES Ola Electric clarified that the stake sale was a one-time and limited

monetisation of the promoter's personal holding. According to the company, the funds were used to fully repay a promoter-level loan of around Rs 260 crore. The company said the sale also led to the release of all previously pledged shares, which accounted for about 3.93% of the total equity. Ola Electric stated that this removes a key overhang on the stock.

"Ola Electric confirms that the promoter has completed the one-time, limited monetisation of a small portion of his personal shareholding. The transaction was undertaken solely to repay a promoter-level loan and to release all pledged shares. This has no impact on the company's operations or long-term strategy," the company said in its statement. After the transaction, the promoter group holding has reduced to about 34.6% from 36.78% earlier. As of September 2025, Bhavish Aggarwal directly held a 30.02% stake, of which around 10.1% was pledged.

ICICI Prudential AMC shares list at 20% premium: Hold or sell

New Delhi.(Agency)

ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company made a strong start on Dalal Street on Friday as its shares listed at a healthy premium, raising the key question for investors: should they hold the stock or book profits after the sharp debut?

Shares of ICICI Prudential AMC debuted at Rs 2,606.20 on the BSE, marking a premium of 20.38% over the IPO issue price of Rs 2,165. On the NSE, the stock opened at around Rs 2,600, up 20.09%. The listing was positive but slightly below the most optimistic expectations built into the grey market ahead of the debut. Before listing, the IPO was trading at a grey market premium of



Rs 520-530, which had indicated a possible listing gain of nearly 24%. While the actual debut fell short of that level, it still delivered solid returns to investors.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY ON HOLD OR SELL

Market experts say the listing reflects strong confidence in the company's business model but advise investors to be cautious at current levels. Shivani Nyati, Head of Wealth at Swastika Investmart Ltd, said ICICI Prudential AMC listed at a premium of around 20-22% over its issue price. She noted that the company is among India's leading asset managers, backed by ICICI Bank and Prudential Plc, with a wide presence across equity, debt, hybrid and passive funds. According to her, strong brand value, stable cash flows and a wide distribution network have helped build a scalable business. She added that long-term growth drivers such as rising SIP inflows, deeper mutual fund reach in smaller cities, and a growing preference for managed investments support the company's outlook. However, she advised short-term investors to consider booking profits after the sharp listing gains, while long-term investors may continue to hold the stock with a stop-loss near Rs 2,350 to manage downside risk.

IPO DETAILS AND SUBSCRIPTION

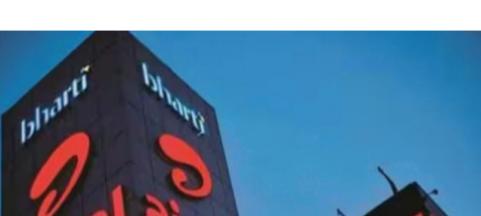
The ICICI Prudential AMC IPO was open for subscription from December 12 to December 16.

Bharti Airtel Appoints Shashwat Sharma As Airtel India MD & CEO

NEW DELHI.(Agency)

Bharti Airtel on Thursday announced a major reshuffle of its senior leadership, with the board approving multiple key appointments across management, including the appointment of Shashwat Sharma as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) of Airtel India.

Sharma's appointment will come into effect from January 1, 2026, the telecom firm said in an exchange filing. Currently the CEO-designate, he will assume the role for a five-year term, subject to shareholder approval, and will be designated as a key managerial personnel of the company. We wish to inform that based on recommendations of HR & Nomination Committee, the Board of Directors of the Company, has approved Appointment of Shashwat Sharma (currently, CEO Designate) as Managing Director and



period of five years, subject to the approval of shareholders," the telecom firm said in the exchange filing. The decisions were approved by Airtel's board at its meeting held on December 18, based on recommendations from the HR and Nomination Committee, the company said in an exchange filing.

Additionally, the board also approved the appointment of Gopal Vittal as Executive Vice Chairman. Vittal, who currently serves as Vice Chairman and Managing Director, will take on the new role as a whole-time director from January 1, 2026, for a period of five years, subject to shareholders' nod.

Furthermore, Somen Ray, the current Chief Financial Officer, has been appointed as Group Chief Financial Officer, while Akhil Garg will assume charge as Chief Financial Officer for Airtel India. The Bharati Airtel's board further approved changes in the compliance function, appointing Rohit Krishan Puri as Company Secretary and Compliance Officer with effect from January 1, 2026. Pankaj Tewari will continue as Group Company Secretary, providing leadership and oversight at the group level.

How aluminium is changing the job story in India's mineral-rich states

Industry estimates cited by the Aluminium Association of India show that the sector has already generated over eight lakh jobs and supports 4,000 SMEs in its downstream ecosystem.

New Delhi.(Agency)

India's employment landscape is undergoing a major shift. As the nation accelerates toward its Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, job creation is no longer confined to urban centres. Rural India is emerging as a major employment hub, thanks to industries that anchor high-value economic activity in resource-rich districts. According to the Government of

India's Employment Report, employment grew by nearly 36% between 2016-17 and 2022-23, adding about 170 million jobs across the economy. This expansion reflects both formal and informal job growth, with rural India emerging as a critical driver of this momentum. As infrastructure, industry, and community-level enterprises expand their presence beyond major cities, rural labour markets are seeing more stable and diverse employment opportunities. Among these, the aluminium industry stands out as one of the most potent engines of rural job creation and economic upliftment.

Since primary aluminium operations are located in remote, mineral-rich regions such as Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh, these areas, once dependent on subsistence farming, now host world-class mining, refining, and smelting facilities that generate thousands of direct and indirect jobs. Industry estimates cited by the Aluminium Association of India show that the sector has already generated over eight lakh jobs and supports 4,000 SMEs in its downstream ecosystem.

and supports 4,000 SMEs in its downstream ecosystem. With additional investments of Rs 20 lakh crore envisioned under the Aluminium Vision Document 2047, the sector can generate



over one million new jobs across mining, refining, smelting, recycling, and value-added manufacturing. For every 1 million tonnes of aluminium produced, the industry creates 20,500 direct and indirect jobs, with each direct job spawning 3.7 indirect jobs in allied sectors like logistics, engineering, and maintenance. This multiplier effect strengthens rural economies and builds a skilled workforce

outside congested metros. The aluminium industry does more than create jobs; it transforms communities. Its presence in rural districts has boosted local GDP and raised per capita incomes, helping narrow regional disparities. It has also expanded critical infrastructure such as roads and power networks, enabling broader economic activity. At the same time, it has reduced migration pressure on major metros, easing urban congestion and improving living conditions. Aluminium is not just an economic driver; it is a strategic metal critical to India's clean energy transition, electric mobility, and infrastructure growth. Recognised globally as a future-critical resource, aluminium powers everything from EVs and renewable energy systems to defence applications. The Aluminium Vision Document 2047 sets ambitious targets to scale aluminium production nearly six-fold, raise bauxite mining capacity to 150 million tonnes annually, and achieve world-class low-carbon production standards.

Shraddha Kapoor

Calls Dhurandhar A 'Big Moment' For Indian Cinema, Praised Technicians

Bollywood actress Shraddha Kapoor has drawn attention to the often-unseen heroes of filmmaking by applauding the technicians behind the latest blockbuster "Dhurandhar", describing the film as a significant moment for Indian cinema. Sharing her thoughts on Instagram stories section, Shraddha said that in the greatest films, the work of technicians remains invisible, yet it is their collective craft that gives a film its soul.

"In the greatest films, the work of technicians is invisible. #Dhurandhar is a big moment for Indian cinema. Let's make the technicians of this marvel visible and applaud them @castingchhabra when every actor is so perfect, it starts at a perfectly chosen cast," she wrote. Reflecting on the film's impact, Shraddha highlighted that authenticity, power and raw energy are never accidental.

"When a film looks so authentic, badass, powerful, it's never by chance. It was created by @vik_now, @sainishohray, @smiti_schauhan, @shivkumarpicker, @preetish. When you feel that

'resonance' and your pulse changes with every scene, there are master craftsme

n in the audio dept making it happen @shashwatology, @bishwadeepchatterjee, @irshadkamiloofficial. Needless to say, @adityadharfilms, @dhar_lokesh #JyotiDeshpande formed the bedrock to build this greatness on. #Dhurandhar," she added.

The actress had earlier penned a note on "Dhurandhar" and had said it's "truly terrible" of filmmaker Aditya Dhar to make people wait for "part 2". She wrote: "Truly terrible of Aditya Dhar to make a film like Dhurandhar. And then make us wait three months for Part 2. Don't play with our emotions, prepone the release please. What a phenomenal experience. Subah shoot nahi hoti toh kasam se abhi hi dobara dekhne jaati"

"(had I not had a shoot in the morning, I would have gone again to watch the film). Chhaava, Saiyaara, Dhurandhar — all in 2025 Hindi cinema."

She had also spoken about the "rampant negative PR" against the film.

She added, "From Yami Gautam having to call out the rampant negative PR machinery to manufactured controversies, Dhurandhar endured it all and came out shining. No bad force can pull a good film down. In audiences, we trust." The film stars Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna, R. Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Sanjay Dutt, Sara Arjun, Rakesh Bedi, Manav Gohil, Danish Pandor, Saumya Tandon, Gaurav Gera and Naveen Kaushik. In the film, the first of a two-part film series, an Indian intelligence mission unfolds over ten years as an undercover agent enters Karachi's criminal and political world to dismantle dangerous cross-border terror networks.

Ahaan Panday

Reacts To Kartik Aaryan And Ananya Panday's Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri Trailer

The trailer of Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri, starring Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday, has released. Shanaya Kapoor and other celebrities have praised the trailer. Adding to the buzz, actor Ahaan Panday has also reacted. He took to social media to express his excitement, praising the film's vibe and the lead pair's chemistry. Taking to his Instagram stories, Ahaan Panday shared the trailer and dropped heart emojis. The trailer opens with the introduction of the lead actors. They are off to a vacation and happen to share the same place, which makes them friends later. However, they slowly fall in love, but there is an emotional twist. However, fans are loving their fresh romance.

Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri: Cast, Crew And Plot

Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri is directed by Sameer Vidwans, who previously collaborated with Kartik on Satyaprem Ki Katha. The film is produced by Dharma Productions and Namah Pictures, with Karan Johar, Adar Poonawalla, Apoorva Mehta, Shareen Mantri Kedia, Kishor Arora, and Bhumika Tewari as producers.

The romantic drama follows the love story of two people who fall for each other as they try to find themselves. However, things take a turn when family pressures challenge their relationship, and they decide to part ways, hoping to meet again. Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri is scheduled to release at the theatres on December 25, coinciding with Christmas. In addition to the lead pair, the film features Neena Gupta, Jackie Shroff and Tiku Talsania in supporting roles.

Ahaan Panday To Undergo 60 Days Of Intense Training For Next With Ali Abbas Zafar?

Ahaan Panday became the heartthrob and an overnight star soon after the release of his debut film, Saiyaara, alongside Aneet Padda. Now, Ahaan is set for his next project, an action-packed Ali Abbas Zafar film with YRF. According to the latest report, Ahaan Panday will have a working birthday as he undergoes an intense 60-day prep for his next film. According to a Pinkvilla source, "Ahaan will need to prep in action for over 60 days to perfect the kind of raw action that Ali wants him to do on screen. It is a pure coincidence that the date when he starts action training is his birthday! So, it's no days off for Ahaan as he will have a working birthday this year."



Tanya Mittal's Stylist Says She Is Facing Hate For Speaking About Non-Payment



Just days after Bigg Boss 19's finale, Tanya Mittal's stylist, Riddhima Sharma, claimed that she had not been paid for her work and that several outfits sourced by her were yet to be returned. The latter shared a long note on her Instagram stories, calling out the internet personality and accusing her team of treating her like a "fool". The controversy has escalated, with Riddhima issuing a fresh, detailed statement regarding her allegations.

The stylist has opened up about the ordeal, describing the emotional and professional toll it has taken on her. She has alleged that parts of her payment remain pending and that multiple outfits are still in Tanya's team's possession. "It was very difficult for me as I have never been in such a situation, especially with someone who is on national television," she told Hindustan Times.

Riddhima Sharma Shared That Things Took A Turn For The Worse As The Finale Approached

"When you work with celebrities, you never expect such situations to crop up, but I guess I needed a reality check, and I got one," she shared, explaining the kind of toll the incident had on her. Further, providing more details on the incident, Riddhima explained that her primary point of contact throughout the professional arrangement was Tanya's brother, Amrutesh. According to her, their collaboration went smoothly, with no signs of trouble. However, things took a turn for the worse for the stylist as the show approached the finale.

Riddhima disclosed that Tanya's team had approached her to style her for the finale, but she was informed that her travel and related costs would not be covered. Expressing her disappointment, she said that she continued to receive requests for outfits despite their condition. "Agar aapko itni need thi stylist ki toh aap mujhe bula sakte the as others did. (If you needed a stylist this much, you could have called me the same way others did as well)," Riddhima mentioned. She continued, "They constantly asked me for outfits, even the blue lehenga she wore the next day of the finale was sourced from me."

Bigg Boss Telugu 9: Thanuja Puttaswamy, Kalyan Padala Lead Top 2 Race As Grand Finale Nears



As Bigg Boss Telugu Season 9 inches closer to its grand finale, anticipation is at an all-time high. With the trophy within reach, the competition has narrowed down to five finalists: Demon Pavan, Sanjjanaa Galrani, Thanuja Puttaswamy, Kalyan Padala, and Emmanuel. Online voting lines are currently open, and audience engagement has intensified as fans rally behind their favourites in the final stretch.

Top 2 Contenders As Per Online Voting Trends

If online trends are anything to go by, two contestants have clearly pulled ahead of the pack. Thanuja Puttaswamy has been dominating conversations throughout finale week, consistently trending across platforms. Current voting indicators suggest she has a strong chance of not just entering the Top 2, but possibly emerging as the winner of Bigg Boss Telugu 9.

Close behind her is Kalyan Padala, who is also widely expected to secure a place in the Top 2. Viewer sentiment and digital buzz point towards a tight race between Thanuja and Kalyan as the finale approaches.

Bigg Boss Telugu 9 Grand Finale Guest

The Bigg Boss Telugu 9 Grand Finale is set to take place on December 21, 2025, starting at 7 pm. According to a report by Deccan Chronicle, Megastar Chiranjeevi is likely to grace the finale episode as a special guest on the Akkineni Nagarjuna-hosted show, adding star power to the much-awaited night.

Bigg Boss Telugu 9 Grand Finale Release Time

The grand finale episode will air simultaneously on Star Maa and Jio Hotstar on December 21 from 7 pm onwards. The finale is expected to be a marathon event, running for approximately 3 to 4 hours and packed with performances, emotional moments, and the final verdict.

Bigg Boss Telugu 9 Winner Prize Money

The winner of Bigg Boss Telugu Season 9 is reportedly set to walk away with the coveted trophy, a brand-new car, and a cash prize of Rs 50 lakh.

Double Eviction Shocks Viewers Ahead Of Finale

In the lead-up to finale week, the show witnessed a dramatic double eviction that left both housemates and viewers stunned. Popular contestants Bharani Shankar and Suman Shetty were eliminated during the semi-finale stage, bringing an emotional end to their Bigg Boss journey.

Palampur Agriversity signs MoA to promote women-led agripreneurship

Palampur. (Agency) In a major step towards socio-economic empowerment of farm women, Chaudhary Sarwan Kumar Himachal Pradesh Krishi Vishvavidyalaya (CSK HPKV), Palampur, signed Memoranda of Agreement (MoAs) for Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs) established under the All India Coordinated Research Project—Women in Agriculture (AICRP-WiA).

The MoA signing ceremony was held in the presence of Vice-Chancellor Dr A K Panda, Director ICAR-CIWA Bhubaneswar, Dr Mridula Devi, and Dean, College of Community Science, Dr Chanderkanta Vats. Addressing the gathering, Dr Panda termed the initiative a significant step towards empowering farm women and stressed the need for strong marketing linkages for products developed by Self Help Groups and Farmer Interest Groups. Dr Mridula Devi highlighted the importance of technico-socio-economic empowerment of women farmers, while Dr Vats acknowledged the support of ICAR-CIWA.

Under the project, three CHCs have been established at Bhadyada (Mandi district), Bhuhana and Tambar (Kangra district), equipped with modern farm tools and machinery to promote women-led agripreneurship and livelihood enhancement. The programme was attended by university scientists, faculty members, SHG and FIG representatives, industry stakeholders and Gram Panchayat Pradhans.

ED Action in National Herald Case 'politically motivated': Sudarshan Sharma

Nurpur. (Agency)

Former Pradesh Congress spokesperson Sudarshan Sharma on Thursday described the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) action in the National Herald case as "malafide and politically motivated," alleging it was part of a broader political conspiracy.

Addressing media persons here, Sharma said that no FIR had been registered in the case, and therefore no criminal case was made out against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. He claimed that the matter lacked any criminal basis from the very beginning.

Sharma stated that the Court has quashed the Young Indian case, observing that it was driven by political vendetta and malice. He said the court's decision has made it clear that there was no criminal substance in the case.

"The truth may be troubled, but it is never defeated," Sharma remarked, alleging that for the past ten years, the Modi government has been attempting to implicate the Gandhi family and other opposition leaders in baseless cases. He said the latest Court verdict has exposed the government's intentions.

The former Congress spokesperson further claimed that the Modi government is now on the back foot and asserted that the Congress party will make a strong comeback in the times to come.

Dharamshala to host 'Kangra Valley Carnival' from December 24-31

Dharamshala. (Agency)

The Kangra Valley Carnival will be held from December 24 to 31, showcasing a blend of culture, sports and digital attractions.

A major highlight of the carnival will be the participation of more than 1,000 women dressed in traditional Gaddi and Jhamakada attire, who will perform folk dances in



Dharamshala between December 29 and 31. The eight-day event will feature a wide range of activities, including cultural programmes, a marathon, cricket and football tournaments, a fashion show, drone displays, as well as literature and theatre events. Fireworks are planned to mark the concluding day on December 31.

Renowned artists from Bollywood, Punjabi and Himachali music will perform during the eight-day event. Prominent names include Kerala's famous band, Ankit Tiwari, Sufi singer Kanwar Grewal, Babu Maan, Kuldeep Sharma, Karnail Rana, Sunil Rana, Paradox rapper group and Ishant Bhardwaj, along with several folk artists. Cultural Centre and Language & Culture Department troupes will also present performances. Special competitions for youth and persons with disabilities will be organised. Cricket matches will be held at Kangra ground, with final to be played at the HPCA International Cricket Stadium, Dharamshala, officials said.

GMADA allots Rs 3.8 cr to end basement seepage woes at Purab Premium Apartments

According to official information, the waterproofing project will be carried out above the basement slab in the power area adjoining Blocks A, B, C and D of the apartment complex.

Mohali. (Agency)

Residents of Purab Premium Apartments in Mohali's Sector 88, who have been grappling with persistent basement water seepage for a long time, are set to get much-needed relief. The Greater Mohali Area Development Authority (GMADA) has taken a significant step towards a permanent solution as it allotted approximately Rs 3.5 crore for comprehensive waterproofing work.

According to official information, the waterproofing project will be carried out above the basement slab in the power area adjoining Blocks A, B, C and D of the apartment complex. Once the tender process is completed, GMADA will initiate the work, which is targeted to be completed within four months.

After completion, the project is expected to put an end to major issues such as water accumulation in the basement during the rainy season, dampness in walls, and damage to vehicles parked in the basement. Residents have long complained that rainwater from the

power area seeps into the basement, creating daily inconvenience along with serious safety and maintenance concerns. Despite repeated complaints in the past, a permanent solution had

been proposed, after which modern waterproofing techniques will be applied to ensure that seepage does not recur in the future.

GMADA officials stated that special emphasis will be laid on the quality of work, and the project will be executed in a time-bound and technically sound manner. The authority aims to ensure that residents do not face similar problems again, even during heavy rainfall.

Sharing details of the project, Chief Engineer Ajay Garg said, "This work will be completed within four months. With this, the long-pending demand of residents living in Purab Premium Apartments will finally be addressed, and they will get permanent relief from the seepage problem". Residents of the apartment complex have welcomed GMADA's decision, calling it a long-awaited move.

They said that once the work is completed, the basement will become safe, dry and fully usable, bringing an end to years of inconvenience and concern caused by water leakage.



not materialised. However, with GMADA now undertaking the work directly, residents say there is renewed hope. Under the waterproofing plan, the power blocks will be removed, followed by a technical inspection of the

Punjab rural polls: Why Akalis are likened to dinosaurs in Punjab

Chandigarh. (Agency)

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had referred to the Akali Dal leadership as "dinosaurs" while campaigning for the 2022 Assembly elections in the state. The analogy was to suggest that the SAD had become an extinct political force in Punjab.

Akalis were able to win only three seats in 2022 Assembly elections — one each from Malwa, Doaba and Majha regions. And since then, the Akalis are struggling to regain their lost political ground. In a Bathinda rally ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in the state, Mann had once again referred to them as dinosaurs. He had said that just as dinosaurs vanished from earth, the former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal's family and their brand of politics would soon be completely wiped off from Punjab's political landscape.

The CM had also claimed that the people of Punjab had already rejected the Akalis for their "misrule," leading him to compare their inevitable disappearance to that of the

prehistoric creatures. This remark followed his earlier 2022 description of both the Congress and Akalis as "deadwood" of Punjab politics,



indicating they were "power-hungry politicians living in a fool's paradise".

The analogy also encapsulated in a popular saying in the state: "Dinosaurs may return, but the Badals will not come back to power." After the Tarn Taran by-election, when Akalis finished second with ruling AAP retained the seat, with its candidate Harmeet Singh Sandhu defeating

his nearest rival and Shiromani Akali Dal nominee Sukhwinder Kaur Randhawa by 12,091 votes, the SAD has used the analogy to show its resurrection. Uptight memes have surfaced on social media with SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal holding a life-sized dinosaur, tied to a rope. A song has also been circulated saying that dinosaurs were coming back to life in Punjab.

Mann, in a recent press conference had also mocked the SAD once again and said, "After winning two rounds in Tarn Taran by-election, Akalis are buoyed. They are now going around holding the dinosaur. They should realise that dinosaurs have gone extinct. And these people will never come back to power."

On Thursday, while addressing a presser alongwith AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, Mann mocked at the SAD again. Responding to a question, he said, "SAD is on number three. They did not win all seats in a single Assembly constituency and if they can claim that they are coming back then it is their folly."

NGT seeks clarity on utilising environmental compensation

Shimla. (Agency)

The Principal Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), New Delhi, has sought greater clarity on the utilisation of environmental compensation funds in Himachal Pradesh while granting additional time to the Joint Committee to submit its pending reports in an environmental compliance case relating to Bilaspur district.

The matter pertains to an Original Application filed by Kashmir Singh, concerning alleged environmental violations and remedial measures.

Earlier, the Tribunal had directed respondents to furnish complete details on the use of Rs. 20 lakh deposited as environmental compensation with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Himachal Pradesh Pollution Control Board (HPPCB).

According to HPPCB, Rs. 15 lakh was utilised for installing 100 solar lights, while Rs. 5 lakh was returned to CPCB. An additional Rs. 10 lakh was deposited with the Government Hospital, Bilaspur.

However, the Tribunal noted that despite submission of action plans, specific details such as installation dates of solar lights and handpumps and the actual implementation of remedial measures were not clearly disclosed. Consequently, CPCB, HPPCB and the Government Hospital, Bilaspur, were directed to file detailed responses.

In the latest hearing on December 17, the NGT recorded that the Joint Committee could not submit its report within the prescribed time due to a delay in the receipt of a signed technical expert report dated December 13. It was also informed that comments from Dr. Narendra Sharma, Scientist 'F', CPCB, were received on December 16.

Taking note of these submissions, the Bench comprising Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and Dr. Afroz Ahmad granted four weeks' additional time to the Joint Committee to file its duly signed report along with the CPCB expert's comments. The matter has been listed for further hearing on February 12, 2026.

Violence in victory rally leaves five AAP workers injured

Narinder Singh, an AAP worker, alleged that Congress worker Jasbir Singh, along with 7-8 others, tried to stop the victory celebrations and attacked them.

Ludhiana. (Agency)

A late-evening celebration following the AAP victory in the block samiti polls in Bachitar Nagar area of Ludhiana turned violent on Thursday after the AAP and Congress workers clashed, leaving five AAP workers injured.

According to AAP workers, the clash occurred when they were taking out a victory rally after their candidate, Sukhbir Singh Khanna, won the block samiti election from Bachitar Nagar area of the Gill constituency. The injured have been identified as Gurmukh Singh (65), Ravinder Singh (44), Gurdeep Singh (32), Udhavir Singh (25) and Mandeep Singh



(36). All of them were admitted to the civil hospital in Ludhiana with

injuries to their legs.

Narinder Singh, an AAP worker, alleged that Congress worker Jasbir Singh, along with 7-8 others, tried to stop the victory celebrations and attacked them. "We were moving through the streets to thank residents when Jasbir Singh and his supporters first stopped us in street number 4 and later in street number 7. They beat up our workers. He opened fire, while others pelted bricks at us, following which several of our workers were injured," he claimed.

Injured Gurmukh Singh alleged that the attack was carried out as rival workers could not accept their electoral defeat. Another injured

worker, Ravinder Singh, claimed that 15-20 rounds were fired in the air, some of which caused injuries on their legs.

Police said the matter was being inquired. Officials from the Sadar police station visited the spot and recorded statements of the injured. No arrests had been made till the filing of this report. Following the incident, the celebrations were immediately called off. AAP workers alleged that the attack reflected the inability of Congress workers to accept the party's defeat in the area.

The incident has once again raised concerns over the law and order situation in the city.

Indora comes alive with culture as two-day Indora Utsav begins

Indora (Kangra). (Agency)

The two-day Indora Utsav began on a vibrant note on Thursday, celebrating the region's rich cultural heritage, social unity and commitment to a drug-free society.

The festival was formally inaugurated by Himachal Pradesh Technical Education, TCP, Housing, Vocational and Industrial Training Minister Rajesh Dharmani, who offered prayers at the historic Kathgarh Mahadev temple to mark the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, Dharmani congratulated MLA Malender Rajan and the Indora Assembly Welfare and Development Society for successfully organising the festival. He said fairs and festivals play a vital role in enlivening society, preserving cultural traditions and providing a platform for local talent to flourish.

The minister also highlighted the state government's intensified campaign against drug abuse under Chief Minister Sukhinder Singh Sukhu, saying the slogan "Drive away chitta, save the youth" is fast turning into a mass movement across Himachal Pradesh.

Indora MLA Malender Rajan welcomed the minister by presenting him with a traditional shawl, cap and memento.

Former minister Thakur Singh Bhamouri, former MLA Ajay Mahajan and State Civil Supplies Corporation Vice Chairman Vishal Chambiyal were also present.

MLA Malender Rajan said the Indora Utsav is not just a cultural event but a strong medium for social awareness, women empowerment and regional unity, aimed at eradicating drug abuse and promoting youth talent.

Earlier, the minister flagged off an anti-drug awareness rally, inspected exhibitions put up by self-help groups, women's organisations and departments, and inaugurated a blood donation camp.

On the first day, cultural programmes enthralled the audience with Pahari and Punjabi songs. Renowned Punjabi singer Gurnam Bhullar's performance drew huge applause, while local artists also gave impressive presentations.

Best foods for quick weight loss

No matter how healthy your daily routine might be, sometimes, the sudden need for quick weight loss manages to creep in unannounced.

Whatever the reason - a school re-union or your 30th birthday - none of us are above the need to lose weight and lose it fast. And here's some good news: Coupled with the right exercise and healthy nutrient intake you can lose weight quickly and surely by consuming these best foods for quick weight loss. Remember the first tenet of a healthy diet is portion control, and you're on your way to quick weight loss success...

Lean protein:

A recent study from Purdue University has proved yet again that lean protein enables weight loss through appropriate appetite control. While non-vegetarians can get lean protein from lean meat and egg white, vegetarians should look to include these protein foods in their daily diet: Chickpeas, soybeans, kidney beans, tofu, other beans and pulses, and dairy. Even peanut butter is a good substitute as an appetite controller here.



Fruits and vegetables:

This is a best practise followed by people who lose permanent weight successfully. Even if you love meat, including at least 2-3 whole fruits and a side serving of



vegetables with each meal goes a long way in curbing your appetite and enabling quick weight loss. So leave those diet pills, exotic foods that you buy just once and never eat again, and step over to the neighbourhood grocery store. Your best bet with quick weight loss lies within these humble, yet extremely healthy, fruits and vegetables.

Broth-based soups:

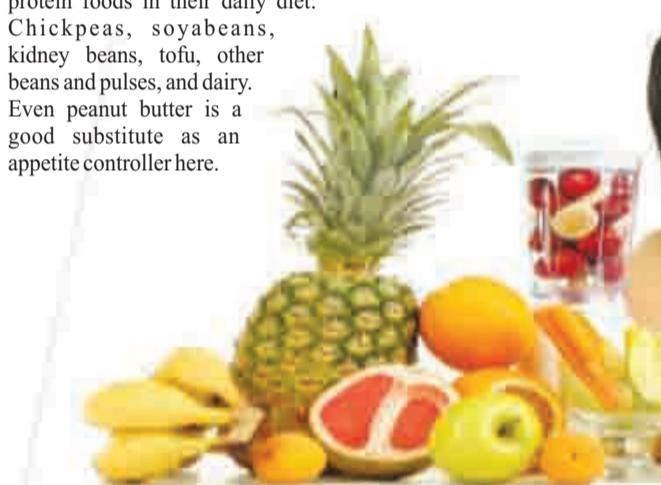
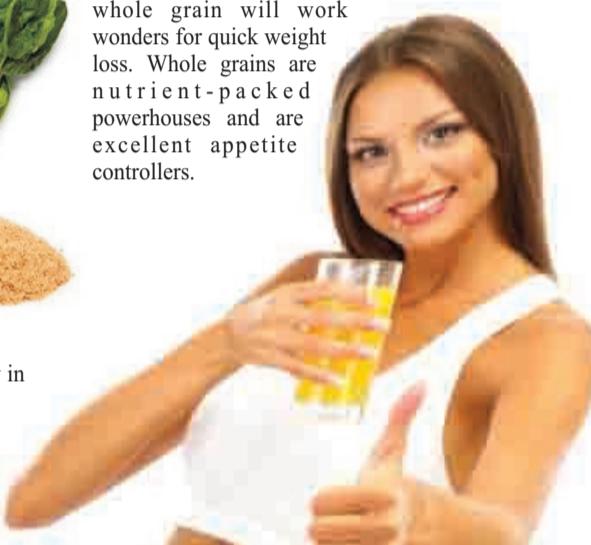
Pureed and chunky broth (not cream) based hot



Lose Weight Fast

Low-salt and low-starch foods:

Cutting back on sodium and high-starch foods (read: bad carbs) results in a kind of cheat weight loss, which - if properly maintained can lead to permanent weight loss. In the short run, this strategy leads to low fluid retention and what you lose initially is 'water weight'. This is why most weight loss diets that promise quick weight loss begin with a no-carb, no-salt shock phase. You can do this cleverly by cutting down reasonably and continuing a daily exercise routine to maintain healthy appetite and calorie burn.



8 health benefits of Ginger tea



Nothing beats cold in the winter like a piping hot cup of ginger tea. With its high levels of Vitamin C, magnesium and other minerals, ginger root is extremely beneficial for health.

Once made into tea, you can add peppermint, honey or lemon to mask the taste of the ginger. Here's why you should have this soothing beverage.

Relieve nausea

Drinking a cup of ginger tea before travelling can help prevent the nausea and vomiting associated with motion sickness. You can also drink a cuppa at the first sign of nausea to relieve the symptom.

Improve stomach performance
Useful in improving digestion and increasing absorption of food, ginger

properties that make it an ideal home remedy for muscle and joint problems. In addition to drinking ginger tea, you can also use it to soak inflamed joints.

Fight respiratory problems

Ginger tea can help relieve congestion associated with the common cold. Try a cup of ginger tea for the respiratory symptoms associated with environmental allergies.

Improve blood circulation

The vitamins, minerals and amino acids in ginger tea can help restore and improve blood circulation that may help decrease the chance of cardiovascular problems. Ginger may prevent fat from depositing in the arteries helping to prevent heart attacks and stroke.

Relieve menstrual discomfort

This one is for all women suffering from menstrual cramps. Try soaking a towel in warm ginger tea and apply it to your lower abdomen. It may help relieve the pain and relax the muscles. At the same time, drink a cup of ginger tea with honey.

Strengthen immunity
Ginger tea can help strengthen your immunity due to the high levels of antioxidants in ginger.

Relieve stress

Ginger tea has calming properties that may help lower your stress and tension. This is thought to be due to a combination of the strong aroma and healing properties.



So sick was the Indian government of the procrastinating Indian citizen who refused to opt for preventive health care, that it bribed them to see a doctor. In 2012, the then finance minister offered a plan to save up to Rs 5,000 on tax by opting for an annual preventive check-up.

While Indians refuse to visit a hospital unless they need to be brought in on a stretcher, Americans, they say, can't get enough. In the US, annual check-ups account for more than 8 per cent of doctor visits, and cost the health care system \$8 billion a year.

Each visit takes around 23 minutes, adding up to a total of 17 million hours each year spent checking 45 million healthy people. In Europe, a study revealed that many routine checkups led to over-diagnosis and over-treatment of relatively mild health problems, leading some patients to take medication for years with no apparent benefit.

But with the average age of patients diagnosed with cardiac problems dipping, and lifestyle-related disorders on the rise, doctors here are keen to catch the bug early. Thus, avoiding a case of 'surprise' heart attack, like actor Farooq Sheikh's.

Don't wait for a heart attack, says Dr Lekha Pathak, cardiologist. One in 10 Indians suffer from hypertension. And most aren't aware of it. For people above 40, I suggest a twice-a-year check up. This should include

Electrocardiography (ECG), cardiac stress test, 2D echo and blood biochemistry to check blood sugar, kidney and lipid profile.

Smokers and those who have a family history of cardiac illness, diabetes and hypertension are part of a high risk group. They must start with these tests at 30.



Often, those suffering a 'surprise' heart attack are those who have lived with symptoms of high cholesterol and hypertension, without knowing it. This is not specific to an age group or sex. But 40 per cent of patients suffering from cardiac issues tend to be below 40.

Start gynaec visits in mid-20s, says Dr Rajeev Chhabra, gynaecologist

Indian women are just not in the habit of visiting a gynaecologist regularly. In fact, most women don't go to a doctor even when suffering from the symptom of a illness. It's always a last minute visit when the pain gets unbearable.

For women above 45, they need to start caring for their bones, since menopause will soon strike. Start with the following tests: CBC, Creatinine levels, SGPT and SGOT levels, calcium and phosphorus, USG (ultrasonography), PAP smear and mammogram.

Women between 23 and 30 need to take annual thyroid tests, prolactin, DHEA-
sulfate test and ultrasonography. These are purely preventive tests ensure that when they do decide to conceive, they encounter no complications. Lifestyle disorders like Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOD) are detected at such times.

In case you are sexually active with multiple partners and don't insist on the use of condoms, take the PAP smear test every year.

For every known diabetic, there's one undiagnosed, says Dr Rajiv Koval, diabetologist

In 2012, 11.8 million patients were diagnosed with diabetes, adding to the 65 million who live with the metabolic disorder. Sixty per cent of them were diagnosed during a routine health check up, having lived with silent symptoms.

It's a cultural problem. Indians feel they are wasting money on tests if they aren't sick.

There is no age bar to check blood sugar levels. It's meant for every adult. For those who aren't diabetic, a yearly check-up should include fasting and post meal blood sugar tests. Add the HbA1c test, that's usually missing from the basic package. It's to check the average plasma glucose concentration over prolonged periods of time.

For patients who are diagnosed with diabetes, the tests need to be specific; like those that test the effect of the illness on the liver, kidneys and retina.

Post a comment

Don't wait for a heart attack!