

## Amit Shah to start three-day visit to West Bengal tonight to charge up BJP ahead of polls

**During his visit, the home minister is slated to attend a series of organisational meetings with the BJP's Bengal leadership unit in phases.**

**KOLKATA (Agency)**  
Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit West Bengal from tonight to charge up the BJP's organisational machinery ahead of the Assembly elections in the state, scheduled for April–May next year. The home minister is expected to arrive at the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport tonight and will remain in the state for three days. During his visit, he is slated to attend a series of organisational meetings with the BJP's Bengal leadership unit in phases. After landing at the airport, the Home Minister will head straight to the BJP office in Salt Lake, where he will review the party's organisational

preparedness for the Assembly elections, according to sources in the saffron camp. Sources further said, "We had a plan to organise a rally where Amitji would be requested to address the crowd but he prefers to hold organisational meetings with our party leadership, including our MPs, MLAs and others during his stay for three days till Wednesday." "He wants to focus on our party's organisational set-ups this time in the wake of assembly polls scheduled in the state after few months. He may also be interested in getting some important inputs at the



backdrop against when the state is reeling under the Special Intensive Revisions (SIR) of electoral rolls exercise since 4 November," a source said, requesting anonymity. Apart from the SIR issue, another significant concern is the Matua community, whose names have reportedly been excluded from voters' lists in districts such as Nadia

and North 24 Parganas -- two key BJP strongholds -- following the first phase of the ongoing electoral roll revisions.

On Wednesday, unprecedented violence between two rival Matua groups, aligned with BJP MP and Union Minister of Shipping Shantanu Thakur and Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MP Mamatabala Thakur, rocked Thakurnagar, the administrative headquarters of the Matua community. The unrest followed the deletion of nearly one lakh Matua voters from the electoral rolls. The violence was triggered after a comment made by Shantanu, the BJP

MP from Bongaon constituency in North 24 Parganas, last Monday night, stating that the names of nearly one lakh Matuas could be excluded from the draft electoral rolls and that "sacrifice" was necessary to disenfranchise 50 lakh Muslims. The remark fuelled fresh anxiety within the Matua community and intensified political confrontation in Bengal ahead of the Assembly elections scheduled next year.

Several hundred Matuas belonging to the Mamatabala group took out a protest procession and marched to the Union Minister's residence in Thakurnagar, demanding clarification over the comment.

## Hate normalised: Rahul Gandhi slams BJP over racial assault on Tripura student

**Congress leader Rahul Gandhi condemned the killing of 24-year-old Tripura student Anjel Chakma in a racial attack in Dehradun as a horrific hate crime, blaming it on a prolonged atmosphere of hatred normalised by BJP.**

**New Delhi (Agency)**  
The racial attack on two brothers from Tripura in Dehradun, in which one of them was killed, is a hate crime and the result of a prolonged atmosphere in which such violence has been normalised by the hate-spewing leadership of the ruling BJP, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Monday while condemning the incident.

Twenty-four-year-old Anjel Chakma, an MBA student, from Nandannagar in West Tripura district was attacked by a group of six people when he objected to a racial slur at Dehradun on December 9, and he succumbed to his injuries on December 26. The incident has sparked widespread outrage across the country.

"What happened to Anjel Chakma and his brother Michael in Dehradun is a horrific hate crime. Hate doesn't appear overnight. For years now it is being fed daily - especially to our youth - through

toxic content and irresponsible narratives. And it's being normalised by the hate-spewing leadership of the ruling BJP," the Congress MP said in a social media post.

He added, "India is built on respect and unity, not fear and abuse. We are a country



of love and diversity. We must not become a dead society that looks away while fellow Indians are targeted. We must reflect and confront what we are allowing our country to become". According to the police, on December 9, Anjel Chakma and his brother Michael were drinking at a canteen near a liquor shop in Dehradun

when another group, including the accused Suraj Khwas (22), Avinash Negi (25) and Sumit (25), was also present at the spot.

The group targeted Anjel and his brother with racial slurs. When the brothers objected, the argument escalated into a brutal attack involving knives and blunt objects. Michael was also injured while trying to defend his brother. Anjel's father, who is a BSF Jawan, said his son was repeatedly called "Chinese" and "Chinese mono" by the attackers. Despite Anjel telling them that he was Indian and not Chinese, the assailants allegedly attacked him with knives and blunt objects, the grieving father said.

Five of the six accused have been arrested, while Yagyashri Awasthi, a resident of Nepal's Kanchanpur district, is absconding. Police have announced a reward of Rs 25,000 for information leading to his arrest and are conducting raids at multiple locations. A police team has also been sent to Nepal.

**Uddhav Thackeray banks on his work during Covid-19, urges people to vote for Sena (UBT) in BMC election**

**New Delhi (Agency)**  
Former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has decided to bank on the Covid-19 period work during his tenure and unfold his party campaign around it for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) election scheduled for January 15, 2026.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) president released a 40-page booklet, named "Mumbai Model," that highlights the then government's effort to contain the spread of Covid-19 in Dharavi, Asia's largest slum, located in Mumbai.

The Mumbai Model has mentioned the detailed work carried out by the BMC and the Maharashtra government during the pandemic. Thackeray also said that his decision to appoint Iqbal Chahal as commissioner of BMC was a game-changer as he had full authority to make decisions to contain the spread of the virus. Chahal's book references were also given in this booklet.

Uddhav Thackeray and Raj Thackeray cemented the alliance for the BMC elections, where the Shiv Sena (UBT) is likely to contest 150 seats, while Raj Thackeray-led MNS will contest 77 seats in Mumbai for the BMC polls. According to the booklet, Uddhav Thackeray has worked as a next-door family member who sincerely put in all effort to save as many lives and contain Covid-19 from spreading in Mumbai and Maharashtra. It also has the anecdotes of prominent and renowned people, including senior journalist Kumar Ketkar, common citizens, and businessmen appreciating the work of the erstwhile government under the leadership of Uddhav Thackeray. The Mumbai Model also mentioned that when everyone was afraid to come out of their houses, Uddhav Thackeray led the state by starting several Covid-19 treatment camps across the state, where apart from medical treatment, food and other facilities were provided free of cost. Besides, Thackeray also connected with each citizen of Maharashtra through his Facebook live and became a member of thousands of families.

## "Need Of World" Is That India Becomes 'Vishwa Guru': RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat

**Hyderabad (Agency)**  
RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday called upon Hindus to work towards making the Hindu society and India a 'Vishwa Guru' for the welfare of the world.

Addressing the valedictory function of Vishwa Sangh Shibir, a congregation of international Hindu organisations, he said Hindus and Swayamsevaks have to lead by example and demonstrate how human intellect can be directed towards global welfare.

"... Technology will advance. Social media will grow. AI will come. Everything will come. But, technology's ill effects will not be there. Technology would not become owner of human beings. Human beings would remain the owners of technology," he said. "Human intellect will move towards using technology for welfare of the world. Not the reverse. How it will happen? We have to live by example. This is before the entire Indian society."

the Rahstrava Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief added. Those in the rest of the world could not even ensure maximum good of the maximum people, he said. Bhagwat also said people of Hindu

origin have to lead such a life that others learn from them. With such an ideal, Hindus have to establish 'dharma' everywhere, he said. However, Hindus would lead the world not by deploying its soldiers or by suppressing others using economic power, he said.

Bhagwat stressed the need for India to become a 'vishwa guru', saying it is not merely an ambition of the Hindu society.

away from his uncle's party to join the BJP and Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. At the time, Ajit raised concerns about Sharad Pawar continuing at the helm despite his old age. Ajit was sworn in as Deputy Chief Minister under this new alliance. He favoured aligning with the ruling coalition, while Sharad Pawar's faction insisted on remaining with the opposition.

### Why The NCP Split

Speaking at the NCP Chintan Shivir in Nagpur, Ajit Pawar said at the time, "We are in alliance with the BJP and Shiv Sena, and many people ask me why I took the step of separating from the (undivided) NCP and why I accepted the strain on family and personal relationships. I want to tell you that I did this not for power or position, but to ensure stability."

## Pawars Reunite For Polls: Inside The Family Feud And Its Aftermath

**Guwahati (Agency)**

More than two years after they went their separate ways, Ajit Pawar and Sharad Pawar-led factions of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) are joining hands for the Pimpri-Chinchwad municipal elections.

Addressing an election rally on Sunday, the Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister said, "For the sake of the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation elections, the 'clock' and the 'tutari' (trumpet) have united. The 'parivar' (family) has come together." The 'clock' symbol represents Ajit Pawar's NCP faction, recognised by the Election Commission as the original party, while Sharad Pawar's faction uses the 'tutari' (curved trumpet).

**How The NCP Split Between Ajit And Sharad Pawar**

The NCP was founded by Sharad Pawar in 1999. For over two decades, it remained a key player in Maharashtra politics. Ajit Pawar, Sharad Pawar's nephew, was a senior leader in the party and served as Deputy Chief Minister multiple times.

### The Split

The NCP split in 2023 when Ajit Pawar, along with a group of senior leaders, broke

## Revanth Reddy's Sonia Gandhi Counter In Digvijaya Singh Post Row

**Telangana (Agency)**

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Sunday night joined the row over Congress leader Digvijaya Singh's post – about the Bharatiya Janata Party and its ideological mentor, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, and about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'impressive rise...'. In a subtle but clear rebuttal on X – and without naming Digvijaya Singh – Reddy, widely seen as a Gandhi loyalist, praised ex-Congress President Sonia Gandhi for her role in the selection of PV Narasimha Rao and Dr Manmohan Singh as Prime Ministers of India in 1991, 2004, and 2014.

Reddy's message to critics, internal and external, was clear – the Congress also rewards merit, regardless of background, in efforts to 'build democratic institutions to unite a diverse India'.

"When one reflects on the leadership of Sonia Gandhi we find service, commitment, ethics, and values..." Reddy said, "Under Sonia Gandhi leadership, it became possible for PV Narasimha Rao, who started his public career from a remote village in Telangana, to become PM." "Sonia Gandhi also made an economist like Dr Manmohan Singh Prime Minister." "From leading India's freedom struggle to framing the Constitution, from building democratic institutions to uniting a diverse nation, the Indian National Congress has shaped every defining chapter of modern India," the Telangana Chief Minister declared.

On Saturday senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh triggered a second row in as many weeks. He wrote to Rahul Gandhi over the need for reforms within the party. Sharing a black and white photo of PM Modi from the 1990s, he praised the BJP and RSS, "I found this picture... it is very impressive... the way grassroots workers of RSS and Jan Sangh (as the BJP was called earlier) sit on the floor at the feet of leaders and become Chief Minister and (then) PM..."

## News box

**Gurgaon civic body seeks govt nod to Rs 470cr plan for road sweeping****Gurgaon.(Agency)**

MCG has submitted a revised administrative approval proposal of Rs 470 crore for mechanised and manual road sweeping across the city. In an official communication to the department of urban local bodies (ULB), MCG said the estimates have been reworked and prepared zone-wise to ensure more effective implementation and monitoring.

The proposal covers the selection of agencies for the mechanised and manual sweeping of roads within MCG limits. Officials said the estimates were prepared in line with approved request for proposal (RFP) norms, factoring in the operational needs of each zone. Planning criteria include deploying one tractor-trolley for every 30 sanitation workers, considering population density, waste generation and traffic conditions. According to the revised proposal, the estimated expenditure is Rs 145.5 crore for zone 1, Rs 64.2 crore for zone 2, Rs 81.8 crore for zone 3, and Rs 179.4 crore for zone 4. "We have proposed one agency per zone for both mechanised and manual road sweeping. The estimates are based on the latest survey of the city's road length," an MCG official said. The scope of work includes special cleaning arrangements for tourist and high-footfall areas, with provisions for multiple cleanings during the day or night sweeping where required. Additional manpower during weekends and national holidays has also been factored in zone-wise and will be part of the work of the hired agencies. If approved, officials said the project would strengthen the city's sanitation infrastructure and help improve road cleanliness under the Swachh Bharat Mission.

**Murder FIR after man held for theft dies by suicide in custody****Gurgaon.(Agency)**

A day after a 22-year-old man arrested in a theft case died by suicide in police custody at the crime branch unit in Farrukhnagar, police on Saturday registered a murder case against unidentified persons. Moreover, four police personnel from crime branch, Farrukhnagar, have been transferred to the district police lines, Gurgaon. Asif, from Rampura in Bhiwadi, Rajasthan, allegedly hanged himself in police custody in the afternoon. He had been arrested earlier on Friday by the crime branch team. A case was registered against him at Farrukhnagar police station under sections 305 (theft) and 331(4) (trespassing) of BNS. "Based on a complaint filed by Asif's family, a case has been registered against unknown persons. However, they have not been able to provide any evidence to support their allegations so far," police spokesperson from Gurgaon, Sandeep Kumar, said. A judicial inquiry was ordered into the incident on Friday. An autopsy was conducted in the presence of a judicial magistrate on Saturday. Sources said that it appears that Asif died due to hanging, but to rule out any suspicion, the inquiring officials will have to wait for reports on the ligature material, which details the type of object used in the hanging; the viscera report, which analyses the reason behind his death; and the crime scene report. On Saturday, Asif's family gathered outside the Sector 14 mortuary and protested that police had tortured Asif to death. They sought action against the cops. However, sources said that no injury marks other than those of hanging were found on Asif's body. A senior police officer denied custodial torture, citing that Asif had been arrested only a few hours before being locked up. He was served tea and provided with a quilt. Then the cops got busy. When the cop watching over him went to the washroom, Asif used the quilt cover to hang himself. He was not tortured at all," a senior police officer said. After hours of protest outside the mortuary, the family eventually agreed to take the body home after being assured of a fair probe.

**Burnt face, bound limbs: Woman found murdered, stuffed in bag at Noida dumping yard; identity still unknown****Noida.(Agency)**

The body of an unidentified woman was found stuffed in a bag at a remote dumping yard in Sector 142 on Saturday evening. Even after 24 hours, police were yet to identify the woman. The woman, believed to be between 22 and 25 years old, was found with her hands and feet bound with white cloth. Her face was burnt - possibly with acid - and neck had deep cuts. The body, police said, appeared to be at least three



days old. According to cops, the body of the woman, who is more than 5ft tall, was forcibly packed into an ordinary bag before being abandoned in the dumpsite. "We received information about the body on Saturday evening and immediately dispatched teams to the spot," said Santosh Kumar, additional deputy commissioner of police (central Noida). The area where the body was found is a secluded dumping site with no surveillance cameras. Even shops and houses in the area lack CCTV coverage, which has made it difficult for police to trace the movements of the accused. Although police have initiated an investigation, no useful information has emerged so far.

**Only 4 of 125 roads in Gurgaon dust-free, checks reveal gaps in road upkeep****Ghaziabad.(Agency)**

An inspection by Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in the city has brought to light considerable shortcomings in road maintenance and waste management by MCG. Checks on 125 roads revealed that 34 had high levels of visible dust, 58 had moderate dust, and 29 had low dust levels. Only four stretches were free of visible dust. On Dec 26, as part of Operation Clean Air, 18 inspection teams assessed the effectiveness of dust-mitigation measures on roads maintained by MCG. Sixteen teams were from Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB), and two were from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Each site was geo-tagged and photographed for documentation. The inspection revealed more than just dust problems. Many stretches with high dust levels also had mounds of garbage and construction debris, along with instances of open burning, indicating weak enforcement, inadequate waste

collection, and poor supervision at the ward level. Roads inspected spanned various sectors, residential colonies, internal ward roads, and arterial stretches. Inspectors said dust accumulation was a persistent issue across multiple areas, rather than isolated incidents. CAQM emphasised the need for MCG to enhance its on-ground operations, including regular mechanical sweeping, timely waste collection and scientific disposal, consistent water sprinkling, and strict prevention of open burning. Without these measures, dust will continue to settle back on the roads. The commission reiterated that Operation Clean Air inspections will persist across NCR to ensure compliance with statutory directions and Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). "The inspection has clearly shown that road dust, unmanaged solid waste, and instances of open burning continue to be major contributors to poor air quality in the city. We have asked the corporation to

immediately strengthen mechanical sweeping, waste lifting, and on-ground enforcement so that visible improvements are seen on roads," said an



HSPCB official. According to the pollution board, the size of dust particles determines their potential health hazard. Particles larger than 10  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  and 2.5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  are not breathable and can cause skin and eye irritations, conjunctivitis, and increased susceptibility to ocular

infections. Inhalable particles, smaller than 10  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  and 2.5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , can become trapped in the nose, mouth, and upper respiratory tract, leading to respiratory disorders such as asthma, tracheitis, pneumonia, allergic rhinitis, and silicosis.

Finer particles may penetrate the lower respiratory tract and enter the bloodstream, potentially affecting all internal organs and causing cardiovascular disorders. The Times of India recently reported that loose dust is prevalent across the city, from dug-up roads to exposed construction materials and trucks carrying garbage. Areas like MG Road, Udyog Vihar, Sector 29, Sushant Lok 1, Galleria Market Road, IFFCO Chowk, Atlas Chowk, and Gurgaon-Faridabad Road are particularly affected by exposed soil, loose construction material, and incomplete resurfacing work, contributing significantly to pollution in these busy areas.

**Craters, encroachments, e-ricks trigger snarls on key Delhi link****Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Travelling on Old Delhi-Gurgaon Road, especially the stretch between Atul Kataria Chowk and Sushil Aima Marg, has become increasingly difficult for daily commuters. Residents say road conditions have worsened over the past two years, leading to frequent traffic congestion and long delays through most of the day.

The road is a key link between residential sectors and nearby industrial areas, and traffic often slows to a crawl during peak hours. Commuters blame poor planning, haphazard execution of civic works and a lack of traffic regulation for the situation. Residents point to open cuts and repeated patchwork repairs that have left the road surface uneven. "The road is full of potholes and temporary repairs do not last long. Vehicles come to a halt at several points every day," said Neeraj Jain, a resident of Sector 22.

Unregulated movement of e-rickshaws has added to the problem. Residents say e-rickshaws often drive on the wrong side, cut across lanes and move without any apparent enforcement. "There is no regulation at all," Jain said.

Moreover, illegal encroachments along both sides of the road have further reduced the usable width. "The authorities seem blind to the issue. Encroachments have left very little space for smooth movement," said Madhur Sharma, a resident of Sector 21. The problem is made worse by indiscriminate parking of trucks and vehicles linked to used-car dealerships along the roadside. Pedestrians are among the worst affected, as large sections of the road lack footpaths or safe walking space. Ongoing infrastructure work has raised safety concerns, particularly near the Air Force Station, where a dug-up section was left unattended with debris on the road. Poor barricading and bent iron fencing on the central divider have

**Two crashes on NH-19 after car loses control and overturns****Gurgaon.(Agency)**

A car went out of control, overturned and got wedged between the divider grille and a roadside tree on NH-19 near Sector 28 metro station late on Saturday. Minutes later, a second accident occurred nearby when another vehicle rammed into a car as the driver stopped to watch the first crash. No injuries were reported in either incident, police said. According to eyewitnesses, a white Honda car being driven at a high speed suddenly lost control and first hit the central divider and then overturned multiple times before coming to a halt between the highway grille and a tree. The impact was severe enough to deploy the car's airbags, which is believed to have saved the driver from serious injuries. Locals said they heard a loud crash and rushed to the spot. Seeing

the driver trapped inside the mangled vehicle, passersby helped pull him out safely. The car, however, was completely



damaged in the accident. Even as people gathered at the site, another collision took place a short distance away. A Fronx car

bearing a Chandigarh registration number stopped on the road after its occupants slowed down to watch the overturned vehicle. A white Swift car approaching from behind crashed into the stationary Fronx, causing its airbags to deploy.

Eyewitnesses said the Swift failed to slow down in time and rammed into the Fronx. While no one was injured in the second crash either, both vehicles suffered extensive damage. Police reached the spot soon after and cleared the damaged vehicles to ease traffic, which was disrupted due to the back-to-back accidents. "A probe has been initiated to ascertain the exact sequence of events and whether overspeeding or negligence was involved. Further action will be taken based on the findings," an officer said.

**Why no action against polluting Faridabad units NGT slams HSPCB, seeks report in 3 weeks****Gurgaon.(Agency)**

National Green Tribunal (NGT) has pulled up Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) for delay in taking action against a group of industrial units in Faridabad found operating without permissions, using prohibited fuels and dumping waste in the open. Describing the matter as serious due to the impact of such units on air pollution in NCR, the tribunal has given the board three weeks to submit an action-taken report. The order was passed by the NGT's principal bench on Dec 22 while hearing an application alleging that several units in villages across Faridabad were violating environmental norms. The application also listed hundreds of such units identified through geo-coordinates. Earlier this year, the tribunal set up a joint committee to examine the allegations. The committee inspected the area in April and May and confirmed the violations. It found "numerous industrial activities" operating without valid permissions from the departments concerned. Most of the

units were engaged in metal casting and forging using oil and gas furnaces. The committee also found the use of unauthorised fuels such as coal and wood, which are not permitted under the Commission for Air Quality Management's approved fuel list for NCR. Industrial waste, including slag ash, was found dumped in the open. The committee warned that this could lead to soil and groundwater contamination. Several units were located in non-conforming or residential areas, while some were unregistered and operating from rented premises. Of the 25 units examined, five were operating without consent to establish or operate, and the process to close them was initiated by HSPCB. Some units were found locked or untraceable, and a few activities were outside the consent regime. The committee recommended that all illegal units be shut down by the local authorities, regular surveillance be carried out to prevent the resumption of such activity, and electricity

supply to unauthorised units be disconnected. It also suggested that licensing authorities consult the pollution board before issuing permissions for industrial use.

NGT noted that although the committee submitted its report in May 2025, HSPCB's response after seven months only indicated that letters had been issued to various authorities. "No effective action by HSPCB has been reflected," the bench observed, adding that officers needed to remember that polluting units were worsening NCR's air quality and creating "serious problems" for residents. When counsel for CPCB and HSPCB sought two months to file an action-taken report, the tribunal declined, saying this would only prolong the "misery of the residents." It directed that the report be filed within three weeks. The matter will be heard next on Jan 15, 2026. "For months, these units have been openly flouting environmental laws.

**4km stretch, 7 entry points: Why Noida expressway turns a rush-hour bottleneck****Noida.(Agency)**

A 4km stretch of the Noida Expressway between Chilla Border and Mahamaya Flyover grinds to a halt daily as seven entry points funnel heavy traffic. Barricades meant to manage merging traffic only narrow lanes, creating bottlenecks and long tailbacks, leaving thousands of commuters stuck for hours during peak hours.

The expressway handles an estimated five lakh vehicles daily. Roughly two lakh enter via the DND Flyway, and about one lakh each through the Chilla border, Kalindi Kunj, and other access points such as Sectors 15, 16, 18, and 37. The first chokepoint lies just past the Chilla border, beneath the Sector 14-A flyover. Barricades placed here divert Noida-bound traffic onto Udyog Marg and DSC Road, already heavily congested. The second, and most notorious, is the DND Flyway loop. Thousands entering the expressway here

in the evening often face half-hour delays. Jitendra Kumar, a resident of Mahagun Moderne in Sector 78, said he uses this route daily. "There is always a traffic jam at this loop in the evening. It takes nearly half an hour to navigate this spot. The traffic police and Noida Authority must take some measures to resolve this issue," he said.

Just meters ahead is a narrow passage that facilitates traffic coming from Sector 16 and Rajnigandha Chowk onto the expressway near Film City's underground parking. The fourth chokepoint is near the Film City gate. Traffic police have placed two layers of barricades here, forcing vehicles exiting Film City to slow down, manoeuvre in a zigzag pattern, and exit one by one. Between 4 pm and 8 pm, office-goers experience crawling traffic. "There are several offices and studios in the vicinity. The barricades make peak-hour travel a nightmare," Sumit Kumar,

who works in one of the media houses in Film City, said. On the Noida-to-Delhi side, three chokepoints exacerbate congestion. Near Kalindi Kunj and the old furniture market, barricades narrow lanes, slowing traffic towards the Dalit Prerna Sthal. Ejaz Ahmad, a Delhi resident, said he occasionally takes this route to reach Noida's Sector 18 malls. "Traffic police place barricades that narrow the lane, slowing vehicles all the way to the Bird Feeding Point," he said. The sixth chokepoint, near gate number 3 of Prerna Sthal, sees traffic from Sector 18 and GIP Mall via the Film City flyover merge with the expressway. Barricades sometimes remain in place even outside peak hours, frustrating commuters.

The seventh chokepoint, just before Chilla Border, sees comparatively lighter traffic but contributes to local delays. Road widths vary from five lanes near Dalit Prerna Sthal to three near the Bird Feeding Point. Roadside vendors selling boiled corn and other snacks further slow movement, as motorists stop to shop, adding to congestion.

Noida Authority has widened a segment of the road between Chilla Border and Mahamaya Flyover, adding a lane by merging part of the footpath over a 250-metre stretch from the DND loop to Film City flyover. Another plan to widen the Noida-Delhi carriageway near Dalit Prerna Sthal remains on hold due to safety concerns for visitors.

Officials hope the upcoming 5.5-km Chilla elevated road connecting Mayur Vihar with Mahamaya Flyover will ease congestion but the project has been delayed. S Velmurugan, chief scientist at the Central Road Research Institute, said the jams result from a sharp rise in vehicles without corresponding road improvements. "Multiple sector roads merge along this four-kilometre stretch,

increasing traffic pressure. Police measures manage flow temporarily, but they are not long-term solutions.

**THE SIKH TIMES**

Edited, Printed, Published  
Owned by Simmi Babbar  
N-31, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar  
Delhi-110009

Printed at Qaumi Patrika Printing  
Press, A4/A144, Tronica City  
(Loni), Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh)

Corporate Office:

5, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg,  
Press Area, ITO, New Delhi

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RNI No. DELENG/2008/25465

# SGPC & Akali Dal are using Sri Akal Takht Sahib and Panth as shield to protect their wrongdoings: CM Mann

Contd.....Front page

Even the decision of termination of all services with S.S. Kohli & Associates (Chartered Accountant firm), and approval to recover 75% of payments made due to their failure in responsibility was made. However, as S.S. Kohli was rendering services as CA of Akali leader Sukhbir Singh Badal too, so the action is still hanging in fire." He pointed out that the SGPC at the behest of its masters claim that the state government is meddling into the affairs of the panth which is not true as the SGPC has passed its resolution for the criminal action against the accused, for which state government only can act. "However, to save the skin of the influential persons who are involved in this sin, the SGPC has later taken back all its resolutions. During Akali regime all the rights to publish Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji were given to SGPC through Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar Act, 2008 (Punjab Act) but now when the state government wants to ensure recovery these saroops so that no desecration or any other such heinous crimes takes place, these people are giving religious colour to it," he added. The Chief Minister said that SGPC wants every power but does not want to be accountable to the people adding that now they are trying to use Sri Akal Takht Sahib for saving the skin of those who are close to their masters. "The SGPC and its President are mere puppets in the hands of the Akali leadership who are using it for their own vested interests. They are afraid of the SIT as the SGPC and their masters know that a fair and thorough probe will expose their ugly face," he added. CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said that though SGPC has failed in its duty to find the missing saroops, the Punjab government will ensure that perpetrators of this heinous crime are punished as per law of land. "For the last 14 years the elections for this esteemed body have not taken place and these leaders have not even demanded it from the Union government. The psyche of every Sikh has been bruised due to the disappearance of 328 saroops of Sri Guru Granth Sahib," he stated. The Chief Minister pointed out that BJP had on its official page posted a cartoon of great Sikh Gurus but the SGPC has taken no action against them as the polls of the state are coming. "The Akali leaders just want to grab the chair and are least bothered about the interests of the state and its people," he asserted. Citing examples, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said that Akalis gave consent for giving central university status to Panjab University, SYL, draconian farmers law and every other anti-state decision just to corner benefit for their family. The Chief Minister said that 1920 when Akali Dal was formed it was known as the party of the Lions but these leaders have transformed the party into the one of Dinosaurs. "The present Akali leadership shies away from raising the issue of the state before the Union government whereas the state government has left no stone unturned for it. The sole reason behind it is that the Akali leadership is greedy for power due to which they don't hesitate in taking every anti-state stance," concluded CM Bhagwant Singh Mann.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that, I, MOHD SAHIL NASIM QURESHI S/o NASIMUDDIN, R/o House No-423, Gali Pahar Wali Ahata Kidera, Idgah Road, North Delhi, Delhi-110006, declare that name of my mother has been wrongly written as BUSHRA BANO in my 10th class educational Certificate and name of mine and my mother has been wrongly written as QURESHI SAHIL NASIM and BUSHRA NASIM in my Class 12th educational Certificate. The actual name of mine and my mother are MOHD SAHIL NASIM QURESHI and BUSHRA, which may be amended accordingly.

## NAME CHANGE

I hitherto known as RAIES KHAN S/o SHARIF KHAN R/o 13, 1ST FLOOR, NAFEEZ ROAD, BATHA HOUSE, HARI MASJID, ZAKIR NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110025, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAIES KHAN for all purpose in future.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that, I, VEENA SHARMA, W/o SONU SHARMA, R/o 95, Gali No. 1, Madoli Road, Chander Lok Colony, Mandi, Saboli, North East, Delhi, Delhi-110093, declare that name of mine and my minor daughter has been wrongly written as INDU SHARMA and AAYUSHI in my minor daughter namely AYUSHI SHARMA, aged 14 years, in her Birth Certificate No. MCDOLIR-0110-00407370. The actual name of mine and my minor daughter are VEENA SHARMA and AYUSHI SHARMA respectively, which may be amended accordingly. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

VEENA SHARMA

## NAME CHANGE

I, SUNITA wife of JC-294308N Rank-NB Sub Name- BHOSLE INDRAJEET ATMARAM residing at HOUSE NO-919, PLOT NO-38 A, SAI PREM SAGAR NIWAS, YASHWANTRAO CHAVAN CHOWK, SWAMI SAMARTH MANDIR JAWAL, SHANKAR NAGAR, MOREWADI, AMBAJOGAI, DIST-BEED, MAHARASHTRA-431517, have changed my name from SUNITA to BHOSALE SUNITA INDRAJEET for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 29/12/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

## NAME CHANGE

I, VANAMALA Mother of JC-294308N Rank-NB Sub Name- BHOSLE INDRAJEET ATMARAM residing at HOUSE NO-919, PLOT NO-38 A, SAI PREM SAGAR NIWAS, YASHWANTRAO CHAVAN CHOWK, SWAMI SAMARTH MANDIR JAWAL, SHANKAR NAGAR, MOREWADI, AMBAJOGAI, DIST-BEED, MAHARASHTRA-431517, have changed my name from VANAMALA to VANAMALA ATMARAM BHOSALE for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 29/12/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

## NAME CHANGE

I, VANDA DIO SURJESTI NAGAR W/o GAURAV TANWAR R/o H.No-337, Asola Fatehpur Beri Delhi-110074, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as VANDA TANWAR.

## NAME CHANGE

I, SANZIB KUMAR SINGH S/o DURGA PRASAD R/o B-2 A, Gali No-11, Mahavi Gali, Gurudwara Road, Mandawali, Laxmi Nagar, East Delhi, Delhi-110092, have changed the name of my minor son NAKSHAY SINGH aged 10 years and he shall hereafter be known as VAIBHAV SINGH.

## NAME CHANGE

I, VIRENDER SINGH S/o Dheer Singh Tanwar R/o L-232, DLF Capital, Green Moti Nagar, Ramesh Nagar, Delhi-110015 have changed my name to Virender Singh Tanwar.

## NAME CHANGE

I, Kamlesh W/o Kishan Lal R/o 21, Third Floor Back Side, New Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059 have changed my name to Kamlesh Bayal.

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## NEWS BOX

**Dhaka-Karachi direct flights likely from January**

TAIPEI. (Agency) Pakistan's High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Imran Haider, said on Sunday that direct flights between Dhaka and Karachi are likely to begin in January, calling it an important step in improving ties between the two countries. He shared the update during a courtesy call on Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House in Dhaka.

Haider said the number of patients travelling to Pakistan for liver and kidney transplants has increased, adding that Islamabad is ready to offer training and academic opportunities in transplant-related medical fields. The two sides further discussed ways to expand cooperation in trade, investment, and aviation, while also scaling up cultural, educational, and medical exchanges to strengthen bilateral relations.

Haider said bilateral trade recorded a 20 per cent rise compared to the previous year, with business communities from both countries exploring new investment opportunities. He also highlighted a rise in cultural exchanges, noting growing interest among Bangladeshi students in higher education in Pakistan, particularly in medical sciences, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence. Yunus welcomed the growing engagement between the two countries, stressing the need for more visits and stronger cultural, educational, and people-to-people exchanges among SAARC member states. He also emphasised the importance of boosting Bangladesh-Pakistan trade and said both sides would work towards identifying new areas for investment and joint ventures.

SDG Coordinator and Senior Secretary Lamiya Morshed was also present at the meeting.

**"80 Drones, 36 Hours, Airbase Attacked": Pakistan's Big Op Sindoor Admission**

## WORLD. (Agency)

The Pakistani government has acknowledged, for the first time in detail, the impact of India's strategic and precision strikes on its military installation under Operation Sindoor in May, eight months after the four-day armed conflict between the two countries. The admission came from Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, who confirmed that Indian drones struck the Nur Khan airbase in Rawalpindi's Chaklala area, damaging the key military installation and injuring personnel.

"In 36 hours, at least 80 drones were sent," Dar, who is also the foreign minister, said, underlining the scale of the operation. He, however, claimed Pakistan was "able to intercept 79 drones out of 80." India then made the mistake of attacking the Nur Khan Airbase in the early hours of May 10, prompting Pakistan's retaliatory operation," he said while speaking during the year-end press briefing last week. India had launched Operation Sindoor in the early hours of May 7, 2025, to avenge the massacre of 26 civilians by terrorists in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, on April 26. Shehbaz Sharif's deputy's comments marked a notable shift from Islamabad's earlier stance, which had largely played down the extent of damage caused by Indian strikes. Dar further stated that Islamabad did not request mediation between Pakistan and India during the May conflict, claiming that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan expressed a desire to speak with New Delhi. He claimed that on May 10, Rubio called him at around 8.17 am, in which he conveyed that India was ready for a ceasefire and asked whether Pakistan would agree.

**16 Dead In Fire At A Retirement Home In Indonesia**

Jakarta. (Agency) A fire at a nursing home on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi killed more than a dozen people, with three others injured, a local official said Monday.

Firefighters received the report of the blaze at 8:31 pm Sunday at a nursing home in the North Sulawesi provincial capital Manado, said the city's fire and rescue agency chief Jimmy Rotinsulu. "There were 16 deaths; three (people) had burn injuries," he told AFP. Many bodies of the victims were found inside their rooms, Jimmy said, adding that many of the elderly residents were likely resting in their rooms in the evening when the fire broke out. Authorities managed to evacuate 12 people -- all unhurt -- and transfer them to a local hospital, he said.

Footage aired by local broadcaster Metro TV showed the fire engulfing the nursing home, while locals helped to evacuate an elderly person. Deadly fires are not uncommon in Indonesia, a Southeast Asian archipelago of more than 17,000 islands. A fire tore through a seven-storey office building in Indonesia's capital Jakarta this month, killing at least 22 people. In 2023, at least 12 people were killed in the country's east after an explosion at a nickel-processing plant.

**As Jamaat tie-up sparks rift, Bangladesh's NCP chief says alliance not ideological**

**The National Citizen Party has joined an alliance led by Jamaat-e-Islami ahead of Bangladesh's general elections. The move has caused internal dissent and resignations within the party amid concerns over ideological**

## YANGON. (Agency)

His remarks came amid strong internal dissent within the student-led party, which had spearheaded the movement that toppled the Sheikh Hasina government. Around 30 NCP leaders have issued a joint letter opposing the alliance with the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami, while two senior leaders have announced their resignations. Islam said the party had earlier planned to contest all 300

constituencies independently, but the murder of Osman Hadi had significantly altered Bangladesh's political landscape. "In this changed context, we believe broader unity is essential to ensure a fair and competitive election. With that urgency, we held discussions with Jamaat-e-Islami and its eight-party alliance," he was quoted as saying by the Daily Star.

Addressing the resignations of senior leaders Tasnim Zara and Tajunbha Jabin, Islam said the decision to join the alliance was taken by a majority of the party's executive body. He denied reports of a split and said efforts would be made to engage dissenting leaders and resolve differences. The NCP, an offshoot of the Students Against Discrimination (SAD) movement that led last year's violent July Uprising, emerged as a political party under the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus.

Leaders opposing the alliance said it directly contradicts the NCP's stated ideology and its position on the July Uprising and democratic values. In a memo, they cited



Jamaat's controversial political history, including its opposition to Bangladesh's independence and alleged involvement in atrocities during the 1971 Liberation War, calling these incompatible with the party's core principles. The dissenting leaders warned that the alliance would erode the NCP's political credibility and public trust, creating confusion and disappointment among supporters and grassroots activists. NCP joint convenor Tajnuva Jabeen, a doctor who announced her resignation in a Facebook post, described the alliance as "a political strategy" that was "carefully engineered". She said she was stepping down with "mental agony" and felt she had

**Knife attack near Suriname's capital Paramaribo kills at least 9 people, including kids**

## PARAMARIBO. (Agency)

A knife attack outside Suriname's capital of Paramaribo killed at least nine people, including five children, police said Sunday. Officials said the victims included four of the attacker's children and neighbors who came to their aid. A neighbor's child was also killed. Local media reported the victims were located at multiple homes. The attack took place in

Richelieu in the Commewijne district about 25 kilometers (15 miles) east of Paramaribo. Neighbors said the attack began after the suspect, a 43-year-old male, had an argument over the phone with his wife, with whom he no longer lived. The neighbors said that after the suspect's wife said she would not pick up the children, but would instead send someone else for them, the suspect attacked his kids with a knife and also

went after neighbors in their homes. In a statement Sunday, Suriname's Police Corps said the suspect attempted to attack police officers who arrived on the scene and he was injured during his arrest. He is now recovering in a hospital. Police said a sixth child and another adult were seriously injured in the attack and were being treated at a hospital in Paramaribo. On her Facebook page, Surinamese President Jennifer Gerlings-Simons reacted to the news, saying the attacker took the life of his children and his neighbors. "I wish all the bereaved much strength, resilience, and comfort in this unimaginably difficult time," Gerlings-Simons wrote in Dutch, the nation's official language. Suriname, a former Dutch colony, is the smallest independent nation in South America, with a population of approximately 600,000 people. It has traditionally had one of the lowest murder rates in the region. But the murder rate spiked in 2024 to 30 homicides per 100,000 residents, according to data gathered by the think tank Insight Crime.

**Former Bangladesh PM Khaleda Zia in 'extremely critical' con**

**Taiwan's Defense Ministry said in a post on X that rapid response exercises were underway, with forces on high alert to defend the island.**

## Hong Kong. (Agency)

China's military on Monday dispatched air, navy and rocket troops to conduct joint military drills around the island of Taiwan, a move Beijing called a "stern warning" against separatist and "external interference" forces. Taiwan said it was placing its forces on alert and called the Chinese government "the biggest destroyer of peace." The drills came after Beijing expressed anger at US arms sales to the territory and a statement by Japan's prime

minister, Sanae Takaichi, saying its military could get involved if China were to take action against Taiwan, the self-governing island that the world's second-biggest economy says must come under its rule. But the Chinese military did not mention the United States and Japan in its statement on Monday morning. Taiwan's Defense Ministry said in a post on X that rapid response exercises were underway, with forces on high alert to defend the island. In a separate statement, it said it had deployed appropriate forces in response, conducting combat readiness drills. "The Chinese Communist Party's targeted military exercises further confirm its nature as an aggressor and the biggest destroyer of peace," the ministry said. Senior Col. Shi Yi, spokesperson of China's People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theater Command, said the drills

would be conducted in the Taiwan Strait and areas to the north, southwest, southeast and east of the island. Shi said the activities will focus on sea-air combat readiness patrol, "joint seizure of comprehensive superiority" and blockades on key ports. It was also the first large-scale military drill where the command publicly mentioned one of the goals was "all-dimensional deterrence outside the island chain." It is a stern warning against 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces and external interference forces, and it is a legitimate and necessary action to safeguard China's sovereignty and national unity," Shi said.

China and Taiwan have been governed separately since 1949, when a civil war brought the Communist Party to power in Beijing. Defeated Nationalist Party forces fled to Taiwan.

**Trump says Ukraine, Russia are 'closer than ever' to peace after talks with Zelenskyy**

**Trump insisted he believed Putin still wants peace, even as Russia launched another round of attacks on Ukraine while Zelenskyy flew to the United States for the latest round of negotiations.**

## UPALM BEACH. (Agency)

President Donald Trump on Sunday insisted Ukraine and Russia are "closer than ever before" to a peace deal as he hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at his Florida resort, but he acknowledged the negotiations are complex and could still break down, leaving the war dragging on for years.

The president's statements came after the leaders met for talks following what Trump said was an "excellent," two-and-a-half-hour phone conversation with Russian

President Vladimir Putin, whose invasion of Ukraine launched the war nearly four years ago. Trump insisted he believed Putin still wants peace, even as Russia launched another round of attacks on Ukraine while Zelenskyy flew to the United States for the latest round of negotiations. "Russia wants to see Ukraine succeed," Trump said during a late afternoon news conference as he stood with Zelenskyy after their meeting. He repeatedly praised his counterpart as "brave." Trump and Zelenskyy both acknowledged thorny issues remain, including whether Russia can keep Ukrainian territory it controls, as well as security guarantees for Ukraine to ensure it's not invaded again in the future. After their discussion, they called a wide group of European leaders, including Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, and the leaders of Finland, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Poland. Zelenskyy said Trump had agreed to host European leaders again, possibly at the White House, sometime in January. Trump said the meeting could be in

Washington or "someplace." Trump and Putin will speak again. Trump said he'd follow the meeting with another call to Putin. Earlier Sunday, Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov said the



Trump-Putin call was initiated by the U.S. side and was "friendly, benevolent and businesslike." Ushakov said Trump and Putin agreed to speak again "promptly" after Trump's meeting with Zelenskyy. But Ushakov added that a "bold, responsible, political decision is needed from Kyiv" on the fiercely contested Donbas region in eastern Ukraine and other matters in

no "honourable option" despite being a founding member of the party.

Meanwhile, the main leader of the 2024 violent uprising, Mahfuz Alam, distanced himself from his disciples under the NCP banner over their move to forge the Jammat alliance. In a Facebook post, Alam declined to be a "part of this NCP", as a rift in the party over the alliance issue yielded a memorandum signed by 30 of its senior leaders expressing their stance against the move and two ranking ones announcing their resignation. Under the prevailing circumstances, my respect, affection and friendship for my July comrades will not be erased. But I am not becoming part of this NCP. It is not true that I was given a proposal from the Jamaat-NCP alliance, but keeping my long-standing position is more important than becoming a Jamaat-NCP alliance (candidate)," Alam said. Bangladesh is scheduled to hold general elections in February. In the reshaped political landscape, former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

**Thai and Cambodian top diplomats meet in China to solidify ceasefire**

## world. (Agency)

Top diplomats from Thailand and Cambodia kicked off two days of talks in China on Sunday as Beijing seeks to strengthen its role in mediating the two countries' border dispute, a day after they signed a new ceasefire. The ceasefire agreement calls for a halt to weeks of fighting along their contested border that has killed more than 100 people and displaced over half a million in both countries. Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow and Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn were set to meet in China's southwestern Yunnan province for talks mediated by their Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi.

China has sought to position itself as a mediator in the crisis, along with the United States and Malaysia.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who threatened to withhold trade privileges unless Thailand and Cambodia agreed to a July ceasefire, suggested Sunday that the fighting between Thailand and Cambodia "will stop momentarily" and boasted that the U.S. "has become the REAL United Nations."

In a post on his social media site from his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, where he's been spending the winter holidays, Trump wrote that both sides "will go back to living in PEACE" and referenced his past comments about helping to broker a ceasefire that largely hasn't held. "I want to congratulate both great leaders on their brilliance in coming to this rapid and very fair conclusion. It was FAST & DECISIVE, as all of these situations should be!" Trump wrote.

The talks in China aim to ensure a sustained ceasefire and promote lasting peace between the countries, according to a statement by Sihasak's office.

Wang was scheduled to join both bilateral meetings with each of the diplomats and a trilateral talk on Monday.

China has welcomed the ceasefire announcement, which freezes the front lines and allows for displaced civilians to return to their homes near the border.

China stands ready to continue to provide (the) platform and create conditions for Cambodia and Thailand to have fuller and more detailed communication," a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement read. The ceasefire agreement comes with a 72-hour observation period, at the end of which Thailand agreed to repatriate 18 Cambodian soldiers it has held as prisoners since earlier fighting in July. Their release has been a major demand of the Cambodian side. Prak Sokhonn, in a statement after his meeting with Wang, expressed deep appreciation for China's "vital role" in supporting the ceasefire. China also announced 20 million yuan (\$2.8 million) of emergency humanitarian aid for Cambodia to assist the displaced.

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dispute for there to be a "complete cessation" of hostilities. Both leaders identified decidig the future of the Donbas region as a major sticking point. Trump said the parties were inching closer to agreement. "That's a very tough issue but one that I think will get resolved," he said. Zelenskyy said: "Our attitude is very clear. That's why President Trump said this is a very tough question and, of course, we have with Russia different positions on it." Trump said, however, that he still believes Putin is "very serious" about ending the war, even as Russia continued striking targets in Ukraine as Zelenskyy traveled to the U.S.

Trump said, "I believe Ukraine has made some very strong attacks also." He held out the possibility that negotiations could still fall apart. "In a few weeks, we will know one way or the other, I think," Trump said. "We could have something where one item that you're not thinking about is a big item, breaks it up. Look, it's been a very difficult negotiation. Very detailed."

## NEWS BOX

**Weapons banned in Manali, Kullu amid New Year rush****Kullu/Manali. (Agency)**

With a heavy influx of tourists expected for New Year celebrations, the Kullu district administration has imposed a complete prohibition on carrying weapons and ammunition into Manali and other prominent tourist destinations in the district. The restriction will remain in force till January 2, 2026.

Deputy Commissioner issued a formal notification stating that no visitor would be permitted to bring licensed weapons during this period. The ban applies to all individuals except police, paramilitary, and Army personnel deployed on official duty. The decision, taken on the request of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Manali, aims to maintain public safety, law and order, and communal harmony amid swelling crowds.

The administration has warned that strict action will be initiated against violators under Section 223 of the Indian Penal Code, 2023. District police have been directed to ensure rigorous enforcement of the order, with special vigilance on Mall Road, Manali, and adjoining high-footfall areas where large gatherings are anticipated.

Officials apprehend that anti-social elements could exploit dense crowds during celebrations, particularly if snowfall materialises at the year's end. Weather conditions have already heightened tourist interest, and destinations across the Kullu district, including Manali, Rohtang Pass, and Keylong, are witnessing a sustained rush following the Christmas holidays.

The town of Manali is already teeming with visitors, adding pressure on traffic management and civic administration. Given the recent monsoon devastation in parts of the district, officials acknowledge that crowd regulation, traffic control, and emergency preparedness will be a challenging task.

**Union Home Minister Shah to unveil Assam infrastructure projects****Guwahati. (Agency)**

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to arrive in Assam's capital, Guwahati, on Monday to inaugurate several key infrastructure projects. He will inaugurate the Intelligent City Surveillance System (ICSS), a citywide CCTV network aimed at strengthening security and law enforcement.

The ICSS, an Integrated Command and Control Centre, will monitor over 2,000 CCTVs to enhance security and emergency response systems in the state. Alongside this, Shah will also inaugurate the new Guwahati Police Commissioner's office.

Following these events, the Home Minister will inaugurate the 'Jyoti-Bishnu International Cultural Auditorium' at Khanapara, one of the largest cultural auditoriums in the country, with a seating capacity of 5,000.

Shah will also visit the newly built Shaheed Smarak Udyan at Boragaon, Guwahati, to pay homage to the 860 martyrs of the Assam Movement. Later, he will travel to Badravati in Nagaon to inaugurate the Badravati Cultural Project, a Government of Assam initiative aimed at developing the sacred Badravati Than, the birthplace of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva, into a world-class spiritual and tourism destination.

The project, developed at an estimated cost of around Rs. 217 crore on 162 bighas of land freed from encroachment, seeks to preserve and showcase the religious and cultural legacy of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva while providing modern facilities for visitors.

**Mumbai Ward Watch: Water cuts, drainage key issues in Ward H East with slum pockets and high-rises****Mumbai. (Agency)**

Tucked between Mumbai's affluent western suburbs and the fast-expanding Bandra Kurla Complex, the H East ward presents a study in sharp contrasts. While parts of Bandra East and Santacruz East have seen a surge of high-rise developments and office complexes, much of the ward remains defined by sprawling slum clusters such as Golibar, Vakola, Behrambaug and Kherwadi, alongside older Marathi neighbourhoods that once shaped the city's cultural life.

Home to the Thackeray family residence, Matoshree, the upcoming Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections on January 15 are being closely watched as a test of political loyalties in the H East ward. In the 2017 civic polls, seven of the ward's ten seats were won by the Shiv Sena, and all but one of those corporators have remained with the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction. While several familiar faces are expected to return to the fray, new entrants could still alter the political equation.

The ward's leaning towards the Shiv Sena UBT was also evident in the recent Maharashtra Assembly elections, where UBT candidate Varun Sardesai defeated the NCP's Zeehan Siddiqui.

**A blockbuster year of hits and misses in Bengaluru****Karnataka. (Agency)**

As 2025 draws to a close, Bengaluru's mobility landscape feels like a tale of two cities. One city is swiping through mobility apps to book a seamless trip from auto to Metro in one go; the other is stuck in one of the 7 lakh vehicles sold this year. It has been a year of record-breaking ridership and heartbreaking delays. The hits: Metro, bus and the digital leap. The biggest 'hit' of 2025 was undoubtedly the Yellow Line. Its opening didn't just connect RV Road to Bommasandra; it pushed Namma Metro into the 'Million Club' with daily ridership finally crossing the 10-lakh mark. Parallelly, the humble bus remained the city's lifeline. Supported by the Shakti scheme, BMTC recorded nearly 45 lakh daily trips. With a renewed electric fleet, Express buses on NICE Road, Metro feeders, UPI integration, and major staff recruitment after several years, BMTC continues to deliver. BMTC deserves significant financial support in the upcoming budget to better serve lakhs of citizens.



2025 was also the year Bengaluru's 'Silicon Valley' DNA finally coded its way into transport. By adopting GTFS (General Transit Feed Specification), BMTC and BMRCL made

tickets to all delegates. While real-time BMTC data is still awaited, the digital foundation is now solid.

**The misses: Private vehicle surge and suburban slump**

The most sobering 'miss' of the year is a single statistic: 7,00,000. That is the number of new vehicles registered in 2025, nearly 2,000 every single day. This relentless influx neutralizes every gain made by public transport, even as it reaffirms the economic growth Bengaluru brings to the country.

We continue to measure 'congestion' through the lens of the car. We forget that for the lakhs on the Metro, there is no congestion. We missed a massive opportunity by failing to restore the Bus Priority Lane on Outer Ring Road. By prioritizing a car carrying one person over a bus carrying 50, we are choosing gridlock by design. The Suburban Rail project remains a disappointment, plagued by missed deadlines and contractor exits. The appointment of a new MD is making 2026 look optimistic.

**Shux's Axiom-4 feat adds thrust to India's space plans****As a part of the creation of the BAS, ISRO also successfully conducted the SpaDeX mission, where two 220Kg satellites were docked and undocked in the Low Earth Orbit in January.****BENGALURU. (Agency)**

India always continued to inspire awe among global powers with its achievements in the space sector – ISRO's Mars Mission and Chandrayaan series being some of the biggest to catch the eye of the big players in the global arena. And 2025 was no different. The participation of Group Captain and Gaganyaan Shubanshu Shukla in the Axiom-4 mission, and him docking the SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft named Grace into the International Space Station (ISS), were a loud announcement of India taking giant strides in its space programme. The Axiom-4 mission, and ISRO's participation in it, also set the tone and focus of the public and private Indian space sector to the most sought after scheduled missions – Gaganyaan and the establishment of the Bharatiya Antartiksh Station (BAS). The first manned mission is scheduled for 2027, and the launch of the first module of BAS is scheduled for 2028. ISRO aims to establish and start operations of the entire space station by 2035. As a part of the creation of the BAS, ISRO also successfully conducted the SpaDeX mission, where two 220Kg satellites were

docked and undocked in the Low Earth Orbit in January. By detecting the liquid oxygen leak in the spacecraft scheduled for launch for the Axiom-4 and demanding its fix before launch, India asserted its involvement and showed its strength. "The safety of the astronauts in space



is more important than the launch date," an ISRO team had stated during the meeting with Axiom Space and SpaceX teams ahead of the mission launch. The four-member crew included Shukla, Peggy Whitson, a former NASA astronaut and director of human spaceflight at Axiom Space, and two mission specialists Slawosz Uzanski-Wisniewski from

Poland and Tibor Kapu from Hungary. Shukla, is the first Indian to stay inside the ISS for 18 days and altogether in space for 20 days. He is the second Indian to go to space, after a gap of 41 years – Group Captain Rakesh Sharma went to space on April 3, 1984, onboard the Soviet Soyuz T-11 spacecraft for an eight-day mission. Apart from playing the role of the mission pilot for Axiom-4 mission, Shukla also conducted seven indigenously designed microgravity experiments. The list of experiments included growing space microalgae to understand the growth and radiation response of edible algae, muscle regeneration with supplement treatment in space, space farming, impact of microgravity on seed physiology, resilience and ageing patterns of tardigrades, Cyanobacteria in microgravity and impact of human-skin in space.

It may be noted, that before handing over the space cropping experiment to Shukla, ISRO had conducted Compact Research Module for Orbital Plant Studies (CROPS) experiment in space, which found that cowpea could germinate in space. The CROPS was one of the 24 payloads on the POEM-4 platforms.

**Legacy project: Class of 2000 pledges Rs 50 cr to IIT-Bombay****Mumbai. (Agency)**

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay celebrated its annual alumni day on Sunday where the Silver Jubilee Batch (Class of 2000) pledged a sum of Rs 50 crore towards the institute's Legacy Project. In 2024, the Silver Jubilee batch (Class of 1999) had pledged Rs 21.2 crore towards the project, while a year before, the Class of 1998 pledged Rs 57 crore.

In his address at the event, Professor Shriresh Kedare, Director, IIT Bombay, said, "Alumni are an important part of the IIT Bombay community. They are not only bringing in resources, but also invaluable expertise and strong connections with society and industry."

Recognising the alumni community for their continued support and commitment, IIT Bombay honored its top donors of 2025 by unveiling a Donor Wall on the occasion.

Acknowledging their selfless support, Kedare remarked, "The contributions by these donors have helped the establishment of Centres of Excellence

and Chair Professorships, as well as facilitated the enhancement of infrastructural facilities on campus and played a key role in student development. We are looking forward to more meaningful involvement of our Alumni in the future journey of IIT Bombay."

The event also included a book launch by Kanwal Rekhi, an IIT Bombay alumnus and a globally renowned entrepreneur and mentor. His book, "The Groundbreaker: Risks, Rewards and Lessons from a Legendary Entrepreneur", published by HarperCollins, reveals his inspiring journey from IIT



Bombay to the Silicon Valley. The fifth edition of IIT Bombay's fund-raising campaign 'GO-IIT Bombay' for the year 2025-'26 was launched at the event, apart from bestowing "Distinguished Service Award" and "Chapter Service Award" on alumni members.

**Mumbai Hardlook: Captured footpaths, empty promises****As Mumbai gears up for Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections in January, The Indian Express looks at Mumbai's walking woes and speaks to citizens who are calling for plans to make the lives of pedestrians easier.****Mumbai. (Agency)**

Along Dadar's Chhabildas Road, the footpaths always seem to be bursting at the seams, not with pedestrians but with vendors who sell anything from bags to bangles to flowers and fruits. Even garbage from nearby shops pile up in some areas. With no space left for pedestrians, passengers who alight from the nearby Dadar railway station are forced on to the road, where they negotiate for space amid heavy flow of vehicles.

The chaotic pedestrian experience outside the busy railway station is not an anomaly. According to a report, Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) for Greater Mumbai, by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), 51 per cent of trips in Mumbai are made on foot. Yet, lack of adequate pedestrian infrastructure has emerged as the biggest grievance among citizens. As large scale infrastructure projects across the city eat into existing spaces, pedestrians say their walking experience has only worsened in the recent years.

Taking cognisance of pedestrians' woes, the Bombay High Court earlier this year pulled up civic authorities and the traffic police department over unlawful parking and encroachments on footpaths, saying they make the lives of pedestrians miserable.

**How footpaths evolved**

Mumbai has about 4,000 kilometres of footpaths, according to the BMC. Their origins date back to the 1880s, when the first dedicated walking spaces were laid along roads in the Fort area, following European planning models. During the time, massive infrastructure works were initiated and the Fort walls were pulled down. As construction of wide arch drains were undertaken beneath the roads, it also necessitated the development of roads, according to Pankaj Joshi, principal director of Urban Centre Mumbai.

"In the colonial times, about 80 to 85 per cent of trips were made on foot as private vehicles

or even public transport were uncommon. The British administration was emulating the European model across all major colonial



cities where a larger space of footpaths were dedicated for pedestrians", he added.

As Mumbai's population grew, planners extended the city northwards through

book Bombay The Cities Within, Sharada Dwivedi and Rahul Mehrotra note that large scale construction in Dadar and Matunga took place between the 1910s and 1930s, followed by planned neighbourhoods in suburbs such as Bandra, Khar, Juhu, Vile Parle, Santacruz, Versova, Chembur and Andheri during the 1930s.

Joshi said this emphasis on pedestrian infrastructure began to weaken after the 1960s. "Until the 1950s, all the suburban schemes had wide footpaths such as in Shivaji Park, Parsi Colony, Five Gardens or even Marine Drive in island city. However, after the 1960s, the footpaths started becoming narrower. This worsened further in the 1980s and 1990s as the width of the footpaths kept on receding through the decades," he said, adding that the suburbs are now bearing the brunt of this shift.

Citing 'love jihad', vigilantes barge into Bareilly cafe, assault friends celebrating birthday

**Lucknow. (Agency)**

A group of nearly two dozen vigilantes on Saturday barged into a cafe in Bareilly and allegedly assaulted the staff and a group of friends who had gathered there to celebrate a girl's birthday, while levelling allegations of "love jihad". The incident was triggered by the presence of two youths from the Muslim community in the birthday party, it is learnt.

The assailants also allegedly vandalised the cafe. Videos of the incident have surfaced on social media. An FIR was registered against the two accused by name – Rishabh Thakur and Deepak Pathak – and 25 of their unidentified associates, police said. All of them were absconding till the filing of the report.

While it was alleged that Rishabh and Deepak, both local residents, have links with the Bajrang Dal, the organisation's Bareilly coordinator Aryan Chaudhary denied the claim, saying they had no association with the outfit. However, two birthday party revellers, Shaan and Waqif, along with the cafe owner, Shaileendra Gangwar, were detained invoking provisions of breach of peace. They were released later on bail on personal bonds, officials said.

"Shaan and Waqif along with the cafe owner were detained for breach of peace after a heated argument between the two sides. The cafe was booked for birthday celebration by Shaan and Waqif," said Rajbali Singh, Station House Officer of Prem Nagar police station.

Efforts were underway to trace Rishabh Thakur and Deepak Pathak, against whom the FIR was registered on the complaint of Shaileendra Gangwar, police said. CCTV footage and videos of the incident were being examined to identify other persons involved, SHO Singh said. No one sustained serious injuries in the incident, or was admitted to hospital, he added.

**With guarantees unpruned, it was a tightrope walk for Karnataka government****BENGALURU. (Agency)**

Burdened by the five guarantees, the government was constrained to fully implement development projects this year too, as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah walked the tightrope to fulfill the 2025-26 budgetary announcements.

His budget with an outlay of Rs 4.09 lakh crore has a revenue deficit of Rs 19,262 crore. The state earmarked Rs 51,034 crore for the guarantees, while the shortfall in revenue receipts from GST rate rationalisation constrained the state's spending. There will be a shortfall of Rs 20,000 crore in revenue receipts by the end of the financial year.

On the brighter side, Karnataka's IT Policy 2025-30 envisaged to boost the annual software exports from Rs 4.09 lakh crore to Rs 11.5 lakh crore with an incentive of Rs 967 crore to reinforce the state's position as a leading innovation-driven and



good monsoon will only add to it. Experts said if the government had pruned the spending on the five guarantees, it could have saved by Rs 10,000 crore. But some Congress legislators complained about lack of funding for development projects, saying they alone cannot win elections and the development too is necessary to impress the electorate. Cashing in on it, BJP harped on the government delaying two instalments of Grha Lakshmi dole, alleging that the government was facing a fund crunch and asking it where the Rs 5,000 crore had disappeared.

Joshi said this emphasis on pedestrian infrastructure began to weaken after the 1960s. "Until the 1950s, all the suburban schemes had wide footpaths such as in Shivaji Park, Parsi Colony, Five Gardens or even Marine Drive in island city. However, after the 1960s, the footpaths started becoming narrower. This worsened further in the 1980s and 1990s as the width of the footpaths kept on receding through the decades," he said, adding that the suburbs are now bearing the brunt of this shift.

## It's time to bury the shovel and fill the hole

The death certificate of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, was signed without much fanfare in December 2025, replaced by the brand-new Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act (VB-G RAM G), 2025, a title so long it requires its own administrative department to pronounce. For two decades, we operated under the collective delusion that the height of human aspiration for a rural Indian was to spend a hundred days a year under a scorching sun, moving earth from one spot to another. The 2005 Act was born out of a noble impulse to prevent starvation, but it quickly devolved into a state-sponsored ritual of stagnation. We called it a "right-based" revolution, yet for millions, it became a trap—ceiling that prevented them from ever looking beyond the bottom of a half-dug trench. We have spent billions of rupees over 20 years to ensure that our rural population remains exactly where they are: unskilled, underpaid, and tethered to the whims of a local strongman who decides whose name appears on the muster roll.

When the MGNREGA was first introduced in 2005, it served a vital, albeit grim, purpose. It was the floor that prevented the poorest from falling into the abyss during the lean seasons. It gave women a semblance of financial independence and forced private landlords to pay a slightly less insulting wage. In the early years, you could see the impact in the reduced distress migration and the sense of agency it provided to the landless. It was a social safety net in a country that had none, a temporary bridge designed to carry the vulnerable until the "real" economy could reach them. We measured success in "person-days," a cold, mechanical metric that prioritised the quantity of sweat over the quality of life. It was the ultimate palliative for a government that couldn't figure out how to create real jobs, so it decided to manufacture work instead. However, the dark side of this "guarantee" was a systemic rot that turned a safety net into a communal cesspool of wasted potential. By the mid-2020s, the scheme had become synonymous with "digging holes and filling them back up." We created thousands of "assets"—unpaved roads that vanished in the first rain, ponds that couldn't hold water, and plantations that existed only on paper. The irony is that while we were paying people a pittance to perform primitive manual labour, the world around them was undergoing a technological explosion. We made our people "lazy" not because they didn't want to work, but because we gave them no incentive to learn. Why would a young man in a village spend time learning to repair a solar pump or code a basic app when the government was offering a guaranteed, albeit miserable, wage for moving mud? We effectively subsidised low productivity and institutionalised a lack of ambition, creating a labour scarcity in productive agriculture while our industrial growth choked for want of skilled hands. Now, as the calendar turns to the final days of 2025, the new VB-G RAM G scheme promises a "modernised" version of this old nightmare. It ups the ante to 125 days and introduces a "60-day agricultural pause" to ensure that farmers aren't left stranded during harvest seasons. But the most significant shift is the funding: the Centre is now asking states to cough up 40 per cent of the cost, a move that will likely break the back of already bankrupt state treasuries. While the government touts AI-based monitoring and GPS tracking as the cure for corruption, they are missing the fundamental point. Whether you dig a hole for 100 days or 125, and whether a satellite or a corrupt supervisor watches you do it, the result is the same: you are still just digging a hole. The new scheme is merely a rebranding of the same old apathy, shifting the financial burden to the states while maintaining the same archaic obsession with unskilled manual labour as the primary tool for poverty alleviation.

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) is all set to emerge as an epistemologically audacious and structurally transformative parliamentary missive with a mission to demolish stereotypes entrenched in bureaucratic inertia and regimental strangulation on one hand and to remove intellectual subservience to encourage sovereign excellence on the other through cognitive self-reliance, innovative co-existence, meritocratic leadership, creative pedagogy, all of which is facilitated by cementing and institutionalising a visionary architecture built on responsible autonomy coupled with autogenous discipline triggering the civilisational consciousness to regain the lost geopolitical stewardship through industry-aligned skilling and globally competitive standards capable of dismantling the scaffolds of fossilised colonial frameworks that were once advanced by legacy rent seeking regulatory monopolies and chaotic credentialism reducing universities to degree dispensing silos than engines of national progress with the Bill decisively integrating accountability and transparency linked with performance metrics to hopefully reward intellectual rigour, multi-disciplinary research, innovative entrepreneurship and societal impact, thereby enabling higher education institutions (HEIs) as catalysts of change by leapfrogging into an era of authoritative participation in global knowledge commons, grounding indigenisation, constitutional canulation, traditional continuum alongside emerging and frontier domains of science and technology embracing Artificial Intelligence, Bio-Nano, Cybophysical, Digital, Electronics, Energy and Environmental (ECube), etc. that blends contemporaneous curriculum with ancient wisdom in a manner that is neither nostalgic nor derivative but boldly original to empower original thinking amongst learners who shall become active epistemic agents rather than passive recipients in a manner that is flexible, modular, multi-lingual, experiential and aligns with the career aspirations of the world's largest demographic capital capable of oxygenating Bharat from strangulating suffocation supported by academic freedom, competitive compensation, sumptuous research endowments, elevated collaborations that restore teaching and scholarship to unimaginable positions of dignity and influence that can steer mission-driven centres of excellence supported by government grants, corporate philanthropy, virtuous cycle of intellectual property-based wealth creation through discoveries of massive societal impact, particularly in marginalised regions and hitherto uncharted territories of academic disciplines driving home the strong and sound message

that equity is not by dilution of standards but by expansion of opportunities and positive disruption through digital public infrastructure, open learning resources, skilling and capacity building that futureproof higher education canvas against socio-econo-geographical pressures and parading Bharat's most strategic human assets in pursuit of excellence and resilience to charter the nation's destiny through a robust higher education ecosystem that shall not be built by administrative appendages but by pillars of crucible ideas, character and leadership studded with visionary

individually satisfying and collectively purposeful to maximise learning outcomes which was a challenging task considering the diverse complexities that pushed back any creative polity and policy to meet its own cul-de-sac with VBSA now laying the road for multiple pathways and roadmaps offering different routes and destination points aligned with nation, institution and individual goals being the triple barrelled ammunition that fires the double engine growth towards a singular growth trajectory of developed nation status for Bharat, which is seeing the second coming of her first leadership position



ideals, concerned citizenry, innovative ideation, maximalist outcome based pedagogy, driving the productivity and efficiency of every stakeholder to forcefully dismantle the false dichotomy between excellence and inclusion, autonomy and accountability, heritage and progress, private and public, deemed university and university and a variety of other duel-dual terminological termites that have bitten the system too deep the scars of which shall soon begin to disappear to send a message that Bharat's time has come through VBSA which is not an incremental reform with plug and play imported templates but a self-authored charter code that programs all forms of systems into a uniform yet diverse system of thinking accommodating diverse needs of all participants in a manner that is both

as the entire country unites to create a knowledge economy that spurs economic and social growth balancing the multiplying demands of the next generation through a learner-centric common denominator that cuts across all sections in a manner that is holistic, leaving no stones unturned in Bharat's march towards becoming a global super power on the attainment of Viksit Bharat status by 2047 which will be an epoch for Chiranjeevi Bharat, an epitome of civilisational continuum unparalleled and unbeatable by any civilisation that came and went and will never come in the foreseeable future. By now you would have realised that this is my hat-trick single line article reserving it for the last and in doing so, my year-end one-line closer is dedicated to Pradhan's lifeline starter. Happy New Year 2026.

## Case against Punjab cops: Time for new terms of public engagement

**The Tribune Editorial: The alleged assault on a Colonel and his son by Punjab Police officials in March throws up questions on policing methods**

Five months after the Punjab and Haryana High Court transferred the probe into the alleged assault on a Colonel and his son in Patiala in March, the Central Bureau of Investigation has submitted a chargesheet against four Punjab Police officials. They have been charged with causing grievous hurt and wrongful restraint. The law will take its own course, but the case throws up probing questions on the policing methods, the often unhinged bravado of those donning the uniform, and a widening public distrust. It also provides an opportunity to re-engage with the citizenry at various levels, and enforce more nuanced ways of conduct and delivery. Recently, a decorated retired General took up cudgels against the threatening and aggressive ways of police escort vehicles. Action followed, but the situation on the ground has hardly changed, and it's not limited to Punjab. Chandigarh is an outlier where a



citizen's immediate engagement with an orderly administrative setup helmed by the police happens the

moment one steps out on to the road. It's a collaborative arrangement that expects discipline, provides the infrastructure for it and leaves little room for flouting rules. Sadly, and inexplicably, not even a modicum of this model has been replicated anywhere in the region. Not even when those tasked with this responsibility — the political and bureaucratic top bosses — get a firsthand experience during their stay and work in the UT.

Managing traffic during VIP movement is a perfect test to gauge how trained and empathetic the police force is. The guidelines are meant to cause minimum public inconvenience while ensuring a protective zone. For the commuters, it's a nightmare. For the constable on the spot, it's even worse. Cybercrime, gangster modules, drugs — policing is real tough. That's simply no excuse for not doing it right.

## Dhurandhar: 2025's nationalist narrative catalyst

**For decades, Hindi cinema had lived through the boom-bust cycle where two or three massive releases carried the annual load. In 2025, the pattern inverted.**

The year ended with a roar on the silver screen and its echo defined everything that followed. The success of Dhurandhar was not only cinematic but civilisational. It did not simply break records. It set the emotional tone of a nation. When audiences rose to their feet as credits rolled on December 5, they were not merely celebrating a film's craft. They were acknowledging a sentiment that had long been searching for voice.

By its 21st day in theatres, Dhurandhar was reported to have crossed the Rs 1,000-crore milestone worldwide, becoming the highest-grossing Indian film of the year and the fifth-largest success of all time. In its triumph lay the signal that the nationalist mood of India had moved from politics to popular imagination, that cinema audiences had begun dictating the nation's emotional narrative rather than following it. The country's biggest industry—long accused of speaking in borrowed accents and cosmopolitan codes—had suddenly begun to reflect the nationalistic mood. What made this moment even more significant was the ecosystem it revealed. Throughout 2025, Hindi cinema experienced what industry analysts called a "steady flow of steady performers", rather than dependence on blockbuster spectacles. In the first half of the year alone, 17 films crossed the coveted hundred-crore mark at the domestic box office, a dramatic increase from merely 10 such films in the corresponding period of 2024. For decades, Hindi cinema had lived through the boom-bust cycle where two or three massive releases carried the annual load. In 2025, the pattern inverted. The industry witnessed momentum driven not by 'event cinema', but by films that connected with audiences through authenticity, emotional honesty and a willingness to address what people actually felt rather than what critics prescribed they should feel. From its first week, Dhurandhar was more than a blockbuster. Its advertising

tone, dialogues and audience engagement embodied a spirit that was simultaneously defiant and celebratory. It proved that patriotic sentiment could transcend geographical and demographic boundaries. The film's triumph occurred in a year already marked by significant shifts in storytelling. In February, Chhaava, Vicky Kaushal's historical action-drama about Maratha warrior Sambhaji, had crossed `600 crore at the box office, signalling that Indian history and heroes were no longer marginal subjects but mainstream currency.

Dhurandhar itself justified that symbolism through cinematic craft. It opened with the precision of a military operation and advanced with the momentum of conviction. For an audience long accustomed to irony and moral hesitation, this clarity arrived like relief. People did not quietly consume Dhurandhar—they claimed it as emotional property.

The reasons for this response lay deeper than the screen. For years, Hindi cinema had lost touch with its wider audience precisely because its guardians had misread what that audience wanted. The major production houses and creative communities had circled themselves in cosmopolitan caution. Patriotism was often reduced to background decor or mocked as an outdated reflex. Storytelling had turned into symbolism designed for validation of Western lifestyles and culture rather than emotion at home. When Dhurandhar appeared, it violated that trend with unapologetic enthusiasm. The moment was ripe for such a shift. Since 2019, India's political and cultural language has undergone steady transformation. The old markers of elite progressivism, urban irony, global aspiration and moral neutrality began to fade as authentic expressions of national sentiment reasserted themselves. In their

place rose a direct and confident nationalism that sought its reflection in culture. Dhurandhar arrived precisely when that mirror was missing.

The earlier success of films such as Uri: The Surgical Strike, The Kashmir Files, and The Kerala Story had hinted at the change; but Dhurandhar institutionalised it. It became not just a film but a launchpad for a new emotional mainstream. Its impact was so pronounced that it seemed to give permission to an entire industry that



had been afraid to speak its own language. A new generation of filmmakers and writers from smaller cities or digital platforms entered the mainstream empowered by the realisation that authenticity could sell and that audiences were hungry for stories that did not ask them to feel ashamed of their own identity. The monopoly of inherited surnames and old networks began to loosen. Yet, the success of Dhurandhar must not be mistaken for the triumph of aggression. Its achievement lay in articulation, not polemic. The director chose precision over bombast. Every emotional beat was earned rather

than declared. The protagonist's resilience was depicted not as dominance but as dedication to purpose. The lesson extended beyond cinema: the rising nationalism of 2025 found in Dhurandhar a model of confidence without contempt, of pride without prejudice. The film's success while maintaining this balance suggested that audiences, too, were more sophisticated than the critics had assumed—capable of appreciating patriotic sentiment without requiring it to harden into hatred. Still, this transformation carries its own challenge.

The newfound assertiveness of Hindi cinema must avoid the trap of predictability or formulaic repetition. What will define the decade ahead is not how many nationalistic films are made, but how deeply they explore the human experience within them. Precision of craft should accompany clarity of message. The promise of Dhurandhar was not that every film must shout its identity, but that no film should be afraid of it. The industry must resist the temptation to turn a rediscovery of voice into a new orthodoxy.

By the final quarter of 2025, it was clear that the cultural axis had shifted fundamentally. The very critics who once dismissed such projects as populist or narrowly exclusive were conceding that a new narrative order had emerged. In hindsight, the year will be remembered not only for Dhurandhar's record-breaking success but for how it redefined cinematic legitimacy. The old hierarchy of taste, the circle of directors, critics and producers who mediated what India should feel lost its influence. The local triumphed over the global not because it shut out the world, but because it spoke from the depth of belonging. Certainty replaced confusion as the artistic mood of the year.

## Dehra Police bust theft and burglary network, arrest five in Kangra

Jalandhar . (Agency)

Dehra. Dehra Police has busted a theft and burglary network by arresting five accused in connection with a break-in at a mobile phone shop in the Rakhar area of Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh.

Dehra District Superintendent of Police, Mayank Choudhary, told UNI that the theft occurred during the intervening night of December 10–11, 2025, at a mobile phone shop owned by Vipin Kumar, son of Balveer Singh, located at Kohlu Chowk under the jurisdiction of Rakhar Police Station. He said that unknown miscreants had broken into the shop and committed the theft.

Following the incident, SP Mayank said that a case was registered at Police Station Rakhar and an intensive investigation was launched. Choudhary said that during the probe, police made effective use of technical surveillance, local intelligence inputs and other scientific as well as traditional investigation methods.

He said that to ensure a thorough and result-oriented investigation, three special teams were constituted comprising personnel from Police Station Rakhar, Police Station Moeen and the CIA Dehra unit. Based on continuous and coordinated efforts, technical surveillance and concrete evidence, police successfully arrested the accused on December 25 and 26, 2025, SP Mayank Choudhary disclosed.

He said that the arrested persons have been identified as: Punit Jaswal (31), Rakesh Singh (48), son of Dakshish Chand, and Hardeep (25), son of Ranjeet Kumar, all the three residents of village Badoh, tehsil Ghanari, district Una and Shubham (19) and Subhash alias Saurabh (24), son of Mukesh Kumar both residents of village Ambota, tehsil Ghanari, district Una.

He said that the Police have so far recovered two mobile phones, two motorcycles used in the crime and one iron rod allegedly used during the theft from the possession of the accused. SP Mayank said that all suspected accused involved in the case have been arrested and further legal proceedings are being carried out as per law.

## Panchayati Raj System is the soul of Indian Democracy: Prem Kumar Dhumal

Samipur. (Agency)

Former Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Prem Kumar Dhumal said that the Panchayati Raj system is the soul of Indian democracy, and all efforts must be made to strengthen it further.

He made these remarks while meeting a delegation of party leaders from the Panchayati Raj Cell and HP Tourism Cell at his Samipur residence on Sunday evening. The delegation included Sher Singh, District Coordinator of the Tourism Cell; Malkiyan Pathan, Co-Coordinator; and Dr. Subhash Thakur, District Coordinator of the Panchayati Raj Cell, along with their colleagues.

During the meeting, discussions were held on organisational matters as well as key issues related to Panchayati Raj and tourism. Prof. Dhumal emphasised the central role of Panchayati Raj institutions in strengthening democracy, noting that they connect citizens directly to government and facilitate grassroots development.

He said, "Strong Panchayats are the foundation of strong villages. Only when villages are empowered can the state and the nation thrive." He urged the Panchayati Raj Cell to actively train elected representatives, disseminate information on welfare schemes, and promote a transparent, accountable, and people-oriented governance system.

## Night temperatures rise across Kashmir ahead of snowfall prediction

Srinagar. (Agency)

Ahead of a fresh Western Disturbance expected to bring light to moderate snowfall across the Kashmir Valley from Tuesday, the night temperatures witnessed a noticeable rise at most places in the region.

According to the latest meteorological data, Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of 3°C, up sharply from 0.8°C the previous night. Qazigund, the gateway town of Kashmir, also saw an increase as the mercury settled at 1.4°C, compared to 0.0°C a night earlier.

Gulmarg, the famed ski resort, remained below freezing at -2°C, though slightly warmer than the previous night's -2.2°C.

The hill resort of Pahalgam recorded a minimum of 0.4°C, a significant rise from -1.9°C on the previous night, while Kupwara in north Kashmir saw temperatures climb to 1.8°C from 0.2°C. Pulwama registered -0.5°C, and Shopian recorded 0.2°C, indicating a general upward trend across south Kashmir as well.

Meteorological officials said the rise in night temperatures is typical ahead of an approaching Western Disturbance, which is expected to affect the region over the next 24 hours. MetI officials have predicted generally cloudy weather with light rain or snowfall at many places in Kashmir from December 31 to January 1. They said that a few middle and higher reaches of North and Central Kashmir are likely to receive moderate snowfall during this period.

## Himachal doctors' call off strike after CM Sukhu reopens inquiry into hospital brawl

Sukhu said his government has reduced duty hours of senior resident doctors from 48 hours to 12 hours and increased their stipend from Rs 65,000 to Rs 1,00,000 per month but such incidents raise

Chandigarh . (Agency)

Doctors at Shimla's Indira Gandhi Medical College (IGMC) called off their strike after Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu assured that the patient-physician brawl that led to the termination of services of a senior resident would be looked into again.

The Resident Doctors Association (RDA), in a statement, said the indefinite strike, which entered its second day on Sunday, has been called off with immediate effect in the larger public interest. It said the government has assured them that the doctor's termination could also be revoked.

The termination of the services of Dr Raghav Narula earlier this week had led the resident doctors to announce an indefinite strike on Saturday, with medical services, barring emergency services, disrupted for the second day at a few places in the state. On Friday, resident doctors were on mass leave demanding the immediate reinstatement of Narula.

The RDA, meanwhile, maintained that it is awaiting the revocation of the doctor's termination following the inquiry report. The doctors said they will hold a meet again on January 3 to discuss their future plan of action.

On Friday, members of the doctors' association had met Sukhu who assured action against those who allegedly threatened the doctor and promised new guidelines to ensure the doctors' security inside hospitals.

Earlier in the day, the chief minister appealed to the doctors to resume work since he has

assurance, the doctors chose to go on an indefinite strike. If the doctors wish to continue with talks, they should leave their pride behind, call off their strike and resume work tomorrow. I will call senior doctors of the IGMC for talks as nothing is set in stone. The decision can be reviewed if the doctor feels he is punished," he told mediapersons on his return from New Delhi.

Sukhu also said the doctor should have lodged a complaint instead of "assaulting" the patient.

Narula was initially dismissed before being removed from service following a physical altercation with a patient. The confrontation, captured in a video, showed Narula punching the patient, Arjun Singh, who allegedly attempted to kick the doctor.

Singh claimed the dispute arose after he objected to being addressed as "tu" instead of "tum", which he said made Narula aggressive. However, Narula maintained that it was

Singh who instigated the fight by using abusive language against him and his family.

The report of an inquiry committee found both parties at fault. They found "misconduct, misbehaviour and acts of unbecoming a public servant" on Narula's part, officials said.



directed officials to reopen inquiry into the incident.

"I had assured them that the matter would be examined and the decision to terminate Dr Narula's services would be reviewed. Unfortunately, instead of trusting my

## Mohali police on high alert ahead of New Year; large-scale mock drill held at Bestech Mall

Chandigarh . (Agency)

Ahead of the New Year celebrations and taking lessons from the recent tragic incident in Goa, the Mohali police Sunday conducted a large-scale mock drill at Bestech Mall in Phase 11 to ensure public safety and emergency preparedness.

The exercise was carried out under the leadership of SP (City) Dilpreet Singh and the supervision of DSP (City-2) Harsimrat Singh Bal, with the participation of around 80 police personnel, including teams from the Punjab Police Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS).

During the mock drill, Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS), explosive detection teams, and fire brigade personnel were deployed on the spot to



simulate emergency response measures. The primary objective of the drill was to assess quick response mechanisms and rescue operations in the event of any untoward incident.

An awareness programme was also conducted as part of the exercise. Mall employees, food court staff, chefs and personnel deployed at key

locations were briefed in detail on fire safety measures and emergency evacuation procedures. They were informed about the importance of maintaining calm during emergencies, safely evacuating people, and promptly alerting the police and fire services.

Officials said the drill was conducted in view of the recent tragic incident in Goa that claimed several lives, with the aim of ensuring that Mohali is fully prepared to handle any such emergency situations.

Speaking on the occasion, DSP Bal said that the Mohali police is fully alert ahead of the New Year and that such mock drills and checking drives will continue to ensure the safety and security of the public.

## Victims in 8 of top 10 'digital arrest' scams in Chandigarh are senior citizens, data reveals

Officers with the Chandigarh Police said elderly citizens are particularly vulnerable to such 'digital arrest' scams as they are more likely to trust communication that appears to sound official.

Chandigarh . (Agency)

Senior citizens aged over 70 were targeted in eight of the top 10 "digital arrest" cases reported in Chandigarh during 2024 and 2025, according to the figures released by the Union territory police on Saturday. While eight of the victims were aged between 71 and 89, those in the two remaining cases were 57 and 53 years old.

Officers said elderly citizens are particularly vulnerable to such digital scams as they are more likely to trust communication that appears to sound official. According to the police, fraudsters typically impersonate officers from the police, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED), Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), or even court officials, falsely accusing victims of criminal involvement. The victims are then kept under continuous video or audio surveillance and coerced into transferring large sums of money.

Fake courtroom, constant monitoring

In a recent case of digital arrest fraud in Chandigarh that surfaced in November this year and which The



Indian Express reported earlier this month, a 73-year-old resident of Sector 45 was allegedly coerced into transferring Rs 52 lakh after cybercriminals threatened him with arrest in a fictitious case purportedly registered at Colaba police station in Mumbai. The scammers even showed the victim – retired private sector employee Shashi Kumar Sahai – a fake courtroom over a video call and told him that he would be kept under constant watch because he was a senior citizen. The fraud surfaced when Sahai's son, Saurabh, learned that his father had been kept under constant video watch by unknown callers.

In another such case, an elderly Chandigarh couple was cheated of Rs 85 lakh after callers convinced them that they were suspects in a money-laundering case and that only certain "officials" could help them secure a "Priority Innocence Verification Certificate" to prevent arrest. The First Information Report (FIR), filed at the cyber police station in Chandigarh's Sector 17 on December 9, reveals a meticulously staged month-long deception that mimicked the style and structure of an actual government probe.

## Gatka Cup 2025 inaugurated in Mohali; players from over 20 states participate

Chandigarh . (Agency)

The three-day 9th National Senior Gatka Championship-2025 under the banner of Gatka Cup was inaugurated on Sunday at Gurdwara Ratwara Sahib, New Chandigarh (Mohali). Organised by the Gatka Federation of India, the national-level event has drawn participants from more than 20 states and will continue till December 30.

Mohali MLA Kulwant Singh, who attended the inaugural ceremony as the chief guest, said that preserving traditional sports is a collective responsibility. "Preserving and promoting heritage-related sports is our collective moral responsibility," he said, adding that "a traditional sport like Gatka can survive only when opportunities are provided to learn, watch and organise such events across society".

The championship has been dedicated to the 350th martyrdom anniversary of the ninth Sikh Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur. On the occasion, the MLA also distributed prizes and certificates to players.

Appreciating the organisers, Kulwant Singh said that such events help

Congress pushes Himachal into 'no return zone' with Rs 45,000 cr debt: BJP

Sundernagar.(Agency)

Himachal Pradesh Bharatiya Janata Party President Dr. Rajeev Bindal launched a scathing attack on the Congress government, stating that under the leadership of Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, the state has been pushed into a situation from which recovery appears extremely difficult.

He said development has come to a complete standstill, while the burden of debt, taxes, and inflation continues to weigh heavily on the common people. Dr. Bindal pointed out that in just three years, the Congress government has taken loans amounting to nearly Rs 45,000 crore, directly burdening the public exchequer.

Even after reaching the borrowing limit, the government sought extensions for additional loans, reflecting financial mismanagement and near bankruptcy. Despite this massive borrowing, neither new development projects are being initiated nor are pending ones being completed.

He highlighted the woes of the Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC), noting that fares have increased manifold, hundreds of bus routes have already been shut down, and around 500 more routes are on the verge of closure. Travel concessions for women have been withdrawn, forcing rural and poor citizens to rely on private transport and bear additional expenses.

Dr. Bindal alleged steep hikes in electricity, water, cement, and essential commodities. The promise of 300 units of free electricity proved to be a hollow assurance, as power tariffs were increased by up to 46%. Households that once received zero electricity bills are now paying bills running into thousands of rupees.

Targeting the health sector, Dr. Bindal said schemes like Ayushman Bharat and Himecare have been virtually shut down. Hospitals are facing medicine shortages, Doctors and paramedical staff are unavailable, and patients are forced to wander for treatment—clear evidence of an overall administrative collapse.

## One investment, multiple incomes: How Punjab's new-age farmers are using integrated farming for year-round income

Jalandhar . (Agency)

After completing his graduation, Satnam Singh Chakkal of Sanghol village in Fatehgarh Sahib went to Australia in 2007 to pursue post-graduation in horticulture and landscaping and spent nearly two and a half years abroad.

His experience there made him realise that success demands hard work. With this understanding, he decided to return to India and start working in his ancestral farm but with a modern and innovative approach.

Unlike traditional farmers who depend on a single crop, Satnam was determined to diversify. His family already had a poultry unit, which inspired him to explore integrated farming. He developed a model in which poultry and fish farming support each other,

significantly reducing input costs while increasing overall income. Satnam, now in his early 40s and has been practicing integrated farming for the past seven years, says that it can transform agriculture into a sustainable and profitable enterprise.

Owning nine acres and cultivating another three on lease, Satnam has successfully combined fish farming and poultry to create multiple income streams from one system. He developed fish ponds over nearly eight acres and simultaneously expanded his poultry unit on around two acres. Today, he manages around one lakh broiler birds. He says poultry feed contains nearly 25 per cent protein.

Due to this high protein content, about 20 per cent of the feed consumed by poultry is excreted undigested. This waste becomes a natural and nutritious feed for fish in the ponds.

"I don't need to spend on fish feed. My only annual expense in fisheries is the purchase of fish

seed, which is available at a nominal price," he says. Satnam also uses pond water for irrigation after circulating around 20 to 25 per cent of pond water with fresh water at regular intervals. This nutrient-rich water is used to irrigate nearly two acres of crops. He doesn't use chemical fertilisers, saving money on fertilisers.

Satnam harvests around 20 to 25 quintals of fish per acre annually. This translates into an income of approximately Rs 2.5 to Rs 3 lakh per acre per year. At present, his poultry unit produces nearly six lakh broilers annually. After meeting all expenses, he earns a net profit of around Rs



60-Rs 70 per bird. He also practices fish diversity, selling nearly half a dozen species, including Rohu, Catla, Grass Carp, Silver Carp, and other varieties.

Parminderjit Singh, a progressive farmer from Kalewal village of Sultanpur Lodhi, has successfully adopted an integrated fishery and piggery farming model. Owning 10 acres, with four acres under fish farming, Parminderjit started his fishery unit in 2022–23 and expanded into piggery in September 2024. At present, he rears around 100 pigs in a covered area of approximately 1.5 kanals near the fish ponds. Under this integrated system, he produces around 10 tonnes of fish annually and markets over 100 pigs each year, generating a steady supplementary income.

# Dense fog hits operations at Delhi airport; 128 flights cancelled and 8 diverted

**The Delhi airport issued a passenger advisory as dense fog disrupted flight operations, with delays and cancellations expected during the day.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Flight operations at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport were hit by dense fog Monday morning, leading to the cancellation of 128 flights and diversion of eight others, airport sources said.

According to the sources, 64 arriving and 64 departing flights were cancelled at the country's busiest airport, and eight flights were diverted as visibility dropped sharply across the national capital and parts of Northern India.

"Due to persistent dense fog, flight operations continue to remain under CAT III conditions, which may result in flight delays," the airport operator Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) said in an advisory, adding that teams were working with stakeholders to minimise inconvenience to passengers.

At airports which are certified for Category III conditions, aircraft equipped with special landing systems and trained crews can



operate in very low visibility. However, it limits the number of flights that can operate during severe fog.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation also issued an advisory stating that flight operations at select airports in Northern India could be affected by fog, leading to possible delays. Airlines also issued advisories warning of possible disruptions. In a post on X, IndiGo advised passengers to check their flight status before leaving for the airport and to allow extra time for travel, as fog could also affect road traffic.

"Fog continues to persist across Delhi and several airports in northern India. Visibility remains reduced and, as a result, flight movements are presently slower than normal, with some delays being experienced. We will continue to manage operations under the prevailing conditions, sequencing departures and arrivals to maintain orderly operations," the airline said.

Over the past few weeks, several days of low visibility have led to flight delays, diversions, and cancellations, particularly during the early morning hours.

**Woman sold premium flat in Gurgaon's DLF Camellias for half the price, duped of Rs 12 crore**



**New Delhi.(Agency)**

In August 2024, a woman was looking for a house at some posh society in Gurgaon. DLF Camellias was on her list, but it was beyond her budget.

Soon, she met Abhinav Pathak, a medicine distributor, who claimed to know people who could help her get a house in DLF Camellias for Rs 12.04 crore — nearly half the original price. How? "He claimed to have already purchased a premium property through a bank auction and offered to transfer it to her at a lower rate," a police officer said. A bank usually puts a property on auction to recover a 'bad loan'. It is when the owner of a property fails to pay dues to the bank. The properties, thus auctioned, are sold at lower rates.

The woman took the bait.

"In August 2024, the complainant was approached by M/s MG Leasing & Finance. Representatives showed her meticulously forged documents — sale certificates, covering letters, and auction receipts — all purportedly from the State Bank of India," DCP (Crime Branch) Aditya Gautam said.

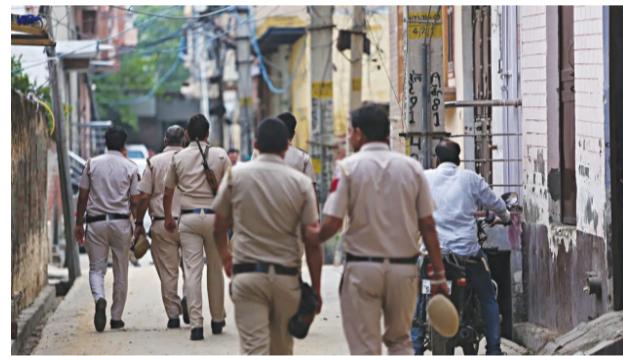
Convinced, the woman transferred Rs 12.04 crore through RTGS and demand drafts between August and October last year. It was only later, when the bank confirmed every document was forged, that the victim realised that no such flat was available. A complaint was filed on June 13 this year.

Delhi Police Crime Branch's Inter State Cell took up the case and traced the money trail. Bank statements confirmed the massive sum had been credited to an account of some proprietorship firm, owned by one Mohit Gogia. An extensive manhunt was launched across Delhi-NCR, Bhopal, and Mumbai. But the accused had, by then, gone underground.

The breakthrough in the case was made through technical surveillance and manual intelligence. On November 22 this year, a specialised team led by inspectors Satender Poonia and Sohan Lal tracked Gogia while he was fleeing from Mumbai towards Uttarakhand. He was apprehended near Doiwala on the Rishikesh-Dehradun Road.

## Landlord arrested for sexually assaulting girl in North Delhi's Burari: Police

**The incident happened when the girl returned from her school to her house on Friday afternoon, and was alone in the house, according to police sources.**



**New Delhi.(Agency)**

A girl was allegedly sexually assaulted by her 52-year-old landlord in North Delhi's Burari area on Friday, a police officer said. A case has been registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the accused has been arrested, officers added.

The incident happened when the girl returned from her school to her house on Friday afternoon, and was alone in the house, according to police sources. "The landlord has a shop of religious amenities nearby. The man came inside the house on the pretext of house repairs," a police officer said.

The accused then threatened to kill the girl and then sexually assaulted her, the police said. Later that evening, when the girl's mother came back, she got to know about the incident. "The girl told her mother about the incident and she then filed a complaint. The medical test of the girl was done and a case was registered," the officer added.

## Prepare SOPs on response to tackle crisis: Delhi top cop to units in wake of Bondi Beach terror attack

**Moving from chaos to coordination in the shortest possible time in focus in fresh SOPs**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

In the wake of the recent mass killing incident at Bondi Beach in Australia, the Delhi Police have moved to sharpen their preparedness for a similar crisis, directing senior officers to frame a comprehensive protocol on response, firing, and training for such situations, has learnt. Delhi Police Commissioner Satish Golchha, sources said, has directed the Special CPs of two units — Operations and Training — to jointly draft a detailed standard operating procedure (SOP) that clearly spells out the roles and responsibilities of every unit involved in counter-terror and active-shooter style responses.

Moving from chaos to control in the shortest possible time in such situations and ensure maximum coordination and minimum confusion — this is set to be the goal for different units as the SOPs are framed.

According to a senior police officer, the new protocol will detail unitwise responsibilities for district police, PCR units, SWAT teams, specialised units of the Special Cell and crime branch, traffic units, and the Special Branch unit. "Under this SOP, they will define the exact work distribution; who takes initial command at the scene and how command is transferred when specialised units arrive; how perimeter security and crowd control are to be enforced in real time, communication channels between field units, control rooms, and senior leadership to avoid overlaps," the officer said.

Apart from this, the Special CP (Training) is planning to map all the operational requirements into regular and scenario-based training modules.

"He is expected to include simulated active shooter periodic refresher courses for the beat police staff, station staff and first responders on rapid assessment and decision-making in the crisis situation," the senior officer said.

## Real-time data, source identification: Delhi govt set to develop AI-enabled data system with IIT Kanpur to combat air pollution

**This evidence will enable agencies to act at the source of pollution, rather than resorting to blanket bans and reactive measures," the official statement read.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Hyperlocal source apportionment, sensor-based monitoring and real time data are expected to be among the highlights of an artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled decision support system (DSS) that is likely to be developed for the Capital as the Delhi government explores a collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur to tackle the air pollution in the city.

Under the leadership of CM Rekha Gupta, we are ensuring that Delhi's fight against pollution must be scientific, sustained and strategic. We are moving towards a model where decisions are driven by real-time data, source identification and measurable outcomes, not reactive measures," Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa was quoted as saying in an official statement on Sunday. The focus, he said, is to move away from blanket restrictions towards targeted action at pollution hotspots. The

proposed collaboration, according to an official statement, aims to strengthen the ability of the Capital to identify pollution sources at a granular level, assess their impact, and enable



targeted, timely interventions across sectors. "A key pillar of this approach is dynamic source apportionment, which will help authorities scientifically identify contributions from dust, transport, industry, biomass burning and regional factors.

This evidence will enable agencies to act at the source of pollution, rather than resorting to blanket bans and reactive

measures," the official statement read. "Our objective is clear — pollution control cannot be seasonal. Delhi needs a 365-day action framework that combines technology, governance and enforcement, working in complete coordination backed by data driven decision-making," the Minister added.

At present, the Capital relies on Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology Pune's (IITM) DSS. Experts have flagged concerns in the past about the reliability of data. The Indian Express had reported on October 1 that Delhi's Air Quality Early Warning System (AQEWS) has been able to forecast high-pollution days with more than 80% accuracy, but its reliance on outdated emission inventories and the tendency to underpredict pollutant levels limit its effectiveness, according to a study by the public policy think tank Council on Energy, Environment, and Water (CEEW).

## Verdict of a disappearing shield: How the Aravallis edge towards erasure

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

As one of the world's oldest geological formations, the Aravalli Hills range fights for its existence after the Supreme Court redefined its peaks. According to the new definition on the recommendations of the federal government, only peaks or parts of the hills that are 100 metres above the ground level are to be treated as Aravalli hills.

Protests have erupted across northern India, especially the NCR, Haryana and Rajasthan, with citizens worried about the degrading air quality, the effects of which are widely felt, particularly during the winter months. However, earlier this year, sudden dust storms led to an overnight dip in the city's air quality index (AQI).

While walking across the city during that time, one could feel dust clinging to the skin. Now, dust storms are not a new

phenomenon. Delhi has been witnessing these storms for years, but the frequency of these storms, along with hyper-temperatures and warmer nights, has only been observed largely in the last few years.

**Into the wild**

As one crosses that area and drives through the Delhi-Faridabad highway, a pit stop while entering the Mangarbani village shows the mined area on the hills.

"However, after a ban by the Supreme Court in 2009, mining was stopped in these locations," said Sunil Hasrana, a local environmental activist who has long been associated with the fight to preserve the Aravallis.

Hasrana pointed out some of the green patches on the hills that surrounded their locality.

"After mining was stopped in these areas, the greenery was restored in the following years. If the recent orders from the SC get implemented in the upcoming years, then these hills might go back to ground zero and have a detrimental effect on the villagers and the residents of Delhi NCR," he added.

## Edited videos, blackmail: How a crime syndicate ran a system of fear to target traffic cops across Delhi

**For over a decade, a crime syndicate ran a parallel system of fear, recording and coercing traffic police across the Capital. This is their story.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

"Picture this," a senior-rank Delhi Police officer says. "Traffic policemen, heads bowed, sitting on the floor. Raju leans back in a chair, completely calm and unshaken." He pauses and lets the image sink in. Then he adds, "That's how scared they were of him".

The image has circulated quietly within the Delhi Police for months. The description comes from one of the officers investigating the case. Rajkumar Meena, also known as Raju (45), is now at the centre of a sprawling crime syndicate. According to the police, over more than a decade, the syndicate allegedly blackmailed traffic officers using doctored videos to extort

what they describe as the "breaking point". "It came", the officer says, still shaken, "when the syndicate targeted women traffic officers". According to the police sources, Raju threatened to circulate purported videos showing women traffic officers



accepting bribes unless they complied with his inappropriate demands.

"As the complaints from women traffic officers began to reach senior ranks, the response hardened," a police officer said. Then, on the instructions of Delhi Police Commissioner Satish Golcha, nearly 15

FIRs were clubbed together, and the case was brought under the stringent provision of the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA).

"A step that signalled just how seriously the police now viewed the threat," a senior-rank police officer said. That fear and unease surrounding Raju can also be sensed far from the police offices — on the main road in North West Delhi's North Ghonda area. The single-lane road is lined with closely packed houses and small shops selling sweets, jewellery, and groceries. At one of the grocery stores, when asked about Raju's house, a man in his twenties shakes his head, denying any knowledge of the name. He then pulls a phone from his pocket, presses it to his ear — as if pretending to take a call — and gestures with his right thumb towards a blue building.

The blue structure is a primary public school. Wedged between it and a small jewellery shop is a three-floor building bearing a prominent board: 'Surekha Rani, Advocate'. From the second floor, an

elderly couple peeps out and shouts, "Wo aayi nahi hai abhi..."

Surekha Rani, a Delhi-based lawyer practicing at Karkardooma district court, is Raju's wife. Raju, she says, was questioned for days before his arrest. "On the fourth day, he went to the police station at 5 pm. By 6:30 pm, a 14-15 page FIR was registered. They had already made up their mind," she alleges, struggling to catch her breath.

Surekha says she married Raju nearly two decades ago and moved almost immediately to their current residence. What she knew of her husband, she claims, was that he was involved in some form of transport business. Investigators describe a far more elaborate operation.

Police officers say Raju had cast a long shadow over some traffic police officers for more than a decade. A single word — tafteech (investigation), typically used by police officers to make criminals squirm — had come to mean something very different in this case. Whispered in police stations, it signalled that a sting operation had been conducted.

## NEWS BOX

**ISL future in flux as Odisha FC weigh exit, Jamshedpur commit to revised season****NEW DELHI. (Agency)**

The Indian Super League finds itself at a crossroads ahead of the 2025–26 season, with financial uncertainty and format concerns threatening to delay clarity on how, or even whether, the league will begin on time. A crucial online meeting between ISL clubs and the All India Football Federation on Sunday laid bare the divide, with Jamshedpur FC committing to the season and Odisha FC openly weighing a possible exit. Jamshedpur emerged as the only club to formally confirm participation regardless of the league's final structure. Odisha, however, conveyed to the federation that it would reconsider playing this season if additional costs are imposed without a commercial partner backing the league. These contrasting positions were presented during discussions involving all top-tier clubs and a four-member AIFF panel that included deputy secretary general M Satyanarayana.

One major takeaway from the meeting was agreement on abandoning the traditional home-and-away format. With several stadiums unused for close to nine months and

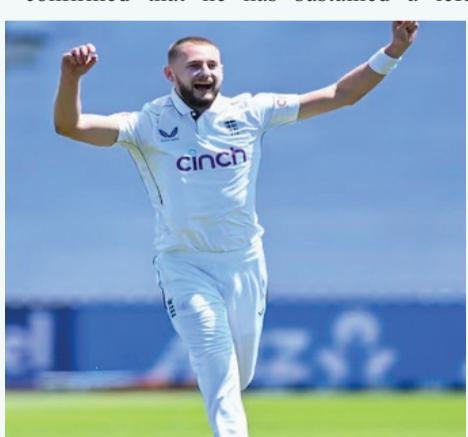


limited time to prepare them, the league is now likely to be staged at two or three centralised venues. While the AIFF had earlier indicated a February 5 start, final dates remain undecided. Key points discussed during the meeting included: Season format: A centralised model, either conference-based or a single-leg league where teams play each other once. Match count concerns: The proposed format would see teams play only 15 matches, falling well short of the AFC's mandatory 24-match requirement for continental qualification. AFC exemption request: Clubs have asked AIFF to seek a one-time waiver from the Asian Football Confederation due to exceptional circumstances. Cost-sharing model: Total operational expenses are estimated at Rs 35–40 crore, with each club potentially contributing around Rs 2.5 crore. Financial pressure remains a central concern. Club representatives warned that if even one or two teams opt out, the remaining clubs could be forced to shoulder a higher share of costs.

**Ashes: Gus Atkinson ruled out of Sydney Test, England to not name any replacement****NEW DELHI. (Agency)**

England fast bowler Gus Atkinson has been ruled out of the fifth and final Test of the ongoing Ashes 2025–26 after pulling his hamstring during the fourth match in Melbourne. Atkinson helped England claim the first wicket on Day 2 when he had nightwatchman Scott Boland (6 off 17) edging one to wicketkeeper Jamie Smith.

However, he left the field grimacing in pain after completing his fifth over, having pulled his hamstring. Atkinson subsequently underwent scans, which confirmed that he has sustained a left



hamstring injury. As a result, he will not be featuring in the final Test, which is scheduled to be played in Sydney. "England Men's seamer Gus Atkinson has been ruled out for the remainder of the Ashes tour after scans confirmed he has sustained a left hamstring injury. The Surrey right-arm fast bowler left the field after bowling his fifth over of Australia's second innings during England's victory at the MCG in the fourth Test. England will not call up a replacement for the fifth Test, which gets under way in Sydney on 4 January," informed the England and Wales Cricket Board in a press release. Atkinson played three Tests in the series, scalping six wickets with best figures of 2/28 in Melbourne. He also scored 73 runs with the bat from five innings, with a best score of 37 during the first Test in Perth. The speedster becomes the third English bowler to be ruled out of the ongoing series. Atkinson was brought into the playing XI for the fourth Test in place of fast bowler Jofra Archer, who was also ruled out of the remainder of the Ashes series with a side strain ahead of the Melbourne Test.

**John Cena's farewell chaos, a Rocky dilemma: Why 2025 wasn't WWE's finest year**

**A year that was supposed to be a brilliant one for WWE ended being one of the frustrating ones from a creative standpoint. The company fumbled John Cena's farewell run and the absence of The Rock and the return of Brock Lesnar failed to inspire a revival for them in 2025.**

**LIVERPOOL. (Agency)**

When Cody Rhodes defeated Roman Reigns in the main event of WrestleMania 40, it seemed like one of the best moments in WWE history. The finish of the match was laced with the presence of some of the biggest superstars in the company's history, with The Rock playing his role as the Final Boss to perfection, John Cena coming to the aid of Rhodes, and The Undertaker adding to the awe factor of the entire spectacle. Rhodes finished his story, Reigns' stint at the top

came to an end, and overall, everyone was in love with pro wrestling once again. This was exactly what fans had expected when Triple H, aka Paul Levesque, took charge of creative. As a result, anticipation was sky-high heading into 2025, with so many stories waiting to be explored.

There were several superstars ready to be thrust into the spotlight and become the next big stars. Questions loomed large — what was next for Rhodes and the Final Boss? Adding to the intrigue, John Cena revealed that 2025 would be his final year as an active wrestler as he prepared to pivot away from the business. All of this meant expectations were incredibly high for WWE in 2025. However, what fans eventually witnessed left many disappointed and, at times, furious. Inconsistent booking and a lack of compelling storylines led many to label the year as one of WWE's weakest from a creative standpoint. While there were a few bright spots, with superstars like Bron Breaker emerging as a potential future cornerstone, many others were relegated to side roles without any clear direction. The Rock's involvement, which was supposed to elevate the product, only added to the confusion.



So where exactly did WWE go wrong in 2025? Let's take a closer look.

**LAST TIME IS NOW FAILS TO CONNECT**

The moment Cena announced his retirement, all eyes were on how WWE would handle the final run of a modern-day great. Over the years, legends such as Ric Flair, Shawn Michaels, and The Undertaker had all been allowed to bow out on their own terms, with their final runs being fondly remembered by the WWE Universe.

At the Royal Rumble, Cena made his intentions clear — he wanted to break Flair's record for the most World Championship reigns in WWE history. The Cenation Leader quickly became a favourite to win the

Rumble and headline WrestleMania. When the final two came down to Cena and Jey Uso, the crowd was firmly behind the veteran. However, WWE opted to give "Main Event" Jey Uso the victory, a decision that ultimately didn't do much for either man. Cena then entered the Elimination Chamber, needing a major win to secure his spot at WrestleMania. At the same time, The Rock expressed his desire to have Rhodes as "his guy," further complicating the WWE Championship picture. Cena survived the Chamber match and punched his ticket to WrestleMania. Then came one of the most shocking heel turns in WWE history. Cena turned his back on everything he stood for, aligned with The Rock, and set his sights on Rhodes. Many expected this to mirror Hulk Hogan's nWo transformation — a full-blown Hollywood villain version of Cena. The buzz was incredible. However, Cena's heel run quickly fizzled out. While there were a few standout moments and matches, the overall execution lacked depth. Cena himself later admitted that the run was rushed, with The Rock's absence and creative missteps playing a major role in its failure.

**Joe Root backs Brendon McCullum, Ben Stokes to continue despite Ashes loss****NEW DELHI. (Agency)**

Star England batter Joe Root has backed the Ben Stokes and Brendon McCullum-led team management despite England losing the ongoing Ashes series in Australia. England are trailing the five-match rubber 1–3 with one match remaining. The Ben Stokes-led side travelled to Australia with a fresh and renewed batting approach, aiming to end their long-standing series victory drought in the country. While England did manage to register a Test win in Australia after almost 15 years, they failed to win the series, thereby continuing their 15-year-long agony Down Under. Despite what has been a largely forgettable series, Root has thrown his support behind McCullum and Stokes to continue in their respective roles, stating that the team has improved significantly under their leadership. In terms of the playing group, we're absolutely committed to the management. They've been outstanding. You look at the group of players that we've got and you look at the guys that were involved in the team when I was captain four years ago, and you look at their records individually, and every single one of them has improved as a player. This team has improved as a team. So I think it would be silly for the amount of hard

availability. Each student will be entitled to purchase one ticket only, priced at Rs 750 for the East Stand (Lower) and Rs 950 for the East Stand (Second Floor), inclusive of applicable taxes. The process for availing these tickets has been designed in two



stages. Students must first register online and upload valid documents — such as a current institutional identity card or recent academic records — through the official ticketing portal. Applications will be verified by MPCA, and successful applicants will receive a confirmation link

via WhatsApp or email to complete the purchase. The registration window opens at 11 am on December 31, 2025, and will remain live until the quota is exhausted or 5 pm on January 1, 2026, whichever is earlier. A similar mechanism has been put in place for

specially-abled spectators, underlining MPCA's emphasis on inclusivity. Tickets for this category are priced at Rs 300 and allocated in the North-East Gallery. Applicants must upload a valid government-issued disability certificate as part of the verification process. Each eligible spectator can purchase only one ticket, and those requiring wheelchairs are expected to arrange them independently on match day.

All tickets — regular, student concession, and specially-abled — will be sold exclusively online through 'District by Zomato', MPCA's official ticketing partner. General ticket prices for the match range from Rs 800 to Rs 7,000 across various stands and pavilion levels, with additional payment gateway and courier charges applicable.

**Sunil Gavaskar questions ICC's double standards: MCG pitch will be rated 'good'****MANCHESTER. (Agency)**

Legendary India cricketer Sunil Gavaskar has taken a dig at the ICC (International Cricket Council) over what he described as double standards in the process of awarding pitch ratings. Gavaskar said that the pitch used for the recently concluded fourth Ashes Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) is likely to be rated 'good', despite the Test match ending inside two days. The opening day of the MCG Test witnessed 20 wickets fall — the most in Australia on Day 1 of a Test match since 22 wickets tumbled at the Adelaide Oval in 1951. A further 16 wickets fell on Day 2, as the entire Test match was completed within 142 overs.

Following the end of the game, Gavaskar recalled how the pitch for the first Ashes Test in Perth was rated 'very good' despite that match also ending inside two days. Taking a swipe at the ICC, he said that since there was a new match referee, Jeff Crowe, instead of Ranjan Madugalle for the Melbourne Test, the pitch might be rated 'good' rather than 'very good'. "Since there

is a new match referee, Jeff Crowe, for the Melbourne and Sydney Test matches, the rating could be different. Since 36 wickets



fell in the Melbourne Test instead of 32 in Perth, Crowe might drop the word 'very' from the 'very good' that Madugalle gave for the Perth pitch and rate the MCG pitch as good. Surprises never cease, of course, so we may get another rating," Gavaskar wrote in his column for Sportstar.

He also offered a sarcastic take on Indian pitch curators, referring to how ICC match

referees often portray them through poor pitch ratings, calling them horrible groundsmen. "The curators, or as we found

out about the person in charge at the MCG, the Director of Turf, may make a human error and get it slightly wrong, but they are not as devious as those 'horrible groundsmen' in India who do not even prepare a pitch and expect the batters to score runs on them. Tut tut," Gavaskar added. The Melbourne Test became the third-shortest Test ever played in Australia in terms of balls bowled, with just 852 deliveries. Only the first Test of the ongoing series in Perth, which concluded after 847 balls, and the 1932 fixture between Australia and South Africa at the same venue, which lasted 656 balls, were shorter on Australian soil. After the match, both captains, Steve Smith and Ben Stokes, criticised the pitch for being too favourable to bowlers. Former players and commentators also expressed concern over the excessive assistance offered to seamers.



work and things that have been done," Root was quoted as saying by the BBC. Root admitted that there were areas for improvement for the England side but credited the team for making giant strides collectively as a group. "Yes, we can be better and there are certain areas that we'll continue to keep working at, but that management works extremely hard. They might do things in a slightly different way and it might appear different to what we're used to as an English team, but I think we've made great strides as a group and a big reason for it is because of the guys that we have behind us," Root said. The former England captain also expressed disappointment at having lost his fourth Ashes series in Australia, but praised the team for winning a Test in the country for the first time since 2011.

**T20 World Cup 2026: Australia set to make key Pat Cummins call despite injury**

**Australia remain confident Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Tim David will be fit for the T20 World Cup. Despite injury concerns, selectors are set to include the trio in their provisional squad.**

**MANCHESTER. (Agency)**

Australia are expected to stick with Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Tim David in their T20 World Cup plans despite injury concerns surrounding the trio. With the provisional squad deadline approaching, selectors remain confident that all three players can be fit in time for the tournament



in Sri Lanka and India. Cummins is set to be named in Australia's initial 15-man squad, although a final decision on his availability will be taken closer to the World Cup. The fast bowler has played only one international match since suffering a lumbar stress injury in July, returning briefly for the Adelaide

Test before being rested again as part of a cautious recovery plan. He is scheduled to undergo further scans on his back in four weeks to assess his readiness. Tim David's place in the plans has also been retained despite a recent setback. The big-hitting batter picked up a grade two right hamstring

strain during a Big Bash League match on Boxing Day, ruling him out for the remainder of the BBL with Hobart Hurricanes. However, his rehabilitation timeline suggests he should be available for selection when the World Cup begins in early February. Hazlewood has made steady progress in his own recovery, having resumed running after dealing with a hamstring injury and Achilles soreness. Team management remain optimistic about his availability, with his rehabilitation tracking well ahead of the tournament. Australia's group-stage schedule could further ease the pressure on returning players. Their opening World Cup match is on February 11, with Ireland and Zimbabwe first up, before a meeting with Sri Lanka on February 16. That buffer could allow extra recovery time, particularly for David. The provisional squad, due to be submitted before the ICC deadline on January 2, may still change depending on Big Bash League form or any fresh injury concerns.

## Gold & Silver prices hit new highs: Experts' forecast for 2026

Kolkata .(Agency)

Gold and silver prices have recorded a sharp rise on December 29, 2025, Monday. Both precious metals are trading around new highs in the domestic market. According to the latest update on Monday morning, strong buying was seen in gold and silver. The trend of investors seems to be moving towards safe investment once again. This rise in prices at the end of the year is attracting people's attention. Today, the price of 24-carat gold in India has reached Rs 1,40,750 for 10 grams. The price of one gram of gold was recorded at Rs 14,075. 22 karat gold was available for Rs 1,29,021 for 10 grams. The price of one kilogram of gold has reached Rs 14075000. Due to the steadily rising prices, the movement in the market has intensified. Silver price rally continues. Gold prices have risen sharply today. The price of one kilogram of silver has reached Rs 2,53,650. The price of one gram of silver has been recorded at Rs 254. Rs 2537 rupees has to be paid for 10 grams of silver. This rise in silver prices is surprising to investors.

Gold and silver on MCX

Gold remains in a strong position on the MCX as well. The price of 10 grams of gold in India MCX stood at Rs 140385. The price of silver on MCX was recorded at Rs 2,53,551 for 1 kilogram. Both metals touched high levels during the trading session. There is a bullish atmosphere in the domestic futures market.

Support from the international market

The price of gold in the US Comex market was around \$4536 per ounce. At the same time, the price of silver was recorded close to \$79 per ounce. The impact of fluctuations in the international market was also shown on the Indian market. Due to global uncertainty, investment in precious metals has increased. As the Gold prices continue to rise, Pranav Mer, Vice President, EBG Commodity & Currency Research, JM Financial Services Ltd, said that in 2026 the yellow metal is not expected to rise as much as it did in 2025. However, the current moment may push up prices towards USD 5,000-5,200 and Rs 1,50,000-1,55,000 on the MCX in 2026.

Silver prices have recorded a huge jump in 2025. "Silver is supported by strong industrial demand from new-age sectors, relatively cheap pricing compared to gold, and a sharp rally in the industrial metals after Trump's tariff announcement in April 2025," Pranav Mer of JM Financial Services, said.

## L&T wins order for Hyderabad Greenfield Radial Road phase-2 project

New Delhi.(Agency)

Infrastructure major Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Monday said it has bagged a "significant" order for the Hyderabad Greenfield Radial Road project.

The contract, awarded to L&T's transportation infrastructure business vertical, covers the second phase of the project in Ranga Reddy district. L&T classifies an order amount ranging between Rs 1,000 cr to Rs 2,500 cr as 'significant'. It involves the construction of a "22.3 km 3+3 lane access-controlled radial road" to boost connectivity in the region, L&T said in a filing to BSE. The Hyderabad Greenfield Radial Road phase-2 holds strategic importance as the first radial connector linking Hyderabad's outer ring road to the proposed 340-km regional ring road, enhancing regional connectivity. It will improve access to key growth hubs like IT corridors and electronic city, driving economic development in Telangana's Ranga Reddy district. Under the contract, the infrastructure firm will construct a 3.6 km long viaduct, minor bridges, underpasses and culverts. "Construction of service roads on both sides, extensive retention structures, storm water drainage system, footpaths, cycle track and landscaping works is also in L&T's scope," the filing said. Larsen & Toubro is engaged in engineering, procurement and construction projects, hi-tech manufacturing and services operating across multiple geographies.

## OpenAI's new job offer brings \$500 mn pay and high stress: Details here

New Delhi.(Agency)

OpenAI founder Sam Altman has announced a new senior job role that will pay more than half a million dollars a year. The role focuses on reducing the risks linked to rapidly advancing artificial intelligence (AI) systems. Altman said the company is hiring a "Head of Preparedness", calling it a critical position at a time when AI models are improving very quickly. He warned that the job will be demanding, saying, "This will be a stressful job, and you'll jump into the deep end pretty much immediately."

The compensation for the role is \$555,000, along with equity. Sam Altman highlights AI impact on mental health.

Altman said OpenAI has already seen early signs of AI affecting mental health in 2025. In a post on X, Altman said, "This is a critical role at an important time; models are improving quickly and are now capable of many great things, but they are also starting to present some real challenges. The potential impact of models on mental health was something we saw a preview of in 2025; we are just now seeing models get so good at computer security that they are beginning to find critical vulnerabilities." Altman explained that while OpenAI has systems to measure how powerful its models are becoming, the company now needs a deeper understanding of how these capabilities could be misused. He said the goal is to limit harmful uses of AI in products and in the real world, without stopping people from benefiting from the technology. He added that this work is difficult because there are few past examples to learn from. Some ideas that seem helpful at first can create unexpected problems later.

## PAN-Aadhaar not linked yet What happens if you miss December 31 deadline

If your PAN is still not linked with Aadhaar, the clock is ticking. The Income Tax Department has set December 31, 2025 as the final deadline, and missing it could make your PAN inoperative, affecting tax filing and refunds.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Income Tax Department has reminded PAN cardholders to complete the PAN-Aadhaar linking process before the December 31, 2025 deadline. Those who fail to do so risk their PAN becoming inoperative, which can disrupt several tax and financial activities. According to the department, PAN cards that are not linked with Aadhaar within the prescribed time will not be valid for key transactions, including income tax filing and refund claims. WHAT IS PAN-AADHAAR LINKING?

## Hindustan Copper share price jumps over 11%: What's driving the rally

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shares of Hindustan Copper surged as much as 10% in early trade on Tuesday, emerging as one of the top gainers on Dalal Street amid strong global copper prices and renewed buying interest in metal stocks. The Hindustan Copper stock was trading at Rs 528.55, up 11.13%, at around 11:24 am on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). In the past five trading sessions, shares of the company have gained a whopping 32%. The sharp move reflects optimism around copper's demand outlook, tight global supply conditions and expectations of improved earnings visibility for domestic producers. COPPER PRICES GAINING MOMENTUM

One of the key triggers behind the rally is the continued strength in global copper prices. Copper prices have remained elevated on the back of rising demand from electric vehicles, renewable energy projects, power transmission and large-scale infrastructure spending. As a critical input for EVs, solar installations and grid expansion, copper is a direct beneficiary of the global energy transition.

## Indian Railways in 2025: Vande Bharat in Kashmir, Kavach enhanced, over 99% electrification - The milestones

New Delhi.(Agency)

The year 2025 was a historic year for Indian Railways. This year Railways took many big decisions related to technology, environment, passenger comfort, safety and network expansion. These steps helped accelerate the railways towards building a modern, digital, inclusive and future-ready transport system.

Vande Bharat and expansion of high-speed trains In 2025, the Vande Bharat Express network expanded rapidly. Advanced version schemes like Vande Bharat 4.0 have also appeared, which aims to provide more speed and better comfort. The introduction of semi-high-speed trains and the trial of upgraded trainsets promoted faster and better intercity travel. During the Calendar year-2025, 15 Vande Bharat express trains were introduced. The Vande Bharat Sleeper is expected to be launched in 2026. Big focus on

PAN-Aadhaar linking is the process of connecting a person's Permanent Account Number with their Aadhaar number. This helps the tax department verify identities and prevents the issue of multiple PAN cards to the same individual. At present, keeping this link active is compulsory for all taxpayers in India. WHY LINKING PAN WITH Aadhaar IS IMPORTANT

Under Indian tax laws, PAN-Aadhaar linking is no longer optional. If the two are not linked, the PAN may be declared inoperative. An inoperative PAN can cause problems while filing income tax returns, delay refunds, and affect various financial transactions such as investments and bank-related activities. In fact, the Central Board of Direct Taxes has issued a special directive for individuals who obtained their PAN using an Aadhaar enrolment ID instead of a final Aadhaar number. These individuals have been given time until December 31, 2025, to complete the linking using their actual Aadhaar number. If the process is not completed within this timeline, the

PAN may become inoperative from January 1, 2026, which could lead to difficulties in tax compliance and other financial matters. HOW PAN-AADHAAR DEADLINES HAVE CHANGED

that no penalty will be charged if this group completes the linking within the extended deadline. However, other PAN holders who missed earlier cut-off dates may still have to pay a Rs 1,000 fee under Section 234H.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOUR PAN BECOMES INOPERATIVE?

If a PAN becomes inoperative, taxpayers may not be able to file income tax returns or receive refunds. Certain financial transactions may also get blocked, and higher tax may be deducted at source in some cases until the PAN is made active again. HOW TO CHECK PAN-AADHAAR LINK STATUS

Taxpayers can easily check whether their PAN is linked with Aadhaar through the Income Tax e-filing portal. By entering PAN and Aadhaar details, the portal shows the current linking status. If the link is missing, a clear message appears on the screen.

## Why experience-led design is becoming a core growth driver for hotels

New Delhi.(Agency)

The hospitality industry will continue to change significantly in 2026, when it will be clear that all travellers are looking for more than just a place to stay, but will also be searching for a purpose and community through their experiences, and contact with themselves and who they are. As guest expectations evolve, design has moved from being a visual enhancer to becoming a core business engine. Today, aesthetics, technology, sustainability, and emotional engagement intersect to shape both guest satisfaction and commercial growth. Everyone from villas to luxury hotels in hospitality is experiencing this transition first hand. Therefore, hotels and resorts that will be successful too will not only design spaces for their guests, but they will also design a story.

The design and creation of space in the hospitality industry is much more than decorating; it is through the experience (how guests experience that space). The competitive advantage will be based upon the ability to create multiple sensory experiences for all guests' check-in until the guest checks out. The hotels/resorts that have created an experience for their guests had much higher satisfaction feedback and a positive review, which has built a loyal database for them. The guests have felt an emotional connection with the property due to the ambience, the design elements, and the comfort it has given them. It's more of an experience rather than just a stay. Design is now an "invisible salesman." It is guiding the decision-making process and providing places of comfort and a basis for bringing guests back. The main influences are:

**Spatial Flow:** Creating a guide for the natural flow of guests and providing a clear definition of zones, an uncluttered path, and smooth transitions from public to private. **Lighting:** A layered lighting that creates a balance between the guest's mood and surroundings. It also helps in highlighting the art and design elements to set the first impression when a guest walks into the lobby or enters a restaurant. **Biophilic Design:** Utilising natural materials, greenery, water features, and organic patterns that reduce stress levels and elevate the richness of guest perceptions of luxury when designing hotels. The guests reach your property after having a long travel journey. Hence, such a design plays an important part in giving those soothng vibes. **Technology Integration:** Smart controls for lighting, temperature, entertainment, and privacy—empowering guests to tailor their stay effortlessly.

Market participants say sustained firmness in overseas copper prices has improved the earnings outlook for mining and metal companies, including Hindustan Copper.

SUPPLY CONCERN ADD TO



MOMENTUM

Supply-side challenges have further supported copper prices. Disruptions at major copper mines, declining ore grades and delays in capacity expansion projects globally have tightened supply. With demand continuing to rise, the imbalance between supply and consumption has kept prices firm, adding to bullish sentiment around copper-linked stocks.

COMPANY-SPECIFIC OPTIMISM LIFTS STOCK

Investors are also factoring in expectations of better operational performance at Hindustan Copper.

The company has been focusing on capacity expansion, improving ore output and increasing metal production across its mines. Any improvement in volumes, combined with elevated copper prices, has a direct and positive impact on margins and profitability.

Traders say the stock has seen renewed interest from both institutional and retail investors, aided by broader optimism around metal stocks and the PSU theme.

TECHNICAL BREAKOUT SEEN

From a technical perspective, the sharp rise suggests a breakout from recent consolidation levels. Analysts tracking the stock say the rally has come on strong volumes, indicating fresh buying rather than short covering alone. If momentum sustains, the stock could see further upside in the near term, though volatility is likely given the sharp run-up.

technology and safety

Railways have taken steps to modernise the old train control system this year. The Kavach automatic train protection system was implemented and the task of finishing level crossings without gates was accelerated. Almost complete electrification of the broad gauge network was also a major achievement, which made the operation more clean.

Green Initiative: Hydrogen-powered train

Moving towards green transport, Indian Railways has developed the first hydrogen train made in the country. It was prepared for a trial run, making India one of the countries working on zero-emission trains.

Digital improvements for travelers

In 2025, the passenger reservation system was redesigned and digital platforms like Swaral started. Aadhaar authentication has been made

mandatory in Tatkal ticket booking. IRCTC has disabled more than 3 crore suspicious user IDs to prevent fake bookings. Special facilities have also been increased for the elderly, pregnant women, disabled and visually impaired travellers.

Railway network expansion and special trains The Railway ministry informed that Indian Railways commissioned over 900 kilometres of new track lines during the period April 1 and 30 November 2025. Ever since the Modi government came to power in 2014, a total 34,428 km of new track has been laid across Indian Railways at an average of 8.57 km/day, which is more than twice the average daily commissioning (4.2 km/day) during the period 2009-14. 89 special trains were run in December to handle the crowd of passengers. New superfast trains like Golden City Express were also introduced, which strengthened tourism and economic corridors.

## Silver breaches Rs 2.5 lakh per kg for 1st time: Why waiting may be wiser

The sharp rise has put silver firmly in the spotlight, forcing investors to confront a familiar question at uncomfortable levels: is it still worth buying, or is patience the better strategy now?

New Delhi.(Agency)

Silver prices have crossed a major psychological milestone in India, breaching Rs 2.5 lakh per kg for the first time, as a powerful global rally continues to push the metal higher. The sharp rise has put silver firmly in the spotlight, forcing investors to confront a familiar question at uncomfortable levels: is it still worth buying, or is patience the better strategy now?

WHAT IS DRIVING SILVER'S RECORD RALLY?

Silver's surge has been driven by a mix of global and domestic factors. Internationally, silver prices have hit fresh record highs, supported by strong industrial demand, tight supply conditions and rising investor interest. Silver's

growing use in solar panels, electronics, electric vehicles, and battery technologies has added a structural layer of demand that did not exist at this scale in earlier cycles. At the same time, global inventories remain constrained after years of underinvestment in mining.

With supply struggling to keep pace, prices have moved sharply higher once investment flows returned. In India, the jump in global prices, combined with currency movements, has translated into record domestic rates, pushing silver beyond Rs 2.5 lakh per kg.

WHY SOME EXPERTS ARE URGING CAUTION

Not everyone believes this is the right time to rush in. Market expert Avinash Gorakshakar cautions investors against chasing silver after such a sharp run-up. "When everybody starts buying the same commodity at elevated levels, then something is wrong," he has said, noting that silver has crossed levels that even technical analysts did not anticipate.

While Gorakshakar remains positive on silver's long-term demand outlook, he expects near-term profit booking.

According to him, silver's structural story over the next two to three years remains strong, but short-term corrections are very much possible. "At these levels, even if you want to buy silver ETFs or take direct exposure, it makes sense to wait," he said,



adding that a correction of around 10 percent or possibly more cannot be ruled out. Such a pullback, he believes, could offer a better entry point for long-term investors.

TECHNICAL INDICATORS STILL STRONG

On the other hand, technical indicators suggest that silver's broader uptrend is still intact. Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich

Money, says silver continues to dominate the precious metals space and has significantly outperformed gold in this cycle. According to him, the rally is being driven by a powerful combination of safe-haven demand, accelerating industrial usage and persistent structural supply deficits. "The bullish structure remains intact, with corrections staying brief and contained," he has said. From a technical standpoint, Ponnudi sees further upside potential in international markets, with silver targeting higher levels as long as key support zones hold. In the domestic futures market, MCX silver prices are hovering near record levels, mirroring the strength seen globally. Ponnudi says the long-term bullish framework on MCX remains valid as long as prices stay above Rs 2.5 lakh. Any deeper corrective move, he believes, is likely to find support in the Rs 2.4 lakh to Rs 2.35 lakh zone. "A decisive breakout above current levels could trigger the next leg of the rally," he said, adding that the broader trend continues to favour accumulation on dips rather than aggressive buying at peaks.



# Avneet Kaur

**Serves Sexy Winter Fashion In Switzerland With Burgundy Knit Look**

Winter fashion, but make it cute, cosy and quietly luxe, that's the vibe Avneet Kaur is serving in Switzerland. Set against postcard-perfect views, her look blends warmth, style and effortless holiday glamour. In her latest Instagram post, Avneet is dressed in a rich burgundy knit sweater that instantly becomes the hero of the outfit. The sweater features textured ruffle detailing down the front and on the cuffs, adding a soft, romantic touch to an otherwise snug winter staple. The deep wine shade pops beautifully against the snowy-blue skies and green landscapes, making it ideal for a European winter escape.

She pairs the sweater with fitted light-blue denim jeans that balance the bulk of the knit and keep the silhouette clean and flattering. The jeans are tucked neatly into knee-high brown leather boots, a classic winter choice that's both practical and polished. The boots ground the look and add a subtle equestrian feel, perfect for strolling through scenic European towns.

Her accessories are minimal but smart. Slung across her body is a compact brown leather shoulder bag with a gold chain strap, adding a hint of luxury without overpowering the outfit. She finishes the look with slim, tinted sunglasses in warm tones, which add a retro edge and protect her eyes from the bright alpine sun. Avneet's hair is pulled back into a sleek ponytail, keeping the look fuss-free and letting the outfit shine. Her makeup is understated yet sharp with defined brows, soft blush and a muted lip that complements the burgundy knit. The setting elevates everything. She's surrounded by Switzerland's winter beauty, towering Christmas trees decorated with red ornaments, snow-capped mountains in the distance, bare-branched trees lining open walkways, and sunlight breaking through dramatic clouds. It's the kind of look that says winter vacation without trying too hard.

Avneet Kaur began her journey in showbiz as a tiny powerhouse on *Dance India Dance Li'l Masters* in 2010, later joining *Dance Ke Superstars*. By 2012, she had smoothly transitioned into acting with *Meri Maa*, followed by *Tedhe Hain Par Tere Mere Hain* and a memorable stint on *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa*, where she became the youngest contestant ever. Her acting graph only climbed higher with roles in *Savitri – Ek Prem Kahani*, *Ek Mutthi Aasmaan*, and *Hamari Sister Didi*, before making her film debut in *Pradeep Sarkar's Mardaani* (2014). Over the years, Avneet impressed in *Chandra Nandini* and as the fierce *Yasmine* in *Aladdin – Naam Toh Suna Hoga*. On the big screen, she's been seen in *Chidiakhana*, *Tiku Weds Sheru*, *Luv Ki Arrange Marriage*, and the murder mystery *Party Till I Die*. Most recently, she starred in *Love in Vietnam*, India and Vietnam's first co-production, alongside *Shantanu Maheshwari* and *Kha Ngan*.



# Sobhita Dhulipala

**Calls Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar 'Mind Blowing', Lauds Sara Arjun: 'What Talent'**

Ranveer Singh starrer *Dhurandhar*, directed by Aditya Dhar, has ruled the box office ever since it released in theatres on December 5. The film has been receiving great reviews, and a number of celebrities including Akshay Kumar, Shilpa Shetty, Anupam Kher, Ram Gopal Varma, and many others praised the film. Now, Sobhita Dhulipala has also shared her review of *Dhurandhar*, and gushed over the Ranveer Singh starrer. She called it a 'mind-blowing' film unlike any other, and also praised Sara Arjun for her brilliant performance.

#### Sobhita Dhulipala Reviews Dhurandhar

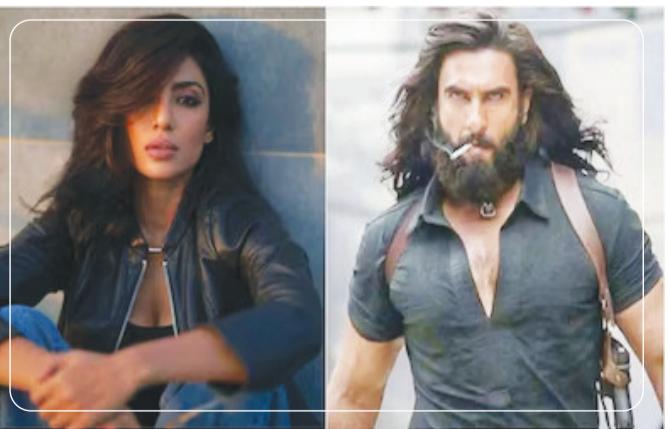
On Saturday, Sobhita Dhulipala took to her Instagram stories to share her review of *Dhurandhar*. Impressed with the film, she praised Ranveer Singh, Sara Arjun and director Aditya Dhar. "DHURANDHAR Wow. Wow. Wow. Breathtaking. Mind blowing. Inspiring. Unlike any other. !!! SUPREME !!! @adityadharfilms @ranveersingh (@folded hand and salute emojis) @saraarjunn! What talent, what beauty," she wrote. Check out her Instagram story below!

Meanwhile, *Dhurandhar* has rewritten the Bollywood box office record books. The Ranveer Singh-led spy thriller has emerged

as the highest-grossing Hindi film ever in India, overtaking long-standing benchmarks set by recent blockbusters.

On its 22nd day in cinemas, the Aditya Dhar directorial added a little over ₹15 crore to its tally, taking its net domestic collection to ₹648 crore. With this, *Dhurandhar* has surpassed the lifetime earnings of Shah Rukh Khan's *Jawan*, which had collected ₹640 crore in India, and claimed the top spot among Bollywood releases.

#### About Dhurandhar



*Dhurandhar* follows Intelligence Bureau Chief Ajay Sanyal, played by R. Madhavan, who leads a high-stakes mission to dismantle a terror network in Pakistan. Ranveer Singh portrays a Punjabi youth recruited from prison and trained to infiltrate Karachi's criminal underworld. *Dhurandhar* stars Ranveer Singh in the lead, supported by Sara Arjun, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal, Akshaye Khanna and R. Madhavan. Its sequel, *Dhurandhar 2*, will hit cinemas on March 19, 2026.

**Bigg Boss 19 Winner Gaurav Khanna Shares Emotional Tribute For Salman Khan On His 60th Birthday**



Bigg Boss 19 winner Gaurav Khanna marked Bigg Boss 19 host Salman Khan's birthday with an emotional and deeply personal tribute. Fresh off his Bigg Boss win, Gaurav took a moment to thank the superstar host who not only guided his journey inside the Bigg Boss house but also became a major source of inspiration for him. Sharing the same on social media, Gaurav wrote, "Over the years, I've always admired Salman Khan Sir not just the superstar that the world sees, but the person who inspires so many journeys, including mine. That admiration is honestly one of the biggest reasons I chose to step into Bigg Boss 19. To share that space, to be guided by him, and then to hear him say that he would love to work with someone like me felt nothing short of a dream coming true. Moments like these remind you that manifestations do come alive when you believe and stay true to your path. On this special day, taking a moment to wish the one and only Bhaijaan, Salman Khan, a very happy birthday. Grateful always."

Throughout Bigg Boss 19, Salman Khan openly praised Gaurav's gameplay, calling him one of the most sincere and emotionally intelligent contestants the show has seen in recent years. From praising his calm approach to appreciating the dignity with which he handled conflicts, Salman repeatedly acknowledged Gaurav as a rare player who stayed real and rooted. In fact, the megastar also said that he will work with Gaurav soon. Meanwhile, Salman Khan marked his 60th birthday with a grand midnight celebration at his Panvel farmhouse on December 27, hosting close friends, family members and colleagues from the film industry. The event was marked by an elaborate spread, thoughtful arrangements for guests and multiple celebrations through the night and early morning.

**'Was Given No Freedom': Malti Chahar Recalls How Parents Would Hit Her After Fights**



**Malti Chahar opens up about her traumatic childhood, revealing how she was given no freedom and how her parents would hit her after fights at home.**

Actor Malti Chahar, who recently made headlines for her stint in the Bigg Boss 19 house, has spoken about her traumatic childhood and revealed how life took a difficult turn after seventh grade, and how there was a lot of tension between her parents that she and her siblings had to witness. Malti Chahar shared, in conversation with Siddarth Kannan, "A lot of things went wrong after my seventh grade." And while joking that she got her periods, she added, "I have adenomyosis, a condition that causes extreme menstrual pain. I used to be hospitalised almost every month. There is no permanent cure for it. You can take hormonal medication, but it comes with side effects, so I try to avoid it. Even today, I live with constant pain. Nobody understood me or my pain, even in the Bigg Boss house. The problem is that it is extremely difficult to explain to people with the attitude: 'Sabko hota hai, iska kya hai itna'?"

"There was a lot of tension between my parents. They fought constantly, and being the elder sibling, I had to witness all of it. My brother had started playing cricket, which kept him away from these fights," Malti further added.

While talking about how she was forced to keep her hair short till 11th grade, she said, "I had told my father that I wanted to participate in the Miss India beauty pageant and pursue a career in the entertainment industry. However, he wanted me to become an IPS officer. He believed that by keeping me away from these ambitions, I would focus on my studies. I was forced to keep short hair until the 11th grade and was given no freedom. It affected me deeply."

Speaking about the impact of domestic violence and fights between her mom and dad, Malti said, "We lived in a 1BHK house; where do you go when your parents are fighting? Many times, my mother would hit me after arguing with my father, and at times, my father did the same. They never realised the impact it had on me. They had compatibility issues and have been living separately for the past 13 years."

# Mascara Mistakes

## that you need to fix

Mascara is one product that can make a huge, visible difference to your face, and also give you the pleasure of looking all natural and subtle, if done right. This magic wand can open up your eyes and make them look less tired. However, if you don't follow the rules of the trick when you are applying your mascara, you might end up with clumpy, spidery lashes that look ghastly. Here are a few common mascara mistakes that many women are guilty of...

### My mascara smudges!

If you end up with racoon eyes at the end of the day, you should know that you have chosen the wrong mascara. The simple trick is to use waterproof ones, which stay put for hours. Remember that using eye creams that are too oily could be one of the reasons behind even a waterproof mascara smudging. So go easy on the oily eye creams during the day and opt for water-based under eye creams.

### It dries out too quickly

Don't stock up mascara that you scarcely use. If you regularly

use the product, it won't dry out soon. Choose to buy mascara that is not terribly expensive, yet, is of good quality and from a trusted brand. Ideally, mascara has a shelf-life of only three-four months, so you should replace it after that.

### I don't like the clumpy look

If your mascara wand does not have the right brush bristles, then you might end up with clumpy lashes. Choose a spoolie brush with a helix design to help coat your lashes evenly. When you take the wand out, make sure to brush off the excess on a face tissue first — this will ensure you have enough product on the spool to coat the lashes evenly.

### Can't remove it well

If you are using a waterproof formula that stays on for long, you must invest in a good quality eye make-up remover. Be gentle and avoid pulling the lashes while you are at it.



## Struggles of a wavy- haired girl



While there are several hairstyles that rock the wavy hair look, most normal girls born with it go through some strange struggles that only they understand. Here's a few of them...

### All haircuts look the same

You spend several hours looking up for the most stylish haircut you wish to get, go to the best salon and choose the most expensive stylist - but the end result looks no different than the previous one. In a day or two, every new haircut looks the same on you, since your hair falls in the same old way.

### Too hard to find a hair product

There are a number of shampoos, conditioners and serums for straight-haired people, and a good amount for those with curly locks so that they can maintain those defined curls. However, the apt product that will help your hair tame down and look manageable — way too difficult to find.

### Fancy hairstyles are just an illusion

Several people might advise you to try some of the best hairstyles like a fishtail braid, a milkmaid side bun or something more fancy, but the moment you try to implement them you realise your hair are way too knotted and wavy to try to keep these styles in place, which always leaves with only one style- hair down style.

### It always changes course

The moment you wash them, they become so straight and that makes you happy. The next morning your wake up and your hair has changed course and has gained like some thousands of new waves from nowhere, and even if you comb it several times, they don't seem to straighten up.

## 5 sunscreen mistakes you're probably making

Summer's well and truly here, which means that everyone's going sunscreen crazy. However, it isn't enough to slather on sunscreen just before you head outside. Here are some common mistakes that people make when it comes to sunscreen:

### Wearing old sunscreen

If you don't use sunscreen regularly, you may end up using an old one that's been lying around in a bag from your last beach vacation, or one that you've forgotten was in your glove compartment through the winter months. It's important to check the expiry date before you use it and if it's past that, throw it away. Do the same thing if you've kept sunscreen in a hot place like the glove compartment because heat can cause active ingredients in it to break down and potentially harm your skin.

### Not using sunscreen often enough

You need to use sunscreen all through the year, even during the monsoon and winter. This is because we are exposed to UV radiation, which is what sunscreen protects your skin against, all the time. You also need to reapply sunscreen every few hours because it gets absorbed by the skin, just like moisturizer.

### Relying on sunscreen in your makeup

This is a big no-no because the SPF in your moisturizer or foundation usually isn't high enough to really protect your skin against UV radiation. Also, it's best to use sunscreen over your makeup so that it gives your skin the best possible protection.

### Not using sunscreen indoors

Many people don't realize that they are exposed to UV radiation even when they're out of the sun, like when



they're in their cars or offices. Your skin is still exposed to it even when your car windows are rolled up, or when the office window that you sit next to is closed but the blinds aren't closed. Moreover, there are studies that say that the fluorescent lights used in offices can emit UV radiation, so it's important to apply sunscreen even if all you do is head from your car to work and back again.

### Not applying sunscreen everywhere

Most people apply sunscreen only to the parts of their body that are directly exposed to sunlight. However, not all fabrics are UV-resistant, so you also need to apply sunscreen to parts of your body that are covered up by your clothes before you wear them.

## Why women should not use male grooming products

Are you the kind of partner who loves to use her husband's or boyfriend's grooming products — be it perfumes (they smell divine, don't they), or even razors (they sure are sharper).

However, it may not be as harmless as it seems. Did you know that they can adversely affect your skin?

Says dermatologist, Dr Geeta Oberoi, "A man's skin structure considerably differs from a woman's as hormonal profiles which greatly influences the skin is different in men and women.

Usually, the male skin is 20 to 30% thicker, in addition to being firmer, and is more capable of water retention.

The male skin exfoliates at a higher rate than woman's. Therefore, skin products that are made for men, take all these factors into consideration. Hence, long-term use of grooming products meant for men by women, can lead to faster rate of skin damage. It can also cause early onset of wrinkles and dark patches."



## How to take care of your feet



Constant exposure to dirt, grime and sun can wreak your feet. Wearing open sandals in this weather can not only make your feet to crack but also cause tanning. Here are a few ways you can take care of them -

### Wash your feet when you get back home and apply a moisturising lotion

Right after you get into your house, make sure that you wash your feet and apply a thick layer of moisturising cream to protect it from getting cracked. Further, the cream will also take care of the cracks that you have already developed on your feet.

### Apply a layer of nourishing gel on your feet before you go off to bed

For those who have cracked heels, it is recommended to use a nourishing gel before you go off to bed every night.

Once you apply the gel on your feet, you should ideally wear socks to protect it from bacteria present in the air.

A pedicure in two weeks is a must

If you thought that pedicure is a treatment that should be done only once in a month, then you're wrong. If you already suffer from cracked feet, it is recommended that you get a hydrating pedicure done at least once in every two weeks. A moisturising pedicure with aloe vera or chocolate is great for your feet.

Get hold of a feet balm

There are plenty of products available in the market that ensure that your feet is free from bacteria and dead skin cells. One of them is a nourishing feet balm which protects your heels from getting cracked.