



No third party: India's firm reply as China joins Trump in Pak truce credit war

India has consistently maintained that the ceasefire on May 10, following Operation Sindo, was reached following direct talks between New Delhi and Islamabad.

New Delhi (Agency)

India has firmly rejected China's claims that it mediated between New Delhi and Islamabad during the military conflict earlier this year, reiterating that no third party was involved in the ceasefire decision. India has consistently maintained that the ceasefire on May 10, following Operation Sindo, was reached following direct talks between the Director General of Military Operations (DGMOs) of the two countries.

"We have already refuted such claims. On bilateral issues between India and Pakistan, there is no role for a third party. Our position has been clarified on several occasions in the past that the India-Pakistan ceasefire was agreed to directly between the DGMOs of the two countries," the source told.

The development comes after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi did a Donald Trump and claimed that Beijing mediated several global conflicts, including the standoff between India and Pakistan in May. "This year, local wars and cross-border conflicts flared up more often than at any time since the end of WWII," Wang Yi said at an event on Tuesday. He further said that China, in an attempt to "build peace that lasts",



has taken an objective and neutral stance while focusing on addressing both symptoms and root causes.

Following this Chinese approach to settling hotspot issues, we mediated in northern Myanmar, the Iranian nuclear issue, the tensions between Pakistan and India, the issues between Palestine and Israel, and the recent conflict between Cambodia and Thailand," the Chinese foreign minister said.

CHINA JOINS CREDIT WAR

China is the latest after US President Donald Trump to claim that it stopped the military conflict between India and Pakistan this year. While this was a first such claim by China,

Trump has repeated it a hundred times - at global forums, press meets and even during bilaterals with foreign leaders. However, China's claim only exposes its hypocrisy as it firmly backed Pakistan and allegedly provided military assistance during the three-day hostilities. It is a different matter that Chinese air defence systems came a cropper as India struck 11 military bases deep inside Pakistan at the height of the conflict.

China's role has also come under scrutiny after top Army general Rahul R. Singh said Beijing used the confrontation as a "live lab" and gave real-time inputs to Pakistan.

Pakistan was at the front. China was providing all possible support... In the last five years, 81% of the military hardware that Pakistan is getting is all Chinese.

China is able to test its weapons against other weapons, so it's like a live lab available to them," he said at an event in Delhi. India and Pakistan were locked in a brief but intense military confrontation in May, triggered by a terror attack in Pulwama on April 22, which claimed 26 innocent lives. India responded with Operation Sindo, destroying nine terror camps in Pakistan.

KARC-2 recommends deploying surplus staff from low-workload units to service-delivery functions

BENGALURU (Agency)

The Karnataka Administrative Reforms Commission-2 (KARC-2) has recommended the redeployment of surplus staff from low-workload units to frontline and service-delivery functions for human resource optimisation and vacancy management in government departments.

Former Minister and KARC-2 Chairman R V Deshpande submitted the 10th report of the commission to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday. The commission conducted a comprehensive review of sanctioned, filled, vacant and

outsourced posts across departments, boards and corporations. Cadre and Recruitment Rules were examined to assess relevance to present-day functional requirements, said a note from the commission.

While recommending to the government to fill long-pending frontline vacancies on priority, particularly where vacancies have persisted beyond one year and affect citizen-facing services, the commission asked the government to freeze further outsourcing in Group-C and Group-D cadres where sanctioned



regular posts exist but remain unfilled.

The commission recommended rationalising district-level staffing patterns by linking sanctioned strength to population, beneficiary load, regional backwardness and departmental annual action.

service intensity, converting redundant clerical posts into technical or multi-tasking posts, based on functional requirements and departmental inputs, and abolishing obsolete and functionally irrelevant posts identified through Cadre and Recruitment Rules review. To strengthen governance systems, the commission recommended institutionalisation of a Reform Monitoring Unit (RMU) within the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms (DPAR-AR), integration of reform recommendations into departmental annual action.

Punjab Govt has spent over 800 crore on modernisation of Punjab Police in last 3 years, with major upgrades set to continue in 2026: DGP Gaurav Yadav

The Sikh Times

CHANDIGARH, December 31: To make policing more efficient, responsive, and professional as per the commitment of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav on Wednesday outlined an ambitious and technology-driven "Vision 2026" for the Punjab Police, centered on a massive infrastructure and capability upgrade. A key focus is the upgrade of the Dial 112 Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) with dedicated Dial 112 Central control room building to be established at Mohali with the cost of ₹52 crores, while a fleet of vehicles will be augmented with the cost of ₹50 crores. "Our target is to drastically reduce the current average response time of 12-13 minutes to just

7-8 minutes," said the DGP, while adding that simultaneously, District Control Rooms across Punjab are also being upgraded with an investment of ₹25 crores to ensure seamless coordination and faster incident management, directly contributing to the reduced response time target. DGP Gaurav Yadav, accompanied by IGP Headquarters Sukhchain Singh Gill, was addressing a press conference to share the future roadmap of Punjab Police. For border security, DGP Gaurav Yadav said that the Second Line of Defence will see 2,367 CCTV cameras installed at 585 locations along the International Border at a cost of ₹49.58 crores, which will be act as force multipliers. The Anti-

Drone System (ADS) fleet will be expanded from the current three oper-



ational systems to an additional six under procurement, with 10 more to be procured later in a phased manner, he said, while adding that Drone Response Teams (DRTs) have also been pressed into action, and will be

greatly synergised with Village Defence Committees (VDC) members' involvement in the coming year. Highlighting the continuous modernisation drive, the DGP revealed that the Punjab Government has spent over ₹800 crores on modernisation of Punjab Police in the last three years. He said that all the SP rank officers in the field have been given new vehicles, besides, all the Police Stations and Police Posts have also been equipped with new vehicles. He added that the state government has approved a mega police building project worth ₹426 crores to be spent over the next three years. This includes new headquarters for the Cyber Crime division at Phase 4 in Mohali, new police lines in Nawanshahr and Malerkotla districts, and 11 other new police station buildings. **Contd.....page-7**

Delhi Government's Talks With Ola, Uber Signal Comeback Of Carpooling

Aggregators told the government they need time to make technical and operational changes, following which they have been asked to fully roll out ride-sharing features within a month.

Delhi Govt Pushes Carpooling After Talks With Ola, Uber, Rapido. The government held talks with major cab and mobility aggregators, including Ola, Uber and Rapido, as part of its effort to ease traffic congestion and curb rising vehicular emissions, signalling a comeback of carpooling.

Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa chaired a high-level meeting on Wednesday, where the government asked aggregators to restart ride-sharing services at the earliest and begin work on a separate carpooling framework. "The sooner we start large-scale ride sharing and carpooling, we will see fewer vehicles on our roads. I appeal to the people of Delhi to actively choose ride sharing and



carpooling options so that together we can reduce pollution levels in the city," Sirsa said. Officials said ride-sharing, which allows multiple passengers to book the same cab, is expected to resume soon.

Aggregators told the government they need time to make technical and operational changes, following which they have been asked to fully roll out ride-sharing features within a month.

Carpooling, officials clarified, will be treated as a non-commercial shared mobility option. Aggregators have been directed to start developing in-app carpooling modules or independent platforms, while the Transport Department will examine the legal framework needed to enable and regulate carpooling in Delhi.

The meeting also focused on cutting down the number of private vehicles on the road. Aggregators were urged to expand bus and shuttle services, especially on office routes and high-demand corridors, to improve last-mile connectivity and reduce peak-hour pressure. Electric mobility was prominent in the discussions. The government said privately registered electric vehicles could be allowed to

operate under aggregator platforms without commercial permits or registration fees. The Transport Department has been asked to study the legal, regulatory and safety implications, including insurance and passenger safety norms.

Aggregators were also advised to promote green ride options and introduce in-app features that show users the emission savings from shared or electric rides. They were asked to share route-wise data to help the government identify congestion hotspots and plan targeted traffic interventions. Reiterating the government's wider pollution control strategy, Sirsa said action is being taken on vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, dust and waste management alongside enforcement measures.

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News box

MCG seals seven properties over 1.8 crore tax dues**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Enforcement teams of the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) sealed seven properties across the city on Tuesday for non-payment of property tax dues amounting to Rs 1.8 crore, despite multiple notices being issued to the owners. The sealing drive was led by zonal taxation officer Pankaj Kumar, along with tax inspector Pankaj Saluja and their team. According to MCG officials, two properties in Kherki Daula had outstanding dues of Rs 30,82,747 and Rs 19,72,508, respectively. In Mohammadpur Jharsa, two properties were found to have pending tax of Rs 27,35,536 and Rs 22,65,126. A property in Narsinghpur with outstanding dues of Rs 14,04,967 and another in Pace City-I owing Rs 18,17,872 were also sealed. In addition, a property in Palam Vihar with pending tax dues of around 752 lakh was sealed during the drive. MCG commissioner Pradeep Dahiya said, "Property tax is the main source of income for the MCG, through which the city's cleanliness, roads, sewers, water supply, and other civic amenities are operated. Strict action like sealing will continue against defaulters who do not deposit tax despite repeated notices." He appealed to property owners to deposit their outstanding property tax on time to avoid punitive action, adding that the corporation will intensify its campaign against tax defaulters in the coming days. The sealing drive resulted in the collection of Rs 7 crore in a single day. So far, MCG has collected Rs 285 crore in property tax during the current financial year, with officials expecting further increases by March 2026 as enforcement continues. This year, MCG and MCM have also introduced artificial intelligence (AI) to boost property tax revenue. Using AI, residents with outstanding dues are being identified and approached, their queries resolved, and assistance provided in paying pending taxes.

Contractor held for labourer's death in Gurgaon**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

A contractor was arrested on Tuesday, a day after a 20-year-old labourer died during basement excavation work in Sector 56. Police said the excavation was allegedly carried out without safety equipment and beyond permitted working hours.

The accused was identified as Shivpukar Giri (46), a resident of Deoria district in UP. Police said they received information through the police control room about several labourers being trapped under a collapsed mound of soil at Plot No. 26 in E Block. A police team reached the site and found a crowd gathered outside the plot. Locals informed them that labourers were buried during excavation work. Rescue operations were launched immediately, and the crime scene unit and a magistrate were informed. Two labourers were initially pulled out, while another remained trapped. After continued digging, the third labourer was rescued. All three were taken to Marengo Hospital in Sector 56. One of them, Badal, was later shifted to Civil Hospital in Sector 10, where he was declared dead. His body was sent to mortuary.

Govind, one of the injured workers, later submitted a complaint stating that the contractor had brought him, his brother Roshan, and three others — Uday, Sagar and Badal — from their villages for basement excavation work. He alleged that although work usually stopped in the evening, the contractor forced them to continue for two additional hours after dark, assuring extra payment. Based on the complaint, a case was registered under the sections for negligence and culpable acts leading to death.

Ghaziabad man allows shell co in his name to park syrup racket funds**Ghaziabad.(Agency)**

A 50-year-old man was arrested near Hindon metro station on Tuesday for his alleged role in a cough syrup smuggling racket in which codeine-based syrup, categorised as a narcotic drug, was moved illegally and proceeds were routed through a shell firm registered in his name. According to police, Deep Prakash Gupta of Hardoi allowed the masterminds to use his name to set up a paper company against a commission. The firm's bank account was used to park and route money linked to the smuggling. The racket came to light on Oct 18, when three persons were arrested in UP's Sonbhadra with illegal cough syrup worth Rs 3 crore. During investigation, Sonbhadra police learnt that some gang members were in Ghaziabad and the supply chain ran from Delhi. The information was shared with cops from Ghaziabad, who agreed to carry out a joint operation with their counterparts in Sonbhadra. Following a tip-off on Nov 4, the police team arrested a total of eight gang members from a transport warehouse on Meerut Road. The cops recovered 1,150 cartons of cough syrup from four trucks parked there, including 850 cartons of Eskuf and 300 cartons of Phensedyl, which were hidden between lime sacks. Those arrested included Saurabh Tyagi (37), a resident of Indirapuram and one of the masterminds. An FIR was registered against all the accused under relevant sections of the NDPS Act at Nandigram police station.

Piyush Kumar Singh, ADCP (crime and cyber), said evidence pointed to financial links between Gupta, described as the owner of 'DP Enterprises', Saurabh Tyagi, owner of RS Pharma, and Vishal Upadhyay, owner of Vanya Enterprises. Although transactions worth Rs 5 crore came to light between the three of them in 2024-25, police found 'DP Enterprises' had no existence and operated only on paper to convert illegal money from the smuggling of syrups into legitimate earnings. Gupta said he had worked in the medicine business in Odisha since 2005. There, he would contact medical representatives (MR) and take medicines to supply to Delhi, due to which he frequently travelled to the capital. During this period, he met Vishal Upadhyay. In 2023, when his work in Odisha stopped, he returned to Hardoi, and in 2024, went to Delhi again to meet Vishal Upadhyay. Vishal introduced him to RS Pharma's owner, Saurabh Tyagi, and told him about cough syrup smuggling, saying he would get a commission of Rs 2 to Rs 3 per bottle. He only needed to register an agency in his name. Lured by the commission, he got the licence for DP Enterprises registered at a Delhi address in Dec last year, "he said.

Noida.(Agency)

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has suspended the affiliation of GD Goenka High School in Sohna for one academic year (2026-27) after finding multiple violations of the board's bylaws. After reviewing the school's reply sent on Sept 29 along with the inspection committee's observations, CBSE barred the school from admitting students in classes IX and XI for the next session. Students currently enrolled in classes IX to XII, however, will be permitted to continue in the same school, subject to stringent safety compliance. In its submission to CBSE, the school stated that it was operating on 7.68 acre with separate entry and exit, within a total land holding of 60 acre. CBSE, however, recorded a discrepancy between this claim and the information uploaded by the school on OASIS Portal, which reflected a land area of 18,211 sqm as on Sept 18.

The board rejected the school's explanation, noting that it was inconsistent with the inspection committee's physical verification conducted on Aug 19, which confirmed that three institutions were functioning from the same campus and within the same building.

The inspection report stated that GD Goenka High School operated from a portion of the ground and first floor on the left side of a common reception area. It further noted that GD Goenka World School, an IB school, was running from part of the ground and first floor on the right side of the same common reception, and GD Goenka University, a private university, was functioning from the same premises. CBSE held that this arrangement violated clauses 14.10 and 9.1.3 of the affiliation bylaws, which prohibit sharing of school infrastructure with other institutions. CBSE also observed that the campus did not have a

concrete boundary wall on all four sides and that a common reception for all three institutions created serious safety and security concerns. The board warned that a shared campus without physical segregation could expose school students to bullying, harassment, and unwarranted interaction with higher-education students, reiterating that every school must maintain a fully secured campus inaccessible to outsiders. It also recorded that the school was not in a position to segregate the institutions into separate campuses within a short time.

TOI tried to contact the school authorities but didn't receive a response. Beyond infrastructure and safety lapses, the inspection committee reported admission irregularities, including students admitted without transfer certificates from previous schools, and the absence of a composite science lab as required under CBSE norms. The board flagged deficiencies in records, stating that

documentation was not maintained in strict compliance with bylaws, standard operating procedures, and CBSE circulars and notifications issued from time to time.

Taking what it termed a "sympathetic view" in the interest of students, CBSE ordered a one-year suspension to allow corrective action. The school has been directed to disengage other institutions from its premises, ensure exclusive use of the building and grounds by school students with separate entry and exit from the main road, construct a six-foot-high concrete boundary wall around the campus to demarcate school land, and ensure that no infrastructure or human resources are shared with any other institution. It must also establish a Composite Science Lab, maintain records as per CBSE regulations, ensure complete student safety, and comply strictly with all norms and bylaws in future.

Frauds borrow Rs 2cr from senior citizen in Gurgaon, con him, 1 arrested**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

A man was arrested from Hyderabad on Monday for allegedly cheating a senior citizen under the pretext of cancer treatment for a woman.

Officials from the economic offences wing (EOW) said the fraud was carried out in collusion by two persons, with fake bank transfer screenshots and emotional blackmail used to extract money. The case came to light after a senior citizen registered a complaint, alleging that a woman from Nepal, identified as Yangji Sherpa, alias Yana, duped him of Rs 2.21 crore. The complainant said that he met the woman at a spa centre last year.

"The complainant said that the woman sought money repeatedly for one year, claiming it was needed for her sister's cancer treatment, and sent forged screenshots of bank transactions to create an impression that she was returning the funds. Whenever the complainant demanded his money, she allegedly threatened to end her life," the officer said. A case was registered at Sector 40 police station and the investigation was handed over to EOW-I. Cops found the involvement of a second accused, Azhar Ahmad (30) from Hyderabad. "The accused disclosed that he executed the fraud along with his female friend Yangji Sherpa," the officer said, adding Ahmad was nabbed from Hyderabad on Dec 29. Police said Yangji received around Rs 2.18 crore from the complainant between May 2024 and April 2025. To maintain trust, about Rs 18 lakh was sent back to the complainant at intervals, while forged screenshots of additional transfers were shared to falsely indicate repayment. Investigators said the bank account used to receive the money belonged to Yangji Sherpa, while the mobile number used to communicate with the complainant was registered in Ahmad's name.

Multi-level car parking to community centre: CM Saini launches Rs 113cr infra projects in city**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Chief minister Nayab Singh Saini on Tuesday inaugurated and laid the foundation for development projects worth around Rs 113 crore in the city. Projects worth Rs 73 crore were inaugurated, including a multi-level car park in Sadar Bazar costing Rs 55 crore and a community centre in Sector 14 costing Rs 18 crore. The projects for which the foundation stone was laid include a model road and drain in Sector 16 at a cost of Rs 8.32 crore, a sewerage and drinking water pipeline in Sector 17A at a cost of Rs 6.28 crore, hostel construction work in Sector 16 at a cost of Rs 6.67 crore, and special repair work in the new vegetable market at a cost of Rs 19.41 crore. The much-awaited multi-level car parking facility in Sadar Bazar was completed a few months back and the inauguration was pending. To ensure smooth management, MCG outsourced

its operation and maintenance to a private company for a period of 5 years. The car parking facility was constructed over 3,187 square metres, with 3 basements and 6 floors and can accommodate 218 cars. The facility is expected to ease parking woes in one of the city's most crowded and oldest markets. Construction of this parking facility was completed in 2025 after a delay of 4 years. Scheduled to be completed in Dec 2021, the project was delayed. Saini was in the city for the 'Viksit Gurugram Maharat', organised by MLA Mukesh Sharma. CM, addressing the crowd, said that out of 217 promises made in the assembly election manifesto, 54 promises were fulfilled in just 1 year, while work on 163 promises is in progress. "This govt is the people's govt. The govt's resolve is 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas,'" said CM. Assuring development of the city, CM said, "Govt will leave no

stone unturned in the comprehensive development of Gurgaon, and continuous and effective steps will be taken in the direction of making it the most developed city in the country." Listing the works done by the BJP-led govt for Gurgaon assembly constituency, the CM said that in the last 11 years, development works worth Rs 1,909 crore were carried out in the Gurgaon assembly constituency, and out of 67 announcements made for the area in the past 11 and a half years, 39 were completed and work on 11 is in progress. Meanwhile, Saini said that efforts are being made to control the pollution through the operation of electric buses and modern waste management technologies. "Around 300 electric buses will join the fleet of city buses, and works are being carried out to improve sanitation management to deal with air pollution," said CM.

BMW speeding through dense fog mows down cyclist in Noida**Noida.(Agency)**

A 49-year-old cyclist died after a BMW speeding through fog crashed into him from behind in Nithari village late on Monday night. Ashok Sharma, a resident of Kharja in Bulandshahr, was returning home on his bicycle after work when the BMW hit him near Saraswati School, close to pillar number 30 of the Noida elevated road, around 11pm. The impact flung him in the air, hurled him several metres ahead and snapped the bicycle into two halves. He suffered grievous injuries in the head and other body parts. After striking the cyclist, the BMW went out of control and crashed into a nearby electricity pole, damaging it badly, before climbing onto the road divider. Passersby who witnessed the accident informed police and rushed Sharma to a nearby hospital, where he succumbed to injuries. A team from Sector 20 police station reached the accident spot and arrested the driver — Mankul Mahajan (39), a property dealer living in a society in

Sector 44. Police said Mahajan attempted to flee after the accident, but locals caught him and handed him over to cops.



An FIR was registered against Mahajan for causing death by negligence and rash driving. The BMW — bearing a VIP registration number UP16-EB 4444 — was seized and taken to the police station. Its front portion was badly damaged. A senior police officer said the accident occurred amid foggy conditions and compromised visibility, when speed limits are already reduced on major stretches.

"The car was being driven at a very high speed, which appears to be the primary cause of the crash. We sent the driver for a medical examination, whose reports were unclear on whether he was drunk at the time of the accident," the officer said. A video of the car's interior was widely circulated on social media, purportedly showing cigarette packets, lighter and empty liquor bottles inside the vehicle. The clip triggered public outrage and demands for strict action against the BMW driver. Sharma, who was employed as a supervisor at an institution in Sector 10, was the sole earning member of his family. After autopsy, the body was handed over to the family, who are expected to perform the last rites on Wednesday. The family demanded compensation from the state govt and strict punishment for the accused. Police pointed out that Sharma was linked to earlier controversies as well, including an alleged online betting case in 2024.

Haryana Police seek red corner notice against Dubai-based gangster**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Haryana Police has initiated proceedings to obtain a red corner notice (RCN) against businessman-turned-gangster Inderjit Singh Yadav. Police have already secured look out circulars (LOCs) against him in five cases registered in the city. A police officer said Inderjit is currently living in Dubai with his wife. He owns Gem Records Entertainment, which operates under the name Gems Tunes. Two murder cases have been registered against him, including one at Rohtak's Sadar police station in connection with the murder of Himanshu Bhau, Deepak Nandal, and Sunil Singh alias Sardhania. Sardhania, a Sonipat resident, fled to Dubai after jumping parole in Haryana last year. While trying to reach the US, he was allegedly kidnapped by donkey-route agents and later brought back to India from Nicaragua, where Haryana Police arrested him earlier this

year. Police said Inderjit paid money to secure Sardhania's release from the agents. Inderjit is also alleged to have links with prominent political leaders and film actors and to own multiple properties in India and abroad. While he lives in Dubai with his wife, his two children live in a society in the city. Punjab Police had earlier provided security at his flat in the city, but it was withdrawn earlier this month. "We will bring him back soon," a senior Haryana Police officer said. Meanwhile, Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted searches at 10 locations in Delhi, Gurgaon, and Rohtak in connection with an ongoing money-laundering case against Inderjit, his associates, Apollo Green Energy Ltd, and other linked entities under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 on Dec 26 and 27. ED said the probe was initiated on the basis of more than 15 FIRs

and charge sheets filed by Haryana Police and UP Police under various provisions of the Arms Act, 1959, BNS, 2023, and IPC, 1860. The cases linked to illegal extortion, coercive loan settlements involving private financiers, arms-based intimidation, and commissions allegedly earned from such activities.

According to ED, the investigation found that corporate entities, including Apollo Green Energy Ltd, borrowed large amounts of cash from Jhajjar-based private financiers and issued post-dated cheques as security. Inderjit allegedly acted as an enforcer, facilitating coercive settlements of high-value loan transactions and disputes running into hundreds of crores. ED claimed these settlements were carried out through threats, intimidation, and use of armed associates and local gangs, with links to organised crime syndicates operating from abroad. In

return, Inderjit allegedly earned commissions amounting to hundreds.

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How was the year 2025 for the workers and employees of Punjab? Reaction of various organizations

The Sikh Times Malagar khamano

Fatehgarh Sahib, 31, December: Convenor of Punjab Employees and Pensioners Joint Front, Satish Rana, said that although the employees and pensioners did not achieve any economic gains in the year 2025 and despite several rounds of elections this year, we were successful in saving the common platform of the employees for the year

2026, even though all the employee federations and independent organizations of Punjab were on one platform, we were not successful in bringing the employees of both the clerical secretariats into this big common front, so although 2025 remained dull for the employees from the government's point of view, for 2026, I will try to move towards the by-election in four years. The Chief Minister of the state is not holding meetings with employees

sioners along with the employees of both the secretariats. State President of Democratic Employees Federation, Jarnamit Singh, said that the Punjab government has Regarding the demands of pensions, the Chief Minister had only held one meeting in the name of a meeting in Jalandhar for the by-election in four years. The Chief Minister of the state is not holding meetings with employees

and pensioners, it becomes clear that governments change but policies do not change, so nothing new has been achieved for the employees in the year 2025. The year 2025 has left a lot of questions for the employee movement! Teacher leader Bikramdev Singh said that the teacher organizations have a leading role in the entire employee movement. In the year 2025, the employ-

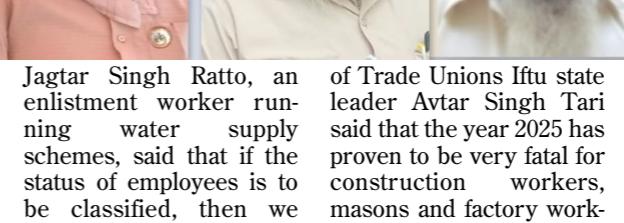
ee movement is going through a period of serious crisis, which is also affecting the employees. Although the objective conditions are in favor of the employees, the employee leaderships could not decide the direction of joint struggles in the current circumstances, although the experience of the farmers' movement was before us. In the year 2025, due to the teachers' movement being active, new recruitments continued only in the education department, even though it was decided by the previous governments, no new recruitments were made in any other department. Therefore, employee leaders will have to abandon their narrow-minded approach and become the head of the entire movement. Outsourcing employees' leader Sarabjit Singh Bhullar said that it is not right to blame the governments alone, the leaders of our raw workers' organizations also do not want the unity of all raw workers, the category of which the leader is, he wants that first I become established, the second may or may not be, he said that when the Act 2016 was made, the leaders withdrew their hands to implement it, due to which the outsourcing workers were left stranded. In the year 2025, the gap in the salaries of outsourcing workers has become even wider, with such low salaries in the midst of extreme inflation, it is very difficult for the

families of outsourcing workers to survive. Therefore, we demand from the government that the minimum wage base should be increased or salaries should be made equal to Chandigarh.

ment has not laid off any worker but has increased the salaries of the workers working on our enlistment. So in terms of wages, the year 2025 has been good for us to some extent. Indian Federation

this change, while the capitalists will squeeze more blood from the workers, these laws will also have an impact on the masons and workers related to construction. Labor Union leader Balwinder Singh Simru said that in the year 2025, Punjab was hit by floods, due to which construction work was greatly delayed, laborers and masons faced a huge backlog in construction work and he said that while on the one hand, the hands of the laborers and masons were idle due to the floods, neither the labor department held the hands of the construction workers nor did they provide any assistance, rather some communal forces tried to break the unity of the migrant and Punjabi workers, which

could not be successful due to the unity of the justice-loving people and workers of Punjab. Therefore, the year 2025 was also a challenging one for the construction workers and masons.



Jagtar Singh Ratto, an enlistment worker running water supply schemes, said that if the status of employees is to be classified, then we come in the seventh category. Punjab is the only state in the whole of India where workers were made contractors. This policy was not brought by the Bhagwant Mann government but it was brought by the previous governments. Therefore, although this government has not regularized the raw workers, this govern-

NAME CHANGE

I Ruby Kanjaria W/O Vijay Kumar R/O New T block RZ-101 A, Uttram Nagar West delhi 110059 changed my name to Ruby.

NAME CHANGE

I Ruby Kanjaria W/O Vijay Kumar R/O New T block RZ-101 A, Uttram Nagar West delhi 110059 changed my name to Ruby.

NAME CHANGE

I, Mohammad Ashraf S/o Abdul Razzaq R/o A-2304, Ground Floor, Lal Kuan, Chungi No.2, Badarpur, Delhi-110044 have changed my name to Mohammad Ashraf.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform you that Mr. Narendra Bhata intends to purchase a Freehold Residential Southern Side Second Floor (without roof rights), built up on Plot Bearing Nos. R-20A and R-20B, out of Khasra Nos. 183 and 184, situated at Block R-1, Bhagwati Garden, Village Nawada, Uttram Nagar, New Delhi-110059, from Mrs. Gurcharan Kaur. Mrs. Gurcharan Kaur purchased the said property from Mrs. Asha Goel vide Sale Deed dated 01/01/2019, Registered as Document No. 748, in the office of the Sub-Registrar-II, Janakpur, New Delhi. Please note that the original chain documents have been lost. The earlier document, duly registered in the office of the Sub-Registrar-II, Janakpur, New Delhi, vide Document No. 14863, Book No. 1, Volume No. 896, Pages 1 to 10, dated 09/10/2015, is not available in respect of the said property. An online FIR (Lost Report No. 338506/2025) was registered on 17/12/2025 regarding the loss of the aforementioned documents. Please also note that the said property is proposed to be financed by Hero Housing Finance Limited, NSP Branch, New Delhi. If any person(s) objection & regarding subject property, then kindly mail to Mr. Ajay Kumar Verma & Mr. Papu Lodhi S/o Mr. Puranilal through Sale Deed dated 14/07/2025 and Serial No.7422. Please also note that the said property is proposed to be financed by Hero Housing Finance Limited, Lucknow Branch, Uttar Pradesh If any person(s) objection & regarding subject property, then kindly mail to Mr. Ajay Kumar Verma & Mr. Papu Lodhi S/o Mr. Puranilal through Sale Deed dated 14/07/2025 and Serial No.7422. Please also note that the said property is proposed to be financed by Hero Housing Finance Limited, Lucknow Branch, Uttar Pradesh If any person(s) objection & regarding subject property, then kindly mail to Mr. Ajay Kumar Verma & Mr. Papu Lodhi S/o Mr. Puranilal through Sale Deed dated 14/07/2025 and Serial No.7422. 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NEWS BOX

Tatiana Schlossberg, granddaughter of ex-US President John F Kennedy, passes away at 35 due to myeloid leukaemia

WORLD. (Agency)

Tatiana Schlossberg, a climate journalist and granddaughter of former US President John F Kennedy, passed away at 35. Tatiana was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia in 2024, after her second child was born. She underwent chemotherapy and bone marrow transplant treatments following the diagnosis. Tatiana is well-known for her book "Inconspicuous Consumption: The Environmental Impact You Don't Know You Have", released in 2019. The book explores the climate crisis and its solutions. It also empowers readers to make informed choices as consumers in relation to the well-being of the environment. She had also written pieces concerning climate change in the New York Times.

A social media post by her family, shared by the John F Kennedy Library Foundation, reads, "Our beautiful Tatiana passed away this morning (December 30). She will always be in our hearts." Notably, Tatiana lost her grandfather, President Kennedy, to an assassination in 1963, and her uncle, John F Kennedy Jr., to a plane crash in 1999.

CIA behind strike at Venezuelan dock that Trump claims was used by drug smugglers, say sources

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

The CIA was behind a drone strike last week at a docking area believed to have been used by Venezuelan drug cartels, according to two people familiar with details of the operation who requested anonymity to discuss the classified matter. The first known direct operation on Venezuelan soil since the US began strikes in September marks a significant escalation in the administration's months-long pressure campaign on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government. The strike has not been acknowledged by Venezuelan officials. US President Donald Trump first made reference to the operation in an interview Friday with John Catsimatidis on WABC radio in New York, saying the US had knocked out some type of "big facility where ships come from." In an exchange with reporters Monday as he hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at his Mar-a-Lago resort, Trump added that the operation targeted a "dock area where they load the boats up with drugs." But the president declined to comment when asked whether the attack was conducted by the military or the CIA. The CIA and White House officials also declined to offer further comment on the matter. Col. Allie Weiskopf, a spokesperson for Special Operations Command, which oversees US operations in the Caribbean, said in a statement that "Special Operations did not support this operation to include intel support."

Thieves drill into German bank vault, make off with about 30mn euros in cash, valuables

BERLIN. (Agency)

Robbers used a large drill to break into a German savings bank's vault room and steal cash, gold and jewelry worth some 30 million euros (\$35 million), police said Tuesday. The heist in the western city of Gelsenkirchen saw the thieves break into more than 3,000 safe deposit boxes, they said. While the criminals remained at large, hundreds of distressed bank customers massed outside the branch on Tuesday demanding information, but were kept at bay by police. According to police, the robbers drilled their way into the underground vault room of the Sparkasse savings bank from a parking garage.

Investigators suspect the gang spent much of the weekend inside, breaking open the deposit boxes.



The break-in came to light after a fire alarm was triggered in the early hours of Monday and emergency services discovered the hole.

Witnesses reported seeing several men carrying large bags in the stairwell of the parking garage during the night from Saturday to Sunday. Footage from security cameras has also shown a black Audi RS 6 leaving the parking garage early Monday morning, with masked persons inside. The car's license plate had been stolen earlier in the city of Hanover, police said.

A police spokesman told AFP that the break-in was "indeed very professionally executed", likening it to the heist movie "Ocean's Eleven".

Taiwan coastguard says Chinese ships 'withdrawing' after drills

Taipei, which slammed the two-day war games as "highly provocative and reckless," said the manoeuvre failed to impose a blockade on the island.

TAIPEI. (Agency)

Chinese warships and coastguard vessels are withdrawing from waters around Taiwan, the island's coastguard said on Wednesday, with Beijing's military drills appearing to be "over." China launched missiles and deployed dozens of fighter jets, navy ships and coastguard vessels around the island on Monday and Tuesday in live-fire drills aimed at simulating a blockade of the Taiwan's key ports and assaults on maritime targets. Taipei, which slammed the two-day war games as "highly

provocative and reckless," said the manoeuvre failed to impose a blockade on the island. Communist China has never ruled democratic Taiwan, but Beijing claims the island of 23 million people is part of its territory and has threatened to use force to annex it. The warships and coastguard vessels are withdrawing, but a few are still lingering outside the 24-nautical-mile line," Hsieh Ching-chin, deputy director-general of Taiwan's coastguard, told AFP, indicating the "drills should be over." Taiwan's coastguard has maintained a deployment of 11 ships at sea because China Coast Guard vessels "haven't completely left the area yet" and "we can't let our guard down," he said.

Beijing has not yet publicly declared the drills to be finished. Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te warned on Wednesday that Chinese drills targeting the island "are not an isolated incident" and pose "significant risks" to the region.

China's authoritarian expansion and

escalating coercion pose significant risks to regional stability and also impact global shipping, trade and peace," Lai said at a promotion and rank conferment ceremony for military officers in Taipei. China's show



criticism of China's drills. Japan said Wednesday that China's military exercises "increase tensions" across the Taiwan Strait, and that it had expressed its "concerns" to Beijing. Australia's foreign ministry also condemned on Wednesday China's "destabilising" military drills around Taiwan, saying it had raised concerns with Beijing counterparts. Beijing slammed criticism of its exercises as "irresponsible." "These countries and institutions are turning a blind eye to the separatist forces in Taiwan attempting to achieve independence through military means," foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a news briefing Wednesday. "Yet, they are making irresponsible criticisms of China's necessary and just actions to defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, distorting facts and confusing right and wrong, which is utterly hypocritical."

Envoy of Quad countries hold rare publicised meeting at US Embassy in Beijing

PARAMARIBO. (Agency)

BEIJING: Ambassadors of the Quad nations, consisting of the US, India, Australia and Japan, held a rare publicised meeting in Beijing. The meeting took place on Tuesday at the US Embassy in Beijing, according to the post on X with a photo by the American Ambassador to China, David Perdue. "The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is a force for good in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific region," Perdue said in his post. "It is a pleasure to meet with the ambassadors of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue countries in Beijing. The relations among the four countries — the United States, Australia, India, and Japan — continue to be stable and strong," he said and posted a photo of



here has not yet commented on the meeting. China, over the years, has been a strong critic of the Quad and has not yet reacted to the meeting. Beijing, in the past while reacting to the Quad

meetings, stated that it is opposed to countries forming cliques, engaging in group politics and bloc confrontation.

In her reaction to the Foreign Ministers meeting of the Quad countries held in January this year, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said China has always advocated that cooperation among countries should not target third parties. "China believes that cooperation between countries should not target any third party," she said.

"Engaging in group politics and bloc confrontation will not bring lasting peace and security, and is not conducive to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific and the world as a whole," she said.

A forgotten chapter: The stories of Allied POWs in Nagasaki during the atomic bombing

NAGASAKI. (Agency)

Hundreds of prisoners of war from Allied countries were held at brutal Japanese camps in Nagasaki when the United States dropped an atomic bomb 80 years ago.

Their presence during the Aug. 9, 1945, bombing is little known, and family and researchers have been collecting and publishing testimonies to tell the stories of these often unrecognized victims. In September, dozens of relatives of Dutch POWs and descendants of Japanese bombing survivors came together to commemorate both those who were abused at the camps and the tens of thousands of Japanese who were killed that day. The dead included at least eight captives at one of the Nagasaki camps.

Descendants and survivors reckon with a painful past. Andre Schram, who represented the Dutch families at the Nagasaki memorial, unveiled in 2015, is the son of a sailor who was among nearly 1,500 POWs held at the Fukuoka No. 2 Branch Camp for three years and forced to work at the Kawanami shipyard.

Many of the prisoners were Dutch service members captured by the Japanese in Indonesia, transported to Nagasaki on so-called "hell ships," kept at two major camps — No. 2 and No. 14 — and used as slave labor. About 150,000 Allied prisoners were held in dozens of camps across Asia during the war, including 36,000 sent to Japan to make up for labor shortage as Japanese men were drafted and deployed to battlefields across Asia, according to the POW Research Network Japan. There were also prisoners from the United States, Britain and Australia in Nagasaki. None died from the atomic blast at the No. 2 Camp, but more than 70 earlier died of malnutrition, overwork and illness.

Andre Schram's father, Johan Willem Schram, returned to the Netherlands four months after the war ended, but only near the end of his life did he tell his son about being treated like a slave. Japanese officials have apologized multiple times for wartime atrocities, "but Johan, like many other victims, had doubts about their sincerity," his son said. He felt Japan and the Netherlands treated him and other prisoners of war with disrespect. He never wanted anything to do with Japan again," Andre Schram wrote in "Johan's Story," a booklet about the Netherlands' colonial rule of the Dutch East Indies, the war with Japan and the aftermath, based on his research after his father died in 1993. Peter Klok said his father, Leendert Klok, also a Dutch POW at the camp, told him that Japanese civilians at the shipyard were friendly and helped him find parts to repair his watch. Military police later beat him for seeking help. Klok called the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki awful, but said Japan must reflect on its atrocities.

Mali and Burkina Faso impose retaliatory travel ban on US nationals

The White House noted persistent attacks by armed groups as one of the reasons for the travel ban. Mali and Burkina Faso have struggled to contain armed groups that have spread rapidly in both countries.

DHAKA. (Agency)

Mali and Burkina Faso said late Tuesday they would ban US citizens from entering their countries in retaliation for US President Donald Trump's decision to ban Malian and Burkinabe citizens from entering the United States. The announcements, made in separate statements by the foreign ministers of the two West African countries, marked the latest twist in the frosty relationship between West African military governments and the US. On Dec. 16, Trump expanded earlier travel restrictions to 20 more countries, including Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, which are run by



juntas and have formed a breakaway association from the regional bloc, the Economic Community of West African States. In accordance with the principle of reciprocity, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation informs the national and international community that, with immediate effect, the Government of the Republic of Mali will apply the same conditions and requirements to US nationals as those imposed on Malian citizens," the Malian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a

statement. Another statement signed by Burkina Faso's Minister of Foreign Affairs Karamoko Jean-Marie Traoré cited similar reasons for the ban on American nationals entering Burkina Faso. The White House noted persistent attacks by armed groups as one of the reasons for the travel ban. Mali and Burkina Faso have struggled to contain armed groups that have spread rapidly in both countries. The juntas vowed to fight the armed groups after deposing civilian governments over the insecurity that has.

Zohran Mamdani is set to be sworn in as mayor as NYC rings in the New Year

Mamdani will take his initial oath at the former City Hall subway station in Manhattan. On Thursday afternoon, he will be sworn in again, this time by Bernie Sanders on the steps of City Hall.

NEW YORK. (Agency)

Zohran Mamdani will become mayor of New York City as the clock ticks over into 2026 — but the celebrations are set to last through New Year's Day. The Democrat's team is planning two separate swearing-in ceremonies Thursday — a small, private one with his family in an old subway station around midnight, followed by a large event in the afternoon that will include a public block party outside City Hall. As a new mayor's term begins immediately with the new year, it has been

customary for the city's incoming leaders to hold two events. Outgoing mayor Eric Adams held his initial swearing-in at Times Square shortly after the famous ball drop, while Adams' predecessor, Bill de Blasio, took his first oath at home in Brooklyn.

For his part, Mamdani will take his initial oath at the former City Hall subway station in Manhattan — one of the city's original stops on its subterranean transit system, known for its tiled arches and vaulted ceilings. New York Attorney General Letitia James, a political ally and notable foe of US President Donald Trump, will administer the oath of office. The old City Hall stop was designed as the flagship station of the city's first subway line, but was decommissioned in 1945. These days, outside of occasional guided historical tours, locals can usually only catch a glimpse of it by staying on the 6 train after its last stop downtown when it turns around to head north. In a statement, Mamdani's office said the choice to be sworn in at the station reflected his "commitment to the working people who

keep our city running every day." "When Old City Hall Station first opened in 1904 — one of New York's 28 original subway stations — it was a physical monument to a city that dared to be both



beautiful and build great things that would transform working peoples' lives," Mamdani said. "That ambition need not be a memory confined only to our past, nor must it be isolated only to the tunnels beneath City Hall: it will be the purpose of the administration fortunate enough to

serve New Yorkers from the building above," he said. On Thursday afternoon, Mamdani will be sworn in again, this time by US Sen. Bernie Sanders, one of his political heroes, on the steps of City Hall in a ceremony scheduled to kick off at 1 p.m. US Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, another political ally, will deliver opening remarks. Mamdani's transition formed an inaugural committee that includes actor John Turturro, playwright Cole Escalante and writer Colson Whitehead, as well as advocates, small business owners and campaign workers who the incoming mayor's office says have "provided perspective, guidance, and cultural sensibility" for the ceremony.

The public swearing-in will be accompanied by a block party along a stretch of Broadway leading up to City Hall. Mamdani's office expects thousands of people to attend and says there will be performances, music and interfaith elements.

NEWS BOX

TRAI holds consumer outreach on grievances, cyber hygiene

Kangra. (Agency)

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Regional Office Delhi, organised a Consumer Outreach Programme on Consumer Grievance Redressal and Cyber Hygiene on Monday at Hotel Sagar, Matour, Kangra.

The programme saw enthusiastic participation of over 100 attendees, including consumers, members of TRAI-registered consumer organisations, representatives of telecom service providers, and local Anganwadi workers. TRAI officers Rajesh Tripathi, Joint Advisor, Sushil Kumar Bansal, Senior Research Officer, and Suresh KV, along with representatives from Airtel, BSNL, Jio, and Vodafone Idea, addressed the gathering. They sensitised participants about the consumer grievance redressal mechanism and cyber frauds, highlighting preventive measures to ensure safe digital practices.

The TRAI DND 3.0 App was also showcased during the session, following which several participants downloaded the app, reaffirming their commitment to curbing unsolicited commercial communications and protecting consumer rights.

Maha: Aspiring Congress candidates stage strong protest in Nashik

Nashik. (Agency)

Some loyal Congress workers who were interested in contesting the municipal corporation election staged a protest against rejection of their candidature by locking the entrance gate of the Congress Committee office in city today.

At this time, they raised slogans against the party office-bearers who refused their candidature.

The protesters alleged that they were denied candidature even though a complete panel of loyal Congress workers and office-bearers was ready for the upcoming elections to be held in Old Nashik area. They further alleged that injustice has been done to the workers who have been loyal to the party for 25 to 30 years by giving candidature to outsiders and rich people at the last moment.

Citizens should submit applications to remove duplicate names from the voter list

Nashik. (Agency)

The Chief Electoral Officer of Maharashtra has issued instructions to verify and remove duplicate names (DEC's) from the voter list of the assembly constituency.

Accordingly, the citizens should submit applications for the removal of the names of duplicate, migrated and deceased voters in 125 Nashik West assembly constituencies through the Polling Station Level Officer (BLO) or on the website <https://voters.eci.gov.in>, along with the necessary documents, the District Collector and District Election Officer Ayush Prasad has appealed through a press release.

The list of voters with duplicate entries in Nashik West assembly constituency is available on the website <https://nashik.gov.in>.

The work of collecting information on duplicate, migrated and deceased voters is going on through house visits by the Polling Station Level Officer. To ensure that the voter list remains accurate and error-free, all voters should check with the district office to see if their name is duplicated or in which part of the list, said District Magistrate and District Election Officer Ayush Prasad.

Jharkhand: Three inmates missing from Hazaribag Central Jail

Hazaribag. (Agency)

Three inmates have gone missing from the Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan Central Jail, triggering concern within the state administration over security arrangements at the high-security prison. Confirming the incident, Jail Superintendent Chandrashekhar Suman said preliminary information suggests that all three inmates are residents of Dhanbad.

However, he added that details regarding their identities and whether they were convicts or undertrials are yet to be ascertained.

The incident has raised fresh questions about prison security, as the Hazaribag Central Jail is known for housing hardened criminals, Naxalites and several high-profile undertrial prisoners. The jail is considered one of the most secure facilities in the state.

In recent weeks, security at the jail had been further tightened. The Inspector General of Prisons had suspended 12 security personnel to strengthen vigilance, following which security protocols were reportedly reinforced. Despite these measures, the disappearance of three inmates has put the jail administration under renewed scrutiny.

The prison is protected by a five-layer security system, requiring thorough checks for anyone entering or exiting the premises. The jail also holds historical significance, as veteran freedom fighter Jayaprakash Narayan had famously escaped from the same prison during the freedom movement.

PGI contract workers observe hunger strike over non-payment of wages

Chandigarh. (Agency)

Several contract workers at the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGI) observed a hunger strike from 6 am on Tuesday, protesting non-payment of long-pending wages and other service-related demands. The PGIMER currently has close to 4,000 contract workers. According to the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of the PGIMER contract workers, those participating in the hunger strike included sanitary attendants, sanitation supervisors, hospital attendants, bearers and cooks working in morning and evening shifts. The JAC said the protest was carried out in a "peaceful, voluntary and democratic manner".

JAC chairman Ashwani Kumar Munjal said the hunger strike was a result of compulsion, alleging that nearly Rs 55 crore in basic pay and dearness allowance has been pending since January 13, 2024. He said arrears of sanitation supervisors, sewer men, and staff posted at Nehru Hospital Extension and the Sangrur

satellite centre are also yet to be cleared. Munjal further alleged that a written assurance given by the PGIMER administration on August 12 had not been honoured, leading to

The JAC warned that if no resolution is reached within the next two to three days, it will chalk out further action, including another one-day collective hunger strike in the first week of January.

A statement issued by the PGIMER said that its administration successfully maintained full operational capacity despite the strike. "Due to a robust contingency plan deployed by the administration, patient care across all departments remained entirely unaffected," the institute said in the statement. The services, including OPD, indoor, operation theatre, emergency, trauma, diagnostics, and others, remained unaffected, the statement added.

A total of 8,770 patients were seen in the OPD, and 166 in the Emergency and Trauma department. Around 100 new patients were admitted, and 137 surgeries were performed. The majority of outsourced workers continued to perform their duties, the institute claimed.



widespread anger among contract workers. Other demands include maternity leave and medical benefits for women contract staff, payment of a bonus, reinstatement of four security guards removed in November 2024, and parity in facilities with regular employees.

From sleepy suburb to bustling metropolis, Mohali steps out of Chandigarh's shadow

Mohali. (Agency)

It was not long ago that Mohali was dismissed as Chandigarh's sleepy sibling, a patchwork of villages and housing clusters shaped largely by the spillover from the region's meticulously planned capital. Chandigarh's strict planning norms kept it neat and contained, leaving Mohali to grow around its edges. Fast forward to 2025, and Mohali's skyline, roads and social fabric tell a very different story of rapid growth, demographic churn and entrepreneurial energy. The city is now bursting at the seams.

Mohali was conceptualised in the 1960s as part of the region's planned expansion, but it began to draw attention only in the 1990s and early 2000s. Infrastructure projects played a decisive role. The operationalisation of the Shaheed Bhagat Singh International Airport significantly boosted air connectivity, while new road links, particularly along the Airport and Kharar corridors, strengthened road access and opened up large tracts for development.

Today, Mohali sits at the crossroads of education, technology, real estate and lifestyle economies. It thrives not merely because of its proximity to

Chandigarh, but because it has steadily built an ecosystem of its own.

Education cluster One of Mohali's most visible success stories is its emergence as a knowledge and education hub. Institutions such as the National Institute of



Pharmaceutical Education and Research first put the city on India's academic map, paving the way for both public and private players.

The district today hosts multiple universities including Amity University, Rayat Bahra University, Ashoka University and Plaksha University, along with centres of excellence

such as the Indian School of Business and the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research. Students from across the country and overseas now call Mohali home, lending the city a distinctly youthful and cosmopolitan character.

This growth is anchored in the Education City project, envisaged as a 1,700-acre learning destination offering land to global institutions across disciplines ranging from engineering and pharmaceuticals to media and hospitality. With residential, commercial and academic clusters planned together, the project aims to position Mohali as a global learning hub rather than just a student town. Mohali's identity has evolved sharply over the decades. Conceived as a village in the 1960s, it was later planned as an industrial town and then transitioned into a satellite city. In 2002, during the tenure of former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, the state introduced the Mega Project Policy, offering incentives to projects spread over at least 100 acres. This opened the door for developers such as DLF, Emaar, MGF and Ansar, who brought large-scale housing projects and accelerated urbanisation.

Guru's humanistic vision more relevant than ever: Kerala CM

Thiruvananthapuram. (Agency) Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday said the message of social reformer and spiritual leader Sree Narayana Guru, rooted in humanism, rationality and universal brotherhood, has gained renewed relevance at a time when efforts are being made to distort history, culture and democratic values.

Inaugurating the 93rd Sivagiri Pilgrimage, the Chief Minister said the pilgrimage, envisioned by the Guru, was not a ritualistic exercise but a knowledge-driven movement for social transformation.

He recalled that the Sivagiri Pilgrimage message, formulated in 1928, placed strong emphasis on education, cleanliness, organisation, scientific temper, agriculture, trade, industry and technology, with education accorded top priority.

Referring to Kerala's social history, Vijayan said the Aruvippuram consecration marked the beginning of the Kerala Renaissance by challenging caste hierarchy, Brahminism and feudal oppression. The Guru, he noted, worked not to replace one caste order with another but to build a society free from caste and religious discrimination, guided by the principle of "Sodaravna" (brotherhood).

The Chief Minister cautioned against attempts to impose a monolithic cultural narrative on India by eroding its plural traditions and promoting unscientific ideas in the name of culture, warning that such moves threaten democracy, secularism and rational thought.

Highlighting the enduring influence of the Guru's teachings, Vijayan said Kerala's progressive movements and welfare-oriented policies — including land reforms, education reforms and initiatives to strengthen public education, healthcare and social security — were inspired by the Guru's human-centric vision.

Describing Sree Narayana Guru as a true universal teacher, the Chief Minister said his philosophy transcended caste, religion and nationality, and played a decisive role in guiding Kerala from social darkness to enlightenment.

Netizens of Kolkata woke up season's coldest day this year-end with temperature dipped to 11 Degrees

Kolkata. (Agency)

The netizens of Kolkata on Wednesday woke up to a season's coldest day with mercury dipped to the lowest 11 degrees so far, a record in 2025, initially with poor visibility, which later cleared with the sunshine allowing to clear traffic of trains and flights with delayed schedules, official sources said.

The cold spell, which persisted for past weeks, further tightened in the neighbouring districts of South Bengal in Bankura and Purulia between 5 and 6 and hardened to below 3 degrees in the Darjeeling hills. The netizens of Kolkata have been experiencing a significant cold spell from mid December, with temperatures dropping between 12-13°C, marking the coldest period of the season.

Even the areas like Dum Dum and its outskirts have been witnessing temperatures between 8 to 10 degrees and further colder weather conditions in the surrounding South Bengal districts like Bankura and Purulia. This intense chilly weather condition due to persisted dry, and

cool northerly winds and dense morning fog, making it the most significant winter month of the year. Dense fog, or truly the smog condition wrapped large parts of the state causing disruption of train schedules, flight departure also causing difficulties in navigating waterways traffic in the city and suburban areas.

The seasonal travellers are also flocking Darjeeling Hills hoping for snow, though it is rare in the main town, with higher chances in nearby areas like Sandakphu, Tiger Hill, and Phalut. The visitors seek clear views of snow-capped Kanchenjunga and experience the chill.

The dip in the mercury in the Darjeeling hills and snowfall in the upper reaches of Sikkim have triggered a massive influx of tourists since Christmas, with visitors flocking to the mountains to enjoy the chill.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) says the possibility of light to moderate snowfall in the upper reaches of the hills by the weekend.

Odisha: Former agriculture cooperative society functionary held for Rs 79 lakh misappropriation

Bhubaneswar. (Agency)

A former managing director of agricultural cooperative society in Odisha's Sambalpur district was arrested today by Vigilance sleuths on the charge of embezzling Rs 79 lakh which was collected from the farmers towards loan repayment.

Fanindra Kumar Sahu, Former Managing Director of Jamankira Large-sized Agricultural Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society (LAMPCS) Limited, Sambalpur was arrested today by Odisha Vigilance.

The arrest follows an investigation into the financial discrepancies of the 2021-22 fiscal year, where a total of Rs 79,28,000 (approximately) was allegedly misappropriated by Sahu, the Vigilance said in a statement. Sahu allegedly collected loan repayment amounts directly from local farmers but intentionally omitted these entries from the Day Book (the primary accounting record). To hide the missing funds, he reportedly submitted false

repayment vouchers to the SDCC Bank (Sambalpur District Cooperative Central Bank), Jamankira Branch. These documents were bolstered by fake seals to mimic official bank verification. In this connection, Odisha Vigilance has registered a case under sections 13(2) r/w 13



(1)(a) Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018 besides sections 468/471/477-A/409 Indian Penal Code against the accused Sahu.

Sahu was later remanded to judicial custody after a local Court rejected his bail.

Kolkata on high alert for New Year's Eve as police plan massive security cover

Kolkata. (Agency)

Kolkata will be under an unprecedented security blanket on New Year's Eve, with police deploying nearly double the number of personnel compared to Christmas Day to manage large crowds, prevent rowdiness and ensure public safety during year-end celebrations.

Around 6,500 police personnel will be deployed across the city in two phases — an initial posting from around 9 am, followed by the main deployment from 4 pm onwards.

Senior officers said the crowd on December 31 is expected to be larger than on Christmas, requiring tighter crowd control and quicker response mechanisms. Sources in Kolkata police said that there will be special concentration in Central Kolkata, particularly the Park Street area where the rush is expected to be high. Of the total deployment, around 4,000 police personnel will be stationed on roads between Park Street and the Alipore Zoo-Alipore Jail Museum stretch, with nearly 2,500 cops

posted on Park Street alone. Another 1,300 uniformed personnel will be deployed across other hotspots and special nukas in different parts of the city. As in previous years, extensive use of technology will be made for surveillance. Drones and a wide network of CCTV cameras will monitor crowd movement in Park Street and the Alipore Zoo areas. Multiple watchtowers will be set up, and the central business district will be divided into several zones, overseen by 18 IPS officers. Police assistance booths will also be set up to help revellers.

Specialised teams from the detective department, the Kolkata Police STF, Special Branch and quick response teams (QRTs) will be on the ground. By evening, plainclothes personnel, teams from the detective department's watch section and the all-women "Winners Team"

will be deployed in and around Park Street to prevent harassment and other illegal activities. Sources at Kolkata Police

Extra security will also be in place on the Kolkata Metro, with additional Railway Protection Force personnel deployed to manage passenger rush. Police have ordered a strict crackdown on drunk driving, with special raids likely to continue daily through the festive period.

Instructions have also been issued to ensure crackers are not burst beyond court-mandated hours and to act against DJs playing music above permissible sound limits. Cops have further decided not to allow people to loiter or block entrances of eateries.

"The crowd will be larger than Christmas and rowdiness is usually higher on this day, so our response has to be adequate," a senior police officer said, adding that while Kolkata is generally considered safe, strict enforcement is necessary to ensure peaceful celebrations.



headquarters, Lalbazar, said special teams have been formed based on intelligence inputs, with a special focus on the safety of women, children, and the elderly.

Let's resist attempts to weaponise ignorance

In this terribly toxic, violent and polarised world, it is easy to get carried away by the all-pervading negativity that characterises our times. Yet, as a teacher, I continue to feel that we should not give up, and we must sow the seeds of hope and inspire the new generation to imagine and strive for a better world. I wish to appeal to the teaching fraternity to welcome the new year with a heartfelt prayer: Let the pedagogy of hope alter the dynamics of the classroom, redefine the purpose of education and activate the power of critical thinking, creative imagination, empathy and love. However, it is important to acknowledge that the despair we see among contemporary students and teachers often manifests itself in the form of some sort of cynical pragmatism.

As the market-driven/instrumental logic of neoliberalism robs education of a higher and nobler purpose, and transforms into a mere technical skill for economic productivity, many youngsters begin to regard social Darwinism or hyper-competitiveness as a new virtue, money as a new God, and egotistic pride as a status symbol.

No flower blooms in their inner world; seldom do they converse with Gandhi and Marx; and they have no 'surplus' time to struggle for equity, ecology, peace and justice. Yes, this sort of pragmatism means the absence of hope for a new world. Likewise, the cult of hyper-nationalism further intensifies this sort of pragmatism among many teachers. As surveillance is normalised, many teachers in our colleges and universities begin to feel that they are being constantly monitored and observed. And possibly, this sort of fear makes them extremely cautious of what they can teach, speak and write. As the colonisation of the academic sphere by the discourse of hyper-nationalism robs education of its libertarian potential, it is not impossible to find a significant section of teachers who prefer to remain silent, or become over-enthusiastic to show their loyalty to the system. It is, therefore, not surprising that these 'pragmatic' teachers fail to arouse a new imagination, or the language of resistance amongst their students. Here is a world tormented by war, authoritarianism and climate emergency. Yet, our colleges and universities refuse to see anything beyond the metrics of 'ranking', and the narratives of 'placements and salary packages'.

Hence, the question arises: What is the pedagogy of hope I am referring to? And is it at all possible? Let it be understood clearly that it is not an empty ideal, or an imaginary utopian act. It's impossible to nurture it without critical pedagogy: the kind of education that encourages the young learner to regain his/her creative agency, and question what damages the possibility of a just, egalitarian, humane and ecologically sensitive world. It is like understanding and theorising rigorously, say, the aggression of hyper-nationalism that causes war, genocide, militancy, terrorism and religious fundamentalism; the greed implicit in the logic of modern technocratic capitalism that reduces everything — be it a tree, a river, a forest or a mountain — into a mere 'resource' for ceaseless 'growth' and 'development', and leads to the horrors of climate emergency; and above all, the unholy alliance of billionaire technocrats and neofascists that erodes the spirit of democracy. Moreover, the pedagogy of hope means that education cannot be reduced to a mere technical skill; instead, it is essentially about awakened intelligence, or what Henry Giroux — one of the finest educationists in our times — would have characterised as a transformative tool for nurturing informed and politically aware democratic citizens. This is the only way to resist the weaponisation of ignorance. Apart from critical thinking, the pedagogy of hope needs something more. It needs a mode of learning that arouses every young learner's hidden potential — I mean, the courage to dream of a new world; the willingness to unite knowledge and praxis, thinking and feeling, and science and aesthetics.

AAP on top in rural polls, but no room for complacency

The recent victory is no guarantee of AAP's success in the 2027 Assembly polls.

The ruling party's sweeping victory in the rural body elections has been a foregone conclusion since long, particularly after the 73rd Amendment (1992) gave constitutional status to Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) in India. In Punjab, the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was the runaway winner in the recent block samiti and zila parishad polls. Opposition parties such as the Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) made their presence felt in areas where local leaders wielded influence. The AAP claimed that the mandate was an endorsement of the good work done by the Bhagwant Mann government since 2022 in rural Punjab and it would help the party retain power in the 2027 Assembly elections. However, the Congress and the SAD accused the AAP of indulging in high-handedness and misusing state machinery to win the elections. The aim of establishing the three-tier Panchayati Raj system was to strengthen the democratic process at the grassroots level. Though the system was implemented in 1959, it did not have full constitutional validity before the 73rd Amendment in 1992. Subsequently, it became a permanent, mandatory part of India's democratic structure and incorporated in Part IX of the Constitution. However, devolution of powers to rural bodies has been mostly conspicuous by its absence, thus making them political tools in the hands of the ruling party.

The first block samiti and zila parishad elections in Punjab were held during the rule of the Beant Singh-led Congress government in 1994. Riding high after having rooted out decade-long terrorism in the state, the ruling party swept the elections. It was the first normal election in Punjab in the post-terrorism period. The 1992 Assembly and parliamentary elections witnessed a very low turnout (23.50 per cent) due to the boycott by major Akali Dal factions and threats from terrorist organisations against people's participation. The SAD, having a rural base, had contested the block samiti and zila parishad elections but failed to make a major impact. Rather, the party had levelled allegations of large-scale malpractices and accused the Congress of throwing all democratic norms to the wind to win those elections. The end result was the Congress' rout in the 1997 Assembly elections — it could win only 14 seats against 87 in 1992. In the Lok Sabha elections in Punjab, the Congress' tally dropped from 12 seats (out of 13) in 1992 to two in 1996; it drew a blank in the 1998 parliamentary elections.

The AAP performed below par in the 2024 parliamentary elections, winning only three seats despite being in power. Its performance in the urban elections was also dismal as it failed to get a clear-cut majority in the majority of the civic bodies. The party was desperate to reassess its dominance. No wonder it went all out to win



the rural elections. The party relied on brazen messaging during campaigning in rural areas, with slogans such as "AAP di Sarkar, AAP di Zila Parishad, AAP di Block Samiti — taanki sidha kam AAP de hath". It was a message for the rural masses: vote for us or struggle to get your work done. The ruling party made its intentions clear; in some cases, it was a throwback to the SAD-BJP rule (2007-17) when halqa incharges were made extra-constitutional centres of power. The SAD had given them a free hand, which ultimately resulted in the political marginalisation of the party. The outcome only reflects an assertion of power, not the eagerness of the people to endorse the work done by the government. The highhandedness will breed deep resentment among the rural masses. The ruling party may consider this victory as significantly pro-incumbency, but this is no guarantee of success in the Assembly elections.

A close look at these elections lays bare fault lines in state politics, particularly at the grassroots level. The allegations and counter-allegations have become an integral part of Punjab politics, ignoring the core issues and problems faced by the people of the state.

The entry of gangsters and candidates backed by gangsters and their success in some cases have raised disturbing questions about politics in Punjab.

Notably, the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB G-RAM-G) Act, which has replaced the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) as the flagship Central scheme for wage employment for rural workers, has been opposed by AAP, SAD and the Congress. With a little over a year left for the Assembly elections, the AAP continues to grapple with several issues: deteriorating law and order situation, dissatisfaction among various sections of society, inaccessibility of some elected representatives, the financial crisis and the failure to meet the expectations of the people who had voted wholeheartedly for the party in the 2022 elections. The influence of an unconstitutional power centre based in Delhi is also a matter of concern for the electorate. The unfortunate part of Punjab's story in the post-Green Revolution era is 'growth without development', which is the result of dominance of the rural elite in politics. Political leaders and their parties are largely not keen on strengthening the democratic structure at the grassroots. Factional politics without ideological commitment has also contributed to the degeneration of the political process in the state. The big question is: Whether or when will Punjab move towards a participatory political process?

Congress must rebuild organisational muscle

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



IT has been a forgettable year for the Congress on the electoral front — the party suffered a debacle in Delhi as well as Bihar and didn't find many takers for its 'vote chor' allegations. The new year will be even more challenging, with Assembly elections scheduled to be held in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. No wonder the top brass put on a brave front at the party's 140th foundation day. Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi said the Congress was "not just a political party, but the voice of India's soul that has stood with every weak, deprived and hardworking person"; party chief Mallikarjun Kharge declared that "the Congress is an ideology and ideologies never die." The harsh reality is that the party's existential crisis is worsening by the day. Rumblings of discontent are quite evident. Senior leader Digvijaya Singh caused a flutter on Saturday when he lauded the RSS-BJP's organisational

power and shared an old picture of Narendra Modi in a post on X. He also stressed the need to strengthen the Congress at the grassroots level. Shashi Tharoor's measured support for Digvijaya's views suggests that the party cannot afford to compromise on rebuilding organisational muscle.

The Congress has claimed that history, values and ideology remain its core assets. Whether these assets can be converted into electoral gains depends less on rhetoric and more on the party's ability to reform, reorganise and convincingly reconnect with the masses. The BJP, whose juggernaut rolls on, has dubbed the Congress an "army of sycophants" and the "weakest link" in Indian democracy. Such criticism, which is not far off the mark, should spur the grand old party to turn the tide. At 140, the Congress stands at a crossroads; its resurgence holds the key to the Opposition's prospects of combating the BJP.

Aravallis are vital for food security

There is a dire need to protect the hills that serve as a green wall against desertification



misguided claims. Thank heavens the world is now awake to the catastrophic consequences of melting glaciers. Going beyond global warming, the world has already entered the global boiling stage. It implies reckless exploitation of hills and forests, which will only push the world towards a climate catastrophe. Stretching across 1,44 lakh sq km in 37 districts of four states — Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi — the Aravallis have abundant reserves of major minerals like lead, zinc, silver, copper and of course, marble. In addition, the hills are also rich in critical minerals like lithium, nickel, molybdenum, niobium and tin. Just as the US President in 'Don't Look Up' was made to believe that the comet's economic wealth would bring in immense fortune, it is being acknowledged that the minerals present in the

Aravallis are essential for the economic development of the country. If that be so, I don't know why massive #SaveAravalli protests are taking place. Don't people understand the economic value of the mineral wealth that needs to be extracted at any cost? Over a billion years old, the Aravallis have served as a green wall against desertification of the northwestern region. These hills are also a repository of rich biodiversity; they play a key role in recharging aquifers and have resisted the march of the desert into Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. But a lot of damage has already been done to the wildlife habitats and local livelihoods by human intervention and the development process in the Aravalli belt.

As the desert expands, the country's hard-earned food security is under threat. Parliament was informed in

February 2025 that as per the 2021 Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India prepared by the Indian Space Research Organisation, deserts are fast creeping into the food bowl. Already, more than 3.64 lakh hectares in Haryana, 1.68 lakh hectares in Punjab and 1.54 lakh hectares in Uttar Pradesh are under land degradation and desertification. If the Aravallis are made to conform to the new definition, land degradation will only hasten. It will open the floodgates for gushing hot winds, frequent dust storms, soaring temperatures; coupled with the depletion of deep aquifers due to exhaustive crop farming, this will lead to rapid soil erosion, thereby degrading farming lands. While the debate on the proposed new benchmark for the Aravallis is focused on mining and the environment, the emerging threat to long-term food security is getting sidelined. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification has warned that desertification deals a severe blow to soil fertility, turning fertile lands semi-arid. Surely, desertification is too serious an issue to be confined to claims and pledges. Putting a new management plan into action and promises of 'robust protection' are no longer adequate safeguards.

The Aravallis are not just a natural reserve for strategic minerals; they also provide massive ecosystem services. The true economic cost of these ecological and environmental services has not been worked out.

Once this cost is known, the nation will realise the economic necessity of keeping the hills intact, even as the economic cost of extracting minerals is overemphasised.

If national accounting as per the TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity) norms can ascribe an economic value to the religiously important Mount Kailash and the Dal Lake, a similar cost-benefit analysis must be done for one of the oldest hill ranges in the world.

Garry Sandhu headlines Day 8 of Kangra Valley Carnival, Kuldeep Pathania will be chief guest

Dharamshala. (Agency)

The Kangra Valley Carnival-2025 will conclude with a vibrant cultural extravaganza on December 31, with Punjabi singer Garry Sandhu as the special attraction on the eighth and final day. The finale will feature a grand Kangri and Gadali Night, celebrating the region's rich folk culture and traditions.

Deputy Commissioner Hemraj Bairwa said that Himachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Pathania will grace the occasion as the chief guest and formally conclude the eight-day carnival.

The programme, starting at 5 pm, will showcase traditional folk dances and songs of Kangra and adjoining areas, with local artists performing in traditional attire.

The evening will also include Mahila Mandal competitions, finals of the Miss and Mrs Kangra Valley Carnival, and performances by Ishant Bhardwaj, Nisha Pandit and Sanjeev Dixit.

A major highlight will be a grand dance performance by over 1,000 women, symbolising community participation, folk heritage and women's empowerment.

Tanda Medical College Students shine at OSMECON 2025

Dharamshala. (Agency)

Three MBBS students of Dr. Rajendra Prasad Government Medical College, Tanda, brought laurels to the institution and Himachal Pradesh with their outstanding performance at OSMECON 2025, an international medical conference held from December 27 to 29 at Osmania Medical College, Hyderabad.

Disclosing this on Wednesday, Dr. Milap Sharma Principal Dr. Rajendra Prasad Govt Medical College Kangra told UNI that the conference, focused on advancements in clinical medicine, research innovation and interdisciplinary healthcare, was attended by over 4,000 delegates from across the world.

He said that the abstracts submitted by the Tanda students were selected in multiple categories, including paper, poster and clinical case presentations.

Sharma said that Shashank Kaul, a fourth-year MBBS student, qualified through three rounds of debate to reach the finals. Agrima Kapoor, also a fourth-year student, won the paper presentation category, while Maanya, a third-year MBBS student, secured first place in the dermatology case presentation.

Dr Milap said that their achievements at the international forum highlight their academic excellence and research aptitude, placing them among the top student performers at OSMECON 2025.

Light snowfall triggers traffic curbs as New Year tourist rush builds up in Himachal

Shimla/Keylong.(Agency)

Light snowfall in higher regions and adjoining areas has prompted the district administration on Wednesday to regulate vehicular movement and issue fresh advisories to commuters and tourists ahead of the New Year rush. Authorities said freezing of surface water and formation of black ice have made mountain roads slippery and potentially life-threatening. "As a precautionary measure, tourist cabs and private vehicles were advised to return to safer locations after announcements were made at the North Portal".

Officials cautioned that frost and invisible ice layers significantly raise the risk of vehicles skidding, collisions and hitting roadside parapets. The district administration of Lahaul-Spiti had already issued a traffic advisory for local commuters and tourists, restricting movement on vulnerable stretches and closing entry beyond the Rohtang Tunnel after light snowfall along the snowline areas.

Though it was briefly opened for regulated vehicular traffic on Monday, officials said movement was later curtailed as conditions deteriorated. Across the state, weather remained largely dry to overcast on Tuesday, with reports of light snowfall confined to higher elevations. There was no snowfall till morning at popular hill destinations on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the New Year tourist influx intensified, with hospitality units in Shimla and Manali reporting around 80 per cent occupancy. Authorities warned that roads may witness heavy congestion as large numbers of visitors arrive for short stays. Police and district officials have appealed to tourists to avoid unnecessary travel, follow advisories strictly, and plan journeys with caution, stressing that traditional winter travel discipline remains essential for safety in the hills.

NFR Introduces New Time Table with Enhanced Connectivity and Passenger-Centric Initiatives

The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 31st December:

Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has introduced its New Time Table, effective from 1st January 2026, bringing with it several passenger-centric and operationally significant improvements aimed at strengthening railway connectivity in the NE Region and beyond. As part of the new time table, NFR has regularized the 20 new train services which had been introduced during 2025 across various important routes. These services include Mail/Express & Passenger trains connecting key destinations such as Guwahati, Sairang, Dibrugarh, Agartala, North Lakhimpur, Kathihar, Jorhat, Anand Vihar and several other major locations of the nation, providing additional travel options to passengers, particularly in long-distance and previously tough to access corridors. Further to enhance passenger convenience, the frequency of certain existing train services has also been increased. For e.g. passenger trains operating between Silchar and Mahishashan, which were earlier running only two days a week, have now been upgraded to operate six days a week. This enhancement is expected to greatly benefit daily commuters and passengers from the Barak Valley region by offering more flexible and reliable travel options. The new time table has

also formally incorporated Special trains that are operated during peak travel periods. A total of 12 pairs of Special trains running on important

improving accessibility to rail transport and reducing the need for long road journeys to major stations for boarding designated trains. In a sig-

improved punctuality. The collective impact of these measures is expected to be substantial. The introduction/incorporation of trains,



long-distance routes have been included, ensuring better planning and readiness to handle seasonal rush during festivals, holidays and high-demand periods. A major highlight of the new time table is the provisioning of a large number of new stoppages for existing trains. More than 170 new stoppages have been provided at stations spread across Assam, Tripura, West Bengal, Bihar and adjoining areas. These new stoppages will bring railway services closer to passengers in semi-urban and rural areas,

significant step towards modernization and energy efficiency. NFR has also carried out extensive shifting of traction changing points, enabling many trains to operate under end-to-end electric traction. Several important long-distance and premium trains, including Rajdhani and several other Express/Mail train services that have been brought under continuous electric traction. This initiative will result in smoother train operations, reduced dependence on diesel locomotives, lower carbon emissions and

increased frequencies, additional stoppages, expanded electric traction and inclusion of Special trains will together result in improved connectivity, reduced travel time, enhanced operational efficiency and greater passenger satisfaction. These initiatives reaffirm Northeast Frontier Railway's commitment to providing safe, efficient, environment friendly and passenger-oriented rail services, while supporting the overall socio-economic development of the North Eastern Region.

A symbol of good governance and development, with visionary policies that enhance revenue growth and control expenditure, the Municipal Commissioner has become the center of discussion.

The Sikh Times

Sanjay Arora

Chandigarh Municipal Corporation Commissioner Amit Kumar, who played a key role in rescuing Chandigarh from the financial crisis, has once again become the center of discussion among officials and the public. The impact of his work ethic was evident in the House of Representatives. His work ethic was instrumental in significantly strengthening the corporation's financial position, while also providing relief to the public in paying taxes and outstanding dues. This bold move set a remarkable example of good governance. He has achieved significant achievements in the areas of cleanliness, environmental protection, revenue enhancement, and expenditure reduction for the Municipal Corporation of Chandigarh (MCC) for the year 2024-25 and the upcoming budget for 2026-27.

It is noteworthy that The Corporation has not only earned recognition at the national level



but has also taken concrete steps towards financial strength. The Municipal Corporation of Chandigarh has been ranked sec-

ond in the country in the "Super Clean League" for the year 2024-25 by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). Furthermore, Chandigarh secured the top spot in the country in the Green Ranking 2025, achieving 89.09 points. This reflects the Municipal Commissioner's visionary development efforts. Despite accomplishing so much for the city and its citizens, Chandigarh Municipal Corporation Commissioner Amit Kumar does not take credit for himself; instead, he credits every officer and employee who, by following his order, have contributed immensely to achieving his vision of taking the city's development to the next level. In other words, it is

the result of Municipal Commissioner Amit Kumar's effortless and complete workmanship that the city's status is rising day by day. He revised the property tax structure to strengthen the municipal corporation's financial position. The commercial tax was increased from 3 percent to 5 percent. Residential property tax rates were also revised (almost doubled). The changes are expected to generate additional revenue of Rs 10 crore from commercial tax and Rs 15 crore from residential tax. The corporation commissioner said Better utilization of vacant land and properties According to the Municipal Corporation, properties that remain vacant after three auctions will be rented out at a 25 percent discount. This will ensure income from idle properties.

The Municipal Corporation has focused on increasing revenue while also controlling expendi-

Haryana: Married woman assaulted in moving van in Faridabad, two detained

Chandigarh. (Agency)

A 28-year-old married woman was allegedly sexually assaulted inside a vehicle in Haryana's Faridabad after accepting a lift late at night, police said. The incident reportedly unfolded over nearly three hours, after which the woman was thrown out of the moving van, leaving her seriously injured.

According to preliminary details, the woman had left home on Monday evening following an argument and planned to return late that night. Around midnight, while looking for transport from a local junction towards Kalyanpur, she accepted a ride in a van occupied by two men. Instead of heading to her destination, the vehicle was allegedly driven towards the Gurugram road.

The woman's family claims she was kept confined in the van as it moved through isolated stretches of the city for several hours.

During this time, she was allegedly assaulted despite resisting. With deserted roads and the vehicle in motion, she was unable to seek help. In the early hours of Tuesday, the suspects allegedly pushed her out of the moving vehicle near Raja Chowk in the SGM Nagar area and fled.

Mission Shakti-5.0: Muzaffarnagar Police lead the way in women safety and empowerment

The Sikh Times
Manoj Pal

Muzaffarnagar. With the objective of strengthening safety, dignity, self-reliance and confidence among women and girls, the Uttar Pradesh Government's Mission Shakti-5.0 campaign is being actively implemented across Muzaffarnagar district. Under the direction of SSP Sanjay Verma, Anti-Romeo Teams of all police stations carried out an extensive awareness drive at the grassroots level. As part of the campaign, police teams reached markets, towns, public places, religious sites and other crowded areas, engaging directly with women and girls. Through interaction and distribution of pamphlets, they were informed about important helpline services such as Dial-112, Women Helpline-181, Women Power Line-1090, Child Helpline-1098, CM Helpline-1076, One Stop Centre services, and emergency medical facilities including 102 and 108. The teams also educated women about various women-centric welfare schemes of the government, including Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Destitute Women Pension Scheme, Ayushman Bharat Scheme and Women Shakti Kendra Yojana. Information regarding Mission Shakti help desks at local police stations and the public grievance portal was also shared to encourage easy access to support. Police officials stated that the core aim of Mission Shakti-5.0 is not only to ensure women's safety but also to build trust, courage and awareness, empowering women to speak up without fear. The campaign has emerged as an inspiring initiative, reinforcing the message that women's security and empowerment are collective responsibilities, with the police firmly standing beside them.



Punjab Govt has spent over 800 crore on modernisation of Punjab Police in last 3 years, with major upgrades set to continue in 2026: DGP Gaurav Yadav

Contd.....Front page

New ANTF range offices will be opened in Ludhiana, Ferozepur, and Jalandhar, with existing ones upgraded with modern gadgets and forensic tools. The DGP said that pursuant to the New Criminal Laws, witness protection scheme has already been notified by the Punjab government which will further help in improving the conviction rate. Network connectivity at Police Stations will be upgraded by 50 Mbps to 100 Mbps at all the Police Stations depending on the workload. He informed that the AGTF has further upgraded its technical capabilities with Punjab Artificial Intelligence System (PAIS 2.0) now supporting voice analysis, besides other state-of-art features, and Organised Criminal Information System (OCIS)— Powerful digital solution designed to streamline the management of criminal records—is further being upgraded. DGP Gaurav Yadav also stressed that Punjab Police will focus on thorough investigation to identify and take stringent action against travel agents involved in procuring / facilitating passports on fake particulars for organised criminals. To improve traffic management and emergency response in cities, the DGP said that dedicated Traffic and Road Safety Police Stations will be established. These will be integrated with Integrated Command & Control Centres (IC3) for real-time monitoring using city CCTV feeds and adaptive traffic signals, he said.

COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL PREVENTIVE AND BREAKDOWN MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

E-Tender Notice No.: EL/29/

85/2025/K1285; Dated: 24-12-

2025. E-tenders are invited by the

undersigned for the following work:

Tender No.: 57_2025; Name of

work: At Kathihar Division:-

Comprehensive Annual Preventive

and Breakdown Maintenance

Contract of REBC (Regulated Cum

Emergency Battery Charger) of

HIND makes provided in LHB type

AC & TL Coaches of Kathihar division

for three (03) years. Tender Value:

₹13,21,623/-; Earnest Money:

₹26,400/-; E-tender will be closed

at 15:00 hrs on 15-01-2026 and

Opened at 15:30 hrs. on 15-01-

2026. The complete information with

the tender document of above e-

tender will be available in website

<http://www.ireps.gov.in>

Mr. DEE/G & Chg./Kathihar

DRM(W)/Lumding

Serving Customers With a Smile

ENGINEERING WORKS IN LUMDING DIVISION

Tender Notice No.: LMG/Engg/

85/2025: Dated: 29-12-2025;

E-tender is invited by the

undersigned for the following

work: SN:1 Brief Description

of Item : Slope protection

measures at rock fall prone

location at Km 78/0-3 and other

ancillary works under the

Jurisdiction of Sr.DEN/3/

Lumding. Tender Value:

₹4,71,46,676.06/-; Earnest

Money: ₹3,85,700/-; Date & time

of closing of tender at 15:00

hrs. on 22-01-2026 and opening

at 15:00 hrs. on 23-01-2026.

Complete information alongwith

the tender document of above e-

tender will be available up to

15:00 hrs. on 22-01-2026 in the

website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM(W)/Lumding

Serving Customers With a Smile

E-AUCTION FOR ADVERTISEMENT RIGHTS AT 12 STATIONS IN ASSAM AREA OVER ALIPURDUAR DIVISION

E-Auction notices (Re-tender) regarding Advertisement Rights at 12 stations in Assam area over Alipurduar division & Functioning of catering service in PRS building at Kokrajhar station. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Trips/Days. 1826.

Auction Catalogue No. C-MISC-CANKOJ25

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	MSS-APDJ-KOJ-Prkiosk-19-24-1 (Misc-Static-Services-Promotional Kiosk)	License for the functioning of catering services, as supply of Veg. Non-veg. meals including local cuisines, light refreshments, hot & cold beverages as per market driven price in old Passenger Reservation Service building situated in front of SBI/ATM nearest to Kokrajhar Railway Station

Auction Start Date & Time: At 12.00 hrs. & Closing at: 12.30 hrs. of 08-01-2026. Prospective bidders are requested to visit E-Auction Leasing Module on IREPS website <a href="http://www

"No One Tried To Save Him": Uproar Over Tripura Man's Murder In Uttarakhand

►The cops were also criticised by the Chakma Students Union, which represents the community, and for which Bipul Chakma said he had been hassled by an initially reluctant-to-act police.

New Delhi .(Agency) The uncle of Anjel Chakma, the Tripura MBA student murdered in Uttarakhand after he objected to locals using racial slurs – including calling his brother Michael and him 'Chinese momo' – has hit back at the state police force for claiming the horrid remarks were made in "jest". Momen Chakma told Thursday morning, "When they went to the market to buy some things, some people, who were already drunk, made some comments, like calling them Chinese. And when Michael told them not to say such things, they attacked him." "Then Angel went to protect him, and they started beating and stabbing him... no one tried to save them. Uttarakhand Police said this is not racism, but it is indeed a case of racism." The cops were also criticised by the Chakma Students Union, which represents the community, and for which Bipul Chakma said he had been hassled by an initially reluctant-to-act police. The young man's father, Tarun Chakma, a Border Security Force soldier stationed in Manipur, made the same allegation; he said police in Dehradun's Selakui area



initially refused to register his complaint. The FIR was filed only 48 hours later, under pressure from the students union. On Monday Ajai Singh, Senior Superintendent of Police (Dehradun), said the remarks Chakma objected to, and over which he was murdered, "does not fall into the category of a racist comment because a young man involved in the incident is also a resident of the same state". The derogatory remarks were made in "jest", Singh declared. On Tuesday he told Padmaj Joshi, "When I was asked on Day 1, I gave my

version according to the evidence I got... (now) these things have been raised, we will investigate it..." Asked specifically about the allegations about the word 'Chinese' being used, he said it is possible it had been used in 'jest' by the attackers which was misunderstood by the victims. Under pressure from the Chakma community and civil society activists, Singh also announced the formation of a special team to probe the killing. Five people have been arrested so far. A sixth, believed to be of Nepali origin, is on the run.

The killing of Chakma has also spiralled into a political firestorm for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, with the Congress rippling into it; Congress leader Shama Mohamed red-flagged violence against minority communities and questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's silence. Speaking to ANI, Mohamed said, "Such an incident can happen with anyone. I saw a video in which Hindu men said they would kill all Muslims. Why is our PM silent? The Supreme Court should take suo motto cognisance... There is a complete breakdown of law and order..."

IndiGo Faces Rs 458 Crore GST Penalty, Airline Set To Contest Ruling

New Delhi .(Agency)

The country's largest airline IndiGo on Tuesday said authorities have slapped a GST penalty of over Rs 458 crore, and that it would contest the decision. The Additional Commissioner of CGST- Delhi South Commissionerate has slapped the penalty. It pertains to the assessment order under Section 74 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, for FY-2018-19 to FY 2022-23, according to a regulatory filing. The total GST penalty is Rs 458,26,16,980. GST department has passed an order imposing GST demand along with interest and penalty on compensation received from foreign supplier and denial of Input Tax credit. The company strongly believes that the order passed by the GST department is erroneous and not in accordance with law, backed by advice from external tax advisors. "Accordingly, the company will contest the same and shall take appropriate legal remedies against the aforesaid order. The company is already in appeal before the Commissioner (Appeals) in a similar matter for FY 2017-18," the filing said on Tuesday.

Further, IndiGo said that since it will contest the order, the order does not have any significant impact on financials, operations or other activities of the company. Separately, the Office of the Joint Commissioner, Lucknow, has imposed a penalty of Rs 14,59,527 on IndiGo for the period 2021-22. The department has denied input tax credit availed and has raised a demand along with interest and penalty on the company. The company believes that the order passed by the authorities is erroneous. Further, the company believes that it has a strong case on merits, backed by advice from external tax advisors. InterGlobe Aviation, the parent of IndiGo, said in another regulatory filing.

According to the company, it will contest the order before the appropriate authority, and there is no significant impact on its financials, operations or other activities.

Government lifts the city, literally, with elevated corridors

New Delhi .(Agency)

As an ever-evolving city, the capital requires infrastructure updates, and a significant part of the state budget has been set aside for roads, bridges, sewage and water systems, drainage, and other public works. In a push to strengthen South Delhi's infrastructure, the Expenditure Finance Committee cleared three long-pending and critical projects — the Modi Mill Flyover, Savitri Cinema Flyover, and the MB Road Storm Water Drain project. The projects will be executed by the Public Works Department (PWD) with a combined investment of over Rs 759 crore.

In 2025-26, the department secured substantial funding of around Rs 803 crore from the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund to upgrade over 140 road and flyover projects. These upgrades include widening, rehabilitation, resurfacing, and strengthening of key arterial thoroughfares such as Kashmire Gate-Wazirabad Road, Vikas Marg (ITO to D-93), and Ferozeshah Road, as well as flyovers and connectors in Shahdara and East Delhi.

A significant infrastructure push is the Sonia Vihar elevated corridor — a 5.5-6 km elevated road along Pushta Road in North East Delhi designed to decongest, and improve connectivity towards the Uttar Pradesh border. The PWD also initiated a large-scale 55-km redevelopment plan for the Mahatma Gandhi Ring Road corridor, aimed at decongesting major junctions with phased improvements, grade separators, and smarter traffic design.

The PWD has been working on extensive repair and resurfacing of approximately 500 km of damaged roads across Delhi by March 2026. The Delhi Master Plan 2041 is also in the works, to guide major infrastructure decisions and help shape the city's future. The PWD is being reorganised to have its own dedicated engineering cadre, to hire and manage engineers independently. A new drainage master plan was launched with a huge investment to tackle chronic waterlogging problems and ensure water runs off streets quickly during rains. Work has begun on desilting 22 major drains, which will help reduce pollution flowing into rivers.

Mumbai Restaurant Fined Rs 50,000 For Mandatory Service Charge

New Delhi .(Agency)

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on China Gate Restaurant Private Limited, which operates the Bora Bora restaurant chain in Mumbai, for illegally levying mandatory service charges on customers. In an order dated December 29, the Central Consumer Protection Authority said the restaurant was adding a 10 per cent service charge by default to customers' bills and was also charging GST on that amount. This was done despite clear guidelines stating that service charges are voluntary and cannot be added automatically.

The action followed a complaint filed by a Mumbai consumer through the National Consumer Helpline. The complainant alleged that the Bora Bora restaurant refused to remove the



service charge from the bill and even misbehaved when the issue was raised. The CCPA noted that the Delhi High Court, in its March 28, 2025 ruling in the case of National Restaurant Association of India versus Union of India, had clearly upheld the authority's guidelines and ruled that mandatory service charges are illegal. Despite this clear direction, the restaurant continued to levy service charges by default through its billing system. A detailed investigation by the CCPA's director general

(investigation) found that service charges were automatically added to all bills between March 28 and April 30, 2025. This showed that the charge was not optional but imposed on all customers. The investigation also found that the restaurant failed to resolve the consumer's complaint despite receiving multiple notices, charged GST on the service charge in violation of the guidelines, and had a non-functional email address, which restricted consumers from accessing grievance redressal mechanisms. While the restaurant claimed that the service charge was discretionary and said it had stopped the practice after becoming aware of the court ruling, the CCPA said it failed to provide any proof showing compliance during the relevant period. The authority also observed that the refund to the complainant was processed only after regulatory intervention.

Debate on pollution crisis to raise heat in winter session

New Delhi .(Agency)

The Delhi Legislative Assembly will reconvene on January 5, with the four-day winter session focussing on the pollution crisis in the national capital and scrutiny of three CAG reports, Art, Culture and Tourism Minister Kapil Mishra said on Tuesday. The minister said the government will table a proposal on pollution and table three CAG reports 'one each on corruption in 'Sheeshmahal', the functioning of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), and Delhi government-run universities. The term 'Sheeshmahal' was coined by the BJP to point out the alleged opulence of the 6, Flagstaff Road residence of the ex-Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

"There is a very detailed report on the functioning of DJB till the year 2022, it has all the details of all the irregularities which caused the sewage system of the



functioning of universities till 2023 will be exposed in the upcoming session," he added.

Mishra said the Assembly would examine the root causes of the perennial problem of pollution and assess past measures.

"We will discuss what the previous

government had done to curb the pollution. Further, we will also discuss the affidavits which were submitted in the Supreme Court and what their current status is in regards to mitigate pollution," he said.

Mishra also sought the opposition's feedback on battling the city's air pollution. The minister also said that the recent suspension of a registrar and tehsildar by the Delhi government reaffirms its stance of zero tolerance for corruption. "The days of corruption are over. The previous government is not in power anymore. This is a new government, and we will not tolerate any official indulging in corruption," Mishra said. Meanwhile, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that the AAP leaders should stop spreading false propaganda and play the role of a constructive opposition.

New in the New Year: Noida looks at Jewar airport opening, real estate, infra boost in 2026

New Delhi .(Agency)

As 2025 draws to a close, Noida is set for one of its largest infrastructure expansions in recent years, fueled by the opening of the long-awaited Noida International Airport at Jewar. The airport has sparked a series of development projects along the Yamuna Expressway corridor.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Shailendra Kumar Bhatia, Nodal Officer of the airport project, said, "Development of Noida International Airport is complete and the process of issuing the aerodrome license is underway." While initially, the airport will open with one runway and an annual passenger capacity of around 1.2 crore, in the long-term, it is set to be spread over 11,750 acres, featuring five runways, and handling up to 30 crore passengers annually – making it one of the biggest airports globally.

Currently, agricultural fields and village settlements surround the airport, though

the approach from Noida and Greater Noida shows increasing real estate activity. Work on projects like the extension of Regional Rapid Transit System rail links to Delhi and the airport, is also slated to begin next year.

The Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) is focusing on developing the area around the airport into a large manufacturing hub as an extension of Noida, particularly targeting industries.

Several industrial units have received approval to start work, including Pine Valley Venture Pvt Ltd for readymade garments, Deki Electronics for passive electronic components, Neenjas Electricity Pvt Ltd for electric vehicle chargers and LED panels, Escort Kubota for tractor

manufacturing, Minda Corporation for wiring harnesses, as well as solar power players like SAEL Solar P6 and Amber Enterprises India. Electronics and semiconductor manufacturers like

and Havells India is bringing consumer goods manufacturing to the area. According to YEIDA officials, these projects are expected to be completed in 2026.

While basic amenities in Jewar are still limited, they are set to improve: a 100-bed trauma centre and multi-speciality hospital is under construction near the airport. On the real estate front, 2026 is set to see significant progress after 2025 was marked by stalled projects and insolvency issues. Real estate lawyer Chaitanyaashil Priyadarshi of Mimansa Law Offices said, "This year was not good when it came to real estate project handovers in Noida as most were stuck in insolvency. But for 2026, there is an exhaustive list of projects that are close to completion... Many of the pending projects are gradually being executed now and insolvency is also reaching



Aditech Semiconductors, Dixon Technologies, and Ascent K Circuit are also set to start operations near the airport. The Electric Vehicles Manufacturers Welfare Trust is focused on electric vehicles and components,

NEWS BOX

Ashes hero Travis Head makes crucial BBL call ahead of T20 World Cup 2026

NEW DELHI. (Agency) Superstar Australian cricketer Travis Head has hinted at missing the ongoing season of the Big Bash League (BBL) amid concerns over burnout. The left-handed opener said he wants to stay fresh for next year's T20 World Cup, which begins on February 7, especially after playing a major role in Australia retaining the Ashes urn. Describing the ongoing Ashes battle as emotionally draining, Head said he needs a break before what promises to be another demanding season of cricket next year. The 32-year-old has already endured a busy home summer, featuring in the white-ball series against India before playing a Sheffield Shield match as preparation for the Ashes. Head has been in belligerent form in the Ashes, hitting two decisive hundreds, including the whirlwind 123 in the series opener in Perth. When asked about turning out for the Adelaide Strikers in the BBL, Head told News Corp: "Probably unlikely with the emotional drain of an Ashes series, and what's coming up in terms of the World Cup. The emotional drain of actually being in an Ashes series and playing is always



tough. So I think it's important to go into a World Cup fresh." Head has not appeared for the Adelaide Strikers since the 2022-23 season of the Big Bash League.

The star batter has regularly skipped Australia's premier domestic T20 competition in recent years to prioritise international commitments and the Indian Premier League since returning to the tournament in 2024. Head has been an integral member of the SunRisers Hyderabad setup, forming a devastating opening partnership with Abhishek Sharma. He scored 567 runs at a staggering strike rate of 191.59 when SRH reached the final in 2024, followed by another prolific season in 2025. The BBL, which got underway on December 14, has once again been without several of Australia's leading Test stars due to the Ashes.

Magnus Carlsen now a 20-time world champion, ends 2025 with Rapid and Blitz double

NEW DELHI. (Agency) World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen showcased his endgame genius once again as he added a record-extending ninth World Blitz title to the Rapid gold medal he had won two days earlier. Carlsen defeated Uzbek GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov in a hard-fought final of the World Blitz Championship in Doha on Tuesday, December 30.

The Norwegian took home a €70,000 prize, securing his 20th world championship title overall across all three time controls. The triumph also marked the fifth time he has claimed the rare double crown as both the World Rapid and World Blitz champion. Carlsen refused to settle for a draw in the title showdown against the



young Abdusattorov and produced a stunning, unexpected pawn move in the fourth game of the clash to seal a 2.5-1.5 victory and extend his reign in Blitz chess. After the first three games, both players were locked at 1.5 points apiece. The victory was all the more sweet and fulfilling for the Norwegian, who had endured a string of losses during the qualifying (Swiss round) and struggled to secure a place in the knockout semifinals. A draw in Round 19 against Abdusattorov saw both Carlsen, on 13.5 points, and the Uzbek, on 13 points, clinch the final two semifinal spots on Tuesday, finishing behind sole leader Arjun Erigaisi, who topped the standings with 15 points, and American GM Fabiano Caruana, who followed with 14 points. Carlsen then went on to defeat Caruana 3-1 to book his place in the final, while an impeccable Abdusattorov handed Erigaisi a crushing 2.5-0.5 defeat in the semifinals, as the Indian settled for a second bronze medal after finishing third in the Rapid event. Meanwhile, the two bronze medals are a remarkable achievement for the 22-year-old Erigaisi, who will return home stronger and more resolute from the experience.

Arsenal end 2025 on top, Man United stumble against bottom-placed Wolves

Premier League 2025-26: Arsenal delivered a commanding 4-1 win against Aston Villa to end 2025 at the top of the table. Meanwhile, Manchester United struggled to a 1-1 draw with bottom-placed Wolves on Tuesday night.

Liverpool. (Agency)

Arsenal delivered a resounding message in the Premier League title race on Tuesday night, demolishing third-placed Aston Villa 4-1 at the Emirates Stadium to end 2025 firmly at the top of the table. The Gunners had trailed Villa in momentum—Villa came into the game on an 11-match winning run across competitions—but Arsenal's performance turned heads and highlighted their title credentials. The scoring burst came after a tight first half: Gabriel Magalhães opened the scoring early in the second half with a well-

timed finish, before Martin Zubimendi doubled the lead minutes later, adding impetus to Arsenal's charge. Leandro Trossard's composed strike made it 3-0, and substitute Gabriel Jesus added a fourth just minutes after entering the pitch—a goal that underlined both Arsenal's depth and attacking fluidity. Villa managed a late consolation through Ollie Watkins, but it was little more than a footnote to a dominant evening for the hosts. The significance of the win goes well beyond the scoreline. Arsenal extended their lead to five points at the summit, topping the Premier League as the calendar year closed—five points clear of second-placed Manchester City and six ahead of Villa. Crucially, this result came against one of the division's most in-form sides, signaling not just consistency but the sort of performance that transforms title ambition into genuine momentum. For Villa, the loss halts their streak and sees them slip further behind a charging Arsenal, but Unai Emery's side remain firmly in the hunt for a top-four finish. Still, the emphatic nature of Arsenal's victory will likely resonate across the title race discussions over the winter

period. While Arsenal were celebrating, Manchester United endured another frustrating evening at Old Trafford, drawing 1-1 with bottom-placed Wolverhampton



Wanderers. What should have been a straightforward home victory instead quickly became a statistic United will want to forget, days after a 1-0 win over Newcastle. The result was particularly embarrassing given Wolves' position; the Midlands side are at rock-bottom of the Premier League and had managed only a handful of points all season. That they could take a point from Old Trafford not only denied United valuable ground in the race for

Champions League qualification but also sparked discontent from supporters, with boos heard at full time.

United took the lead through Joshua Zirkzee, whose effort deflected in and gave the hosts the advantage shortly before the half-hour mark. But the positivity was short-lived: Ladislav Krejci headed Wolves level just before half-time, ending United's hopes of a comfortable progress. In the second half, United dominated possession and saw a last-gasp effort ruled out for offside, but could not find a decisive breakthrough.

United manager Ruben Amorim did not sugar-coat his assessment of the draw. Post-match, he pinpointed the team's lack of quality and fluidity in attack as key reasons they failed to put away a team struggling so massively on paper. Amorim highlighted the absence of key players—many away at the Africa Cup of Nations or sidelined through injury—as contributors to the disjointed display, but stressed that this should not be used as an excuse. That is normal, but we didn't use that excuse against Newcastle. We are not going to use it today (Dec 30).

Australian great Damien Martyn in induced coma, battling for life against Meningitis

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Harbhajan Singh has thrown his weight behind former Australian cricketer Damien Martyn is in an induced coma, fighting the life-threatening disease meningitis. Martyn was rushed to a hospital in Brisbane in serious condition after falling ill on December 26.

The 54-year-old is suffering from meningitis, a disease that causes inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord and can lead to swelling of the brain.

Former Australia wicketkeeper-batter Adam Gilchrist, a close friend of Martyn, informed the public on behalf of his family that Martyn is receiving treatment in a hospital. "He is getting the best of treatment, and (Martyn's partner) Amanda and his family know that many people are sending their prayers and best wishes," Gilchrist was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au. Cricket Australia CEO Todd Greenberg also sent his best wishes for



Martyn's speedy recovery. "I'm saddened to hear of Damien's illness. The best wishes of everyone at Cricket Australia and in the wider cricket community are with him at this time," Greenberg said in a statement. Martyn made his debut in international cricket during a Test against the West Indies in Brisbane in 1992, scoring 36 and 15 in two innings. Over the course of his career, Martyn became known for his elegant strokeplay and went on to play 67 Tests and 208 ODIs for Australia.

Martyn's illustrious career

The right-handed batter was a vital part of Australia's middle order during their dominant era from the late 1990s to the 2000s. Martyn was also part of Australia's World Cup-winning campaigns in 1999 and 2003. He played a key role in the 2003 World Cup triumph, scoring a vital 88* (84) against India in the final. He was involved in a massive 234-run stand with Ricky Ponting (140* off 121 balls) to help Australia post a huge total of 359/2 in their allotted 50 overs.

Indian sports in 2025: Handshake rows, stampedes and controversies that shaped the year

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Sports in India may have had many memorable highs, but it has also had their fair share of controversies. Isolated moments quickly escalated to a year that had many notable moments defined by public disputes, administrative lapses and moments that embarrassed India as a nation. From international fixtures clouded by political tensions to domestic events marred by chaos, sport repeatedly slipped out of control. These controversies were no mere social media scandals or fleeting cycles of outrage; they disrupted schedules, people's careers and also raised uncomfortable questions on how sport is run in India, where there has always been passion, but planning or the administrative side of things tends to have fallen short.

This was the year when the noise around the game proved louder than the game itself. Let us take a look at some of the biggest sporting controversies in India for 2025.

BREAKDOWN OF INDIAN FOOTBALL

Indian football's biggest worry in 2025 wasn't results on the pitch, but whether its

premier competition would survive at all. The future of the Indian Super League, long projected as the backbone of the sport's professional structure, drifted into uncertainty after its commercial and ownership framework unravelled. With no



clear bidders, unresolved contracts and mounting financial strain, the league's next season was left without firm timelines or guarantees. For clubs, the silence was crippling. Recruitment stalled, preseason planning froze, and players were left unsure if they would even have a competition to prepare for. Administrators offered reassurances, but clarity never followed. The instability also exposed how heavily

Indian football had come to rely on a single top-flight product, with little cushioning beneath it. As weeks passed without resolution, concern spread beyond boardrooms. Coaches warned of lost development time, fans feared regression, and the national ecosystem began to feel the strain. In 2025, Indian football wasn't battling opponents—it was battling uncertainty over whether its top tier could stay upright at all.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP MARRED BY SAFETY CONCERN

What should have been a routine day during a global tournament instead exposed an uncomfortable gap between hosting prestige and on-ground safety. During the Women's World Cup in Indore, two members of the Australia women's cricket team were subjected to harassment while walking near their hotel, an incident that jolted players, officials and organisers alike. The brief encounter, involving a man on a motorcycle, was enough to trigger an alarm within the visiting camp and force an immediate police response.

Margins to mainstream: India women's cricket team wins Battle of the Sexes in 2025

Dubai. (Agency)

For decades, India has fielded two senior national cricket teams—Men's and Women's. Yet, for much of that time, public attention, media coverage, and institutional support remained overwhelmingly skewed toward the men's side. The women's team, despite consistent performances and international success, was often relegated to the margins of public discourse. Rather than receiving the recognition they deserved, players from the women's team were frequently subjected to dismissive commentary and online ridicule. Social media narratives questioning the relevance of women's cricket—along with derogatory labels that trivialised their professionalism—became all too common, undermining both their achievements and credibility. The contrast in public reaction was stark. Landmark performances by male cricketers routinely sparked nationwide celebration, while equally impactful

contributions from leading women cricketers were met with comparatively muted acknowledgement. This imbalance highlighted a deeper issue: the women's



team was not only competing on the field but also fighting for visibility and respect in a sport where they had long proven their excellence. For years, this disparity defined the narrative around Indian women's cricket. However, 2025 has signalled a decisive turning point—a moment that

marks a profound shift in perception, recognition, and the broader cultural conversation surrounding the women's game. But 2025 has marked a seismic shift.

This year, things changed. India Women's Cricket has finally come into its own. 2025 will go down as the year that transformed the fortunes of these incredible athletes. It's the year when the players, who once faced endless mockery, could finally sleep with the quiet knowledge that their struggle had been worth it. The relentless effort, the tough journeys, and the battles—both on and off the field—have led them to a place where they can now proudly call themselves a force to be reckoned with.

2025 is the year when women's cricket in India was no longer an afterthought. It's the year the Indian women's team could stand tall, heads held high, and with the word "respect" finally associated with their name.

After World Cup snub, Shubman Gill to play Vijay Hazare Trophy in January: Report

Shubman Gill, Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul will play in the Vijay Hazare Trophy in January. The trio will leave their respective teams ahead of the three-match ODI series against New Zealand, beginning on January 11.

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

India Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill, all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and star batter KL Rahul are all set to play in the Vijay Hazare Trophy in January. The trio will join their respective teams ahead of the upcoming three-match ODI series against New Zealand, beginning on January 11. According to Cricbuzz, Shubman Gill is expected to feature in Punjab's matches on January 3 and 6 against Sikkim and Goa in Jaipur. Punjab, grouped with powerhouse Mumbai in Group C, currently sit fourth with



two wins from three games. After playing two games, Gill will leave his state side to join the Indian team, which is set to assemble in Baroda on January 7-8 ahead of the first ODI against New Zealand. Ravindra Jadeja has also informed the Saurashtra Cricket

Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) has not confirmed KL Rahul's participation, but he's likely to play in the January 3 and 6 games against Tripura and Rajasthan in Ahmedabad.

Karnataka are second in Group A, maintaining a 100% win record from three matches. Several big names have lit up the ongoing season of the Vijay Hazare Trophy, as star batters Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli also fulfilled their mandatory domestic commitments set by the BCCI. Wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant is also consistently featuring for Delhi and will play the entire season for his team. Kohli will return to play for Delhi for their January 6 fixture against Railways under Pant's captaincy. Opening batter Yashasvi Jaiswal also returned to play for Mumbai for their fourth fixture against Goa after being hospitalised with severe stomach cramps following Mumbai's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) 2025 match against Rajasthan.

Sensex opens 227 points higher, Nifty above 26,000; Tata Steel up 3%

New Delhi.(Agency)

Benchmark stock market indices opened higher on the last trading day of 2025, as metal stocks rallied after India imposed a 3-year import tariff of 11-12% on select steel products, a move aimed largely at checking a surge in shipments from China.

The S&P BSE Sensex was up 185.43 points to 84,860.51, while the NSE Nifty50 added 76.75 points to 26,015.60 as of 9:29 am. Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said that the market has the potential for a directional move upwards but is being weighed down by sustained FII selling and absence of fresh triggers like positive news on the US-India trade front. "The coming days are going to be eventful, starting with the auto sales data for December, Q3 corporate results, expectations from the budget and other news relating to global economy like the possible Fed action in 2026," he added. Tata Steel led the gainers, rising 2.13%, followed by Titan Company, which was up 0.97%. Bharat Electronics gained 0.88%, Axis Bank moved higher by 0.76%, and Hindustan Unilever added 0.71%, supporting the index in early trade.

Bajaj Finserv was the biggest laggard, falling 1.06%. Tata Consultancy Services slipped 0.51%, Bajaj Finance declined 0.45%, Tech Mahindra was down 0.45%, and Mahindra and Mahindra lost 0.40%. The Q3 results have to be watched carefully for indications of upturn in earnings. This is significant since there is lot of hope that there will be a rebound in earnings, going forward," said Vijayakumar.

"Earnings growth will be the single most important factor determining the market trend in 2026. The FII flows in 2026, too, will depend on the earnings performance and expectations surrounding that," he added.

Retail rush and SIPs drive Rs 14 lakh crore jump in mutual fund assets in 2025

New Delhi.(Agency)

Mutual fund industry extended its bull run in 2025, adding a staggering Rs 14 lakh crore to its asset base and pushing total AUM to a record Rs 81 lakh crore by November, powered by surge in retail participation and record SIP inflows.

Venkat Chalasani, Chief Executive Officer of AMFI, told PTI that the industry's outlook remains positive, with steady SIP inflows continuing to offset foreign portfolio investor outflows and strengthening market resilience. Going ahead, fund flows are likely to be guided by valuations and global developments, with investors increasingly favouring large-cap, diversified and hybrid strategies, he added.

The year 2025 also witnessed a robust net inflow of Rs 7 lakh crore, along with a sharp increase of 3.36 crore in the investor base, while SIPs alone contributed about Rs 3 lakh crore, according to data from Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI).

These inflows lifted the industry's assets under management (AUM) by 21 per cent from Rs 67 lakh crore at the end of 2024 to Rs 81 lakh crore by November-end. While the pace of growth was lower than the 31 per cent rise recorded in 2024 and the 27 per cent increase in 2023, the longer-term trend remains strong. The industry had posted a 7 per cent growth in 2022 and nearly 22 per cent in 2021, and has collectively added Rs 50 lakh crore to its asset base over the last five years.

Long-term policy support key to meeting India's renewable energy goals, say experts

Kolkata.(Agency)

Long-term policy frameworks, particularly for hybrid renewables energy, along with a thrust on adoption of technologies and incentive-driven manufacturing, will help the country meet its renewable energy goals, experts said. Experts also believed decarbonisation will continue to be a priority for the industry. Sharing his views, Piyush Goyal, CEO and Co-founder of Volks Energie, said there are certain areas which are essential not only for meeting



climate commitments, but also for powering India's industrial growth, enhancing energy security, and ensuring affordable electricity for consumers.

"Accelerating grid upgrades and storage adoption must be treated as national priorities as India's future energy mix depends on both. Further, incentivising domestic manufacturing of inverters, batteries, and critical components will reduce import dependencies and build supply-chain resilience," Goyal said. Manish Dabkara, CMD of carbon credits firm EKI Energy Services, said emerging technologies, including green hydrogen, advanced storage chemistries, and smart grid systems have the potential to address intermittency and ramping flexibility challenges. "Stable, long-term policy frameworks particularly for hybrid renewables, offshore wind, and green hydrogen will be critical in attracting sustained private and global capital flows," he noted. Gaurav Moda, Partner and Energy Sector Leader, EY-Parthenon India, said that accelerating renewables, efficiency-led decarbonisation, and digital adoption are delivering measurable returns, while renewed momentum in nuclear energy point to a more integrated and commercially grounded phase of the energy transition.

Gold set for a 50-year best, silver breaks records: Where should money go in 2026

The revised allowances will come into effect from January 1 and apply across multiple categories, including domestic layover, night operations, deadhead travel and a newly introduced tail-swap allowance.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Gold and silver prices have cooled off in the last few days of 2025, but the bigger picture remains unchanged. Both metals are heading towards one of their strongest years on record as 2025 draws to a close. After months of sharp gains, some investors are locking in profits, leading to short-term weakness in gold and silver. Even so, prices remain far higher than where they began the year. Gold was trading near \$4,334 an ounce, down slightly from recent levels. The yellow metal had

touched a lifetime high of \$4,549 last week. US gold futures for February delivery were also lower at around \$4,346 an ounce. The fall came as the US dollar strengthened, which often puts pressure on gold prices because it becomes costlier for buyers using other currencies.

GOLD SET FOR BEST GAINS IN 50 YEARS

Gold has risen about 66% so far in 2025, putting it on course for its strongest yearly performance since the late 1970s. This rally has not been driven by one single factor. Instead, several global developments have come together. Lower interest rates in the US have made gold more attractive, as it does not pay interest. Expectations that rates will stay low for longer have also helped. Ongoing global conflicts, worries around government debt, and heavy buying by central banks have further supported prices. At the same time, investment demand through exchange-traded funds has picked up steadily through the year. Minutes from the US Federal Reserve's



December meeting showed that the decision to cut rates was not simple and involved long discussions on risks to the economy. The Fed's next meeting is scheduled for January 27 and 28, and markets expect no immediate change in rates. This environment continues to favour gold as a store of value.

SILVER OUTSHINES GOLD WITH RECORD-BREAKING GAINS

Silver has been the standout performer among precious metals in 2025. Prices fell to around \$74.41 an ounce in the latest session, after touching a record high of \$83.62 earlier in the week. Even after this

fall, silver has gained about 157% this year, far more than gold.

This sharp rise has been driven by strong industrial demand and tight supply. Silver is now seen as a critical mineral in the US, which has lifted its importance.

Demand from clean energy, electronics and electric vehicles has remained strong, while supplies have struggled to keep up. Low inventories have added to the pressure, pushing prices higher for much of the year.

PLATINUM AND PALLADIUM ALSO END STRONG YEAR

Other precious metals have also posted impressive gains in 2025. Platinum slipped to about \$2,123 an ounce after touching a lifetime high of \$2,478 earlier this week. Despite the recent fall, platinum is still up around 135% for the year. Its rise has been supported by tight supply, higher investor interest and policy changes in Europe related to combustion engines.

Palladium was trading near \$1,584 an ounce, down on the day but still up roughly 74% for the year.

Swiggy, Zomato, other gig delivery workers on New Year's Eve strike: Key demands

New Delhi.(Agency)

Last-minute party needs, food orders and grocery runs through online platforms on New Year's Eve may face disruptions across India as gig and delivery workers prepare for a nationwide strike on December 31. With New Year's Eve being one of the busiest days of the year for online orders, the protest could affect food delivery, quick commerce and e-commerce services in several cities. Workers associated with platforms such as Zomato, Swiggy, Blinkit, Zepto, Amazon and Flipkart are expected to take part in the strike. Unions say the action could hurt retailers and platforms that depend heavily on last-mile delivery to meet year-end sales targets. The strike has been called by the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union and the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers, with support from regional worker groups in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi-NCR, West Bengal and parts of Tamil Nadu.

WHY ARE GIG WORKERS PROTESTING?

According to the unions, delivery partners who form the backbone of India's app-based commerce system are being pushed to work longer hours even as their earnings fall. They allege that workers face unsafe delivery targets, limited job security, lack of dignity at work and almost no access to basic social protection. In a letter sent to Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, IFAT said it represents around 4,00,000 app-based transport and delivery workers across the country. The federation said workers had already held a nationwide flash strike on December 25, which led to a 50-60% disruption in services in several cities. The protest, according to the union, was aimed at drawing attention to unsafe delivery models, falling incomes, arbitrary ID blocking and the absence of social security. The federation also claimed that platform companies did not engage with workers after the December 25 protest. Instead, it alleged that companies responded with threats, account deactivations and algorithm-based penalties. The letter further accused platforms of using third-party agencies to weaken the strike. With the December 31 strike, customers may face delays and cancellations as delivery executives log off the apps or sharply reduce their workload. The disruptions are expected to hit food orders, grocery deliveries and last-minute shopping in major cities such as Pune, Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad and Kolkata, along with several tier-2 markets. In its letter, IFAT urged the government to regulate platform companies under labour laws and ban unsafe delivery models, including extreme fast-delivery timelines.

Hindustan copper share price tanks 3%: What's behind the fall

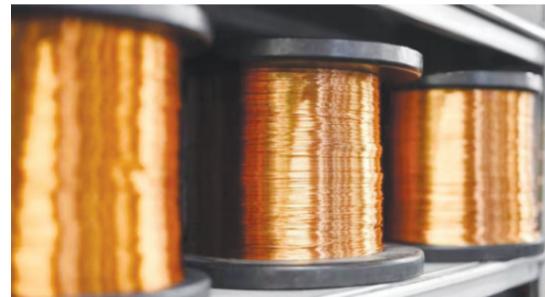
Copper prices have risen sharply this year due to supply disruptions at key global mines and strong demand from sectors such as electrification, renewable energy and artificial intelligence-led infrastructure.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shares of Hindustan Copper fell nearly 3% in Tuesday's trade as investors chose to book profits after the stock's sharp rise in recent weeks. The fall came even as the broader outlook for copper remains strong, supported by global demand and supply challenges. Hindustan Copper was trading around Rs 515 in intraday trade after slipping as much as 3.3% during the session but recovered to trade at Rs 529.80 down 0.78% as of 10:20 am. Market

participants said the decline was largely driven by year-end profit booking and a mild correction in global copper prices, rather than any company-specific bad news.

WHY DID HINDUSTAN COPPER



SHARES FALL TODAY?

Copper prices eased by more than 1% as traders locked in gains at the end of the year. This had a direct impact on copper-linked stocks, including Hindustan Copper, which has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the metal's rally in 2025. Copper prices have risen sharply this year due to supply disruptions at key global mines

and strong demand from sectors such as electrification, renewable energy and artificial intelligence-led infrastructure. However, after such a strong run, some cooling off was expected in the short term.

Experts tracking the stock said the recent fall looks like a pause rather than a trend reversal, especially given the scale of gains already seen. Despite today's fall, Hindustan Copper has delivered very strong returns across time frames. The stock has gained more than 26% in the last five trading sessions. Over the past one month, it is up around 56%.

Looking at a longer period, the share price has jumped nearly 89.49% in the last six months. On a yearly basis, the stock has risen about 113.71%, making it one of the top performers among metal stocks. This sharp rise is one of the key reasons why investors may be choosing to lock in profits, especially as the calendar year comes to an end.

From Reliance Jio, PhonePe to Zepto: 5 key IPOs to watch in 2026

New Delhi.(Agency)

After a strong run in 2025, India's primary market is entering 2026 with high expectations. Several large and well-known companies are preparing to tap the stock market, and 2026 is shaping up to be an exciting year for investors. Many of these firms have been waiting for the right market conditions, and the current mood appears favourable. From digital giants to new-age startups, the upcoming IPO list reflects growing confidence among Indian companies and sustained interest from investors.

Reliance Jio

Reliance Jio Platforms is expected to be the biggest attraction in the 2026 IPO calendar. Valued at around Rs 11-12 lakh crore, its public listing could be one of the largest ever seen on Dalal Street. The telecom and digital services major is reportedly preparing its draft papers and may look to launch the IPO in the first half of the year, subject to approvals. A Jio listing is likely to draw

strong interest from both domestic and global investors, given its dominant position in telecom and its expanding digital ecosystem.

Flipkart

Flipkart, backed by US retail giant Walmart, is also expected to enter the public markets in 2026. Reports suggest the e-commerce firm is aiming for a valuation in the range of \$60 billion to \$70 billion. This would place it among the biggest technology IPOs in India. In preparation for the listing, the Flipkart Group has narrowed its losses in the 2024-25 financial year, signalling a stronger focus on profitability and operational efficiency.

OYO

Hospitality platform OYO has taken another step towards going public. Shareholders of its parent company have approved plans to raise up to Rs 6,650 crore through a fresh issue of equity shares as part of the proposed

IPO. While the exact launch date is yet to be announced, the listing will depend on regulatory clearance from Sebi and overall market conditions. Investors will be closely watching how OYO positions its business ahead of the offering.

PhonePe

Digital payments firm PhonePe is also preparing for an IPO in 2026. The company is expected to raise around \$1.2 billion to \$1.5 billion through a mix of fresh shares and an offer for sale by existing investors. Reports indicate that PhonePe could be valued at close to \$15 billion at the time of listing. With its strong presence in India's digital payments space, the IPO is likely to attract wide attention.

Zepto

Bengaluru-based quick commerce startup Zepto is another name to watch. Known for its 10-minute grocery delivery service.

How India overtook China to become the world's top rice producer

India has emerged as the world's largest rice producer, but closing the yield gap and managing water stress will decide whether this production surge becomes a lasting advantage.

New Delhi.(Agency)

India has shattered China's dominance that had continued for years in the field of rice. By overtaking China, India has reached number one in the world in terms of rice production. The country's share in total global rice production has crossed more than 28%. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has also acknowledged India's achievement. In its December 2025 report, the USDA said India's rice production has reached 152 million metric tonnes, while China's output stands at 146 million metric tonnes. This record will require a revision of long-held assumptions that China is the world's largest rice-producing country.

An interesting aspect of India's success is the significant contribution made by Taiwan. Relations between China and Taiwan remain extremely tense.

Rice has been grown and consumed in India since ancient times. Whenever the origin of rice is discussed, India's name is often mentioned first. There are about 123,000 varieties of rice in the world, of which nearly 60,000 are found in India.

This highlights India's richness in rice diversity. However, in terms of production, India had lagged far behind China for a long time. This is the first time India has overtaken China in rice production. Dr Sudhanshu Singh, Director of the South Asia Regional Centre at the International Rice Institute, says that India's emergence as the world's largest rice producer is a major achievement. Indian rice is exported to 172 countries, and rice has also become an important tool of India's foreign policy.

EARNINGS FROM RICE

In 2024-25, India exported agricultural produce worth a record Rs 450,840 crore, with rice accounting for the largest share of about 24%.

By exporting basmati and non-basmati rice, India earned foreign exchange worth Rs 105,720 crore in a single year. This underlines the importance of rice to the Indian economy.

TAIWAN'S CONTRIBUTION

At the time of Independence, India produced only 20.58 million metric



tonnes of rice annually. By 2025, this figure had risen to 152 million metric tonnes. This record in rice production is undoubtedly the result of the hard work of farmers and scientists. However, Taiwan also played a significant role in India's success in rice cultivation, which merits special mention. In the 1960s, India was struggling with a shortage of food grains.

At the time, cultivation was limited to traditional long-stem rice varieties, with yields of only about 800 kg per hectare.

By then, urea had been introduced as a chemical fertiliser. While the use of fertiliser and additional water could increase output, this required dwarf and strong-stem varieties, which India did not have. Indian varieties tended to lodge when fertiliser and water were used, as their long stems caused the crop to fall over. This led to the need for dwarf varieties to increase production and address food shortages.

Taiwan stepped in to meet this requirement by providing its dwarf rice variety, Taichung Native-1 (TN1). This transformed Indian agriculture. Taichung Native-1 played a key role in the Green Revolution and is considered the world's first semi-dwarf rice variety.

IR-8 CHANGED THE WORLD

Another dwarf rice variety, IR-8, was introduced in India in 1968 by the International Rice Research Institute. This triggered rapid increase in production. Because of its revolutionary productivity, IR-8 came to be known as "Miracle Rice".

Sreeleela Surapaneni

Gets Mobbed While Visiting Tirumala Temple On The Occasion Of Vaikuntha Ekadashi

It is Vaikuntha Ekadashi today (December 30, 2025), and several celebrities have been visiting the Tirumala temple to seek blessings from the almighty. Along with several stars, Sreeleela also visited the temple, and pictures and videos of her getting mobbed have gone viral on social media. The actress, who went to seek blessings at the Tirumala temple, was seen surrounded by fans who were trying to click pictures with her and meet her.

As the videos of the actress getting mobbed went viral on social media, one wrote, "First ban mobiles near temples." "Sreeleela so sweet (sic)," another one commented.

Indian cricketer Surya Kumar Yadav (SKY) visited Tirumala early in the morning on the auspicious occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi.

The video of him visiting the temple with his wife has also circulated on social media, with several people trying to click him visiting the holy place. Several actors have been mobbed in recent times as they stepped out to attend various launches and other events. Recently,

Samantha Ruth Prabhu and Nidhhi Agerwal were mobbed at different events in Hyderabad.

Samantha Ruth Prabhu mobbed

Samantha Ruth Prabhu recently visited Hyderabad to fulfil a work commitment when a large number of people gathered, and chaos broke out. Samantha Ruth Prabhu was mobbed by the crowd, and in the clip, she was seen struggling to move and looking visibly restrained as she made her way to her car. The clip also showed Samantha's security personnel holding her and guiding her through the



Nidhhi Agerwal was mobbed after an event

Nidhhi Agerwal was mobbed at a fan event for her upcoming film The Raja Saab. Police at the Kukatpally Housing Board (KPHB) have registered a suo motu case against Lulu Mall management and the organisers of a promotional event after actor Nidhhi Agerwal was mobbed by fans during a song launch.

KPHB Inspector S. Rajashekhar Reddy confirmed that the organisers had not sought prior permission to hold the programme. "A case is being registered against the mall management and the event organisers for holding the programme without permission," he said.

Rashmika Mandanna's Low-Key Rome Vacation Is Internet's New Favourite

Actor couple Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda are spending the last days of the year in Rome, and fans are loving the small, personal moments they have shared from the trip. Rashmika posted a mix of photos and videos from the vacation, giving a peek into quiet celebrations, candle prayers, and time spent with close friends.

While most of the posts showed Rashmika enjoying the city, a few subtle clips featuring Vijay quickly caught attention online. Fans zoomed in on these moments, especially one where Rashmika fed Vijay dessert before tasting it herself. The gesture may have been simple, but it sparked a flood of reactions across social media.

A Sweet Moment That Fans Can't Stop Talking About

One short video showed Rashmika holding a spoonful of dessert and feeding it to Vijay before taking a bite. Though Vijay's face was not clearly visible, fans instantly recognised him. Another clip showed the couple standing together with candles, praying quietly. Only Vijay's hand was visible, but the moment felt intimate and calm.

Fans quickly shared these clips on X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram. A fan reposted the dessert video and wrote, "First bite for Vijay. Second, her just wife things." Another user combined their names and called her "Rashmika Vijay Devarkonda." A fan simply called her 'wifey,'

while another wrote, "I love you, Rashmika and Vijay Deverakonda, app dono ek sath bahut acche lagte hai (you both are so good together)."

Candle Prayer Clip Draws Playful Reactions

The video where Rashmika and Vijay prayed together also made waves online. Fans reposted it with short captions like, "Them." A person joked, "Tanani pray cheyyani anna (Let her pray brother)," pointing out how Vijay kept moving slightly during the moment. An Instagram user commented, "Vijay never konda ke sath ho (You're with Vijay Deverakonda)." Some photos

from the trip also included Vijay's brother, Anand Deverakonda, who joined the group during the Rome vacation.

How Their Love Story Began

Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda first worked together in the 2018 hit film Geetha Govindam, followed by Dear Comrade in 2019.

Before this relationship, Rashmika was engaged to Kannada actor Rakshit Shetty, while Vijay was linked to a Belgian national named Virginie.

Rumours about Rashmika and Vijay dating began around 2020. Fans often noticed them posting solo pictures from the same locations, whether at home or while travelling. In 2024, both dropped subtle hints about their relationship without directly naming each other. In October 2025, the couple got engaged in a private ceremony attended

Kartik Aaryan Reveals He Has Never Fallen In Love Even Once, Ananya Panday Is Surprised



Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday are currently seen in Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri. The film is getting a positive response and is also doing well at the box office. To promote it further, the actors will appear on the latest episode of The Great Indian Kapil Show Season 4. Makers shared a promo where Kartik was seen making confessions about his love life, which left Ananya Panday shocked. In the leaked promo, Archana Puran Singh says Kartik's dialogues in the trailer, 'The first girl I say I love you to, will be the last girl I will say I love you', and asks if that is also Kartik's mantra. Responding to her, Kartik says, 'I don't say I Love You, when the first one happens, I will say it.' Reacting to this, a surprised Ananya Panday asks, "Toh ab tak nahi hua hai?" Kartik only smiles in response. It is worth mentioning here that both actors were rumoured to be dating in the past. However, they never confirmed.

Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri Day 5 Box Office

According to Sacnilk.com, the film earned just over Rs 1.75 crore on Day 5, indicating weak weekday momentum after a modest opening weekend. Released in theatres on December 25, the film has failed to build strong word-of-mouth, which is now reflecting in its declining footfalls across cinema halls in India. As per early estimates, the film opened with Rs 7.75 crore on Day 1, followed by Rs 5.25 crore on Day 2. On Day 3, the Kartik Aaryan starrer collected Rs 5.5 crore, while Day 4 saw a slight dip with earnings of Rs 5 crore. However, the real test came on Day 5, its first Monday, when the film recorded a sharp fall and managed to collect only Rs 1.75 crore nett in India.

About Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri

Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri marks the reunion of Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday after their 2019 film Pati Patni Aur Woh. The film also features veteran actors Jackie Shroff and Neena Gupta in pivotal supporting roles.

Nimrat Kaur Drops 'Unseen, Unserious And Unfiltered' Reel To Wrap Up 2025



2025 has been a whirlwind year for Nimrat Kaur. She kicked things off with Skyforce, dazzled us mid-year with Kull, and wrapped it all up in style with The Family Man Season 3. But it wasn't all work for The Lunchbox actress. Her latest Instagram post shows that Nimrat also found plenty of time for fun, giving fans a glimpse of the memorable moments that made 2025 truly unforgettable.

Nimrat Kaur Looks Back At A Fun-Filled 2025

Nimrat shared a goofy reel that was basically a compilation of all the fun moments of 2025. It featured videos of her goofing around, getting a haircut, grooving to music, and enjoying massages. One clip even showed her grooving while taking a bite of dosa and idli, revealing the true foodie that she is. The reel also gave some behind-the-scenes glimpses from her projects Kull, Family Man Season 3, and Skyforce.

Plus, it showcased some of her standout fashion looks of the year as well. The reel ended with Nimrat gliding away on a snowmobile in a snowy landscape, with the text: "Rolling into 2026 like this." Her caption on the reel read, "Some unseen, mostly unserious, all unfiltered moments of the year gone by!" She added, "First quarter of the 21st century done (somewhat) right..bring on the next." Mona Singh commented on Nimrat's reel and wrote, "Oye love it oye oye."

The reel also received enthusiastic reactions from users, with one commenting, "Oye kya baat hai," while another added, "Yummy for many reasons." Compliments kept pouring in, as a user remarked, "You are such a beauty," and another described her reel as "Masti Ki Paathshala." One user shared positive wishes, writing, "Here's to a phenomenal 2026," while another expressed affection by saying, "Love you ma'am, god bless you."

Nimrat's Spiritual Last Monday Of 2025

Nimrat shared a video on her Instagram on the last Monday of 2025, offering a glimpse of her visit to the Shankaracharya temple. In the caption, she expressed gratitude for the blessings of the year gone by and noted that, as it was the final Monday of 2025, she wanted to mark the moment by sharing her temple visit. She also wished that the divine protection and energy of Shiva would carry everyone forward with love and light into the coming year.

Happy New Year 2026

Celebration 8 Awesome Party Ideas To Try Out This Year



decided to give you eight awesome New Year party ideas that will make the party this year a red-letter event of your life.

Try out BYOA - Bring Your Own Appetizer

This eases off the burden on your shoulders while the guests also get to have a say in deciding the menu, sort of. Call up all the people you have invited and tell them it's a BYOA party. You know what's the benefit of this? It will sound so fancy and hence, will add the excitement angle to the party. Plus,

appetizers sorted! Wow.

Plan weirdest noisemaker contest

Well, we all know that New Year is all about hoo-hoo and haa-haa. So, making weird noises will not attract the attention of your neighbours on this one fine day of the entire year. So, to make the event super fun, you can plan a contest in which all the attendees have to make weirdest noises possible. And do remember to shoot! This will be the show's topper activity, we bet.

Get a photographer

Though you may think that it is an extra cost and you may rather not do it, photographers can make your party memorable. The photographs will give you memories for your entire lifetime!

Or, delegate someone the responsibility to click photographers against a treat

This is the best way to cut on some expenses while also not having to deal with nosy and demanding photographers. Sure, there are certain people you would know who have photography as their passion. If you thought better than to invite them, think again. Call them to your party and tell them that the responsibility of good photographs is on their shoulders. Just wait and see how passionate they get about it then!

Try potluck if you start in evening

A potluck is usually about too much food that we end up wasting half of or storing in the refrigerators for the next three days if you don't mind stale food. So, potluck should be your bet if you are planning to start your party in the evening. Usually, New Year parties start at nine or 10 PM, so that the entire duration is not more than three to four hours. But, many start it in the evening already. In that case, if your guests are getting food, nothing like it as the chances of it getting wasted are reduced because the party's going to go on a long time.

Try this if you are a chain New-Year-Party-host

Do you throw a New Year party each year?



Then this idea is for you! Ask all your guests to write some predictions about the forthcoming year on a piece of paper. Collect their slips and store it inside a locker which you only open at the end of the next year. Whosoever's predictions turn out right, they get presents. A long-term idea, but sure worth the fun.

Try BYOB - Bring your Own Booze

Another fancy concept but it is even better than BYOA because it further cuts down the cost for you. Finding it hard to sponsor alcohol for everyone? Then this concept is for you. Plus, this way, all your guests will get what they like best - beer, wine or champagne. You just have to call them up and tell them that you know you have this fancy idea because you want it to be fun. Whoosh. Half the money saved.

Try candles

We all want that the setup should be really good and should add to the feeling of the party. But, sticking things to your walls or blowing up balloons is very hard and tiresome. What can you do instead? Just get in some candles. Candles are easy, convenient, can be placed and removed in a jiffy. And you know what's the best part about candles? They look really fancy and perfect for a New Year's Eve.



Ways to stick to your New Year Resolutions

Here are some ways you can do it.

Write it down

One of the best ways to stick to your New Year resolution is by jotting all the points down. It is much easier and will also remind you time and again about what you have promised yourself for the year. This will keep you working harder to achieve your goals.

Post these around

After you have written down your resolutions, put them around you. For instance, paste them on your fridge or your cupboard or at work. The more you get to see what you've

written, the more focused you will be to achieving your goals. It will act like a constant visual to keep you concentrating on the goals you've set for yourself.

Tell others

When you share your resolutions with others, it keeps you

motivated and also keeps you away from cheating. It will keep you determined and also you can tell these people about the progress that you have made on your resolutions every time you see them.

Pair up with a friend

Pairing up with a buddy will keep your resolutions going for a long time. Your friend will act as a built-in accountability partner and you won't feel like letting him or her down. For example, if your resolution is to lose weight, keep your friend informed so that time and



The restaurant — which offers a wide variety of barbecue, tandoori and grilled fare — has a host of attractions and entertainment options lined up for its end-of-the-year festivities as part of the carnival-themed Friendzy. The event will see various artists and illusionists entertain guests at the restaurant till January 5, 2015.

The restaurant is known for its open-brick wall surfaces that exude warmth, which complement the dishes that are served. Diners can enjoy a smorgasbord of dishes from American,

again he or she can ask you how much you've lost and whether you've been exercising or not.

Keep yourself motivated

Relying on others is not the only way to stay inspired. Remind yourself each time that you cheat that you've made a promise to yourself. For example, if your resolution is to drink less this year, then stay away from going out every now and then to a party where you know that you may end up drinking more and this can affect your health.

Have a heart-warming feast this New Year

Food fanatics in the city who want to end the year by feasting on grilled delicacies can make their way to Barbeque Nation.

Mediterranean, Oriental and Indian cuisines. The venue also has a live grill embedded in each table so that diners can have a minibarbecue party right there. The grill is used to finish off pre-cooked nonvegetarian and vegetarian starters with a choice of marinades and sauces. There is also a wide assortment of soups, salads, main dishes and desserts as a part of its fullcourse buffet.