

# 'Heard Audio Clip Of Trump On Modi': M Kharge's Swipe At PM On Russian Oil

**Donald Trump had claimed India showed willingness to reduce its import of Russian oil after the US imposed steep tariffs on India last year for buying oil from a country that the US sees as the aggressor in Ukraine**

New Delhi (Agency) Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge has launched a fresh attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in connection with another comment by US President Donald Trump, this time not on Operation Sindo, but India's purchase of Russian oil. Trump had said India showed willingness to reduce its import of Russian oil after the US imposed steep tariffs on India last year for buying oil from a country that the US sees as the aggressor in Ukraine. This comment was heard in an audio clip, the Congress chief said. "Modi wanted to make me happy," the US President whose

unconventional methods of dealing even with heads of States are well-known said in the audio clip, according to Kharge. Kharge, citing Trump's comment, took a swipe at PM Modi, whose friendship with the US President has been billed as the meeting of the world's two largest democracies. "I do not understand why Modi is bending before him (Trump). This is harmful for the nation. (You should) stand for the country. You nod to whatever he says. The country did not elect you as the PM to nod," Kharge told reporters on



Monday. "This is harmful for the nation," he added. "I heard an audio today wherein Trump said (on Russian oil) that he knows that Modi respects him and listens to him. What does this mean? It means that Modi is under his control. I am reminded of a dialogue

from Mr India - 'Mogambo Khush Hua'. After the ambassador spoke to him, Trump said 'Mogambo Khush Hua,'" Kharge said. The Congress chief also raised concerns over the recent arrest of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro, and warned against the "expansionist" tendencies and attempts to intimidate nations.

"The situation forming in Venezuela is not good for the world. The US President is attempting to scare the people of the world. Whoever attempts expansionism does not continue for long. People like Hitler

and Mussolini are gone. It is not right that several people, who harbour ill thoughts, try to disrupt global peace," he said. Expectedly, Kharge touched upon Trump's claims on playing a role in defusing tension between India and Pakistan during Operation Sindo.

"Trump always says that he played a significant role in bringing peace between India and Pakistan. He said that at least 70 times. What does it mean? That he is a tall personality and he can make the world bow to him. But the world won't bow before him. India has said it will buy oil from anywhere keeping the interests of its citizens.

## Lamp can be lit on hilltop: High Court blasts Stalin govt's 'political agenda'

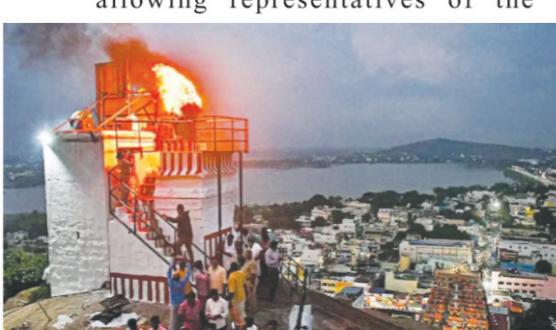
In a setback to the Tamil Nadu government, the Madras High Court upheld an order allowing lighting of Karthigai Deepam at a stone pillar near a dargah atop Thiruparankundram hills, rejecting law-and-order and custom objections.

New Delhi (Agency) In a setback to the DMK-led Tamil Nadu government, the Madras High Court (Madurai bench) on Tuesday, January 6, upheld a single judge's order directing the lighting of a lamp at the stone pillar atop the Thiruparankundram hills in Madurai.

The issue before the court centred on whether Karthigai Deepam could be lit at an ancient stone lamp pillar located on the Thiruparankundram hills, close to the Hazarath Sultan Sikkandar Badusha Avuliya Dargah, with the state and other appellants opposing the practice citing custom, law-and-order concerns and competing claims over the site.

A division bench comprising Justice G Jayachandran and Justice KK Ramakrishnan held that the single judge's order was not barred by res judicata, as the issue had not been conclusively decided in earlier litigations.

The bench said the appellants, including the state authorities and the dargah, failed to produce "formidable evidence" to



show that any agama shastra prohibited the lighting of the lamp. Coming down strongly on the state's objections, the bench termed it "ridiculous and hard to believe" that allowing representatives of the

appeals arose from a December 1 order of a single judge directing the management of the Arulmigu Subramania Swamy Temple, Thiruparankundram, to light the Karthigai Deepam at the ancient stone lamp pillar on the hill.

After the order was not complied with on Karthigai Deepam day, the single judge permitted the petitioner devotees to light the lamp themselves. Even that did not take place, following which contempt proceedings were initiated and remain pending.

Challenging the single judge's order, the state, police, the dargah and the Tamil Nadu Waqf Board approached the division bench. The state argued that the devotees had no enforceable legal right to seek lighting of the lamp and that Article 226 powers could not be used to alter a long-standing custom. The Advocate General submitted that the petition was not a public interest litigation but a private one, and the court's focus should be limited to the petitioner's rights and the statutory obligations of the respondents.

"I have six children and my beard is turning white. Somebody said that one should have four children. Why four? Give birth to eight children, who is stopping you?" he said at a rally in Maharashtra's Akola. Owaisi recalled the statements of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, whose TDP is a part of the BJP-led Centre, of having more children.

"All of them are saying to have more children. Why aren't you doing it now? I challenge you to have 20 children. What kind of joke is this," he said.

Earlier, Rana had said that some people have multiple wives and several children, thereby keeping their population growing, and to beat that, she urged Hindus to have "at least three to four children" to protect India. "I appeal to all Hindus. Listen, these people openly say they have four wives and 19 children. I suggest we should give birth to at least three to four children," the BJP leader said.

"I don't know whether he is Maulana or someone else, but he said he has 19 children and four wives, but he could not complete a quorum of

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi slammed BJP leader Navneet Rana over her suggestion of

having four children to maintain demographic balance, saying he has six children, and asked her what was stopping her from having more.

30 children. They plan to turn Hindustan into Pakistan by giving birth to children in large numbers, so why should we be satisfied with



just one child? We should also give birth to three to four children," she added.

Her remarks triggered a political row, with Congress MP Manickam Tagore calling for the end of such "mad thinking" by the RSS and the BJP. "We should be scientific in numbers, not have such a superstitious or unscientific manner. India's population growth is an alarming story... Those states which are unable to stabilise the population are suffering.

## DMK's 32-seat offer pushes Tamil Nadu Congress to pitch TVK tie-up to Rahul Gandhi

Tamil Nadu (Agency)

With Tamil Nadu heading towards Assembly elections this year, the Congress's renewed push for "power-sharing" is being seen as part of a larger strategy to renegotiate its position within the DMK-led alliance.

According to sources, the Congress has internally pegged 40 seats as its ideal target, viewing it as a crucial number to project relevance in the next Assembly. The DMK, however, is said to be ready to offer 32 seats. Sources said the Congress



has since modified its demand to 38 seats. Tamil Nadu Congress leadership is also attempting to convince Rahul Gandhi of a possible alliance with Vijay's TVK, said sources. Manickam Tagore, Congress MP, reiterated on Monday that the party wants not just alliance seats but a share in government if the coalition wins, reflecting pressure from party workers and strategic recalibration ahead of polls. Tagore's remarks on power-sharing came on the heels of TVK's outreach, where the actor-politician Vijay's party described the Congress as a "natural ally", sparking speculation about the evolving political equations in Tamil Nadu. TVK spokesperson Felix Gerald said Vijay and Rahul Gandhi were friends and claimed the possibility of an alliance with Congress was high, though he cautioned that internal interests within the Tamil Nadu Congress leadership could delay talks. Against this backdrop, TVK leader Nirmal Kumar said that alliance decisions would be taken only after consultations by party chief Vijay. "Our leader will consult and announce the groups related to the alliance. From there, actions will be taken. There are still many days left, about two months, before the elections," he said.

## Jagan Reddy Alleges "Democracy Being Murdered" In Andhra Local Body Polls

Amaravati (Agency)

Former Andhra Pradesh chief minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has alleged large-scale intimidation and violation of democratic norms during the Mandal Parishad President (MPP) by-elections in Vinjamuru and Bommanahalli mandals.

He accused the ruling Telugu Desam Party-led coalition government of using force and the police machinery to influence the election process.

"Even in a small MPP election, the way democracy is being brutally murdered exposes the extreme high-handedness of the TDP and the dangerous nature of the coalition government led by Chandrababu Naidu, who has reduced elections to a show of force instead of a democratic process," he

posted on X on Monday. He alleged that in the Udayagiri constituency, Vinjamuru mandal, the YSRCP workers were stopped on the road while coming to exercise their vote.

"They were attacked, a woman MPTC suffered bleeding injuries, one member was kidnapped and another was taken into police custody, all with the sole aim of stopping them from voting to elect an MPP. It is a planned attempt to silence people by creating fear, using force and blocking their right to vote, only to crush the democratic voice. During these incidents, the police acted like puppets in the hands of the TDP, openly supporting the ruling party and failing to protect the democratic process," Reddy alleged.

He said the same "ugly picture" was repeated



in the Rayadurgam constituency, Bommanahalli mandal.

"Kidnapping elected representatives, attacking them in public, misusing the police and bulldozing election process has become routine under the TDP-led coalition. Chandrababu Naidu, who lectures the nation on democracy, must answer for turning

Andhra Pradesh into a lawless jungle raj state. If this is the condition of democracy in a small local body indirect election, it clearly shows how arrogant and anti-democratic this government has become," he added.

According to the YSRCP, despite having a clear majority of MPTC members in both mandals, the elections were completed in favour of the ruling party through coercion, while police and election officials allegedly remained silent spectators. The party demanded cancellation of the by-elections and called for fresh polls to be conducted in a free and fair manner. The YSRCP said it is documenting all alleged incidents and warned that those responsible would be held accountable through legal.

## Siddaramaiah to break Devaraj Urs' record as longest-serving CM

BENGALURU (Agency)

As Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is all set to equal the record of former CM late D Devaraj Urs as the longest-serving CM on Tuesday, it is a big milestone for him personally and for the state. Though Siddaramaiah and Urs are seen as most prominent leaders who contributed to the uplift of oppressed communities, political analysts say the latter's achievements were more remarkable as he executed the land reforms and also established the first state-level backward classes commission headed by LG Havanur. While Urs could pick new faces from humble backgrounds, Siddaramaiah has not been able to do so because of constraints under the current situation. But Siddaramaiah can be termed the torchbearer of Urs' legacy as he has

effectively implemented the right for food (Anna Bhagya), the five guarantees and also commissioned the socio, educational and economic survey to give social justice to all communities, said senior Congress leader HM Revanna. On the political front, some call his rise to the top post mere "luck", but one should not forget his persuasive skills and Machiavellian moves that made him stake claim to power and retain it, political analysts pointed out.

**He learnt early to stick to state politics, reaped rich dividends**

Siddaramaiah is arguably one of the most successful politicians in the state. He has served as deputy chief minister and leader of opposition twice in his long political career. The nine-time MLA, who lost two Lok Sabha elections, learnt early to stick to



state politics that have earned him hefty dividends.

Starting his career in electoral politics as an independent on the advice of Raitha Sangha leader Prof MD Nanjundaswamy, he tasted success in his debut polls, winning the Chamundeshwari Assembly constituency in 1983. He was supported by the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) that had floated by

Chaudhary Charan Singh, former prime minister. Siddaramaiah, who has high regards for Charan Singh, claims to belong to the socialist Ram Manohar Lohia school of thought.

From that beginning, Siddaramaiah, who is now 77 years old, went on to change parties to suit his ambitions. When the Congress-JDS coalition formed the government in 2004, late N Dharam Singh became chief minister. Siddaramaiah, who was with JDS then and longed to become CM, was stymied by JDS patriarch HD Deve Gowda. He revolted and organised a rally of AHINDA, Kannada acronym for minorities, backward classes and Dalits, communities in Hubballi with the mentoring and backing of veteran leader RL Jalappa and others.

## News box

## Blast at gun shop on Gurgaon-Alwar highway leaves one injured, vehicles damaged

Gurgaon.(Agency)

An explosion at Satyam Gun House on the Gurgaon-Alwar National Highway (NH-248A) in Nuh district on Monday triggered panic in the area, damaging the shop and several vehicles parked nearby. One person sustained minor injuries, police said.

According to police, the blast was strong enough to damage a portion of the gun house's wall, while glass panes from the shop's gate were blown onto the street. Several vehicles parked outside the shop, located in a busy market area, were also damaged by the impact and flying debris. The gun house has been operating at the location for over 10 years, a police officer said. Preliminary information suggests the explosion occurred after cartridges and weapons stored inside the shop caught fire. At the time of the incident, three workers were present inside the premises. One of them suffered minor injuries and was taken to CHC Nuh for treatment. No fatalities were reported.

"Following information about the blast, police and fire brigade teams rushed to the spot. Firefighters managed to bring the fire under control in time, preventing it from spreading to adjoining shops in the market," an officer said. Officials reached the spot and reviewed the situation. Police said teams remain stationed in the area as a precautionary measure. "The exact cause of the explosion is yet to be established. All aspects related to storage and handling of gun-related material are being examined," the officer added. Police are assessing the extent of damage to the shop and nearby properties and recording statements of those present at the time of the incident. No FIR has been registered so far, officials said, adding that further action would be taken after the completion of the preliminary inquiry.

## Mason dies of suffocation after fire breaks out in temple room in Gurgaon

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A 49-year-old mason died of suffocation after a fire broke out in bedding kept inside a room at a temple in Naurangpur village under the Bar Gujjar police post.

The incident occurred on Sunday afternoon. Police said they received information about smoke and a man lying unconscious inside the room. A police team reached the spot, took the body into custody and sent it to the mortuary for autopsy. Police said the deceased, Rajesh Khanna, was from Shahjahanpur district of UP. He had been living in Gurgaon for the past two years for work, and was currently working as a mason at the temple where he lived in a small room on the premises.



Police suspect that a quilt and mattress kept in the room caught fire, filling the space with thick smoke and causing suffocation. "Preliminary investigation suggests the fire may have been triggered by a spark while he was smoking, though no burn injuries were found on the body," the investigating officer said.

Police said statements of family members were recorded, and no foul play was suspected. After the post-mortem was conducted on Monday, the body was handed over to the family.

## Denied parking inside condo, says dialysis patient; Haryana rights panel orders probe into harassment

Noida.(Agency)

Haryana Human Rights Commission (HHRC) ordered a probe last week after a resident of an affordable housing society, who requires frequent dialysis, alleged that he was subjected to inhuman treatment.

Jai Prakash, a resident of GLS Avenue in Sector 92, alleged that the society staff denied him parking inside the premises despite suffering from end-stage renal disease, selectively granting the facility only to favoured residents or those offering illegal gratification. After he approached HHRC seeking urgent intervention on account of "mental harassment", the rights panel directed the deputy commissioner (DC) to ensure immediate relief and submit an action-taken report before the next hearing on Feb 18. Terming the denial "discriminatory and violative of the right to life with dignity", HHRC appointed the DC the nodal officer in the matter. The DC was directed to get the matter inquired into through a senior and responsible gazetted officer. The commissioner of police was directed to ensure that the complainant is not subjected to "any kind of harassment, pressure or threat in future". The complainant resides in the society along with his wife, who is a private school teacher and the sole earning member of the family, consisting of two minor daughters aged 11 and 3 years. Both his kidneys were diagnosed with 100% damage. He is undergoing dialysis treatment three times a week. Due to his deteriorating health condition, the complainant experiences frequent dizziness and difficulty in walking and he even fainted on certain occasions. He claimed that he and his wife made repeated requests to the society staff, as it becomes "extremely difficult" for him to walk long distances given his medical condition, but the staff ignored his requests.

## Gym trainer beaten to death by group of men blocking road, drinking in Noida

Noida.(Agency)

A 30-year-old man died on Monday of injuries he was left with by a group drinking in the middle of a road in Dadri late at night. Police said Harkesh and his friend Mohit were returning home around 1.30am when they found their path blocked by a car parked obliquely near Kaimrala village. There were seven to eight men drinking in and around the car. When Harkesh asked them to move the car, they refused. "An argument ensued and soon escalated into violence. The accused attacked Harkesh and Mohit with sticks and batons before fleeing," a senior police officer said. Mohit, who was seriously injured, managed to call his cousin Kapil Pradhan and inform him about the assault. Villagers and family members rushed to the spot and took both to Yatharth Hospital in Greater Noida, where doctors declared Harkesh dead. Mohit remains admitted in critical condition. Harkesh worked as a gym trainer and a recovery agent. His body was handed to the family after an autopsy.



Following the incident, tension prevailed in Kaimrala village, with residents staging a protest on Monday morning, demanding the arrest of the accused. A heavy police force was deployed in the village, and

Harkesh's last rites were performed later in the evening under police security. Harkesh was from Kaimrala. Mohit also lives there. Sector 20 police station in-charge Arvind Kumar was deputed to

ensure law and order in Dadri, along with the station in-charge of Dankaur and the station officer of the Ecotech-I police station. An FIR was registered on the complaint of Kapil Pradhan against Kaimrala residents Littu, Sonu, Kalu and Vikram and Anuj of Chakrasenpur village, along with unidentified persons. Harkesh's father Jatan Singh told police there was an old rivalry between his son and some of the accused, stemming from a dispute about three years ago. He claimed that Harkesh had identified the attackers to his elder brother before succumbing to his injuries.

"Following the FIR, two suspects have been taken into custody for questioning. Six special teams have been formed, and raids are being conducted at possible hideouts to arrest the remaining accused," the officer said. Greater Noida ADPC Sudhir Kumar said efforts are on to arrest all those involved at the earliest.

## With cycle tracks & footpaths, Gurgaon's civic body plans a model road to South City 2

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The municipal corporation is planning to reconstruct a stretch connecting South City 2 A Block with the main road of Nirvana Country and develop it as a model road. The project is estimated to cost Rs 5.1 crore. Officials said the tendering process has already begun and a private agency will be finalised to execute the project within a span of 10 months. "The project is expected to improve road infrastructure and traffic movement in the area. We will give 10 months to the agency to complete the reconstruction work," said an MCG official privy to the matter. The model road will have a dedicated cycle track and footpath. Street lighting infrastructure, upgraded stormwater drainage systems and sewer lines will be established. The civic body has recently initiated the



process to construct two model roads in the city, one each in Sectors 32 and 39. The Sector 32 model road will span 750 metres from Rajiv Chowk on NH8 to Medanta and will be developed at an estimated cost of Rs 6.7 crore.

The second project, in Sector 39, will run from Medanta to Bakhtawar Chowk over a length of 1.05 km and cost nearly Rs 7.2 crore. Besides cycle tracks and footpaths,

green spaces are also planned as part of the redesign. The construction of these roads is part of MCG's larger plan to develop 100 km of city roads as model roads. In its meeting on Nov 20, the MCG's finance and contracts committee approved the construction of several other model road projects across the city.

The stretch from South City-2 Block A to Nirvana Country was also approved in the meeting, another from Southern Peripheral Road (SPR) to Bani Square costing Rs 6.1 crore, and a Rs 6.3 crore project from Omaxe Mall to Rosewood City. Earlier this year, in Aug, the civic body also initiated the development of a 1.5 km model road from Sai Chowk to Shriram Chowk in New Palam Vihar at an estimated cost of Rs 1.5 crore.

## 2 Old Gurgaon roads passing through markets set for Rs 52 crore revamp

Gurgaon.(Agency)

GMDA is set to revamp two of the busiest arterial roads in the older part of the city at Rs 52 crore. This is the first major upgrade to be done on these roads since the Authority was formed in 2018.

Passing through densely populated areas that include a mix of planned sectors and unplanned colonies, both 30 m-wide stretches of the Basai Chowk-Old Railway Road and the Old Railway Road-IFFCO Chowk are among the most critical links in old Gurgaon. The roads also serve wholesale markets, commercial hubs and daily commuters, making them traffic bottlenecks. While the road network on the other side of the Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway was upgraded more systematically, old Gurgaon struggled to keep pace with the city's rapid growth. Narrow carriageways, poor surface quality

and frequent traffic snarls remained persistent problems despite repeated complaints from residents and commuters. "We have floated the tenders for the repair of the roads. Our focus is on improving their quality, drainage and pedestrian infrastructure. It will also strengthen connectivity to key corridors like the Dwarka Expressway," a senior official of GMDA said. According to officials, the special repair work on the Basai Chowk to

Old Railway Road stretch will cost Rs 27 crore, while the Old Railway Road to IFFCO Chowk stretch will be upgraded for Rs 25 crore. The projects are expected to be executed in 12 months. The scope of the work includes improvement of the central verge, footpaths and the drainage system.

Guard rails, signage and road markings will also be installed to enhance pedestrian safety and regulate traffic movement.

Earlier, the Authority had explored the construction of grade separators on these arterial roads to decongest them. The plan, however, could not take off due to uncertainty surrounding the proposed metro corridors along the stretches. "Once the metro route is finalised, grade separators can be planned in the future," the official added.



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## Noida board approves plan to treat drain water flowing into Yamuna

Noida.(Agency)

Noida Authority board on Saturday approved a phased plan to treat wastewater flowing through city drains, clearing a long-pending proposal to intercept sewage before it enters the Kondli irrigation drain and ultimately the Yamuna, officials said. The approval follows directions of National Green Tribunal (NGT) in the Abhisht Kusum Gupta vs State of UP case, which required urban authorities to ensure untreated wastewater is not discharged into irrigation drains. In compliance with the NGT's Aug 3, 2022 order, the Authority engaged CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) to assess pollution loads in drains discharging into the Kondli drain and recommend suitable treatment measures. An MoU between the authority and NEERI was signed on July 21, 2022. NEERI assessed around 30 drains within Noida Authority area and found that 24 are currently active, while the

remaining are either dry or carry no discharge. The active drains were assigned codes from D1 to D24 and categorised based on discharge volume and pollution levels. As part of ongoing compliance, several drains have already been intercepted. Drain D20 has been trapped at the sewage pumping station (SPS) in the Hosiery Complex area, while drains D6, D7 and D8 were intercepted at sump wells in Sector 33. No further work is required for Drain D2, which is dry, and Drain D5, which carries treated effluent from STP-54 and merges into the irrigation drain in Sector 23. The board also approved timelines to intercept additional drains by June 2026. Drains D10 and D11 will be tapped at the sewage treatment plant (STP) in Sector 50, while Drain D18 will be intercepted at the SPS in Bhangi Sector 106, to divert sewage to treatment facilities. For major drains with high pollution loads, the Authority cleared the construction of dedicated STPs.

Detailed project reports (DPRs) prepared by NEERI for Drain D3 near Summer Villa School in Sector 22, Drain D21 along Gajha Road near the biodiversity park, and Drain D24 running from Sector 126 towards Mayur School were approved. These plants, based on Moving Bed Biofilm Reactor (MBBR) technology, will be developed at a combined estimated cost of about Rs 75 crore and are targeted for completion by June 2027. An STP for Drain D22, which runs from the Mahamaya Flyover area in Sector 44 towards Panchsheel, was also approved. This facility will involve an estimated investment of Rs 127.5 crore, with completion scheduled by June 2027. For other major drains—D4, D9, D12, D15, D16 and D19—NEERI will submit DPRs at a later stage. Treatment works for these drains will be taken up in subsequent phases, with timelines extending up to Dec 2028. Low- and moderate-pollution drains, including D13,

D14, D17 and D23, will be treated using bioremediation and phytoremediation methods near existing sewage pumping stations, which officials said are suitable given their lower discharge volumes. During the meeting, officials also noted correspondence with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), which clarified that it does not approve sewage treatment technologies. Compliance will instead be assessed against discharge standards prescribed by state pollution control boards through the consent mechanism. With approval in place, the Authority will proceed with inviting expressions of interest, evaluating proposals through a technical committee, and issuing requests for proposals for construction, operation and maintenance of the approved projects. Officials said the phased implementation is expected to significantly strengthen wastewater management and address long-

standing pollution concerns in drains feeding the Yamuna.

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## NEWS BOX

## Bluefin tuna sells for record 3.2 million dollar at year-opening auction at Tokyo fish market

NEW YORK. (Agency)

A massive 243-kilogram (535-pound) bluefin tuna sold for a record 510 million yen (\$3.2 million) at the first auction of 2026 at Tokyo's Toyosu fish market.

The top bidder for the prized tuna at the predawn auction on Monday was Kiyomura Corporation, whose owner Kiyoshi Kimura runs the popular Sushi Zanmai chain. Kimura, who has won the annual auction many times in the past, broke the previous record of 334 million yen (\$2.1 million) he set in 2019. Kimura later told reporters he was hoping to pay a bit less for it, but "the price shot up before you knew it."

The auction started when the bell rang, and the floor was filled with torpedo-shaped fish with their tails cut off so bidders could examine meat details such as color, texture and fattiness while walking around the rows of tuna. The pricey fish was caught off the coast of Oma in northern Japan, a region widely regarded for producing some of the country's finest tuna, and costs 2.1 million yen (\$13,360) per kilogram (\$6,060 per pound). "It's in part for good luck," Kimura said. "But when I see a good looking tuna, I cannot resist ... I haven't sampled it yet, but it's got to be delicious."

Hundreds of tuna are sold daily at the early morning auction, but prices are significantly higher than usual for the Oma tuna, especially at the celebratory New Year auction. Due to the popularity of tuna for sushi and sashimi, Pacific bluefin tuna was previously a threatened species due to climate change and overfishing, but its stock is recovering following conservation efforts.

## Venezuelan Opposition Leader To Return Home 'As Soon As Possible'

United States. (Agency)

Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado said Monday she plans to return home "as soon as possible," and slammed the interim president in Caracas. In her first public comments since a social media post over the weekend, when the US military forcibly removed president Nicolás Maduro from power, the Nobel Peace Prize winner vowed to return to her country. "I'm planning to go back to Venezuela as soon as possible," Machado told broadcaster Sean Hannity on FoxNews, speaking from an undisclosed location. Machado openly rejected the country's interim president, Delcy Rodriguez, saying she "is one of the main architects of torture, persecution, corruption, and narcotics trafficking." Rodriguez, who has signaled her willingness to cooperate with Washington, was Venezuela's vice president under Maduro.

Machado said Rodriguez is "rejected" by the Venezuelan people, and voters were on the opposition's side. "In free and fair elections, we will win by over 90 percent of the votes, I have no doubt about it," Machado said. Machado also vowed to "turn Venezuela into the energy hub of the Americas" and "dismantle all these criminal structures" that have harmed her countrymen, promising to "bring millions of Venezuelans that have been forced to flee our country back home."

## Nestle Recalls Infant Formula In European Countries Over "Quality Issue"



Beijing. (Agency)

Swiss food giant Nestle announced on Monday a recall of batches of infant formula in several European countries, notably France, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Italy and Sweden, as a precautionary measure. On its website, the group said it had detected a "quality issue" in an ingredient sourced from one of its major suppliers. "Nestle has undertaken testing of all arachidonic acid oil and corresponding oil mixes used in the production of potentially impacted infant nutrition products," it said on its website.

"No illnesses have been confirmed in connection with the products involved to date." Nestle said it was in contact with authorities in the relevant countries "to ensure the necessary steps are taken".

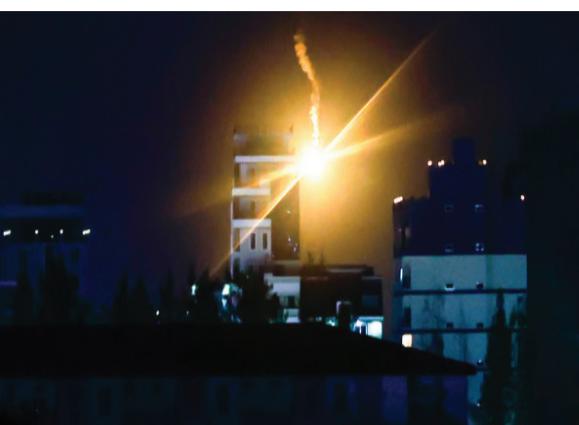
"Nestle assures parents and caregivers that it is implementing appropriate actions, including a product recall where necessary." Nestle France said it was carrying out a "preventive and voluntary recall" of certain batches of its Guigoz and Nidal infant formulas after new investigations showed the potential presence of cereulide, a toxin that can cause digestive issues. The company posted pictures on local versions of its website showing the batch numbers of affected products, which are sold under different names. In Germany they are called Beba and Alfamino. Nestle provided instructions for returning the products and obtaining a refund, as well as a phone number to answer consumer questions.

**The Thai army later said that the Cambodian side had contacted them, claiming "there was no intention to fire into Thai territory" and added that it was caused by "an operational error."**

world. (Agency)

Thailand's army said on Tuesday its Cambodian counterpart claimed fresh cross-border fire was an accident, after Bangkok accused Cambodian forces of violating a 10-day-old truce with a strike that wounded a soldier. The decades-old dispute between the Southeast Asian neighbours erupted into military clashes several times last year, with fighting in December killing dozens of people and displacing around one million on both sides. The two countries agreed a truce on December 27, ending three weeks of

clashes. "Cambodia has violated the ceasefire" on Tuesday morning, the Thai army said in a statement, accusing Cambodian forces of firing mortar rounds into Thailand's Ubon Ratchathani province. One soldier was wounded by shrapnel and being evacuated for medical treatment, it added. The Thai army said in a later statement that the Cambodian side had contacted a Thai military unit and claimed "there was no intention to fire into Thai territory", adding "the incident was caused by an operational error by Cambodian personnel." "The Thai military in the area warned Cambodian forces to exercise caution and stressed that if a similar incident were to occur again, Thailand may need to take retaliatory action," the statement said. Cambodia's defence ministry spokeswoman Maly Socheata declined to comment on the alleged strike. Thailand's Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said his government had lodged a protest with Phnom Penh,



"stating that the truce was violated".

"At the military-to-military level, we have been told the incident was an accident, but we are seeking clarification on how responsibility will be taken," Anutin told reporters in Bangkok. He said Thailand had the "capability to respond" to Cambodia, which is vastly outgunned by its neighbour. Provincial governors had received orders to "make preparations, though no evacuation

of residents has been ordered at this stage", Anutin added. Hundreds of thousands of people on both sides of the border who were displaced by the clashes in December have begun returning home since the ceasefire was agreed last month. Goodwill!

The nations' long-standing conflict stems from a dispute over the colonial-era demarcation of their 800-kilometre (500-mile) border, where both sides claim territory and centuries-old temple ruins. Under the December truce, Cambodia and Thailand pledged to cease fire, freeze troop movements and cooperate on demining efforts along their border. On December 31, Bangkok released 18 Cambodian soldiers held since July when deadly border clashes that month killed dozens of people. Thailand's foreign ministry said their release was "a demonstration of goodwill and confidence-building".

## Rubio, Hegseth brief US congressional leaders as questions mount over Trump's next steps in Venezuela

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and other top officials briefed leaders in Congress late Monday on the striking military operation in Venezuela amid mounting concerns that President Donald Trump is embarking on a new era of US expansionism without consultation of lawmakers or a clear vision for running the South American country. Republican leaders entered the closed-door session at the Capitol largely supportive of Trump's decision to forcibly remove Venezuela's president Nicolás Maduro from power, but many Democrats emerged with more questions as Trump maintains a fleet of naval vessels off the Venezuelan coast and urges US companies to reinvest in the country's underperforming oil industry.

A war powers resolution that would prohibit US military action in Venezuela without approval from Congress is heading for a vote this week in the Senate. "We don't expect

troops on the ground," said House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said



afterward. Johnson said Venezuela's new leadership cannot be allowed to engage in narcotics or the trafficking of drugs into the US, which sparked Trump's initial campaign of

deadly boat strikes that have killed more than 115 people. "This is not a regime change. This is demand for a change in behavior," Johnson said. "We don't expect direct involvement in any other way beyond just coercing the new, the interim government, to get that going." Johnson added, "We have a way of persuasion — because their oil exports as you know have been seized, and I think that will bring the country to a new governance in very short order,"

he said. But Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, emerged saying, "There are still many more questions that need to be answered." "What is the cost? How much is this going to cost the United States of America?" Rep. Gregory Meeks of New York, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said afterward.

Lawmakers were kept in the dark. The briefing, which stretched for two hours, came days after the surprise military action that few, if any, of the congressional leaders, knew about until after it was underway — a remarkable delay in informing Congress, which has ultimate say over matters of war. Administration officials fielded a range of questions — from further involvement of US troops on the ground to the role of the Venezuelan opposition leadership that appeared to have been sidelined by the Trump administration as the country's vice president, Maduro ally Delcy Rodriguez, swiftly became the country's interim president.

## Arrest US Attack Supporters: The Last Decree Signed By Maduro Before Capture

World. (Agency)

The Venezuelan government on Monday published a decree declaring a State of External Commotion, granting sweeping powers to the presidency and instructing security forces to detain "any person involved in the promotion or support" of a US attack against the South American country, CNN reported. The decree, dated Saturday, was signed by then-president Nicolas Maduro, who was captured earlier that day by US military forces and is currently being held in New York. "The national, state, and municipal police agencies must immediately undertake the search and capture throughout the national territory of any person involved in the promotion or support of the armed attack by the United States of America against the territory of the Republic (...) with a view to their prosecution,"

the text stated, endorsed by the now acting president, Delcy Rodriguez, as per CNN. The decree had originally been drafted and announced in late September, weeks after the United



States began deploying naval assets in the Caribbean. However, its contents were not made public at the time and were later updated to reflect developments over the weekend, CNN

reported. The measure carries the force of law and will remain in effect for 90 days, with the possibility of an extension for an additional 90 days. Under Venezuela's Constitution, the declaration of a state of emergency allows the president to exercise near-total authority over political, economic and social matters. This marks the first time the provision has been invoked since the current Constitution came into force in 1999, which permits such a decree in cases of conflict that "seriously endangers the security of the nation, its citizens, or its institutions", CNN reported. Meanwhile, Venezuela's deposed dictator, Nicolas Maduro, pleaded not guilty to multiple federal charges during his appearance before a New York City federal court on Monday, according to CNN.

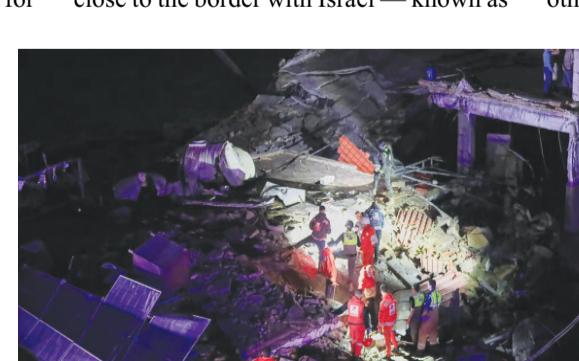
## Israel strikes multiple sites in Lebanon ahead of key disarmament meeting

YANGON. (Agency)

Israel's air force struck areas in southern and eastern Lebanon on Monday and early Tuesday, including in the country's third-largest city. A strike around 1 am on Tuesday leveled a three-story commercial building in the southern coastal city of Sidon, a few days before Lebanon's army commander is scheduled to brief the government on its mission of disarming militant group Hezbollah in areas along the border with Israel. An Associated Press photographer at the scene said the area was in a commercial district containing workshops and mechanic shops and the building was uninhabited. At least one person was transported by ambulance and rescue teams were searching the site for others, but there were no immediate reports of deaths. On Monday, the Israeli army hit several sites in southern and eastern Lebanon, alleging that they held infrastructure for the militant groups Hezbollah and Hamas. Those strikes took place nearly two hours after Israel's

military Arabic language spokesman Avichay Adraee posted warnings on X that the military would strike targets for Hezbollah and the Palestinian Hamas groups in two villages in the eastern Bekaa Valley and two others in southern Lebanon. The later strike in Sidon was unannounced and the Israeli army did not immediately issue a statement on it. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said a home struck in the village of Manara in the Bekaa Valley belonged to Sharhabil al-Sayed, a Hamas military commander who was killed in an Israeli drone strike in May 2024. The areas were evacuated after the Israeli warning and there were no reports of casualties in those strikes. Earlier Monday, Lebanon's Health Ministry said a drone strike on a car in the southern village of Braikah earlier Monday wounded two people. The Israeli military said the strike targeted two Hezbollah members. The Lebanese army last year began the disarmament process of

Palestinian groups while the government has said that by the end of 2025 all the areas close to the border with Israel — known as



the south Litani area — will be clear of Hezbollah's armed presence. The Lebanese government is scheduled to discuss Hezbollah's disarmament during a meeting Thursday that will be attended by army commander Gen. Rudolph Haikal. Monday's airstrikes were in villages north of

the Litani river and far from the border with Israel. The disarmament of Hezbollah and other Palestinian groups by the Lebanese government came after a 14-month war between Israel and Hezbollah in which much of the political and military leadership of the Iran-backed group was killed. The latest Israel-Hezbollah war began Oct. 8, 2023, a day after Hamas attacked southern Israel, when Hezbollah fired rockets into Israel in solidarity with Hamas. Israel launched a widespread bombardment of Lebanon in September 2024 that severely weakened Hezbollah, followed by a ground invasion.

The war ended in November 2024 with a ceasefire brokered by the US. Israel has carried out almost daily airstrikes since then, mainly targeting Hezbollah members but also killing at least 127 civilians, according to the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

## NEWS BOX

**Illegal mining: Panchkula cops seize 5 vehicles in 2 nights****Panchkula.(Agency)**

The Panchkula police has stepped up their drive against illegal mining, seizing five vehicles including a tipper, a poclain machine, and tractor-trolleys, during coordinated operations conducted over two consecutive nights at different locations across the district. In a major action on the night of Jan 4, teams from the anti-illegal mining unit, Ramgarh police post, and Raipur Rani police station jointly carried out raids and caught four vehicles involved in illegal mining.

The seized vehicles included two tractor-trolleys, a tipper, and a poclain machine. All vehicles were impounded, and the mining department was informed for further action as per rules.

According to the police, at around 1am, the anti-illegal mining team led by Inspector Mansa Ram intercepted a tipper and a poclain machine engaged in illegal mining near Mehtab river in Kalka area. Both vehicles were found extracting material from the riverbed illegally and were immediately shifted to the Kalka police station.

Earlier the same night, at around 4am, Ramgarh police post in-charge Tajinder Pal Singh caught a tractor-trolley involved in illegal mining near the Basin river close to Shyamtoo village under Chandimandir police station. Similarly, Raipur Rani police seized another tractor-trolley loaded with illegally mined material near Pyarewala during night patrolling. Continuing the crackdown, the Panchkula police seized one more tipper loaded with illegally mined material in Barwala area on the night of Jan 5. The vehicle was intercepted near Sangrana village during routine patrolling by the Barwala police post team led by in-charge Gurpal Singh. The mining department was called to the spot, following which the tipper was impounded and legal proceedings were initiated.

**MC identifies locations of vending zones in need of mobile toilets, water tankers****Chandigarh.(Agency)**

Officials of the MC's engineering wing (B&R) on Monday identified nine locations of vending zones where mobile toilet facilities are urgently required. Necessary steps are being taken to install these facilities at the earliest. In addition, 27 vending sites were identified where water tankers are needed, and arrangements are being finalised to ensure regular and adequate water supply at these locations in the near future.

It is noteworthy that vending zones in sectors 7C, 10D, 19C, 21C, 22D, 28C, 29C, 33D, 49D, 50C, 53B, Maloya-1, rehab colony Maloya-A, IT Park, and Manimajra are already fully equipped with essential civic amenities, including drinking water arrangements and toilet facilities. These provisions ensure a safe, hygienic, and orderly environment for street vendors and the general public alike.

Through these measures, the MC continues to strengthen its efforts towards inclusive urban development, public health, and cleanliness, while also promoting regulated and organised street vending across the city. The MC reiterates that the welfare of street vendors remains a top priority, and sustained efforts will continue to further upgrade infrastructure and civic facilities in all vending zones to enhance their quality of life and working conditions.

**Farmers seek higher prices from government for red sugarcane in TN****DHARMAPURI.(Agency)**

Sugarcane farmers in Dharmapuri who supply red sugarcane to the cooperative department are discontent with the procurement prices. While the state government offered Rs 38 per cane, including transportation and labour charges, farmers get only Rs 25 per cane, they said.

In Dharmapuri, the cooperative department is involved in the procurement of red sugarcane from farmers, as part of the Pongal hamper provided by the state government. A total of 4.75 lakh cardholders in Dharmapuri would receive the hamper, and to ensure every cardholder receives the red cane, it's procured from parts of Dharmapuri and Salem from over 67 farmers. Speaking to , R. Eshwaran from Keelanur village, said, "When we were initially told that we would get Rs 38 per cane, it sounded good, especially since the market price for the cane was only Rs 38 to Rs 40. However, we later learned that the entirety of Rs 38 per cane does not belong to us. A significant portion of it is taken away as transportation and handling fees for labourers, putting us at a loss. We hope the government will improve procurement prices."

K Semmalar from Kannipatti village said, "During Pongal, the price of red sugarcane increases, therefore, we expected better pricing. However, as we are only paid Rs 25 per cane by the cooperative department, prices in the private market have also plummeted."

**150 Mumbai University Colleges Launch Biodiversity Mapping Drive Across Districts****Mumbai .(Agency)**

Around 150 colleges across seven districts and departments affiliated with Mumbai University have launched an extensive biodiversity survey. The mapping initiative started within their own campuses and will later extend to their neighbourhoods. The data collected will be used to create a community-driven biodiversity register for Mumbai and other districts and can provide various municipal authorities with real-time information. Besides simply counting the numbers of trees, the students will document detailed information on local flora, including their classification as herbs, shrubs, plants or trees, whether the species are rare or common, their height, habitat and also their overall health. More than 800 students, over 200 faculty members and representatives from 16 NGOs across seven districts are already trained by the university.

Phadke told TOI that the selected students would be teamed up with local self-governments, NGOs and other stakeholders to initiate climate action in their geographical areas. The social actions can culminate into the creation and update of the public biodiversity register too, she said. "There are several projects being undertaken under this partnership and biodiversity

under the guidance of Mumbai University Vice-Chancellor Ravindra Kulkarni and led by professor Aparna Phadke and co-facilitated by Indu George and Suhas Jejurikar with 21 master facilitators for the smooth implementation of the project. Under the programme, along with the 800 students, over 200 faculty members and representatives from 16 NGOs across seven districts are already trained by the university.



mapping is one of them. A questionnaire seeking details on the flora was shared with all the participating students," said Phadke.

The questionnaire seeks information on the local and scientific names of the flora, its type, its habitat (whether fresh water, mangroves,

saline, terrestrial or any other), its occurrence, if it is common or rare or very rare. The researchers have also sought details on whether the flora has any local deity importance, or if it is sacred or heritage, along with the tree's health (good, bad, moderate or infested with pests and fungi) and whether the tree's origin is native, exotic or invasive. Phadke said that the tree census is not done comprehensively and therefore, such information can help build databases for the local municipal authorities too. "With colleges spread across the city, this mapping exercise can help us to know the entire city's profile with adequate information on rare and endangered species too," she added. The British Council programme aims to address various challenges faced by India concerning climate change vulnerabilities by engaging higher education institutions.

**Psychometric test to be added to Ama Bus driver refresher course****BHUBANESWAR.(Agency)**

The Odisha government has planned to include psychometric test to the five-day refresher course for Ama Bus drivers at the four institutes of driving training and research (IDTRs) located in Chhatia (Jajpur), Berhampur (Ganjam), Keonjhar and Bonai (Sundargarh). As per the standard operating procedure (SOP) of Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT), Ama Bus drivers were earlier sent to IDTRs for a three-day refresher course, which has now been increased to five days. "Before induction, the drivers produce a certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner. They then undergo a medical test during the evaluation/refresher course at IDTRs. The existing and new drivers will now have to take a psychometric test too," said a senior CRUT official.

A psychometric test is a standardised, scientific tool used by employers to measure an individual's cognitive abilities (aptitude) and behavioural traits (personality) to assess their suitability for a job, predicting performance through numerical/situational judgement tests as well as personality questionnaires.

There are over 1,200 Ama Bus drivers in the state. They will all undergo the five-day refresher course, including psychometric test, in a phased manner in the coming months.

The state government has been drawing flak over frequent mishaps and loss of lives involving Ama Buses across the state. On Saturday, an Ama Bus ran over and auto-rickshaw at Rupali Square in the city, resulting in death of the auto driver and injuries to two passengers.

In the face of severe outrage, Transport commissioner Amitabh Thakur on Monday travelled in an Ama Bus from Bhubaneswar to Cuttack to take stock of the situation, and also interacted with the passengers.

**Temple corridor to be created to promote religious tourism in Mumbai****Mumbai.(Agency)**

A temple corridor connecting Mumbadevi, Babulnath, Mahalaxmi and Siddhivinayak temples will be created to promote religious tourism in Mumbai, said Pavan Tripathi, the BJP Mahamantri for Mumbai. Tripathi, who was deeply involved in the selection of candidates for the BMC elections, expressed confidence that the Mahayuti would win 150 seats, of which the BJP would bag more than 100.

Speaking to TOI, Tripathi said there is no Marathi-non-Marathi issue in this election. The BJP, he said, provided homes to the Marathi Manoos, with the BDD chawls being a prime example. The sin of forcing the Marathi Manoos out of Mumbai is that of Uddhav Thackeray, he said.

On North Indians being given fewer tickets, Tripathi said 21 seats were given to North Indians and there was no discrimination. "We are hopeful that all the candidates will win. All tickets were given keeping every criterion in



mind," he said.

The election, he said, is being fought on the issue of security and development. To ensure the city's development continues, they will vote for the BJP only.

On the issue of security, he said, "After 2014, Mumbai became a very safe city. Earlier, there

were bomb blasts at regular frequency, earning the city the moniker 'Bomb Blast City'. Women, including those from the Muslim community, will vote for the Mahayuti on the issue of security and not just the Ladki Bahin Yojana, as they are the worst sufferers when a family member is lost in such incidents."

On the issue of encroachments, Tripathi said the party raising awareness about infiltrators and illegal encroachments helped contain the spread of such settlements, particularly in Malwani in Malad West. He said the party is committed to a slum-free Mumbai, and this would not only reduce crime but drug addiction too.

The BJP "Sankalp Patra" (manifesto) will be released in the next few days, said Tripathi, and it would focus on upgrading civic hospitals and schools, besides welfare measures for women. Tripathi said he was all for the removal of encroachments on footpaths and widening them to ensure hassle-free pedestrian movement.

**'Amdavadis filed 3.2L complaints of water contamination in 5 years'****Ahmedabad.(Agency)**

With thousands falling ill and lakhs of complaints piling up, water contamination in Ahmedabad has become more than just a civic nuisance. The opposition in the AMC has flagged the risk of an epidemic similar to recent outbreaks in Indore and Gandhinagar. Ageing pipelines and delayed repairs, they say, are pushing the city towards a public health crisis.

AMC opposition leader Shehzad Khan Pathan warned that the city risks a major waterborne epidemic if urgent corrective steps are not taken. Citing official complaint data, Pathan said residents filed 3,17,167 online complaints related to polluted drinking water between 2021 and 2025, yet the issue remains unresolved across large parts of the city. He further claimed that 44,258 cases of water-borne diseases, including diarrhoea, vomiting, typhoid, jaundice and cholera, were recorded over the past three years, underscoring the public health impact of contaminated water supply.

The incidents in Indore, where 10 people have



reportedly died due to complications arising from drinking contaminated water, and Gandhinagar, where more than 100 suspected cases of typhoid were linked to contaminated drinking water, are the result of administrative negligence. Ahmedabad is heading down the same path," he said, adding that water contamination is reported most frequently in the Walled City and old village-settlement (gamtal) areas, where ageing pipelines are prone to leakage and cross-contamination.

According to Pathan, AMC records show that 26 areas of the city have been identified as high-risk zones, while polluted drinking water problems persist at more than 150 locations. "The city has crores of rupees in its budget, yet the problem of drinking water pollution is not being resolved," he alleged.

On Monday, Gomtipur councillors Iqbal Sheikh and Zulfiqar Khan Pathan submitted a memorandum to the deputy municipal commissioner, complaining of severe drinking water contamination in several localities in the area.

On Monday, Gomtipur councillors Iqbal Sheikh and Zulfiqar Khan Pathan submitted a memorandum to the deputy municipal commissioner, complaining of severe drinking water contamination in several localities in the area.

**CBI books Western Railway officials for digitally rigging results of promotional exams****Ahmedabad.(Agency)**

The scrutiny of routine departmental exams has led the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to register a series of corruption cases exposing in what officials are describing as one of the largest departmental exam scams in Western Railway. According to the CBI, an alleged network of senior officials, IT staff, and clerks manipulated computer-based tests (CBTs) by using remote access tools to access exam servers after the tests ended to help select candidates secure promotions. The CBI has filed four FIRs and booked 10 people after finding evidence of remote tampering, missing digital trails and suspicious financial transactions.

According to multiple FIRs, the manipulations were allegedly carried out using customised exam software developed by one of the accused railway officers. "The scam came to light following vigilance scrutiny of the shunting master exam held on Aug 10, 2024, in which 178 candidates appeared. Six railway employees — Bablu Kumar

(pointsman A), Chunchun Kumar (porter), Jitendra Makwana (porter), Sandip Singh (porter), Shilendra Yadav (porter) and Vipul Kumar (pointsman A) — secured abnormally high marks, raising suspicion. These men were later found to have taken loans from Jackson Credit Cooperative Society, a facility meant exclusively for railway staff, just days before the exam," said a CBI source close to the investigation. Other exams conducted in 2023 and 2024 were scrutinised and similar discrepancies were detected.

Following the completion of vigilance inquiries and approval from the railway ministry, four formal complaints were filed on Dec 30 by Rashmi Lokegaonkar, deputy chief vigilance officer (A&P), Western Railway, Churchgate, Mumbai, leading to the registration of FIRs by the CBI.

The FIRs name 10 railway officials as accused and also refer to unidentified public servants and private individuals who allegedly assisted in manipulating the exams.

**Railways to build 1,500 Vande Bharat chair car coaches, Shatabdis to be replaced**

**The Vande Bharat chair car rake is designed for a maximum speed of 160 kmph and is primarily intended for daytime intercity services.**

**Mumbai .(Agency)**

The Indian Railways has rolled back its earlier decision to stop the production of Vande Bharat chair cars after completing 120 train sets. The Railway Board has now issued an order to manufacture 1,500 Vande Bharat chair car coaches — equivalent to 88 rakes — over a four-year period from 2026-27 to 2029-30. Of these, 720 coaches will be produced by the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai.

Official railway sources said that all Shatabdi Express trains operating on intercity routes, whose rake production has already been discontinued, will be replaced with Vande Bharat rakes. Of the 88 rakes planned, 68 will be 16-car train sets, while the remaining 20 will be 20-car configurations.

The Vande Bharat chair car rake is designed for a maximum speed of 160 kmph and is primarily intended for daytime intercity

services. As of December last year, around 96 Vande Bharat chair car rakes had been manufactured by three coach production units — ICF, Rail Coach Factory (Kapurthala), and Modern Coach Factory (Raebareli). Of these, 82 are currently in service, while a few are kept as spare coaches. A few additional rakes have already been allotted to Southern Railway, Northern Railway, and other zones, but are yet to be operational.

**'Policy decision taken to continue production of VB chair car coaches'**

Under the new plan, ICF, RCF and MCF will manufacture 720, 336 and 444 coaches, respectively, taking the total to 1,500. In 2026-27, all units will together produce 23 rakes of 16-car train sets.

During 2028-29, ICF will manufacture 20

rakes of 20-car train sets, while MCF will build 12 rakes of 16-car sets.

In 2029-30, 33 rakes of 16-car Vande Bharat train sets will be produced by all three units, according to an order, dated January 2, issued by the Director (Mechanical Engineering-Production Units) of the

Railway Board. There were no plans to build Vande Bharat rakes during 2027-28.

Sources noted that ICF produced more than 88 Vande Bharat train sets between 2018 and 2025. With Indian Railways shifting focus toward increasing production of the Vande Bharat sleeper variant, ICF was allocated the production of only 11 Vande Bharat chair car rakes for intercity services in 2025-26, while another 20 train sets were planned to be built by other units.

Beyond this, there were initially no further plans for chair car train sets. "There has now been a policy decision to continue manufacturing Vande Bharat chair car coaches, which are likely to replace the ageing Shatabdi Express rakes over the next four years," a senior railway official said.



## The complicated writer-editor relationship

I find it endlessly fascinating to watch videos on art restoration. Old masterpieces appear frayed at the edges, faded in places, their surfaces marked by cracks, tears and the slow abrasion of time. Restoration is painstaking work. Layers of accumulated grime are removed, yellowed varnish stripped away, torn canvases mended, cracks filled and areas of loss delicately retouched. The before-and-after images bear quiet witness to this change. Yet restoration is never simply repair. It demands restraint, for excessive intervention can erase the very history a work carries. The restorer must decide what to clean, what to leave untouched and what may be retouched — always in fidelity to the artist's vision. In this, restoration resembles editing. Editors — whether in journalism, publishing, or film — are the unsung heroes of cultural production. Their labour is largely invisible, yet their judgment shapes what the world finally sees, reads or remembers. When editing works, it leaves no fingerprints. The work appears whole and coherent. That invisibility is why editors are rarely celebrated, even as their imprint is everywhere. Legendary Canadian editor Ellen Seligman, who worked on the manuscripts of writers such as Michael Ondaatje, Margaret Atwood, Rohinton Mistry and Elizabeth Hay, once observed that a good editor must first be a good listener. "You have to listen to what the book is telling you," she said, "and not impose your own ideas on it." What mattered most to her was dialogue — being able to say something about a manuscript that struck a chord with the author, signalling that both were essentially speaking the same language.

Atwood memorably described Seligman as a "hands-on shepherd to her flock of often straying lambs". Ondaatje recalled that while working on 'The Skin of a Lion', he frequently argued with her. But he acknowledged that he "probably learned more about writing and form and subtlety", from that collaboration than ever before — and that there was "nothing in that book that I am not proud of". Maxwell Perkins, one of America's finest literary editors, offers another compelling example. He helped bring to life the work of Ernest Hemingway, F Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe, among others. The story goes that Fitzgerald's first draft was rejected by all the senior editors at the publishing house Scribner's. However, Perkins — then a junior editor — argued passionately in its favour. The publisher, Charles Scribner, opted to trust the young editor's instinct. Guided by Perkins, Fitzgerald's debut novel, 'This Side of Paradise', became a runaway success. Later, when Fitzgerald proposed the title 'Trimalchio in the West Egg' for his third novel, his mentor very tactfully suggested a different one — thus giving the world 'The Great Gatsby'.

Perkins was equally instrumental in shaping Wolfe's vast, unruly manuscripts into publishable form. 'Look Homeward, Angel' emerged from that painstaking collaboration. Wolfe, deeply grateful, dedicated his next novel to Perkins, and their intense relationship later inspired the film 'Genius'. TS Eliot, too, owed an immense debt to his editor and mentor Ezra Pound, who famously cut nearly half of the original manuscript of 'The Waste Land', sharpening its compression and intensity. Eliot acknowledged this intervention by dedicating the poem to Pound as il miglior fabbro — "the better craftsman". Pound himself was less modest, claiming full collaborator status in a celebratory poem: "If you must needs enquire / Know diligent Reader / That on each Occasion / Ezra performed the Caesarean Operation." Not all editorial relationships, however, survive such interventions unscathed. Gordon Lish's role in shaping Raymond Carver's sparse prose remains one of the most contested examples in literary history. Lish cut Carver's stories drastically, helping define a form that would come to dominate late 20th-century American short fiction.

## The aerial spread of the Aravallis should be mapped, classified as an eco-sensitive zone and declared a no-go area for any exploitative purposes, including mining and real estate

India ranks 176 out of 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index. Every piece of data shows that we fully deserve our miserable ranking. Reaching these depths has not been easy — we have been working hard at it in order to award a bunch of crony capitalists unlimited access to the nation's natural wealth. But that is not the only sad part; the real tragedy is that the higher judiciary has looked the other way at this continental scale of vandalism and provided its seal of approval to much of this environmental depredation. It was not always so. People of my vintage can remember the 1990s and the first decade of this millennium when apex court judges like Justice Kirpal and Justice Ahmadi stood like a wall, shielding the country's natural environment from the excesses of the executive, strictly interpreting and implementing the laws meant to protect them. I dare not even imagine what our environment would have been like if it had not been for the path-breaking judgment in the TN Godavarman case in 1996. And they did this by relying on science and invoking the "precautionary principle", which mandates that if an activity poses a threat of serious or irreversible damage to the environment or human health, preemptive protective action should be taken even if there's no full scientific certainty about the risk, shifting the burden of proof to those arguing the activity is safe. They rooted this principle in Article 21, which is a guarantee of a healthy and dignified life. The mess we are in today is because our higher judiciary has abandoned these principles and finds it more convenient to

go along with the government whose core ideology is based on an anti-scientific temper. This trend of ignoring science first became noticeable with the twisted logic in the Ram Mandir judgment where architectural and historical evidence were jettisoned in favour of faith and religious bias. It has since become routine in cases like the SDP 41 (Shimla Development Plan 2041), which was approved in spite of concerns of experts that it would demolish the city's 17 green belts, permit multi-storey structures in a high-seismic zone, and was rightly struck down by the NGT; the firecrackers case (so-called "green" crackers being allowed even though they emit 70 per cent of the pollutants that the regular ones do); the stray dogs case (in which global practices, experts, voluntary organisations, even the existing law, were ignored); the Char Dham highway project (where

'security' was allowed to trump geological science); the Vanshakti case where the basic, well-established principle of "polluter pays" was turned on its head to "pay and pollute" in order to legalise illegalities. The Aravalli judgment of November 2025 is a continuation of this pernicious trend, though the most shocking, given that it was delivered at a time when the whole NCR was being asphyxiated in the most deadly shroud of pollution. The adverse effects of this judgment are by now too well known. Suffice it to say that it would fragment the range into thousands of isolated pockets and render the Indo-Gangetic plain, perhaps the most

instead adopting the 100-metre matrix. The Aravallis are not a collection of hills of varying heights, they are a two-billion-old ecosystem so there was absolutely no need to define them in vertical terms. Every mountain range has contours of varying heights, and each is as important as the other; they cannot be sliced into a thousand fragments based on height, and parts of them opened up for mining. One cannot but agree with Salve that the court lost its way in being sidetracked into the vertical argument. What was needed, in fact, was to determine (not define) what constitutes the Aravallis in spatial (not vertical) terms as it existed for thousands of years, not in its present

form where legal and illegal mining of 10 million tonnes every year has denuded vast parts of it. Salve is of the view that the court should adopt the Godavarman definition of a "deemed" forest for the entire Aravallis (i.e. even a denuded area, if it was once a forest, shall be deemed to be a forest for the purposes of protection). The aerial spread of the range should be mapped, classified as an eco-sensitive zone and declared a no-go area for any exploitative purposes, including mining and real estate. CAMPA funds should then be utilised for re-afforesting its mined out/denuded parts.



polluted region in the world, completely inhabitable due to depleted water tables, rapid desertification, increased temperatures and dust pollution. It is inexplicable why the SC chose to reinstate the 100-metre height formula which it had rejected in 2010. It failed to appreciate that the most important ecological services of a mountain system are provided not by the peaks, but by its lower formations — the troughs, ravines, valleys, foothills — which trap the rainfall, store the moisture, enable the growth of green cover which traps dust and regulates temperature.

The most sensible word on this judgment comes from Harish Salve in a TV interview. He says he finds no reasoning given by the court for ignoring the recommendations of the Amicus Curiae, Empowered Committee, GSI and FSI to go by the slope criteria, and

The court's reasoning, or whatever little of it one can discern, is faulty and unscientific: the apprehension of illegal mining cannot be used as an excuse for expanding legal mining. For, the deleterious effects of both are similar. What is required is not an SMP (Sustainable Mining Plan), but an SCP (Sustainable Conservation Plan). It is encouraging to note that the court has stayed this order. One hopes it will listen to the experts, heed the science behind the environment, not dismember the range for the convenience of mining, and declare the entire Aravallis an ESZ. Nearly 30 per cent of these precious mountains have already been plundered. It is incumbent upon the court to protect what remains and hand it down to future generations as its singular legacy. This is one time when, in the words of Justice Robert H Jackson, it has to be both infallible and final.

## Indore tragedy: Diarrhoea deaths a blot on India's cleanest city

### The move to curb high-dose oral forms sends an important signal against irrational drug use.



highlighted the need to simplify procedures and make systems more friendly for ease of living. But how can ease of living be ensured when citizens are deprived of basic

needs such as clean air and water? The 'double-engine' governments in Delhi and MP have woefully failed on this front.

Vikas Bharat@2047 is a distant goal. It's the here and now that matters more to the people. Fancy acronyms like PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation) and SWAGAT (State Wide Attention on Grievances by Application of Technology) would mean nothing if they are not backed by concrete action on the ground. The Supreme Court has repeatedly asserted that the right to a healthy environment is part of the fundamental right to life under Article 21. The Indore tragedy shows how easily this right can be violated when urban infrastructure is poorly maintained. The bottom line: cleanliness rankings, smart city labels and governance slogans cannot mask systemic neglect.

## Touchstones: Between hope & despair

### What joy does one get after destroying a fellow Indian's happiness in the simple joys of buying and wearing Santa caps or going to church?

I can't remember another time when I sat down to write a column on the first day of a new year. So how can one not let in some thoughts regarding hope and despair creep in? I sincerely hope that I will manage to evoke more hope than despair so let me begin with what has really shaken my faith. Look no further than the shameful behaviour of Hindu mobs over Christmas celebrations in the last week of 2025 (to say nothing of similar behaviour spread through the year). What joy does one get after destroying a fellow Indian's happiness in the simple joys of buying and wearing Santa caps or going to church? Time was when we all liked to attend the Midnight Mass if only to imbibe the peace under a magnificent dome and listen to some Christmas music. The sound of an organ is truly uplifting in a way that no other music can be. This is as true of the Gurbani that is continuously sung in gurdwaras as well. Or the sonorous chanting of Buddhist mantras that seem to arise from the solar plexus of the earth. The sound of these chants and hymns reach out to men and women of all faiths — so what were those goons wielding lathis and swords trying to convey? Did they not realise how much harm they did to their own religion by their disgusting behaviour?

I have another problem related to this. Throughout that evening and for the next few days, all our media could do was play these ugly scenes on a loop and invite guests to provoke a larger debate. What should have been ignored was provided the oxygen that the goons wanted. Believe me, now every time there is another non-Hindu celebration, these worthies will arrive to seek attention. There are so many examples that can be mentioned on such occasions but if our media and social media platforms only sensationalise the lowest form of human behaviour, we will get more and more of it. Equally, why haven't our political leaders condemned these despicable specimens of Hinduism? It makes one wonder at the



silence in every party to speak up for decency and mutual respect. While on despair, let us also acknowledge the alarming state of our environment and the killer pollution levels all over North India. Delhi is now officially labelled as the most polluted city in the world, so join me in lowering the decibel levels of our rah-rah walas when they speak of our rising trillions. If our children are in danger of serious health damage, then what do we care for having overtaken Japan's economy? Has anyone seen

the level of cleanliness there and the respect with which the Japanese treat their older folk and the world around them? I will never forget how moving it was to watch Japanese fans at the last World Cup (which they lost), clearing up the litter left behind by the other beer-bloated, pot-bellied football fans. That is what I regard as a true indicator of civic responsibility and God knows when our paan-spitting, nose blowing, red-light jumping hordes will reach there. Until then, fourth or third

economy, India ranks at the bottom as far as I'm concerned. Let us now start on what makes me happy. It is seeing little children, shiny faced and neatly dressed in clean uniforms, going to school. No matter what the quality of that education may be, the fact that there is a universal acknowledgement that all children — girls included — must study, is a huge victory in a country where parents, who were themselves uneducated, never considered education a vital parental responsibility. However flawed, the Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan and the incentive of a free lunch have played a role in raising this awareness. Leaders such as Jayalalithaa and Nitish Kumar deserve our gratitude for having made the effort to make education — especially for the girl child — a pivotal axis of development. Remember that many of our best athletes, cricketers and boxers (to name just a few stars) come from small towns and villages and have struggled to reach the top. Today we have reached a stage where sport is no longer looked at as a waste of time but the means to a successful career. I can see India doing really well in this century.

I am also hopeful that there will be a reverse flow of Indian talent. More and more young people are turning to start their own ventures or joining a start-up here rather than opting for a life as a second-class citizen abroad. Trump and stray incidents of violence against non-white citizens in the western world have made many bright young people reconsider their decision to bring up a family cut off from the warmth of the Great Indian Family.

These days, many friends and relatives have their NRI children visiting them and it is a joy to see the children soak in the attention and indulgence of the grandparents. If we can somehow build on this mood, we will have achieved a dream I've always nurtured of living within close distance of my grandchildren.

## Drunk 20-year-old biker kills pedestrian on CG Road, held

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

A 25-year-old pedestrian was killed in an accident on CG Road in the Navrangpura area of the city on Sunday night after being hit by a motorcycle allegedly ridden by an intoxicated youth, police said.

According to an FIR filed with the B-Division traffic police by Mahendra Chauhan (25), the deceased's friend and a cook residing at Second Avenue Society on CG Road, the accident occurred around 11.15pm on Sunday near Mardia Plaza at Bodyline Crossroads. The deceased was identified as Prakash Dindor (25), who lived in the same residential complex and worked as a cook.

Police said Chauhan and Dindor went for a walk along CG Road on Sunday night. While returning, the two were crossing the road near Bodyline Crossroads. Chauhan managed to cross safely, but Dindor, who was walking behind him, was struck by a speeding motorcycle approaching from the Bodyline side.

"The motorcyclist was riding at high speed and in a rash and negligent manner. He hit Dindor with great force, throwing both the victim and the rider onto the road," the FIR states. Dindor sustained severe head injuries and collapsed unconscious on the spot.

The motorcycle bore a Mumbai registration plate. The rider was identified as Abu Sufyan (20), a third-year dental college student who stays at a PG accommodation near Gota Crossroads in Ahmedabad, and is a native of Mumbai's Mira Road area. Bystanders rushed to the spot and alerted emergency services. While Sufyan sustained minor head injuries and remained conscious, Dindor was found critically injured. A 108 ambulance reached the scene shortly thereafter, where doctors declared Dindor dead on the spot.

## India aims to land humans on Moon by 2027: Isro chairman

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

India aims to develop a spacecraft by 2027 capable of safely landing humans on the Moon and returning them to Earth, said Isro chairman V Narayanan here on Monday. He was speaking as the chief guest at the Gujarat University's 74th annual convocation. "For this ambitious goal, the Gaganyaan mission has already been initiated and preparations for the Mars mission are also underway and are expected to progress by 2028," he said.

Sharing key milestones of India's space journey, he said that since 1962, India successfully launched 133 satellites for various domestic purposes. He noted that the satellite launched last month using the LVM-3 "Bahubali" was the heaviest so far, weighing 164kg.

## Fake GST Billing Racket Busted in Muzaffarnagar

The Sikh Times  
Manoj Pal

Muzaffarnagar. The district Cyber Crime Police have busted an organised fake GST billing network and arrested three key accused involved in generating fraudulent invoices and e-way bills using fake companies. The racket allegedly caused losses worth crores of rupees to the government exchequer. The arrested accused have been identified as Afzal, Monis, Ali resident of Malhpura under Civil Lines, and Mohammad Hafeez resident of village Tigri under New Mandi police station. Police investigation revealed that the gang had systematically created a web of fake GST firms and showed bogus transactions across multiple states. During the operation the Cyber Crime Police recovered a complete digital and documentary setup used in the fraud. The seized items include six mobile phones, five laptops, one hard disk, one internet dongle, 12 Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) USBs, three rubber stamp seals, one cheque book, two keyboards, two printers, three laptop chargers, several Aadhaar cards, PAN cards, SIM cards, documents related to 34 GST firms and one Creta car. According to the police, the accused target-

ed poor and needy individuals by luring them with small amounts of money to obtain their Aadhaar and PAN cards.

links of the racket may extend to other districts and states, and the role of beneficiaries of the fake firms and suspicious



Using these documents, bank accounts were opened and GST firms were registered in their names. These firms had no real business activity and were used solely for issuing fake GST invoices and e-way bills. Preliminary investigation has further revealed that around 40 to 50 fake firms have been used by the network so far. Through these firms, transactions worth crores of rupees were shown on paper to illegally claim tax credits and other benefits. Information about the case was shared during a press conference by SP Crime Indu Siddharth, who stated that the case is not limited to the three arrested accused. The

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mrs. Lalita Goswami W/o Mr. Ashok Goswami in respect of Built up Ground Floor, without roof rights of Left Side Portion of Property bearing No. 27, area measuring 100 Sq. Yds., out of total area 400 Sq. Yds., out of Khasra No. 822, situated in the area of Village Navada and the colony known as Om Vilas Phase I, Ultam Nagar, New Delhi 110059, by virtue of Regd. GPA, ATS and Will dated 21.07.2008, duly registered in the SRO-II, Janakpuri New Delhi, vide Doc No. 10830, in Book No. 4, Volume No. 12234, on Pages No. 1-12, dated 21.07.2008, executed by Mr. Sumit Aggarwal S/o Late Mr. Jagdish Aggarwal and said property to be sold to Mrs. Priyanka Kalra and same to be finance by SMFG India Home Finance Co. Ltd., General public hereby informed that if anybody has any charge/ interest/title in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

### NAME CHANGE

I Rajneesh Kumar S/o Tilak Raj Bawea, R/o 81, 3rd Floor, Model Town North Ex, Model Town, North West Delhi, Delhi, 110009 have changed my name to Rajneesh Kumar Bawea for all future purposes.

### NAME CHANGE

It is for general information that I, TAJ MOHAMMAD S/o ISLAM, R/o House No. 134, Galli No. 2, Moonga Nagar, Mustafabad, North East Delhi, Delhi-110094, declare that name of mine and my father have been wrongly written as TAJ MOHAMMED and ISLAM KHAN in my 10th class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my father are TAJ MOHAMMAD and ISLAM respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

### NAME CHANGE

I Hem Narayan S/o Ram Avtar Gupta R/o 11705, Galli No. 15, Patel Nagar, Gurgaon, Haryana - 122001, have changed my name to Hem Narayan Gupta for all future purposes.

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### NAME CHANGE

SG Associates (Law Firm) B-01, Plot No. 20, Kaushambi, Ghaziabad-201010. E-MAIL: sgassociates@gmail.com. Ph: 0120-4968888, 8130309204.

## Protective Railings to Be Installed on Bhopa Ganga Canal Bridge to Curb Suicide Incidents

Administrative officials commend the humanitarian initiative of Arvind Ahluwalia

### The Sikh Times

Muzaffarnagar: In a remarkable and humane effort to prevent repeated suicide incidents from the Ganga Canal bridge in Bhopa, social worker Arvind Ahluwalia has taken a decisive step that is drawing widespread appreciation. With the primary objective of safeguarding human lives, high iron mesh railings are being installed on both sides of the bridge to prevent people from jumping into the canal. The Ganga Canal bridge in Bhopa has unfortunately witnessed several tragic incidents over time. Keeping public safety and social responsibility at the forefront, Arvind Ahluwalia initiated this protective measure at his own effort, setting an inspiring example of citizen-led social service. The initiative has received strong support and praise from local residents, eminent citizens, as well as police and administrative offi-

cials. Rishipal Singh, President of the Gram Sudhar Seva Samiti,

bridge will significantly reduce suicide attempts by jumping into



described the effort as a truly commendable step taken in public interest, stating that it has the potential to save many precious lives. SDM Jansath Rajkumar Bharti said that installing iron railings on both sides of the

the Ganga Canal. He termed Arvind Ahluwalia a socially conscious and responsible citizen whose efforts deserve recognition. Echoing similar sentiments, CO Bhopa Devravat Vajpayee stated that this safety arrangement is

a crucial step toward preventing suicide incidents at the bridge and called the initiative highly praiseworthy. Sharing the inspiration behind his work, social worker Arvind Ahluwalia said that he drew motivation for social service from Dr. Dhrupal Singh, Special Secretary at the Uttar Pradesh Secretariat in Lucknow. Since then, he has been consistently involved in various public welfare activities with a firm belief that timely and practical measures can save lives and bring meaningful change to society. The ongoing installation of safety railings on the Bhopa Ganga Canal bridge has emerged as a powerful symbol of social responsibility and compassion. Local residents view this initiative not just as an infrastructure improvement, but as a strong message that collective awareness and individual initiative can together prevent tragedies and protect human life.

Punjab resolution against new job law political, devoid of facts: Saini

### Chandigarh.(Agency)

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini Monday termed the resolution passed by the Punjab Assembly against the VB-G RAM G Act as "political" and "devoid of facts or constructive suggestions". "If any scheme is improved, Congress and INDI Alliance have a problem with that. Every time welfare reforms are introduced for the poor, Congress and the INDI Alliance begin questioning the initiatives," Saini said. The Punjab Assembly on December 30 unanimously passed resolution against the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar Aajeevika Mission (Grameen) Act, accusing the BJP-led Centre of "taking away" the livelihoods of the poor and Dalit labourers by scrapping the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Talking to reporters, Saini said if the Congress had any genuine suggestions, they should have raised those in the Lok Sabha. Instead, he alleged, they avoid debate, shut down discussions, and walk away without answers. Calling the Congress "an expert in spreading lies", he alleged that the opposition is "misinformation". "People of the country and the state have seen Congress' face and understood its character," he said.

"The INDI Alliance people should tell the country's labourers and workers what facilities were available during their time, how corruption took place, how workers did not get due benefits... The absence of biometric authentication and effective monitoring made it impossible to verify whether registered workers were genuine or whether wages reached the intended beneficiaries. As a result, funds were routinely siphoned off," he claimed.

Targeting Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Saini said the resolution against the VB-G RAM G Act reflected political opportunism rather than concern for rural welfare, as it neither cited any data nor offered a single constructive suggestion. Saini said Mann should have clearly read the Act and accused the opposition parties of "deliberately misleading the public on an issue that concerns the livelihoods of crores of rural workers and farmers".

## BMC to Bombay high court: Requisitioned court staff for election duty due to 'inadvertent misreading' of SEC order

### Mumbai. (Agency)

BMC commissioner Bhushan Gagrani on Monday informed the Bombay high court that requisitioning subordinate court staff for civic poll duty was the result of an "inadvertent misreading of the SEC (State Election Commission) order".

The HC, at a special vacation hearing, stayed the commissioner's Dec 22 order to summon subordinate court staff for poll duty, and sought the commissioner's and the SEC reply, and posted the matter to Jan 5. On Monday, Gagrani's senior counsel, Ravi Kadam, said it was "an inadvertent misinterpretation" of a list the state prepared for poll duty.

Gagrani's affidavit said he ought to have been more prudent in segregating govt staff from court staff when requisitioning.

The BMC's reply said this year, there are 10,231



election centres against 7,200 in 2017. Now, it has a staff of 87,000 compared to 1,05,269 in 2017. The staff requirement for the 2026 polls is 51,155, with five to one booth, and with additional flying squad and other staff, the total requirement is 79,989. The BMC has deployed 24,841 of its staff for poll duty.

Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad questioned the civic chief's action of requisitioning the court staff. "From

which provision do you draw powers? You cannot summon them. You don't have the powers," the bench said orally, adding, "Is there any defence that you have apart from accepting your mistake?"

The SEC, represented by advocate Sachin Shetye, submitted in its reply that the provisions of the Representation of Peoples Act, 1951, are not applicable for the conduct of local body elections, which are held under provisions of local Acts enacted by the state legislature. With no separate provision that governs requisitioning of staff for poll duty, SEC issued guidelines in 1995 and amended them in 2018.

The HC, on Dec 30, referred to a 2008 decision of the administrative judges committee and a 2023 EC communication to exempt the court staff. On Monday, the HC adjourned the matter by 3 weeks and said in its final order it would clarify the law and lay down parameters, given the absence of any final judgment on court staff being requisitioned for poll duty.

### STORES E-PROCUREMENT

Tender Notice No.: S/35/2025-26; Dated: 02-01-2026. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works:-

#### SN. 1: Tender No. 50/25/5416/OT/203/2025-26;

Closing/ Opening Date: 19-01-2026

**Brief Description, P.L. No. & Qty:** Supply and testing of VHF 25 Watt Radio with plain MIC standard accessories, power supply unit cum battery charger (13.5V/ 15A) 12V/100Ah VRLA Battery with i-Lead Connectors LMR 400 Co-axial cable with end connectors (30 meters) High Gain base Antenna with RDSO specification No. RDSO/SPN/TC/107/2018 REV. 2.1 or Latest. Make: Motorola or Better, Make/ Model: Motorola XIR M8668i AES 256 Encryption. (Warranty Period: upto 30 Months from the date of delivery). [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]. [UVAM Item ref. (Item id:- 3100590004-25 W VH Digital Radio Set). (i) Qty - 2.00 Set for SSE/Tele/Lumding, NFR (Assam). (ii) Qty - 2 Set for SSE/Tele/Rangiya,NFR (Assam). (iii) Qty - 2.00 Set for SSE/Tele/Tinsukia, NFR (Assam). (iv) Qty - 2.00 Set for SSE/Tele/Katiab, NFR (Bihar). (v) Qty - 2.00 Set for Sr. Section Engineer/Tele/Alipurduar Jn., NFR (West Bengal). P.L. No. - 520500382936.

#### SN. 2: Tender No. 50/25/5399/OT/204/2025-26;

Closing/ Opening Date: 20-01-2026

**Brief Description, P.L. No. & Qty:** Supply of Dual Redundant Arrangement of UFSBI Electronics for exchange of vital relay state information between two different Signalling installations pertaining to ABS/I/B signalling application working on OFC/Quad media in set and consisting of following subsystems a) Electronics for UFSBI interface in redundancy as per IRS spec. no. IRS-S- 104/2012 ver. 0 (latest amendment). Qty: Two Nos.; b) Modem for UFSBI (for use of secondary media OFC /Quad). Qty Two Nos.; c) Automatic Media changeover of modem working on redundant channels for data transmission on OFC/Quad. Qty: Two Nos.; d) Pre wired 36-U Floor mounting MS Cabinet suited to Fit Two sets of UFSBI Electronics with Siemens grey/Smoke grey powder coating (Rust proof and long life), tinted 3-4 mm thick Acrylic/Polycarbonate/ Glass sheet Fitted on front door and metal back door, with double lock and bottom cable entry facility. Qty: One Nos.; Item (a) shall be inspected by RDSO and item (b), (c) & (d) by consignee along with OEM Test Report. Note: 1 Pair shall consist of 2 Sets of UFSBI will consist of 04 nos OFC (dark fibre) modem, 04 nos Quad cable modem, 04 nos Automatic media changeover and any other equipment required for complete media redundancy [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]. [UVAM Item ref. (Item id:- 3100245-Universal Fail safe Block Interface). Qty - 6 Pair for Sr. Section Engineer/ SIG/Fakiragram Jn./ NFR (Assam), P.L. No. - 522001060100.

#### SN.3: Tender No. 50/25/5377/OT/205/2025-26;

Closing/ Opening Date: 19-01-2026

**Brief Description, P.L. No. & Qty:** Supply of 6 Quad Cable, 1.4 mm dia Copper Conductor, Polythene Insulated screened, wire/strip, Galvanized steel armoured, Underground, Jelly Filled as per specification No. RDSO/SPN/TC/72/2007 with amendment No. 1 or latest. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]. [UVAM Item ref. (Item id:- 3100047-QUAD CABLES for S&T INSTALLATIONS, Sub Item id: 3100245001-Universal Fail safe Block Interface). Qty - 6 Pair for Sr. Section Engineer/ SIG/Fakiragram Jn./ NFR (Assam), P.L. No. - 522001060100.

#### SN.4: Tender No. 50/25/5403/OT/206/2025-26;

Closing/ Opening Date: 29-01-2026

**Brief Description, P.L. No. & Qty:** (1) Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of IP based Video Surveillance System in 59 nos. (Dual cab) HHP Diesel Locomotive as per RDSO specification RDSO/SPN/TC/106/2025, Ver. 3.1 or latest. [Warranty Period: 36 Months after the date of delivery], Qty - 59 Set for SSE/IC/Mech, NFR (West Bengal). P.L. No. - 161706150016. (2) CAMC for five years after for 59 nos. Dual cab HHP Diesel Locomotives as per RDSOs specification no. RDSO/SPN/TC/106/2025 version 3.1, effective from 04.06.2025 and CLW Document No. CLW/ELDO/AMC/VSS/01 Rev-0 Alt-C including all accessories required for fitment. [Warranty Period: 3 years, AMC Period: 5 years, Rate of Discounting: 10%]. Qty - 59 Set for SSE/IC/Mech, NFR (West Bengal). P.L. No. - 161706150016.

# Vardi faadna paap hai: Man who molested woman cop paraded by Chhattisgarh Police

**The Chhattisgarh Police paraded a man accused of assaulting and molesting a woman constable during protests against a coal project in Raigarh. The cops forced him to make slogans condemning attacks on them, including one that tearing a police uniform was a sin.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)** The Chhattisgarh Police have paraded a man accused of assaulting and disrobing a woman constable during a coal project protest in Raigarh district, forcing him to chant slogans condemning attacks on the cops. With his face smeared black and a garland of slippers around his neck, the accused, Chitraseen Sao, was marched to a court on Monday. Male and female police personnel formed a ring around him, making him shout slogans such as "police hamari baap hai" and "vardi faadna paap hai" (Police are our parents, tearing the uniform is a sin). At one point, he was made to do sit-ups on the road as bystanders recorded videos. Police said Sao is the prime accused in the December 27 violence in Tamnar block, where protests against the Gare Pelma Sector-I coal project turned violent. During the clashes, Inspector Kamla Pusham was allegedly kicked and beaten, while another woman constable was partially stripped — an incident captured in disturbing videos that later went viral and triggered widespread outrage.

within the police force. The violence followed weeks of agitation against a public hearing for the coal block allotted to Jindal Industries. From December 12, residents of 14 villages began an economic blockade at Libra village, disrupting coal movement and traffic. On December 27, a large crowd gathered and blocked a highway. Police and administrative officials repeatedly appealed for calm, but protesters allegedly broke barricades, threw stones, set vehicles on fire and attacked police personnel. Several videos from the incident circulated widely on social media. One shows a woman constable crying and pleading to be released, addressing the attackers as "brother," while another shows a protester pulling at her clothes as she screams for help. Multiple police personnel, including women constables, were injured and taken to

hospital. After the incident, Tamnar police registered multiple FIRs under sections related to rioting, assault on public servants, arson, outraging the modesty of a woman and

was an expression of the force's anger over the "humiliation" of their colleagues. On January 2, police arrested two accused — Mangal Rathia and Chinesh Khamari — and brought them to the district jail. There, a group of women constables demanded the accused be paraded on the roads. Bilaspur Range Inspector General Sanjeev Shukla told Aaj Tak, India Today's sister channel, that strict action was being taken.

"Cases have been registered against the culprits under serious sections. Some arrests have been made, and efforts are on to identify and nab the remaining accused," he said, adding that a detailed investigation into the incident had been ordered. "All women police personnel are happy because the accused has been caught and punished. We trust the law that he will be given the strictest punishment. Be it a woman officer or a common woman, they are all women. Those who wrong them should definitely be punished," Deepika Nirmalkar, women police.



## Mob Behind 2020 JNU Attack Still Unknown; Faculty Body Slams Delhi Police

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association (JNTUA) on Monday recalled the "barbarous assault" on students and faculty six years ago on this day on the varsity campus. The association, in a statement, said the identities of those who carried out the mob attack with rods and stones, and those who backed them, remain "masked" even today. It said the veritable non-action against the assaulters reflected not just incompetence but "complicity" on the part of the JNU administration and the Delhi Police.



the innocent and suppress their voice." The JNTUA said the moment was made more poignant as two former students — Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam — were again denied bail after more than five years of incarceration without trial. All the same, the association said, the attack failed in its objective of silencing the campus.

"Six years on, the struggle against the destruction of the University continues," Surajit Majumdar, president, JNTUA, said. The attackers are "neither unknown, nor will they be forgotten," he added.

## Delhi government working 24X7 to curb pollution, says L-G

**VK Saxena told the Assembly the BJP-led government has moved beyond seasonal steps with a time-bound, all-season pollution control strategy focused on enforcement, technology and public participation.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Instead of limiting itself, as in previous years, to only seasonal measures, the BJP-led city government has launched a comprehensive, year-round and time-bound Air Pollution Mitigation Plan in June 2025, said Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena while addressing the Winter Session of Delhi Legislative Assembly on Monday.

The L-G said that this plan focuses on prevention, use of modern technology, strict enforcement and public participation, with coordinated efforts. Saxena said that the BJP-led government in its 10 months has taken several steps for public welfare while facing legacy issues such as inertia and negativity that have pervaded the administration for years.

"Air pollution is one of the most serious challenges facing our city today. Clean air is not a privilege, but a fundamental right of every citizen. Although the government has achieved several notable accomplishments, many challenges still remain to be addressed."

The government is confronting all these challenges with unwavering resolve, commitment and transparency, moving forward with the conviction that through collective effort, these obstacles can be transformed into opportunities," the L-G said in his address. "When pollution levels rose in recent weeks, the government immediately took ground-level actions. More than 1800 inspection teams have been deployed, operating round the clock. Under the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign, green cover is being expanded. Within just ten months, 1450 electric buses have been inducted, significantly strengthening non-polluting public transport. Inter-State EV Bus services have also been introduced on several routes. For dust control, mechanical road sweepers in double shifts, water sprinkling and extensive use of anti-smog guns are being deployed."

To strengthen sanitation systems and control pollution, a decision has been taken to provide financial assistance of ₹2,300 crore to Municipal Corporation of Delhi for 70 MRSMs and 1,000 litter picker machines over a period of ten years," he added. The government, Saxena said, has provided an additional grant of ₹500 Crore to MCD this year and will further provide an annual grant of ₹300 Crore in the coming years, which will accelerate waste management and environmental protection efforts.

## Slogans At JNU Against PM After Umar Khalid Denied Bail, BJP Reacts

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Controversial slogans directed at Prime Minister Narendra Modi echoed on the campus of Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on Monday after the Supreme Court denied bail to student activists Umar Khalid and Sherjeel Imam. The two men have been in jail for over five years. They face charges in a "larger conspiracy" case linked to the 2020 Delhi riots.

Reacting to the incident, BJP leader and Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa today asked what is there left to say if they start protesting against the judgment of the Supreme Court?

"They have no link with this country. They are people who want to break up India, they speak ill of the prime minister," he said.

The slogans were raised by some people at JNU's Sabarmati Hostel between 9 pm and 10 pm, sources said. Danish, the joint secretary of the Left-backed



JNU Students' Union (JNUSU), and Sunil, its secretary, were at the spot when slogan-shouting was going on, sources said. Other Left-back student groups also participated. The slogans included references to coffins and PM Modi's name in what appeared to be a direct message of threat, and not an allusion to it.

Khalid and Imam were also once part of this Left-propelled slogan-shouting cohort in JNU, as were Kanhaiya Kumar and Shehla Rashid. Kumar and Rashid

have moved on.

### ABVP Says Will File Complaint

"The Left students shouted slogans near Sabarmati Hostel. They spoke ill against RSS, ABVP, PM Modi ji," Pravin K Piyush, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) secretary at JNU, told today. To a question if they would approach the authorities over the matter, another ABVP member told that they will file a complaint. "We will pursue this matter and make sure they are punished," he added. The ABVP is the student wing of the BJP's ideological mentor Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

A bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and Prasanna B Varale on Monday said the prosecution material disclosed a prima facie case against Khalid and Imam, thereby attracting the statutory bar to bail under Section 43D(5) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

## Gym ownership dispute turns violent in east Delhi, man stripped and beaten, wife molested

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

A man was assaulted, his wife was allegedly molested, and his son was stripped and beaten in full public view following a dispute over the ownership of a gym in east Delhi's Laxmi Nagar area, police said.

The incident took place on Friday around 4 pm, a police official said. CCTV footage of the assault, which later went viral on social media, showed a man being stripped on the road and brutally thrashed by a group of people while he pleaded for mercy.

According to police, a case has been registered under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and one of the accused has been arrested in connection with the incident. The woman lodged a detailed police complaint on the same day.

As per the complaint, the dispute stemmed from the ownership of a gym in the area. The complainant alleged that the gym's caretaker, Satish Yadav alias Pintu Yadav, cheated the family and gradually took control of the commercial establishment, falsely claiming ownership despite having no legal rights. She told police that Yadav was hired only as a caretaker and was never given any ownership rights over the gym. She further claimed that she possessed all documents related to the gym's ownership. The complainant said that after Yadav began asserting control, repeated requests by the family for him to vacate the premises were met with aggressive behaviour, verbal abuse and threats, even before the January 2 incident.

In her complaint, the woman stated, "On January 2, there was water leakage in my house, due to which the entire house was flooded and there was a foul smell. I made several calls to him, but he did not respond. As the sewerage connection is located in the basement, I, along with my husband, went downstairs to check it." She alleged that Satish arrived at the spot with his associates and immediately started beating them. "They dragged us from the gym gate, assaulted us there, and then continued beating us on the road. They pulled my hair, molested me, slapped me and kicked me," she stated in complaint.

The complainant further alleged that her husband was then dragged inside the gym, disrobed, and brutally assaulted with a gym rod. "They threatened to finish him off," she said. She added that when she tried to save her husband and ran towards the police station to seek help, some of the accused entered her house, dragged her son onto the road, disrobed him and assaulted him with shoes. "My son's tooth was broken and he was hit on the head, after which he became dizzy."

## Cold but stable week ahead for Delhi, fog likely to affect mornings

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Delhi is set to witness cold but stable winter weather over the coming week, with temperatures likely to fall as low as 5 degrees Celsius before rising. Shallow to moderate fog is also likely to affect morning visibility throughout the week, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The IMD said a western disturbance currently seen as a cyclonic circulation over north Pakistan may influence weather conditions in northwest India, while a strong subtropical westerly jet stream continues to prevail over the region.

However, no rainfall has been forecast

for Delhi during the next seven days. Minimum temperatures are expected to remain largely unchanged for the next

expected to be below normal on January 8, while it may turn above normal on January 10 and 11.

Maximum temperatures are forecast to remain near normal after January 5. On Monday, the city recorded a minimum temperature of 6.6 degrees Celsius at Safdarjung, marginally below normal. Visibility dipped to 1,600 metres at Safdarjung and 1,500 metres at Palam due to haze and mist.

The IMD has forecast partly cloudy skies for the next 24 hours, followed by mainly clear conditions for three days.

Mist or haze is likely during night hours on January 5, while shallow fog is expected at a few places during morning hours on Jan 6 and 7.



## What Supreme Court's Latest Verdict On Reservations Means For General Candidates

**The Supreme Court in a recent order clarified that if a reserved category candidate, without availing any relaxation or concession, outperforms general category candidates, such a candidate must be treated as competing for open posts in the recruitment process.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

The Supreme Court in a recent order clarified that if a reserved category candidate, without availing any relaxation or concession, outperforms general category candidates, such a candidate must be treated as competing for open posts in the recruitment process.

The court held that when the cut-off marks for reserved categories (Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, and Economically Weaker Section) are higher than the cut-off for the general category, then those from the reserved category who clear the general cut-off should be included in the general quota for government jobs.

Reiterating that the general category is "open to all" irrespective of caste, class or gender, the top court has solidified its earlier stance against excluding reserved category candidates from the general list.

The top court noted that a previous landmark ruling (the Saurav Yadav case) had opined that "the open category is open to all, and the only condition for a candidate to be shown in it is merit, regardless of whether the reservation benefit of either type is available to her or him."

The same has a profound meaning and needs to be translated into action without being unnecessarily bothered by a term like "migration", the top court clarified.

In its latest order upholding the Rajasthan HC verdict, the top court took inspiration from the "guiding light" provided by its own landmark verdicts in Indra Sawhney and Saurav Yadav.

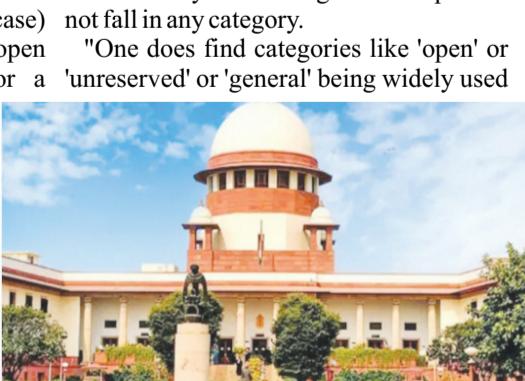
The court concluded that the word 'open' connotes nothing but 'open', meaning thereby that vacant posts which are sought

The court further said that for all intents and purposes, the vacancies on posts which are notified/advertised as open or unreserved or general, as the terms

suggest, are not reserved for any caste/tribe/class/gender and are, thus, open to all, notwithstanding that a cross-section of society can also compete for appointment on vacant posts which are 'reserved' - vertical or horizontal - as mentioned in the notification/advertisement.

### What Was The Case?

Pleas were filed in the top court against a 2023 Rajasthan High Court ruling that held candidates belonging to reserved categories who secure marks higher than the cut-off prescribed for the General or Open category must be considered in the open category even at the stage of shortlisting and not confined to their respective reserved categories.



in course of recruitment drives, but they are meant to signify the open/unreserved vacant posts on which any suitable candidate can be appointed, regardless of the caste/tribe/class/gender of such candidate," the Supreme Court clarified.

## NEWS BOX

13 years after suspension, cricketer Kranti Gaud's father reinstated in police service

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

In a long-awaited development, Munna Singh, father of India's ICC Women's Cricket World Cup winner Kranti Gaud, has been officially reinstated as a police officer in the Madhya Pradesh Police, nearly 14 years after his dismissal. The reinstatement order was issued on Monday by the state police headquarters following strong intervention from Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, who had publicly pledged to resolve the matter during a felicitation ceremony last year, according to Madhya Pradesh Sports Minister Vishwas Sarang. This decision not only brings relief to the family but also serves as a clear example of the government's sensitivity, respect for athletes, and fair approach," he said, as quoted by PTI news agency. "This decision has not only provided



economic and social support to Gaud's family, but has also fulfilled Kranti's dream of seeing her father retire with honour in a police uniform," he added. Singh, who had served as a constable, was dismissed from service in 2012 after allegations of negligence during election duty. His removal plunged the family into financial hardship, forcing them to cope without his steady income. Kranti Gaud, who grew up in Ghuwara village in Chhatarpur district, often spoke openly about the family's struggles, recalling periods when they struggled to afford even a single meal. The matter came into sharp focus when Kranti emerged as one of the standout performers in India's historic first ICC Women's ODI World Cup triumph in November 2025, finishing among the leading wicket-takers and capturing the nation's imagination with her stellar bowling. During the celebratory event in Bhopal last November, CM Yadav assured Kranti that her father's case would be re-evaluated and that steps would be taken to restore his dignity and career.

## Dutch hockey star Bram van Butten aims to win Olympic gold, and send it to space

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

When Indian hockey fans hear the name Bram van Battum, it may not ring a bell immediately. However, for those close to the SG Pipers franchise, he is an up-and-coming defender from the Netherlands, aiming to leave his mark in the second season of the revamped men's Hockey India League (HIL). Van Battum has already made his senior debut for the Netherlands, playing two matches, winning both, and scoring on debut. As curiosity around the 24-year-old grew, a search to learn more about him led to his official LinkedIn profile. One glance at his bio is enough to stand out — not because



of hockey, but because he places his aspiration of becoming an aerospace engineer ahead of calling himself an international hockey player. "I am currently a bachelor student Aerospace Engineering at the TU Delft, striving to become a future engineer. Besides my studies, I enjoy playing field hockey for the first team of SV Kamppong and I am proud to represent the Dutch national team under 21. I have a great passion for sports and I feel privileged I have a chance of pursuing a long professional career. I consider myself to be ambitious, structured, a perfectionist and a team player," read Van Battum's bio. So when he spoke to India Today exclusively ahead of the start of the men's HIL, the first question was always going to be about aerospace engineering and his passion for it. Aerospace engineer in the making

The defender said he was always fascinated by space, aeroplanes, and rockets while growing up, making the decision to pursue aerospace engineering a natural one.

"Yeah, I've always been fascinated by space, basically, I've been interested by aeroplanes and rockets and the moon landing and everything related to SpaceX or NASA, and I find it really interesting," said Van Battum. "When looking for a study after high school, aerospace engineering always came out on top of my interests."

Former England fast bowler Stuart Broad revealed what led to the heated conversation between Marnus Labuschagne and Ben Stokes during Day 2 of the fifth Ashes Test in Sydney.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former England bowler Stuart Broad has revealed the reason behind the heated altercation between Ben Stokes and Marnus Labuschagne during Day 2 of the fifth Test of the Ashes 2025-26 in Sydney. Stokes and Labuschagne were involved in a fiery exchange late on Day 2 after Travis Head struck the England captain for back-to-back boundaries in the 29th over. Following the two boundaries, a few words were exchanged between Labuschagne and Stokes in the middle, with the England skipper even appearing to put his arm around Labuschagne's neck during the



confrontation. However, Stokes had the last laugh, as in his very next over, as he tempted Labuschagne into chasing a wide delivery, resulting in the batter edging the ball to gully and departing for 48 off 68 balls. After the heated passage of play, Stuart Broad lifted the lid on what had transpired between the two, speaking on Day 3 of the Test. The former fast bowler explained how Stokes deliberately tried to pull Labuschagne out of his bubble, and that's a plan of England — get him out of his routines. The very next ball

Ben Stokes bowls, he drives at one that's a bit wide, moves away, and he's out," Broad said on 7Cricket. Broad further criticised Labuschagne for losing concentration at a crucial phase of the innings and throwing his wicket away after settling in well.

"It sort of worked for England, for Ben Stokes to get into that competitive spirit, but I thought it was poor play from Marnus, because Marnus was playing as nicely as he had done all series," Broad added.

Ashes 205-26 5th Test Day 3 Updates

Labuschagne has endured a disappointing Ashes series, continuing a struggle that has persisted over the past few years. He has managed just 222 runs from nine innings in the ongoing series at an average of 27.75, registering two half-centuries. Since 2023, Labuschagne's form has dipped significantly, with only 1,586 runs from 31 matches (58 innings) at an average of 30.5, including one century and five fifties.

Meanwhile, following Labuschagne's dismissal, Travis Head went on to produce a sensational knock of 163, placing Australia in a commanding position on Day 3 of the Sydney Test.

## Steve Smith strengthens Ashes legacy, only behind Don Bradman with 37th Test century

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Steve Smith further cemented his Ashes legacy with a sublime century in the Sydney Test against England, moving to second on the list of most hundreds in the storied rivalry. With his 13th Ashes ton, Smith went past England great Jack Hobbs, who struck 12 centuries between 1908 and 1930, and now trails only the legendary Don Bradman, who amassed 19 hundreds from 37 Ashes Tests. While Bradman's record may remain out of reach, Smith's consistency and dominance across eras have carved out a legacy of his own. The Australian great brought up his hundred off 166 balls in the final session on Day 3 of the New Year's Test at the SCG. Facing Jacob Bethell in the 110th over of the Australian innings, Smith stepped outside off stump and expertly lapped the ball fine for three, sparking a standing ovation from the Sydney crowd as he



were hard at work, doing their best to prepare the outfield for play. The Punjab Cricket Association, in a cheeky social media post, confirmed that the toss had been



delayed due to fog and said they were awaiting photos from the venue, adding that their photographer was en route to the stadium while navigating poor visibility. Mumbai's coaching staff were also seen inspecting the pitch and playing surface at the Jaipur Vidyalaya Ground. Some members of the ground staff even lit

small fires near the venue to keep themselves warm amid the biting cold.

Elsewhere in the city, Chhattisgarh were scheduled to face Maharashtra at the Anantam Ground, while Sikkim were set to take on Uttarakhand at the Dr Soni Stadium. All four matches had their tosses scheduled for 9 am, but there was no sign of play getting underway even an hour later. While delays in domestic cricket during the winter months in north India are common, there were concerns over the latest weather interruption as it came on the heels of an abandoned T20I between India and South Africa due to smog in Lucknow in December. For Shubman Gill, the return to competitive action following an injury lay-off has been further delayed. India's ODI captain was scheduled to take the field for Punjab against Sikkim on January 3 but missed the match due to illness. Punjab instead rode on Arshdeep Singh's five-wicket haul to bowl Sikkim out for 75 and complete a comprehensive 10-wicket victory.

## Ugly way to go: Usman Khawaja out to a full toss in first innings of final Test

New Delhi. (Agency)

Usman Khawaja found the worst possible way to get out in the first innings of his final Test match. The veteran Australian batter missed a full toss on Day 3 of the fifth and final Ashes Test in front of his home crowd at the Sydney Cricket Ground, departing for 17 during the second session. Khawaja looked visibly gutted but opted for a review, hoping against hope that the line of the ball might miss the stumps. Replays, however, suggested that the delivery was indeed going on to hit the timber, with no inside edge to save the left-hander. Khawaja had toiled for 49 deliveries at the crease, stitching together a 41-run stand with Steve Smith. The pair steadied the ship following the dismissal of Travis Head, who had earlier lit up the SCG with a scintillating 163 off 166 balls. However, in the 84th over of the Australian innings, Khawaja was undone by an inswinging full toss. Brydon Carse, operating with the second new ball, set up the experienced batter expertly with a couple of inswingers before striking him on



the boot with the full delivery. Nonetheless, Khawaja received a standing ovation from the SCG crowd, who warmly acknowledged his contribution to Australian cricket. It remains to be seen whether Australia will bat again in the fifth Test, given the high-scoring first innings from both sides. Following Khawaja's exit, stand-in captain Steve Smith continued to

lead Australia's push towards England's first-innings total of 384. Smith brought up a well-paced half-century and had in-form wicketkeeper-batter Alex Carey for company as Australia moved past 350 during the second session on Day 3.

Ashes 2025-26 5th Test Day 3 Updates The build-up to the fifth and final Test had largely centred around Khawaja's farewell. The 39-year-old batter, in a fiery press conference, announced that he would retire from international cricket after the Ashes finale at his home ground.

In an emotionally charged address on the eve of what he described as his final Test appearance, Khawaja delivered one of the most confronting speeches of his career. Calm but resolute, he chose not to dwell on statistics or milestones, instead using the moment to speak about what he alleged were long-standing issues of racial discrimination within Australian cricket circles.

## Too bright to bat: Steve Smith asks Brydon Carse to adjust sunglasses mid-play at SCG

Ashes, AUS vs ENG: Steve Smith briefly halted play on Day 3 of the SCG Test to ask Brydon Carse to adjust his sunglasses after sun glare disrupted his batting, sparking a light-hearted moment at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

A light-hearted moment unfolded during the New Year's Ashes Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground when Steve Smith paused play to address an unexpected distraction. On Day 3 of the SCG Test, England pacer Brydon Carse, stationed at mid-on, was wearing sunglasses that reflected the bright Sydney sun straight into Smith's eyes as he batted. The glare briefly broke Smith's concentration,

prompting him to walk down the pitch and make a polite request. "Carsey! Can you just turn your glasses around? On the back," Smith was heard saying on the stump mic. Carse immediately obliged, shifting his sunglasses to the back of his head before play resumed. The incident drew smiles from players and fans alike, adding a touch of humour to the fiercely contested Ashes encounter.

### SMITH KEEPS SCORING

Smith and Carse have both had impactful outings in the ongoing fifth Ashes Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground, influencing the contest in different ways. Smith, leading Australia from the middle order, once again showcased his composure and situational awareness under pressure. Walking in with Australia at 234 for three in the 55th over following Michael Neser's dismissal, the stand-in skipper steered the innings with a measured approach. He brought up his half-century off

95 balls during the second session on Day 3, combining patience with sharp shot selection to keep the scoreboard moving while ensuring stability at a crucial phase of the



match.

### CARSE IMPRESSES

Carse, on the other hand, has impressed with a disciplined and purposeful bowling performance in the ongoing fifth Ashes Test,

delivering key breakthroughs at crucial moments. Bowling with pace and control, Carse first removed Michael Neser to end a threatening 72-run partnership between Neser and Marnus Labuschagne. After softening Neser up with a series of short deliveries, he went full at 143.2 kph, drawing an outside edge that was safely collected by wicketkeeper Jamie Smith. Carse then landed an even bigger blow with the second new ball by dismissing Usman Khawaja, who recently announced his retirement. A low full toss that shaped in sharply beat Khawaja's flick and struck him on the pad, with ball-tracking confirming the lbw decision after a review. The dismissal not only broke a settled fifty-run stand but also prompted the SCG crowd to rise in applause as Khawaja walked off.

**Sensex opens 150 points lower, Nifty below 26,300; RIL down 2%**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Benchmark stock market indices opened lower on Tuesday, as heavyweight RIL shares tanked nearly 3% in early trade, dragging markets down. The S&P BSE Sensex was down 238.67 points to 85,200.95, while the NSE Nifty50 lost 57.15 points to 26,193.15 as of 9:22 am. Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said that the US markets have largely ignored the Venezuelan crisis and moved ahead. "It seems the market's verdict is that the economic consequences of this major geopolitical event will not be negative; perhaps it can be even positive from the medium to long-term perspective, when the crude prices decline on increased supply from Venezuela. However, it is too early to take a call on this since further surprises on the geopolitical front are likely. We are in a highly uncertain phase," he added. Therefore, investors can also think of increasing the cash position in their portfolios even while remaining invested. Heightened uncertainty triggered by unprecedented geopolitical events demands a cautious approach to investment supported by higher cash position to exploit sudden movements in the market.

The banking sector is moving to a stronger position supported by increasing credit growth even though deposit mobilisation remains a challenge.

**CCI directs 2 Ludhiana firms to cease, desist from anticompetitive conduct**

**CHENNAI.(Agency)**

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has directed two firms based in Ludhiana to cease and desist from anticompetitive conduct after they were found to have entered into collusive bidding. The two companies, KKK Mills and Sankeshwar Synthetics Pvt. Ltd., were found to be in violation of section 3 (3) of Competition Act which prohibits companies from entering into agreements that directly or indirectly results in bid rigging or collusive bidding, shall be presumed to have an appreciable adverse effect on competition.

"Based on the evidence on record, the Commission found that the quotation of identical prices, timing of submission of financial/commercial bids and similar



prior conduct support the conclusion of concerted action which violates Section 3(3)(d) read with Section 3(1) of the Act," the Commission said in a press statement.

It said that the proceedings against the two companies arose from a reference filed by CP Cell, Master General of Ordnance Branch, Directorate General of Ordnance Services, alleging that KKK Mills and Sankeshwar Synthetics Pvt. Ltd. entered into an agreement resulting in collusive bidding in the tender for procurement of underpants.

**Midday pause: Indian markets slip into consolidation mode after recent rally**

**CHENNAI.(Agency)**

Indian equity markets traded with a subdued and cautious undertone in midmorning deals on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, as investors turned selective after the recent rally and chose to book profits across frontline stocks. Benchmark indices slipped from early levels and hovered modestly in the red, reflecting a lack of fresh triggers and lingering concerns over global cues. The Sensex was trading lower by a few hundred points, while the Nifty remained below key psychological levels, indicating that near-term resistance was prompting traders to pare positions. At around 12:30 PM on Tuesday, January 6, the Sensex was trading lower and hovering around the mid-85,000 mark, while the Nifty 50 remained under pressure just below the 26,200-26,250 zone, reflecting continued profit-taking and a cautious mid-session tone. Selling pressure was largely driven by heavyweight stocks, which weighed on the benchmarks and capped any recovery attempts. Market participants appeared reluctant to take aggressive directional bets, preferring to stay on the sidelines ahead of clearer signals from global markets and upcoming corporate earnings. While there was no sign of panic selling, the overall tone suggested a consolidation phase after recent gains, with momentum slowing as valuations were reassessed. Broader markets mirrored the weakness seen in large caps, with mid-cap and small-cap stocks also trading under pressure. Market breadth remained negative, as declines outnumbered advances, underscoring the cautious sentiment prevailing across sectors. Media stocks were among the notable laggards, while select pockets of interest emerged in defensives, offering limited support to the indices. Global cues remained mixed, providing little directional guidance. Concerns around international trade dynamics and lingering geopolitical uncertainty continued to influence investor sentiment, even as Asian markets showed a mixed performance.

# Reliance share price crashes 5%: Is it good time to buy the stock

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Shares of Reliance Industries (RIL) slipped sharply on Tuesday, falling 5% to an intraday low of Rs 1,497.05 from the previous close of Rs 1,577.45. The stock opened slightly lower at Rs 1,575.55 and remained under selling pressure through the session. At the time of writing, the share price was at Rs 1,509, down Rs 68.45 or 4.34%. Data from the trading screen shows that RIL touched a high of Rs 1,575.55 and a low of Rs 1,497.05 during the day. The stock's VWAP stood at Rs 1,519.73, pointing to heavy trading at lower levels. The 52-week high for the stock is Rs 1,611.20, while the 52-week low is Rs 1,115.55. The sharp fall came with strong volumes, showing clear selling pressure.

**WHY RELIANCE SHARES FELL**

The fall came after Reliance Industries said it is not expecting any Russian crude oil deliveries in January and has not received such cargoes in the past three weeks. The company denied a media report which claimed that three vessels carrying

Russian oil were heading to its Jamnagar refinery. In a statement posted on X, RIL said the report was incorrect.

This clarification came at a time when global trade worries have increased. US President Donald Trump said on Monday that tariffs on India could be raised if the country does not reduce purchases of Russian oil. This added to investor nervousness around oil-related stocks, including RIL.

**VENEZUELA ANGLE AND LONGER-TERM VIEW**

Analysts at Jefferies said in a report that a US takeover of Venezuela's oil industry could benefit Reliance Industries and ONGC. According to the report, lifting sanctions on Venezuelan crude could allow Reliance to buy heavy crude at a discount to Brent, which may help improve refining margins. Over the weekend, US forces carried out a major



operation in Venezuela and captured President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, taking them to the US to face charges.

India was once a major buyer of Venezuelan crude, but imports dropped sharply after US sanctions. In FY2025, India's total imports from Venezuela stood at \$364.5 million, with crude oil worth \$255.3 million, down 81.3% from FY2024 levels, as per PTI data.

**SHOULD INVESTORS BUY AT THESE LEVELS**

Kranthi Bathini, Director of Equity Strategy at WealthMills Securities, said stability in global oil prices and better capacity use due to improved crude supply could support Reliance in the short to medium term. He said smoother global supply chains could help refining margins and overall performance. However, Bathini also advised caution. He said investors should closely watch global developments and crude oil price movement over the next few weeks. He added that oil prices are expected to remain within the current range for now and it is too early to expect sharp moves. For investors, the sharp fall may look tempting, but experts suggest tracking global oil trends and news flow before taking fresh positions in the stock.

## HDFC Bank share price falls over 2% after Q3 business update

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Shares of HDFC Bank Ltd. fell over 2% in trade on Monday after the lender released its December quarter business update, with investors turning cautious on growth trends and balance-sheet dynamics. The stock was among the top drags on benchmark indices as selling pressure intensified, even as the broader market traded lower in early deals. As per the bank's provisional Q3 update, average advances under management rose about 9% year on year to Rs 28.64 lakh crore during the December quarter. On the deposit side, average deposits climbed 12.2% year on year to Rs 27.52 lakh crore in the quarter. Period-end deposits stood at Rs 28.60 lakh crore, up 11.5% from a year ago. However, CASA deposits



grew at a relatively slower pace, with period-end CASA rising about 10.1% year on year to Rs 9.61 lakh crore.

Market participants said the stock reaction reflected concerns around loan growth continuing to outpace CASA growth, which could keep pressure on funding costs and the loan-to-deposit mix.

Some investors also booked profits amid heightened scrutiny of large banking

**HDFC Bank shares were among the top drags on benchmark indices as selling pressure intensified, even as the broader market traded lower in early deals.**

stocks during the ongoing earnings season.

The bank said the numbers are provisional and subject to review by statutory auditors. Investor focus will now shift to HDFC Bank's detailed Q3 earnings and management commentary on margins, asset quality and deposit mobilisation.

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Sundaram Alternates (SA), the alternative investment arm of the Sundaram Finance Group, on Monday announced that its SA Real Estate Credit Fund V, India's first ESG-aligned real estate credit fund, has crossed Rs 1,000 crore in capital commitments within three months of its launch in October 2025. "This reflects continued investor confidence in SA's Category II AIF platform and its performing real estate credit strategy," it said in a statement on Monday. The fundraise remains open and is expected to conclude by March 2026, with a targeted final corpus of Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,000 crore. The fund has attracted commitments from a diversified investor base comprising insurance companies, family offices, corporate treasuries, and ultra-high-net-worth investors. It also includes a sponsor commitment from the Sundaram Finance Group, reinforcing alignment of interest.

Crossing ?1,000 crores within three months reflects the confidence that investors place in our underwriting discipline and risk framework. This momentum reflects nearly a decade of sustained effort in building a robust risk management platform for our credit business. As the fundraise progresses toward its final close, our focus remains on disciplined capital deployment, capital protection, and building long-term investor relationships," said Karthik Athreya, Managing Director, Sundaram Alternates.

At the core of Fund V is a performing credit strategy focused on senior secured, amortising lending to brownfield, cash-generating residential projects. The approach prioritises capital protection and downside risk management through conservative loan-to-value structures and collateral coverage. ESG considerations are embedded into the underwriting and portfolio monitoring process, informing asset selection and governance rather than operating as a separate overlay. This integration strengthens overall credit assessment and portfolio resilience. Sundaram Alternates has raised over Rs 3,800 crore across five real estate credit funds, delivering IRRs in the range of 18% to 19%. The fund is the fifth offering in SA's established real estate-backed credit series, which has maintained a "zero capital loss" record since inception in 2017. The platform has maintained a record of full capital repayment with no defaults, across periods including the NBFC liquidity stress, RERA and GST implementation, the COVID-19 pandemic, and recent inflationary cycles.

## Budget should address 'embedded taxes' that inflate healthcare costs

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

India's Union Budget 2026-27 holds significant promise, given the slew of reforms in 2025 such as the New Labour Code and Goods and Services Tax (GST) rationalisation. The reduction in GST rates from 12 to 5% on ophthalmic equipment and lowering of tax barriers on essential medical technology has set the stage for a more inclusive healthcare ecosystem.

To further this momentum, the government could address the structural challenge of embedded taxes that continue to inflate operational costs. Granting "zero-rated" status to healthcare or introducing a minimal GST slab with full ITC eligibility would unlock an estimated 5-6% of costs currently trapped within the supply chain.

This structural shift would allow hospitals to pass on substantial direct savings to patients, truly maximizing the impact of the recent rate rationalizations.

Focus on the Union Budget should be patient centric from a healthcare perspective. Public investment has

reduced out-of-pocket expenditure from 48.8% of total health expenditure in 2017-18 to 39.4% in 2021-22, according to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The National Health Policy set an ambition of raising public health expenditure to 2.5% of GDP by 2025, and Budget 2027 should show a credible glide path toward that goal. (Estimates were 1.9% for early 2025)

The government could also significantly lower the cost of technology adoption by doing away with the residual 7.5-10% Basic Customs Duty and the 5% Health Cess on high-precision, non-indigenous technologies. Equipment such as Femtosecond lasers and advanced retinal imaging systems are critical for sight-saving procedures but remain expensive to import. Eliminating these landed costs will facilitate deeper penetration into Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, ensuring that patients in smaller towns have access to the same world-class surgical offerings as those in metropolitan hubs. Furthermore, as we move toward a tech-led healthcare future, the high cost of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

integration must be addressed. While AI-driven diagnostics for conditions like Diabetic Retinopathy can revolutionize early detection, the recurring costs of high-end software licenses, GPU-based computing power, and AI-integrated hardware remain prohibitive.

We propose a weighted tax deduction on AI-related capital expenditure and a reduction in duties for diagnostic machines with embedded AI software. This would incentivize hospitals to deploy automated screening tools in remote areas, significantly reducing the burden of avoidable blindness through technology. Interest subsidies for medical centres branching out in under developed areas will incentivize them to adopt a pan India approach. Besides reforms, focus should also be given to strengthening financial protection.

As of October 1, 2025, AB-PMJAY (Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana) had over 42 crore people enrolled and more than 33,000 empanelled hospitals across public and private systems.

## Is Venezuela the trigger, or is gold and silver's rally bigger than geopolitics

**In India, MCX gold is trading at a lifetime high. A decisive breakout could push prices sharply higher, while lower levels continue to attract buyers rather than panic sellers. MCX silver, trading over Rs 2.5 lakh, remains in an uptrend as long as key support zones hold.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

When gold and silver surge this sharply, the temptation is to pin the move on a single headline. This week, that headline is Venezuela. But scratch the surface, and the rally looks far more structural than sensational. The immediate spark came from rising geopolitical stress after the United States detained Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro on drug trafficking charges, rattling global markets and reviving classic safe-haven flows. Threats by the US towards

Colombia, Cuba and Mexico, along with reports of overseas asset seizures linked to Venezuela, only deepened the sense of uncertainty. For investors already on edge, bullion became the obvious refuge. Yet, as Ponnudi R points out, the rally was already building well before the Venezuela headlines hit the tape. "The ongoing up-move in gold and silver is being driven by structural demand rather than short-term speculative activity," Ponnudi said. "Sustained central-bank gold purchases, elevated geopolitical uncertainty and expectations of global monetary easing continue to reinforce gold's role as a core portfolio hedge."

According to him, the current environment remains supportive as long as financial conditions stay benign. As long as real yields remain contained, and global liquidity conditions stay accommodative, gold is likely to remain a portfolio anchor," Ponnudi said. "Silver offers higher-beta upside within the ongoing bullion cycle." Silver's appeal goes beyond its safe-haven status. Industrial demand linked to solar energy,

electric vehicles, AI infrastructure and broader electrification themes continue to tighten supply. "Any pullbacks so far appear corrective in nature, signalling a



healthy and well-supported trend," Ponnudi said.

**WHAT THE CHARTS ARE SIGNALLING**

Technically, bullion markets remain firmly in bullish territory. COMEX gold is trading near the \$4,460-\$4,480 zone after a clean breakout above prior resistance, with the earlier \$4,330-\$4,370 band now acting as a strong support base. Prices continue to hold above short-term averages, reinforcing dip-buying interest. In India, MCX gold continues to print

higher highs and higher lows, trading at lifetime highs. A decisive breakout above Rs 1,38,500 could accelerate gains toward the Rs 1,40,000-Rs 1,45,000 zone, while Rs 1,34,000-Rs 1,36,000 remains a strong buy-on-dips area.

Silver's momentum is even more striking. COMEX silver is advancing toward the \$78-\$80 zone and remains well supported above short-term moving averages. Medium-term expectations remain ambitious, backed by structural demand from the global energy transition. MCX silver, trading over Rs 2.5 lakh, remains in an uptrend as long as key support zones hold.

**GEOPOLITICS BEHIND GOLD, SILVER RALLY?**

Escalating tensions between the US and Venezuela have strengthened gold's safe-haven appeal, but analysts caution against overestimating the role of geopolitics in driving the broader rally. According to Aamir Makda, the Venezuela episode has acted as a short-term trigger for gold, rather than a fundamental shift in its outlook.

# Shanaya Kapoor

## Has A 'Pinch Me' Moment As She Starts New Year In Maasai Mara

**S**hanaya Kapoor welcomed the New Year in a unique way this year. Instead of attending glamorous Bollywood parties, the actress chose to immerse herself in the wild beauty of the Masai Mara, Kenya. The Aankhon Ki Gustakhiyaan star shared stunning glimpses from her adventurous trip on Instagram, along with a heartfelt "Happy New Year" message for her fans.

### Shanaya Kapoor's Safari Adventure

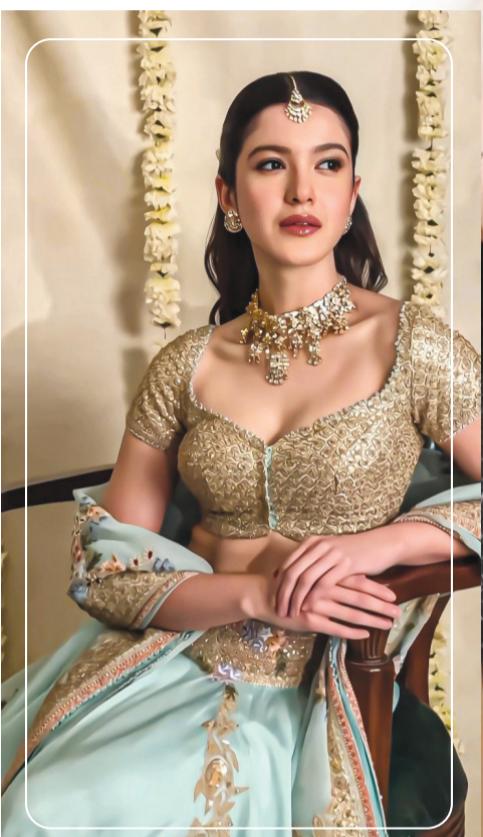
In the first photo, the actress shared a snapshot of herself sitting inside a safari car. She was seen wearing a brown top, which she paired with olive green cargo pants, and added a safari hat and scarf to complete the look. Other pictures and videos showed Shanaya Kapoor perfectly capturing wild animals in their natural habitat. Elephants, giraffes, lions, cheetahs with their cubs, and deer falling prey to ferocious animals – Shanaya's carousel was filled with adventurous moments. In one screenshot of her WhatsApp chat, the actress was seen talking about finding a huge crocodile in the wild. "Saw a huge crocodile today!!!! It was crazy," Shanaya wrote in the text, to which the other person replied, "No way!"

Sharing the glimpses, Shanaya Kapoor wrote, "Pinch me!!!! Hakuna Matata... Happy 2026!" Seeing her adventurous trip, Shanaya's mother, Maheep Kapoor, commented, "Incredible," followed by heart and evil eye emojis. Shanaya's father, Sanjay Kapoor, reacted, "Wow." Bhavna Pandey also took to the comment section and wrote, "Omg love!!!!"

### Shanaya Kapoor's Upcoming Projects

Up next, Shanaya Kapoor will be seen in the survival thriller *Tu Yaa Main*. Directed by Bejoy Nambiar, the film will also star Adarsh Gourav in the lead role. The teaser, which was recently released, set up an eerie narrative involving socio-economic contrasts between the characters. Sharing the teaser, Shanaya wrote, "Love. Terror. And a collab gone very, very wrong. Who's more excited for this one? #TuYaaMain." The film is scheduled to release on Valentine's Day 2026.

Shanaya Kapoor is also set to collaborate with Abhay Verma in *Shujaat Saudagar*'s upcoming romantic film. Further details, including the title of the film, still remain under wraps. Additionally, media reports also suggest that Shanaya Kapoor will join the cast of *Student of the Year 3*. Directed by Reema Maya, the third instalment of the franchise is believed to be a digital series where Shanaya will be cast in double roles. However, there has been no official confirmation yet.



# Radhika Apte

## SLAMS Bollywood For Romanticising Obsession And Control: 'That's Not Love'

**R**adhika Apte, who was recently seen in *Saali Mohabbat*, has spoken candidly about the dangers of romanticising obsession, control, and emotional abuse in cinema. While her character in the film commits an extreme act after discovering her husband's infidelity, the actor firmly believes such behaviour should never be mistaken for passion or glorified as love.

### Radhika Apte On Why Her Character's Actions



#### Should Not Be Romanticised

In an interview with *Hindustan Times*, Radhika explained that her character's breaking point is rooted in prolonged injustice rather than emotional intensity. "That's the problem. I don't think that in the film, what happens is something happening out of passionate love. It's happening because of accumulated acute injustice and treatment of her. I don't like to glorify that as some passionate love for the partner or anybody else in the world. This is where we go wrong on how we

view it. It's clearly happening from being treated badly over and over again," she said.

She further challenged the cultural tendency to label suffering as devotion, "In our culture, these acts are mistaken as love, we call it love. But it's not really love when we have to compromise our happiness repeatedly to please somebody. You can't call it love. I don't agree with the notion."

#### Obedience Is Not Love, It's Power And Control

Calling out long-standing cinematic tropes, Radhika criticised how obedience and control are often framed as respect or passion, especially in Bollywood narratives. "Whether it's husband or husband's family or your parents, listening to them and doing whatever they want you to do, is not love. If anybody expects the other person to compromise their happiness, to do what you ask them to do, that's not love. True love is to see the other person happy and obedience is not love. That's just power and control. And I'm sick of it being called as love or respect," she said.

The actor didn't mince words while addressing the larger impact of such storytelling. "It's awful and horrible.



**Three Booked For Rs 1.41 Crore Fraud Using Athiya Shetty And Arshad Warsi's Names**



**T**he Amboli police have booked three individuals for taking Rs 1.41 crore from Hari Media Network Pvt Ltd using fake documents. The accused have been identified as Rishabh Sureka (former senior manager), Yash Nagarkoti (CEO of Hooray Movies), and Ashay Shastri, who allegedly forged the signature of Suniel Shetty's daughter, actress Athiya Shetty, and also created a fake email ID in actor Arshad Warsi's name to commit the crime.

Hari Media Network has offices in Haryana and Mumbai and provides advertising and marketing services. As per reports, Sureka was handling influencer branding, project coordination, and communications with others. It is said that through fraudulent signatures and fake documents, the trio managed to get Rs 52 lakh transferred to Sureka's personal account from brands including Havells, Mahindra Lifespaces, Realme, and Birla Estates. In January 2024, Sureka, through the company's email ID, approached Athiya Shetty's talent managers and managed to secure a deal for Rs 40 lakh with Khanna Jewellers. Through a forged signature of the actress, she collected Rs 15 lakh on her behalf and never passed it on. To get more money, Sureka also created a fake Zomato invoice under the names of Shetty and cricketer KL Rahul.

#### About Athiya Shetty and KL Rahul's baby girl

Actress Athiya Shetty and husband, cricketer KL Rahul, welcomed the New Year 2026 with their baby girl, Evaarah. On the occasion, the couple posted a sweet picture from the shoreline, where Rahul and Athiya can be seen holding their daughter closely. Rahul and Athiya welcomed their first bundle of joy on March 24, 2025, two years after their marriage. A few weeks after their baby's birth, the couple announced her name and also shared her first glimpse. Athiya and Rahul took to their social media handles to share a picture of Rahul cradling his baby in his arms, while the actress doted on them. They captioned the post: "Our baby girl, our everything. Evaarah/ईवारा~ Gift of God (sic)."

#### About Athiya Shetty and KL Rahul

Athiya and Rahul, who dated for a few years before making their relationship public in 2019, got married on January 23, 2023, at Athiya's father Suniel Shetty's farmhouse in Khandala.

## Mahhi Vij Denies Seeking Financial Support Or Maintenance From Jay Bhanushali: Report



**M**ahhi Vij and Jay Bhanushali officially announced their separation 14 years after their marriage. The estranged couple took to their social media to share a long note announcing their decision to go their separate ways, but the two also shared that they will continue to co-parent their three kids and stay connected.

Now, as Mahhi Vij and Jay Bhanushali announced their separation, a source shared that Mahhi has decided not to seek any financial support or maintenance from Jay for their children, Tara, Khushi, and Rajveer. As per HT, the couple chose to part ways without "monetary claims or legal contention," focusing on dignity and emotional closure.

People close to the development also shared that the two tried every avenue to make their marriage work before they finally decided to part ways.

#### Mahhi Vij Slams Media

Following stories about being a good person and prioritising self, when everyone assumed that Mahhi was trying to convey something and started targeting Jay, the actress shared a selfie with her estranged husband and wrote, "Yeah, this is us." She further continued, "For likes and comments, media can stoop to any level. My stories are not for Jay. Stop making it dirty, just like your journalism."

#### About Mahhi Vij and Jay Bhanushali's Separation

While announcing their separation, the ex-couple took to their social media profiles and wrote, "Today, we choose to part ways on a journey called life, yet we continue to have each other's back. Peace, growth, kindness, and humanity have always been our guiding values.

For the sake of our children, Tara, Khushi, and Rajveer, we commit to being the best parents, the best friends, and whatever else it takes to do what is right for them."

"Though we walk separate paths, there is no villain in this story and no negativity attached to this decision. Before any conclusions are drawn, please know that we choose peace over drama and sanity above all else."

We continue to respect one another, support one another, and remain friends, as we always have been. With mutual respect, we ask for your respect, love, and kindness as we move forward. Mahhi Vij & Jay Bhanushali," the statement read.



# 6 tips for Companies to retain Employees

Consciously hiring freshers is a popular practice across organisations these days. Most companies believe that hiring freshers from top colleges is a kind of guarantee that they will stick to the job for a relatively longer duration. While offering a good paycheck is important, companies need to go that extra mile to make sure their attrition rate is low. Progressive HR functions are now ensuring that freshers establish a long-term association with the company beyond the paycheck. Here are a few strategies they are employing:

#### - A WELL-DEFINED CAREER PATH:

Employees, whether freshers or ones with experience, want to understand how the leadership of an organisation can facilitate their growth. They want to see tangible examples of how their counterparts have grown in the firm. For many, growth is not just a vertical ladder. A lateral lattice is equally important. The young workforce is keen on having early experiences of doing different things rather than being sandboxed into one job role. Hence, it is important for companies to chart out well-defined career paths that factor in a 'variety of work' that encourages their employees to stick to the organisation.

#### - EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT:

It is true that more than half of a company's workforce, at any given time, may be open to opportunities outside their firm. In order to retain employees, it is important to keep them engaged through interesting work opportunities, workshops, personal mentoring, etc. Organisations, thus, need to delegate this responsibility to their people managers.

#### - WORK-LIFE BALANCE:

Irrespective of

their industry, it is important for working professionals to maintain a work-life balance. While high-paying jobs do demand longer hours of work, organisations should implement flexible working hours and work from home policies while respecting their core office culture. Practices like occasional work from home, flexible work arrangements, 'ME' time (keeping a chunk of their time to pursue a hobby of their choice) are ways to help employees maintain a healthy work-life balance.

#### - RECOGNITION AND FEEDBACK:

Typically, bosses are quick on giving feedback when issues crop up. However, appreciation is rare

when things go smooth. Letting your employees know that you appreciate their efforts, recognising and highlighting impactful outcomes and giving timely feedback is crucial. Similarly, gaining feedback from employees and engaging oneself in meaningful dialogues to improve areas that are creating obstacles is important.

#### - ACCESSIBILITY AND COLLABORATION:

Structures are important in organisations. However,



doing away with hierarchy in various aspect of the organisational culture can create a stronger bond with employees and leaders of the firm. An open door policy, open offices, access to calendars of leaders, etc, are a few such examples.

#### - TRANSPARENT AND FAIR REVIEWS:

Enabling transparent and clear reviews and appraisals for employees helps them achieve more with a clear picture of being rewarded on the basis of merit. The review process should celebrate key milestones in an employee's career in an organisation where the focus is on highlighting key achievements, strengths and development areas, followed by a mutually agreed upon goal setting discussion.

## Starting a new job? 10 things you need to know

**Your first week at work can be challenging. Here are a few tips to help you make the most out of your first few days at your new job**

Your first week at your new work place can either go well, or make you rethink about your new position. Your first day at work may be among the most memorable and perhaps stressful day of your career. Here are ten things that you should do in the first week of your new job to make the right start:

**DRESS WELL:** How you present yourself says a lot about your personality.



Dressing well helps give a professional impression. You are the brand ambassador of your firm and the way you project yourself, projects the culture of your workplace.

**BE A PEOPLES PERSON:** Introduce yourself to the people you come across in your organisation. Do not hesitate to have a conversation with your new team members. First impressions do matter. Use generic topics as conversation starters - for example positives of the job, the people around you, the city, the place you stay at, etc.

**OFFICE SPACE AND RESOURCES:** You need to understand your work place for your convenience. It also helps you feel at home. The better you know your workplace, the more engaged you will be. Speak to your colleagues and know more about your workspace.

**LISTEN AND OBSERVE:** One of your most important objectives during the first week must be to

familiarise yourself with the company culture, your department and your goals and responsibilities. Attending orientation programmes in addition to all team and office meetings can be of great help. Participating in informal colleague meetings will help you bond with them.

**ASK QUESTIONS:** As you learn about new job role, projects and people, don't be afraid to ask questions. It might be a good idea to take notes about everything you learn, even if it seems simple. Documenting your queries will ensure you don't ask the same question twice.

**SPEAK UP:** At the same time, don't be afraid to contribute and add value to your new organisation. Actively participate in team meetings and brainstorming sessions. If you have a skill or an ability basis which you've been hired, share that knowledge and experience with the team.

**OFFER HELP:** Don't sit around and wait for the team to decide the task for

you. Being proactive and volunteering to help your new teammates on a project will go a long way. This will project you as a self-motivated employee and help you build a rapport with your boss and colleagues. This will also help you learn more about your job expectations, culture and how things are done in the organisation.

**FIND A MENTOR:** This

may be underrated but it's crucial to find a mentor in any of your seniors who has been the firm for a few years. It could be your manager or your peers from the same or even a different department. Their experience will come in handy when dealing with crucial situations.

**KEEP YOUR BOSSES IN THE LOOP:** Throughout the first week, and the rest of your tenure at work, ask for periodic meetings with your boss as per their convenience. In addition to getting their direction on projects and tasks you have been assigned, you can also use this time to update him/her on your learnings and observations.

**DON'T COMPARE:** Never compare your last job to your current one. Deciding to switch jobs was your decision. There is a difference between expectations and reality. However, if there is a massive change in role, talk to your manager and look for a solution. Those pursuing their first job must go with a clear mind.

## Boss's bad jokes can improve your job satisfaction

If relationships are good, use of both positive and negative humour by leaders can help improve their subordinates' job satisfaction, suggests new research.

"Generally, people think that positive humour, which is inclusive, affiliative and tasteful, is good in leadership, and negative humour, which is aggressive and offensive, is bad," said one of the researchers Christopher Robert, associate professor at University of Missouri in the US.

"In our study, we found the effects of humour depend on the relationship between leaders and subordinates," Robert noted.

Specifically, both positive and negative humour use by leaders is positively related to their subordinates' job satisfaction when the relationship between the leader and subordinates is good. However, when the leader-subordinate relationship is bad, both negative and positive types of humour are associated with lower job satisfaction.



In other words, for leaders, sometimes good humour has bad effects and bad humour has good effects on subordinates.

To test their theory, the researchers developed two sets of matched questionnaires, one for leaders and one for their subordinates.

They analysed responses from about 70 leaders and their 241 subordinates in 54 organisations.

"The findings suggest that if leaders wish to integrate humour into their interactions with subordinates, they should first assess whether or not their subordinates are likely to interpret their humourous overtures positively," Robert said.

These results also have implications for leaders' strategic use of humor.

"Instead of using humour to build relationships, leaders should work to build strong relationships through other means such as through clear communication, fair treatment, and providing clear and useful feedback. Humour then can be used to maintain those strong relationships," Robert suggested.

## 10 words never to use in your resume

Creative is the most overused buzzword in LinkedIn profiles followed by effective, motivated and extensive experience, the social networking site has said.

According to career expert David Schwarz, using buzzwords not only makes your CV generic but it can give the impression that you are trying to mislead your prospective employer.

"They create almost a sense of misleading because they gloss over the detail," News.com.au quoted Schwarz, a principal consultant at career management firm Board Portfolio, as saying.

Schwarz said that everything you put in a resume needs to be backed up with proof.

"If you can't put a metric or a statistic next to that statement shouldn't have it in your CV," he said. He added that candidates should never include aspiration statements in their resume.

"I want to be, or my goal is, or in the future I want, they're all massive red flags because they all basically say you're not qualified to do the job you're doing now," he added.

The top 10 buzzwords that appear most in profiles are:



1. Creative
2. Effective
3. Motivated
4. Extensive experience
5. Track record
6. Innovative
7. Responsible
8. Analytical
9. Communication skills
10. Positive