

Karnataka mulls CID probe in Hubballi woman disrobing case amid opposition heat

**Karnataka.(Agency)**

The Karnataka government is considering transferring the investigation into the Hubballi incident, in which a woman was allegedly stripped by police, to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Friday.

The issue erupted after a video from Hubballi went viral showing a BJP woman worker in a police vehicle in a partially unclothed state following her detention, triggering allegations that the police had disrobed her. The police have denied the charge, claiming that the woman removed her clothes herself, leading to a political row between the ruling Congress and the BJP.

Parameshwara said the decision would be taken after obtaining approval from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, following which the CID would be asked to probe the incident and submit a report to the government. Speaking to reporters at the Home Office, Parameshwara said, "The CID should investigate the truth of the incident and submit a report to the government." He said the government would decide on further action after examining "who is responsible and whether there was any negligence."

**Soon after Vijay's Jana Nayagan gets censor nod, TVK announces manifesto committee**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Actor-politician Vijay's Tamilagam Vettai Kazhagam (TVK) on Friday announced the formation of an election manifesto committee ahead of the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly election. The announcement came on the same day as a major relief for the makers of Jana Nayagan, widely seen as Vijay's final film before his full-time political entry. In a statement, the party said the manifesto was being prepared with the aim of improving the lives of people in Tamil Nadu and ensuring the overall development of the state. A special committee has been formed to collect data and seek input from a wide range of stakeholders across Tamil Nadu.

The committee will interact with the public, small and micro business organisations, labour unions, economic and professional experts, chambers of commerce, employee associations, agricultural bodies, educators, doctors, nurses, women's groups and youth organisations. Based on these consultations, the party said the manifesto would be drafted to put Tamil Nadu on a path of development.

**Amit Shah Chairs Security Review Meeting On Jammu And Kashmir**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said counter-terror operations targeting terrorist infrastructure and terror financing must continue in a "mission mode", asserting that all the resources will be made available to achieve the goal of "terror-free" Jammu and Kashmir at the earliest. Chairing a high-level security review meeting on the Union Territory here, Shah directed all security agencies to remain alert and continue to work in synergy to ensure that the gains achieved after abrogation of Article 370 are sustained. He assured that all the resources will be made available in this endeavour.

The meeting was attended by J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Director (IB) Tapan Kumar Deka, and the chief secretary and DGP of the UT. Heads of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and other senior officers were also present in the meeting.

Appreciating the efforts of the security agencies for strengthening security scenario of the UT, Shah stated that "counter-terror operations targeting terrorist infrastructure

## Centre's MGNREGA move unacceptable, won't work: DK Shivakumar warns of legal action

**Karnataka.(Agency)**

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday strongly criticised the Centre's changes to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), saying the Congress government would challenge them legally. Speaking on MGNREGA, Shivakumar said, "The new changes they have made to the guarantee programme will not work. This is impossible. There is a huge difference now. Earlier, the panchayats had the power to take up work related to water. Now they are saying Delhi will decide everything. No state can afford to bear 40 percent of the expenditure." He added that the Centre had moved ahead without consulting states and said, "If any such decision had to be taken, the Centre should have taken the states into confidence. But without consulting the states, they have

gone ahead with this. We cannot agree to it. We will go to court. We will also fight it out on the streets." The Deputy Chief Minister said the Congress would organise meetings at district, division and state levels to mobilise public opinion. "MGNREGA is the right to work and the right to live. It is a guarantee of employment given by the Congress party. Across the country, this will not be accepted, and we will pass a resolution against it," he said.

**SHIVAKUMAR DEFENDS NATIONAL HERALD**

On the National Herald issue, Shivakumar defended the paper, saying, "It is a party-owned newspaper. It is a national paper that played a role in India's freedom struggle. At no point can anyone question whether our party believes in democracy or fought for



freedom. It was the Congress party that fought for independence. In those days, Pandit Nehru started this great newspaper, and it has a long and significant history." His remarks came after it was reported that the Congress-led Karnataka government reportedly spent the most on advertisements in the National Herald newspaper, giving it

more taxpayer money than any other national daily despite its low readership in the state.

**JDS WILL MERGE WITH BJP**

Addressing party workers at an event to induct Chamarajpet JDS leader Govindaraj into the Congress, Shivakumar said there was a possibility of JDS aligning fully with the BJP. "If you look at Kumaraswamy's approach, there is a possibility of JDS merging with BJP. If it happens, it is good for us as we can directly fight with the BJP," he said, adding, "The earlier the JDS merges with BJP, the better it is for us." Welcoming Govindaraj, his wife Gowrimma, Chandrashekhar, David and others, Shivakumar said the leader was joining the Congress as "there was no arrangement possible between JDS and BJP."

## Lalu Yadav, family acted as criminal enterprise: Delhi court on land-for-jobs scam

**A Delhi court framed charges of corruption and criminal conspiracy against RJD chief Lalu Yadav and his family, while observing that they operated as a criminal enterprise in the Railways land-for-jobs scam.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

A Delhi court on Friday said that RJD chief Lalu Yadav and his family acted as a criminal enterprise as it framed corruption and criminal conspiracy charges against them in connection with the Railways land-for-jobs scam. Special Judge Vishal Gogoi, while passing the order on framing of charges, said the court found, "based on reasonable doubt", a widespread conspiracy by Lalu Yadav and his family. The court said a plea for acquittal of Lalu Yadav and his family was untenable. Taking note of the chargesheet filed by the CBI, which is investigating the case, the court said Lalu Yadav's aides were identified as co-conspirators in the scam. Lalu Yadav and his family functioned as a criminal enterprise and were part of an

overarching conspiracy, using public employment as leverage to acquire properties, independent of their official positions, the court said. The court also said charges would be framed against

Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court rejected Lalu Yadav's pleas to halt trial in the case.

**ABOUT THE CASE**

The case relates to allegations by the CBI that during Lalu Yadav's tenure as Railway Minister between 2004 and 2009, Group D jobs were given to candidates in return for land parcels being transferred to his family at throwaway prices. According to the probe agency, several job aspirants or their relatives either sold or gifted land in Patna and other locations to members of the Yadav family and firms linked to them.

The CBI has alleged that no proper recruitment process was followed and that the jobs were offered in exchange for these land transfers. The Yadav family has denied the allegations, asserting the case is politically motivated.



46 of the 98 surviving accused in the case, including Lalu Yadav and his family members. It also ordered the acquittal of the remaining 52 accused, as there was no substantial evidence against them as per the chargesheet. Last year, both the

## 'Not Nehru's Uncritical Fan': Shashi Tharoor's Nuanced Take, And Jab At BJP

**Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala).(Agency)**

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Thursday said that while he regards India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru as the founder of Indian democracy, his admiration is not without criticism, asserting that acknowledging Nehru's mistakes is necessary, but blaming him alone for all of India's problems is unjustified. Speaking at the fourth edition of the Kerala Legislative Assembly International Book Festival (KLIBF), Tharoor spoke on the BJP government's treatment of Nehru's legacy.

"I am a fan of Jawaharlal Nehru, but not an uncritical fan. I greatly admire his mind and outlook, and I have deep respect for him, though I cannot support all his beliefs and policies 100%. Many of the things he did deserve the highest appreciation. Most importantly, it was Nehru who firmly established democracy in India... I would not say that they (the Modi government) are anti-democratic, but they are certainly anti-Nehru. Nehru has been turned into a convenient scapegoat," he said. While recalling the 1962 India-China war, Tharoor said, "In some cases, their (Modi Government) criticism may have a basis, for instance, the 1962 defeat against China can partly be attributed to some of Nehru's decisions." Shifting focus on the BJP, Tharoor said, "But what they do now is blame Nehru for everything, regardless of the issue." Reflecting on his personal journey as a writer, Tharoor said his love for reading began in childhood because of asthma, when there was no television or mobile phones, making books his only companions. His first novel was also written at a very young age, though it was later lost due to ink spillage. The biography of Sree Narayana Guru is his 28th book.

## Somnath Visit, Talks With German Chancellor On Agenda As PM Modi Visits Gujarat This Month

**During his visit to Gujarat, PM Modi will also meet German Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz in Ahmedabad.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a three-day visit to Gujarat from January 10, 2026, to January 12, 2026, during which he will attend religious, cultural, infrastructure and diplomatic engagements across the state.

The Prime Minister will begin his visit on January 10, 2026, with a visit to the Somnath temple. At around 8 PM, he will participate in Omkar Mantra chanting at the Somnath Temple, followed by a drone show at the temple complex.

On January 11, 2026, the Prime Minister will take part in the Shaurya Yatra at around 9:45 AM, a ceremonial procession held to



honour the warriors who sacrificed their lives defending the Somnath Temple. He will then perform darshan and pooja at the

temple at around 10:15 AM. At about 11 AM, he will attend a public event marking Somnath Swabhiman Parv.

Later the same day, PM Modi will travel to Rajkot to attend the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference for the Kutch and Saurashtra regions.

At around 1:30 PM, he will inaugurate the trade show and exhibition at the venue. At about 2 PM, he will formally inaugurate the conference at Marwadi University, Rajkot, and address the gathering.

From Rajkot, the Prime Minister will travel to Ahmedabad. At around 5:15 PM, he will inaugurate the remaining stretch of Phase 2 of the Ahmedabad Metro, from Sector 10A to Mahatma Mandir, at the Mahatma

Mandir metro station.

**PM Modi To Meet German Federal Chancellor In Ahmedabad**

On January 12, 2026, PM Modi will meet German Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz in Ahmedabad.

At around 9:30 am, the two leaders will visit Sabarmati Ashram, followed by their participation in the International Kite Festival at the Sabarmati Riverfront at around 10 am.

Bilateral discussions will take place from 11:15 am onwards at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar, where the leaders will review progress in the India-Germany Strategic Partnership, which recently completed 25 years.

## Punjab Cabinet clears India's first comprehensive Private Digital Open Universities Policy, 2026 to transform higher education

**The Sikh Times**

Chandigarh, 9th January 9: Signalling an assertive push toward strengthening public healthcare, modernising higher education and delivering tangible relief to citizens, the Punjab Cabinet under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Friday cleared a sweeping set of decisions, led by the approval of over 19 acres of land at Lehragaga for setting up a Medical College and Hospital. The decisions, taken at a meeting of the Council of Ministers chaired by the Chief Minister, also include India's first comprehensive Private Digital Open Universities Policy, 2026, extension of Amnesty Policy 2025 for plot allottees, rationalisation of GMADA property prices, approval for desilting of the Sutlej to fast-track infrastructure projects, and adjustment of staff of Baba Hira Singh Bhatial Institute in government departments, reflecting the government's focus on healthcare expansion, education reform, infrastructure acceleration and pro-people governance. Briefing the media after the

Cabinet meeting chaired by the CM Bhagwant Singh Mann, the office of the Chief Minister stated that the Cabinet gave approval



to allot 19 acre four Kanals land, located at Baba Hira Singh Bhatial Technical College, Lehragaga, on nominal lease rent to Janhit society for establishing a minority medical college by the Jain community. The admission of students and allocation of seats in the medical college to be established by the Jain com-

munity shall be regulated strictly in accordance with the guidelines / notifications issued by the State Government from time to

time. The fee structure for all categories of seats shall also be determined and charged strictly in accordance with the guidelines / notifications issued by the Punjab Government. The Cabinet also decided that trust should start the functioning of hospitals at the earliest and within a period of five years from the date of execution / commencement of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The medical college would be established and operationalized with a hospital of not less than 220 beds and an intake capacity of 50 MBBS seats, and should be further expanded to a hospital of not less than 400 beds with an intake capacity of 100 MBBS seats within eight years of MoU. The move is aimed at imparting quality education to the residents of the state on one hand and emerging the state as a hub of medical educa-

tion on the other. In another significant decision, the Cabinet also gave nod to the Punjab Private Digital Open Universities Policy, 2026 to regulate and promote private digital open universities offering online and open distance learning (ODL) programs thereby imparting quality higher education to the students of the state thereby opening new vistas of employment for them. The policy aligns with UGC Regulations, 2020, and introduces state-level standards for quality, accessibility, digital infrastructure, data governance, and learner protection. This pioneering policy will expand flexible, affordable higher education and position Punjab as a digital learning hub. Through this India's First Historic Reform in Higher Education, The Punjab government has introduced a new Digital Open University Policy. Under this policy, private institutions can establish fully digital universities in Punjab. This is India's first such policy and so far, only Tripura has set up a digital university, but without a comprehensive policy, so Punjab becomes the first state to provide both a policy and a model in this area. **Contd.....page-3**

## News box

**Sultanpur National Park sees highest species diversity in 4 years****Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Sultanpur National Park recorded its highest waterbird species diversity in four years in its annual census. Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 2026—conducted on Jan 6—counted 69 species and 3,955 individual waterbirds at Sultanpur. This marked a sharp rise in species diversity compared to 48 species in 2025, 43 species in 2024 and 51 in 2023. The overall number of birds, however, remained lower than pre-2024 levels, reflecting delayed migration patterns and growing human disturbance inside the Ramsar wetland. Total numbers were still well below the 9,026 birds recorded in 2023. Forest and wildlife officials said the 2026 count showed greater diversity but thinner flocks, a pattern linked to climate variability along the Central Asian Flyway. Prolonged monsoon conditions until mid-Oct improved wetland water levels, but winter set in late, delaying migratory arrivals and dispersing birds across multiple habitats. Delhi state coordinator for AWC TK Roy, who supervised the count along with Haryana Forest and Wildlife Department teams and birders, said, "Migration was clearly staggered this year. We saw more species but fewer individuals, barring a few duck species."

Ecologists flagged increasing disturbance from visitors and photographers moving close to the wetland edge. "The absence of restricted fencing near sensitive waterbird zones is forcing birds to repeatedly flush and abandon feeding areas," Roy said, warning that unchecked tourism could further depress numbers in coming years. Data from the AWC feeds into the Union environment ministry's National Action Plan for Conservation of Migratory Birds and their Habitats along the Central Asian Flyway, making Sultanpur's trends critical for broader conservation planning.

Officials said tighter visitor regulation and habitat protection would be key to ensuring that rising species diversity does not come at the cost of declining bird populations in one of Haryana's most important wetlands.

**Woman found hanging in Gurgaon, kin accuse husband of abetment to suicide****Ghaziabad.(Agency)**

A 29-year-old woman allegedly died by suicide in Sector 7 Extension on Wednesday morning. Shivangi, who hailed from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh, was found hanging from a ceiling fan inside her rented accommodation. Shivangi was working from home at the time, police said, adding, she worked with a private company in Udyog Vihar Phase IV. No suicide note was recovered from the spot. Police said the woman's family lodged a complaint at New Colony police station, accusing the husband of abetment to suicide. "Shivangi's mother alleged that Harshit Jindal, a stationery shop owner in Sector 45 and native of Hisar, demanded Rs 10 lakh from her daughter, claiming insufficient expenditure during the wedding," an officer said. Shivangi lived with Harshit. The couple entered into a love marriage last year.

"The couple consumed alcohol together, after which they slept in separate rooms. Shivangi locked her room from inside. When Harshit went to her room, there was no response despite repeated knocking. He then broke open the door and found her hanging," the officer added.

**Delhivery manager hangs self in Gurgaon: Note suggests suicide, brother files complaint against woman****Noida.(Agency)**

A 29-year-old delhivery manager was found dead by hanging inside his paying guest accommodation in Sector 38 on Tuesday morning, police said. The deceased, identified as Pratik Pandey, a native of Kolkata working with Delhivery, lived alone in the rented premises. The incident came to light when a friend raised the alarm after Pandey failed to answer repeated calls. The PG caretaker also noticed that he had not stepped out of his room in the morning, which was unusual. Police reached the spot around 6:45 am and found Pandey hanging inside the locked room. No signs of a struggle were visible, and no suicide note was initially recovered. An officer said the circumstances surrounding Pandey's death are being investigated, including possible personal or professional stress. Statements of the caretaker and other residents are



being recorded. Inquest proceedings were initiated under Section 194 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS), and the body was sent for post-mortem before being handed over to his family. Meanwhile, Pandey's brother lodged a complaint alleging abetment to suicide against a woman. Police have not disclosed the identity of the person named in the complaint, and the matter is under investigation.

Sources later said a note was recovered in which Pandey stated he had taken the step on his own. In a separate incident later the same day, a 26-year-old taxi driver, Sandeep, was found hanging at his rented accommodation in the New Palam Vihar area. A native of Ujjain in Nuh district, he had been living there for six to seven months. Police are investigating the circumstances of his death.

**From canned fish to ramen, Chinese cos make a big push for Indian food market at Indusfood 2026****Noida.(Agency)**

Amid global trade headwinds unleashed by US tariffs, Chinese food companies are making a renewed push to enter the Indian market, registering the biggest foreign presence at Indusfood 2026, the global trade expo that opened on Thursday in Greater Noida. From canned mushrooms and chickpeas to customised instant noodles aimed at India's fast-growing appetite for Korean ramen, 15 Chinese exhibitors have brought a broad mix of products tailored for Indian consumers. Several companies are pitching vegetarian, non-fried and less spicy variants, signalled a deliberate attempt to adapt to local tastes rather than sell off-the-shelf imports. Food businesses from Iran, the Netherlands, Egypt, Palestine, Brazil, Azerbaijan and Greece are also looking to bite into the giant Indian food market, pitching everything from olives and pickles to baklava, kuafa, sand uggare-based spirits. The three-day expo was inaugurated by Union minister for food processing industries Chirag Paswan.

Addressing buyers and industry representatives, Paswan said platforms like Indusfood connect India's production potential with international markets, foster trust, strengthen long-term partnerships and accelerate the vision of making India a global food basket. "Now that we are food surplus (country), we all need to convert this volume into value. We all know the strength of the sector and the untapped potential of India to be the global food basket. The need is to now channelise the resources," he said. Mohit Singla, chairman of the Trade Promotion Council of India, which organised the event, said Indusfood 2026 has brought together more than 2,200 exhibitors from over 30 countries. China, he said, accounted for the single largest national presence at the fair. Interest in Chinese products was evident on the opening day, particularly at the stall of Jinmailang Food, a ramen manufacturer that drew crowds with live demonstrations and sampling sessions. Chris, a company representative, said Jinmailang had closely tracked Indian consumption

patterns following the surge in popularity of Korean ramen. "We are offering several varieties, including vegetarian options such as mock chicken, which tastes like chicken but is vegetarian. We also have non-fried and less spicy ramen variants to suit Indian preferences," he said. Another Chinese exhibitor, Tianjin Heng Jun Long Commercial Co Ltd, is targeting India's growing urban workforce with canned food products. Sun Meipin, a company representative, said the firm is showcasing canned vegetables, fruits and fish. "As young working professionals get busier, canned foods can help solve everyday cooking challenges. We are looking to collaborate with Indian retailers to bring our products to store shelves," she said. Beyond food, Hong Kong pavilion also featured stalls selling traditional Chinese medicine products. Yan Lam from BeautyHealth Plus said the company was displaying herbal eye drops made from natural ingredients such as ginseng, safflower and borneol, marketed for conditions including dry eyes and myopia. European

and Latin American brands also drew attention. Greece-based Danais SA is showcasing canned peaches and apricots, while Brazil's Expodireto Cotrijal is promoting cachaça, a distilled spirit made from fermented sugarcane juice. "Cachaça is known globally for its distinctive taste, different from rum. It is best enjoyed with lemon and ice," a company representative said.

One of the more personal stories at the expo comes from the Palestine stall, where Diab Mahroum, a fourth-generation confectioner, is presenting baklava and kunafa under the Mahroum brand. His family has been making Middle Eastern sweets since 1890, supplying retail markets across the region and B2B clients in the US, Germany, Australia and Hong Kong. Mahroum said his interest in India grew after observing strong demand among Indian consumers in Dubai. The company has also launched sugar-free variants. Egypt's Zahrat El Wady was showcasing pickles and olives, while Azerbaijan's Alisa Dadashov was looking to buy masala tea and premium rice.

**DIET launches 4-year integrated BEd courses****Noida.(Agency)**

UP govt approved a major reform in teacher education by converting 6 District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), including the DIET in Dankaur, GB Nagar, into higher education institutes. Under the National Education Policy (NEP), these institutes will soon offer 4-year integrated BA-BEd, BSc-BEd and BCom-BEd courses, enabling students to pursue professional teacher training immediately after completing Class 12. With this decision, BA, BSc and BCom BEd courses will now also be taught at DIETs, marking a significant shift from the earlier system, where students completed graduation before enrolling in BEd programmes. The selected DIETs are located in GB Nagar, Jaunpur, Hapur, Meerut, Banaras and Gorakhpur. Out of nearly 70 DIETs across UP, only 6 were chosen in the first phase for upgradation into higher education institutes. According to officials, the move aims to strengthen teacher education and align it with the NEP's focus on integrated and multidisciplinary learning. "These DIETs will now train teachers directly after the 12th grade, reducing the overall duration of teacher preparation while improving academic quality," said RS Yadav, Principal at DIET, GB Nagar. Following recommendations from the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), the state education department is set to hold a meeting with principals of the selected DIETs on Monday. During the meeting, a detailed roadmap for launching the new courses, including academic structure, infrastructure development and faculty deployment, will be finalised.

As per officials, to support this transformation, the state govt will provide a budget of Rs 16 crore for infrastructure development. The funds will be used to construct new buildings, set up modern classrooms and laboratories, develop a digital library and create other essential academic facilities. Thousands of students across the state are expected to benefit from this initiative.



Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), predominant surface winds blew from the west direction with wind speeds less than 5 kmph during the morning hours and then increase to less than 15 kmph in the afternoon hours. The wind speed will then decrease to less than 10 kmph during evening and night. Visibility remained below 300m during the morning hours on Thursday. As per India Meteorological Department forecast, the city will record severe cold day conditions in the coming days. Keeping the drop in temperature in mind, the district administration has set-up 13 night

shelters including facilities at Mamra Crossing in Sector 62, community centres in sectors 135, 21A, and 12-22 and also in Bilaspur, Dankaur, and Jewar. However,

people were still spotted sleeping near the metro pillars in Sector 18. "No one informed me about the night shelter and hence I am staying here," said Sumit, a homeless man TOI spoke to.

**Dadri lynching: Accused seek transfer of case to another court****Noida.(Agency)**

The additional sessions court has advanced by 15 days the hearing in the 2015 lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq for the decision of the district court on a transfer application filed by six accused from one court to another. The daily hearings in the case were to commence from Jan 6 but were deferred by two days, after one of the witnesses scheduled to depose on Tuesday failed to appear, citing personal reasons. On Thursday, when the fast-track court of additional sessions judge Saurabh Dwivedi gathered to record the statement of Akhlaq's wife, Ikraman, counsel Devendra Kumar Rahul, representing the accused, informed the court that they filed an application with the district judge seeking a transfer of the case over "compelling reasons". He also submitted that the case was being "unnecessarily highlighted and politicised". The counsel

submitted that his clients had decided to challenge the additional sessions court's Dec order rejecting the withdrawal petition of the prosecution before the Allahabad High Court. He submitted that while rejecting the withdrawal application filed by the prosecution, the additional sessions court did not give opportunity to the accused to record their statements. Instead, it ordered an expeditious hearing. Counsel representing Akhlaq's wife objected to the transfer application on technical grounds. Advocate Yusuf Saifi, representing Ikraman, said that the defence did not produce any document to claim that the subordinate court's Dec 23 order rejecting the prosecution's withdrawal application was challenged in the high court. "We asked them to furnish the case number if admitted, but they couldn't," advocate Yusuf Saifi, representing Ikraman, said he said. The additional session court agreed

that it was a bona fide right of any litigant to seek the transfer of the case and sought the opinion of the prosecution counsel, who did not raise any objections. But but granted time till Jan 23 to the counsel representing the accused to come up with a fresh application to inform the court about the transfer sought. Citing the Supreme Court's 1995 judgement in PK Ghosh versus JG Rajpur case, Judge Dwivedi said that the court was not allowed to hear the case for such a time, as the transfer application was pending with the district judge. The court did not record the statement of the witness but, on request of the victims' counsel, agreed to mark her attendance. Supreme Court advocate Andleeb Naqvi opposed the arguments of the defence counsel seeking transfer of the case on the grounds that it was assuming a political character.

**SIR: Hearings begin, but unmapped voters wait for administration notices****Noida.(Agency)**

Hearings for additions and corrections of names in the draft Special Intensive Revision (SIR) voter roll began on Jan 6, but Noida and Ghaziabad administrations are yet to start the process of issuing notices to "unmapped" voters.

There are three lakh voters in the two districts whose names, though included in the draft roll, are categorised as "unmapped" as their details could not be confirmed with the 2003 base rolls. All the unmapped voters are to be served notices by the electoral registration officer through booth-level officers (BLOs), asking them to establish their eligibility. Objections and claims window closes on Feb 26. "The notices will be delivered to the unmapped voter by the BLO on their doorstep. Once the voter receives the notice, he will have around 14 days, after which their hearing will be held by the AERO. The details of this will be specified in each notice sent out," said a senior official. Officials said the notices



will be generated automatically, in line with Election Commission of India guidelines, with voter details pre-filled, similar to the enumeration forms used during the revision exercise. Each notice will specify the date, time and venue of the hearing that a voter needs to attend, where they will be required to present valid documents to establish their eligibility. For the revision process, Form 6 is meant for first-time voter registration, Form 6A for registration of migrant voters, Form 7 for raising objections to the inclusion of a name or seeking deletion of an existing entry, and Form 8 for change of residence, correction of entries, replacement of voter ID card, or marking a voter as disabled. The draft electoral rolls published on Jan 6 shaved off 24% of the old electorate in GGB Nagar and 29% in Ghaziabad following a 62-day special intensive revision (SIR) exercise to remove voters categorised as ASD (absent, shifted or dead). In Gautam Budh Nagar, which includes the Noida, Dadri and Jewar constituencies, the size of the electorate has come down from 18.7 lakh to 14.3 lakh voters in the draft roll.

Ghaziabad saw a sharper cut, with the draft roll reflecting 20.1 lakh voters against an earlier electorate of 28.4 lakh.

Administrations in both districts said that while preparations for hearings are in progress, major claims and objections from voters also started coming in. "Claims and objections are mostly for additions of voters' name, changes in existing voter details and deletions, which would reflect in the final electoral roll to be published on March 6," additional DM (Ghaziabad) Saurabh Bhatt said.

Bhatt added the administration will hold meetings with labour-intensive industries and factories to distribute Form 6 for new voter additions in the electoral roll. In Noida, the administration plans to hold a special booth-level verification camp on Jan 11 to help voters check and verify their names in the draft roll.

"All BLOs have been instructed to sit at their respective polling stations on Jan 11 and read out the voter lists during Gram

Sabha and ward committee meetings.

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Editor-in-Chief

Gurcharan Singh Babbar  
Mob: 965407232, 9971359517  
Website : www.thesikhtimes.in  
Email : sikhthetimesindia@gmail.com

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# Punjab Cabinet clears India's first comprehensive Private Digital Open Universities Policy, 2026 to transform higher education

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The policy is need of hour as Crores of students worldwide are learning from online platforms. Similarly, lakhs of students are passing tough exams like JEE, NEET, and UPSC by watching free online lectures. In India too, crores of youth are building careers by learning from online courses and AI apps but the existing university policy only allowed physical campuses. This meant digital-first universities were not legally possible in India, as a result, students got formal degrees from colleges but learned key skills online thereby creating a huge gap between the two but the new policy bridges this gap. Now students can complete their entire degree from home on mobile or laptop and these degrees will be legally valid and compliant with AICTE/UGC standards. This will prove to be boon for students or professionals busy with life, family, or jobs as they will be able to complete degrees without quitting jobs. Without changing cities and even without going to classrooms. Thus a New Era of Lifelong Learning

and Upskilling will be heralded there- by strengthening the culture of continuous learning in fields like IT, AI, Business, Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Data Science. For setting up these Digital Universities at least 2.5 Acres of Land, digital content studios, control rooms, server rooms, and operations centers, State-of-the-Art Digital Infrastructure and others will be required. Likewise, every digital university must have Digital content creation studios, IT server rooms, Learning Management System (LMS) operations center, Digital examination control rooms, Tech-enabled call centers, 24x7 student support systems and a Minimum 20 Crore Corpus Fund. This will ensure that Only serious and capable institutions come forward for this adding that Separate bills will be introduced in the Punjab Assembly for every approved proposal, ensuring each digital university is legally strong and transparent. This policy is modeled on the world's successful digital universities like Western Governors University (USA), University of

Phoenix (USA), Walden University (USA), Open University Malaysia and others who have provided low-cost, modern, high-quality education to millions of students. Punjab is now building India's most modern higher education ecosystem to directly benefit Punjab's Students as it lowers Cost of Education, Digital mode reduces infrastructure costs, More affordable fees and No hidden expenses. New skills like AI, Cybersecurity, Cloud Computing, Business Skills, and Robotics will be part of the degree program and it will solve students' biggest problem as earlier, they got degrees from one place and real learning from another. But now, both will be available in one place through digital universities which will save time and money for lakhs of youth as there will be no commuting, PG/hostel, stationery, or travel expenses. Punjab is leading the country as the state government believes that Education can no longer be confined to the four walls of classrooms. Every top university in the world is moving toward AI and digital modes and for India to advance,

Punjab must take this transformative step first. This policy will make Punjab India's first digital higher education hub and Punjab will show India the Future of Higher Education. This policy is Modern, Innovative, Technology-driven, Accessible, Employment-focused, World-class, Future-oriented and will open a new chapter in Punjab's higher education. In a big relief to the allottees of plots, the Cabinet also gave approval to the extension in the Amnesty Policy 2025 for allotted/auctioned plots under various schemes of the Housing and Urban Development Department. This will allow the default allottees of the Special Development Authority to apply one more time under Amnesty Policy 2025 before the cutoff date March 31, 2026 and allow the allottee to deposit the requisite amount within three months of its approval to the concerned Special Development Authority. The allottee who is interested to avail the benefit under this policy will have to submit an application before the cutoff date i.e. March 31, 2026. In another pro-people initiative, the Cabinet also gave green sig-

Cabinet also gave approval to NHAI (National Highways Authority of India) or its agencies to carry out the desilting in River Sutlej at the sites allotted by the Department of Water Resources at 3 per cubic feet i.e. the price at which desilting contract at Siswan Dam was executed. The approval comes with the further condition that the above said price shall be available to NHAI or its contractors/agencies only till June 30th, 2026 for providing simple earth to NHAI for construction of road projects namely Ludhiana to Ropar. Nod was also granted exemption from the provisions of Section 63 of the Punjab Transparency in Public Procurement Act 2019. The Cabinet also gave nod for adjustment of the staff members of Baba Hira Singh Bhattal Institute of Engineering and Technology against the vacant posts available in the Department of Technical Education & Industrial Training and autonomous institutions under the department on deputation. The decision has been taken in the larger public interest to safeguard the interests of the employees.

## Delhi rings in New Year with chilly weather, 'very poor' air; light rain likely

New Delhi: Chilly and cloudy conditions marked the New Year in the national capital on Thursday, with the minimum temperature settling at 10.6°C and the Met office predicting light rainfall during the day. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), trace rainfall was also recorded in Palam early Thursday. Station-wise data at 8.30 am showed the minimum temperature at 10.6°C at Safdarjung, 9°C at Palam, 10°C at Lodhi Road, 9.9°C at the Ridge and 10.3°C at Ayanagar, the IMD said. Delhi ended 2025 on a biting note, recording its coldest December day in six years on Wednesday as the maximum temperature plunged to 14.2°C. IMD data showed the last lower maximum temperature was on December 31, 2019, when it dipped to 9.4°C. The maximum temperature on Wednesday settled

### NAME CHANGE

I, BULOCHANA DEVI AGARWAL W/o Deep Chand Agarwal R/o SD 302, Tower Apartments, Pitampura, Delhi - 110088 have changed my name to BULOCHANA AGARWAL for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 09.01.2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

### NAME CHANGE

I, SUNITA is legally Mother of No. 2814052P Rank - HAV NAME PAWAR SUNIL MANIK R/o VILL RAHADU POST- USWAD TEH- CHANDWAD DIST- NASHIK (MAHARASHTRA)-423104 have changed my name from MANIK TO MANIK BHAWARAV PAVAR for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 09.01.2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

### NAME CHANGE

I, SUNANDA is legally Mother of No. 2808695W Rank - HAV NAME PAWAR SUNIL MANIK Presently resident of VILL RAHADU POST- USWAD TEH- CHANDWAD DIST- NASHIK (MAHARASHTRA)-423104, have changed my name from SUNANDA to SUNANDA MANIK PAVAR and date of birth from 02/04/1969 to 01/12/1970 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 09.01.2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that my client, Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Ltd., branch Address:- D-11, Ground Floor, RDC Raj Nagar, Opp. BSNL office Ghaziabad - 201002 Here 1 Mrs. Anu Sharma & 2) Mr. Bhupendra Kumar Sharma (Owner's) approached my client, for sanction and disbursement of loan facility against Plot/House No. 22, area measuring 150 Sq. Yds., (i.e., 83.61 Sq. Mts.), situated at Guldhar (Dargai), Pargana Jalalabad, Tehsil and Distt. Ghaziabad, U.P. Mr. Bhupendra Kumar Sharma was the Owner of the Said Plot i.e., Plot No. 22 (Part), area measuring 50 Sq. Yds., by virtue of Sale Deed dated 11.08.2022, duly registered as Document No. 11804 on 11.08.2022, executed by Mrs. Deepak Sharma. It is further known as MOHD ASIF alias MOHAMMAD ASIF SIDDIQUI S/o ABDUL MAJEED, R/o R-236, Gali No. 4, Joga Bai Extension, Jamia Nagar, New Friends Colony S.O., South Delhi, Delhi-110253, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as MOHAMMAD ASIF SIDDIQUI.

### NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as AFROZ KHAN alias AFROZ DASTGIR KHAN S/o GHULAM DASTGIR KHAN R/o H No 94953, Gali No. 4, NEAR SHIV MANDIR, AJEET NAGAR, GANDHI NAGAR, EAST DELHI, Delhi-110031, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as AFROZ KHAN. Mrs. Vijay Sharma. However, it is brought to notice that 1) Mrs. Anu Sharma & 2) Mr. Bhupendra Kumar Sharma does not have documents in Possession i.e., Probate of Will dated 31.10.2012, issued by Concerned Court, Surviving Member Certificate of Late Mr. H.C. Tiwari issued by Concerned Authority & Surviving Member Certificate of Mr. Rahul Sharma, issued by Concerned Authority. Therefore, any person(s), institution(s), financier(s), or bank(s) having any right, claim, title, interest, objection, or encumbrance of whatsoever nature in respect of the Said Property, under or through any document or otherwise, are hereby called upon to submit their claims, along with supporting documents, to the undersigned within 7 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice.

### NAME CHANGE

I, RAKHNADEEP KUMAR BHATTI, S/o Rakesh Kumar, R/o Plot No. 104, Sector 10, Chandigarh, Haryana, India - 160019 have changed my name to Rakesh Kumar Bhatti for all future purposes.

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## NEWS BOX

## Two Indians living illegally in US arrested for smuggling over 300 pounds of cocaine

NEW YORK. (Agency)

Two Indians, living illegally in the US, have been arrested by federal authorities for smuggling more than 300 pounds of cocaine inside a semi-truck.

Gurpreet Singh, 25, and Jasveer Singh, 30, were arrested by local authorities in Putnam County, Indiana on January 4 for narcotics trafficking.

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said this week that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has lodged arrest detainers for them. The agency noted that the two men, who entered the US illegally, were arrested for smuggling more than 300 pounds of cocaine inside a semi-truck in Putnam County, Indiana. Both individuals were given commercial drivers licenses issued by the state of California. "With a lethal dose of cocaine being as little as 1.2 grams, that is enough to kill more than 113,000 Americans," the DHS said in a statement.

Gurpreet Singh had illegally entered the US on March 11, 2023 near Lukeville, Arizona and was released into the country under the Biden administration.

He freely admitted to law enforcement that he was a citizen of India and illegally in the US, the DHS said.

Jasveer Singh illegally entered the US on March 21, 2017 near Otay Mesa, California. He was arrested on December 5 last year for receiving stolen property in San Bernardino, California. ICE had lodged an arrest detainer. However, the detainer was not honoured and he was released, the statement said criticising the policies of the California Governor Gavin Newsom.

"Thanks to Newsom's reckless policies, these two criminal illegal aliens were granted commercial drivers licenses by the state of California and were arrested for trafficking a whopping 300 pounds of cocaine inside a semi-truck," DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said. McLaughlin said Newsom and his fellow sanctuary politicians even refused to honour an arrest detainer on one of these individuals in December.

## Elon Musk's xAI to build 20 billion dollar data center in Mississippi

JACKSON. (Agency)

Elon Musk's artificial intelligence company xAI is set to spend \$20 billion to build a data center in Southaven, Mississippi, Gov. Tate Reeves announced Thursday, calling it the largest private investment in the state's history.

The data center, called MACROHARDRR, is being built in Mississippi's DeSoto County near Memphis, Tennessee. It will be the company's third data center in the greater Memphis area. xAI CFO Anthony Armstrong said the cluster of data centers will house "the world's largest supercomputer" with 2 gigawatts of computing power.

The announcement comes as xAI faces scrutiny over its data center projects in the Memphis area. The NAACP and the Southern Environmental Law Center have raised concerns over air pollution generated by xAI's supercomputer facility located near predominantly Black communities in Memphis. A petition by the Safe and Sound Coalition, a Southaven group opposing xAI's developments, calls for shutting down xAI's operations in the area and has received more than 900 signatures as of Thursday afternoon. xAI did not immediately respond when asked for comment about environmental concerns. A fact sheet released by the Mississippi governor's office said environmental responsibility is a "core commitment" for xAI.

During the announcement, Reeves personally thanked Musk. Reeves predicted the investment would bring hundreds of permanent jobs to the community, thousands of indirect subcontracting jobs, and tax revenue to support public services. Under the incentives for data centers passed in 2024, the state will waive all sales, corporate income and franchise taxes on the xAI development.

## Anger, outrage spills onto Minneapolis streets after ICE officer's fatal shooting of Renee Good

MINNEAPOLIS. (Agency)

As anger and outrage spilled out onto Minneapolis' streets Thursday over the fatal shooting of a woman the day before by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer, a new shooting by federal officers in Oregon left two people wounded and elicited more scrutiny of enforcement operations across the U.S. Hundreds of people protesting the shooting of Renee Good marched in freezing rain at night down one of Minneapolis' major thoroughfares, chanting "ICE out now" and holding signs saying, "killer ice off our streets." Protesters earlier vented their outrage outside a federal facility that is serving as a hub for the administration's latest immigration crackdown on a major city. The shooting in Portland, Oregon, took place outside a hospital in the afternoon. A man and woman were shot inside a vehicle, and their conditions were not immediately known. The FBI and the Oregon Department of Justice were investigating. Mayor Keith Wilson and the city council called on ICE to end all operations in the city until a full investigation is completed. Just as it did following the Minneapolis shooting, the Department of Homeland Security defended the actions of the officers in Portland, saying the incident occurred after a Venezuelan man with alleged gang ties and who was involved in a recent shooting tried to "weaponize" his vehicle to hit the officers. It was not yet clear if witness video corroborates that account. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, President Donald Trump and others in his administration have repeatedly characterized the Minneapolis shooting as an act of self-defense and cast Good as a villain, suggesting she used her vehicle as a weapon to attack the officer who shot her.

# Which US oil companies have interests in Venezuela

**Venezuela sits on about a fifth of the world's oil reserves and was once a major crude supplier to the US, with multiple American firms operating in the country until 2007.**

PARIS. (Agency)

US oil companies with interests in Venezuela are poised to benefit from Donald Trump's plans to take control of Venezuelan oil sales, with the president meeting bosses on Friday to encourage investment in the rundown industry. Trump told the New York Times on Thursday that the US oversight of Venezuela and its oil could last for years. He announced on Tuesday that Venezuela's interim leaders had agreed to US-managed marketing of 30-50 million barrels of crude after leader Nicolas Maduro was ousted by a US raid on January 3. Sanctioned by the US since 2019, Venezuela sits on about a fifth of the world's oil reserves and was once a major crude supplier to the US, with multiple American firms operating in the country until 2007.

However, it produced only around one percent of the world's total crude output in 2024, according to OPEC, having been hampered by years of underinvestment, sanctions, and embargoes. The Trump administration hopes to revitalise production. Here are the US oil companies with experience and interests in Venezuela that are likely to play an important role:

Chevron: exempt from sanctions

Chevron, the second-largest oil producer in the United States, is the only US company still operating in Venezuela.

The Houston-based firm accounts for 25 percent of the country's production, importing over 120,000 barrels of crude per day from Venezuela to the United States in December, according to Bloomberg data. Present in the South American country since the 1920s, Chevron operates five crude oil production projects in Venezuela as a minority shareholder in a joint venture with Venezuela's Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA). Chevron-PDVSA was established in 2007, when Hugo Chavez's government forced the nationalisation of foreign-owned oil companies.

After Washington imposed sanctions in 2019, the Biden administration granted Chevron

a waiver in 2022 in order to keep importing Venezuelan oil amid rising energy prices. Trump first rescinded and then renewed this waiver in 2025. "We continue to operate in



full compliance with all relevant laws and regulations," a Chevron spokesperson told AFP on Monday in a comment about the current situation. ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips: awaiting compensation Two other American oil giants, ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips, had their assets in Venezuela seized in 2007 after refusing Chavez's terms, which demanded the state take a minimum 60 percent stake in operations. Both firms took international legal action, kickstarting years of litigation that they ultimately won.

The World Bank's International Centre for

Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) ruled in 2014 that the Venezuelan government should pay ExxonMobil \$1.6 billion in compensation for taking its Cerro Negro project. The award was later lowered, but Venezuela was still ordered to pay millions to the US oil giant.

The arbitration court of the International Chamber of Commerce ordered in 2018 that the Venezuelan government pay \$2 billion for the "unlawful and uncompensated expropriation" of ConocoPhillips in the Hamaca and Petrozuata heavy crude oil projects.

Another decision by the ICSID in 2019 ordered Venezuela to pay \$8.7 billion to the company for the expropriations. Maduro's anti-US government, embroiled in economic crisis and corruption, never paid and both ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips are still awaiting compensation. ExxonMobil has yet to comment on Trump's suggestion that oil companies invest massively in Venezuela's oil sector. ConocoPhillips is "monitoring developments in Venezuela and their potential implications for global energy supply and stability," a spokesperson told AFP on Tuesday, adding that "it would be premature to speculate on any future business activities or investments."

## One person killed, at least 27 missing in landfill collapse in central Philippine city

JERUSALEM. (Agency)

A: An avalanche of garbage buried workers at a waste segregation facility in a central Philippine city, killing one person, injuring seven and leaving at least 27 others missing, police said Friday. Rescuers retrieved eight people alive and were searching for the missing still trapped after a huge mound of garbage and debris collapsed on them in the village of Binaliw in Cebu city, police said. Those affected included workers at the landfill but it was unclear if non-workers were among the victims.

One of those rescued, a female landfill worker, died while being brought to a hospital, regional police director Brig. Gen. Roderick Maranan told The

Associated Press, adding the rest survived with injuries.

Search and rescue efforts were continuing for the 27 missing, Maranan said, citing an initial police report. Cebu City Mayor Nestor Archival said Friday that at least 12 people have been rescued and 38 others remain missing. The reason for the different numbers of missing and rescued given by police and Archival was not immediately clear. "All response teams remain fully engaged in search and retrieval efforts to locate the remaining missing persons with strict adherence to safety protocols," Archival said in a statement posted on Facebook. At the landfill site dozens of rescuers scrambled overnight in search

of people trapped.

"The city government assures the public and the families of those affected that all necessary measures are being taken to ensure safety, transparency, accountability and compassionate assistance as operations continue," Archival said. Authorities and officials at the waste management facility, which has 110 employees, were to hold an emergency meeting on Friday, Archival said. One of the low-slung buildings hit by the wall of garbage that cascaded down in the landfill was a warehouse where workers separated recyclable waste and rubbish, Maranan said, adding that it remains unclear if nearby houses were also affected.

## 'She was horrible': Trump defends ICE officer who shot and killed Minneapolis woman

World. (Agency)

Hours after a 37-year-old woman was shot by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent in Minneapolis on Wednesday, President Donald Trump defended the officer's actions, framing the incident as a case of self-defense.

Speaking to a group of New York Times reporters in the Oval Office, Trump characterized the woman's behavior as deliberate and violent. "She behaved horribly," he said. "And then she ran him over. She didn't try to run him over. She ran him over." Trump attempted to present video evidence to support his claim, with aide Natalie Harp bringing a laptop to the Resolute Desk to show what the president described as proof of the woman's wrongdoing. While acknowledging the tragic nature of the shooting, Trump stressed the danger faced by ICE agents. "With all of it being said, no, I don't like that happening," he said. "It's a terrible scene. I think it's horrible to watch. No, I hate to see it."

In a separate post on Truth Social, Trump framed the shooting as part of a broader pattern of threats against ICE agents, blaming what he called the

"Radical Left" for creating a climate of hostility. "They (ICE agents) are just trying to do the job of MAKING AMERICA SAFE. We need to stand by and protect our Law Enforcement Officers from this Radical Left Movement of Violence and Hate," he wrote. The killing of Renee Good on

Wednesday set off a clash between federal officials who insist the shooting was an act of self-defense and Minneapolis officials who dispute that narrative. The woman was shot in her car in a residential neighborhood south of downtown Minneapolis, about a mile (1.6 kilometers) from where police killed George Floyd in 2020. Videos taken by bystanders and posted to social media show an officer approaching an SUV stopped in the

middle of the road, demanding the driver open the door and grabbing the handle. The Honda Pilot begins to pull forward and a different ICE officer standing in front of the vehicle pulls his weapon and immediately fires at least two shots into the vehicle at close range, jumping back as the vehicle moves toward him. It is not clear from the videos if the vehicle makes contact with the officer. The SUV then speeds into two cars parked on a curb nearby before coming to a stop. Witnesses can be heard shouting in shock. Renee described herself on social media as a "poet and writer and wife and mom" from Colorado. Calls and messages to her family were not immediately returned. Public records show Good had recently lived in Kansas City, Missouri, where she and another woman with the same home address had started a business last year called B. Good Handwork.

In a video posted from the scene on social media, a woman who describes Good as her wife is seen sitting near the vehicle sobbing. She says the couple had only recently arrived in Minnesota and they have a 6-year-old child.



## Who was Renee Nicole Good, the woman killed by US immigration police

**Family and witnesses challenge Trump administration's account of Renee Nicole Good's killing, as videos raise questions over ICE officer's use of force**

world. (Agency)

Renee Nicole Good, who was shot and killed by a US immigration agent on Wednesday in the midwestern city of Minneapolis, was an "extremely compassionate" person, her mother told the Minnesota Star-Tribune newspaper. "She was extremely compassionate. She's taken care of people all her life. She was loving, forgiving and affectionate. She was an amazing human being," Donna Ganger told the newspaper. The 37-year-old -- a poet and a mother to three children -- was shot by an



Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer while she was behind the wheel of her car. The Trump administration was quick to claim her death was an act of self-defense, but local authorities and witnesses dispute that account -- and widely shared video evidence has called into question the officer's use of deadly force. In 2020, Good earned her bachelor's degree in English literature from Old Dominion University in

Virginia, the school said in a statement honoring her Wednesday. "May Renee's life be a reminder of what unites us: freedom, love, and peace. My hope is for compassion, healing, and reflection at a time that is becoming one of the darkest and most uncertain periods in our nation's history," university president Brian O. Hemphill said. Good was a published poet who was awarded the Academy of

American Poets 2020 poetry prize while at her university. In a biography for the award, she was described as loving movie marathons and making "messy art with her daughter and two sons." US media report that her private Instagram account bio described her as a "Poet and writer and wife and mom and shitty guitar strummer from Colorado; experiencing Minneapolis, MN" and had an emoji of a rainbow LGBTQ+ flag. Her children were from her first two marriages and at the time of her death, she was married to a woman, who she lived with in Minneapolis where they were raising her youngest child, a six-year-old boy. More than \$800,000 has been raised to support her surviving family. Despite accusations from the Trump administration that she was endangering the lives of federal immigration agents, Good's mother told the Minnesota Star-Tribune that she was not taking part in any action against ICE. Her first husband, who declined to be identified, told US media that Good was a devoted Christian and was not an activist.

## NEWS BOX

**Gauri Lankesh accused Pangarkar to contest in Jalna civic polls**



## Mumbai. (Agency)

An accused in the murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh, Shrikant Pangarkar, is contesting as an independent candidate in the upcoming Jalna Municipal Corporation polls. Pangarkar, who is an accused in the Nalla Sopara arms haul case, will be contesting from ward number 13. He will face other candidates including candidates from BJP.

Pangarkar was Jalna municipal councillor of the undivided Shiv Sena between 2001 and 2006. After he was dropped by the party during the 2011 civic elections, he joined the Hindu Janagruti Samiti. He was arrested in 2018 in relation to the Gauri Lankesh case and was granted bail by the Karnataka High Court in 2024. In 2024, Pangarkar joined the Shiv Sena led by then Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde ahead of the Assembly elections. However, he was removed a day later.

Pangarkar was arrested in two cases — by the Karnataka police SIT for the Lankesh murder, and by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) in the Nallasopara arms haul case — and was lodged at Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail before being released on bail.

**Kanpur teen 'kidnapped, gangraped' by cop & his aide; viral video on police inaction sparks outrage**

## Lucknow. (Agency)

A 14-year-old girl in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, was allegedly kidnapped and gang-raped by a police sub-inspector (SI) and his associate earlier this week. The incident sparked outrage in the state after a video went viral in which the minor accused the police of inaction, leading to the suspension of two officers and the arrest of one of the accused, while the SI, Amit Kumar Maurya, remains absconding.

According to the police, the incident occurred on Monday night. In her statement, the minor said that she stepped out of her house to relieve herself and was walking towards the railway tracks nearby when an SUV stopped beside her. She said that before she could react, she was dragged inside the vehicle, where two men were seated. A man wearing a police uniform was driving the vehicle, she stated in the complaint.

The girl alleged that the man in the rear seat started molesting her as the vehicle was driven to a secluded area near the railway tracks. Even as she raised an alarm, she alleged, the two men started sexually assaulting her inside the vehicle. She was allegedly gangraped by the two, who detained her inside the SUV for more than half-an-hour.

**Pune shivers at 8.4 degree Celsius, coldest morning of 2026**

## Pune. (Agency)

The mercury dropped to 8.4 degree Celsius at Pune's Shivajinagar station Friday morning, marking the lowest minimum temperature of 2026, and a big drop from the 13.5 degree Celsius reported on January 1.

In the last 10 years, the minimum temperature in Pune had thrice touched the 8 degree Celsius mark on January 9 — in 2015, 2019, and 2023. Last year, the mercury had soared to 18.2 degree Celsius on this day.

This year, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Pune recorded 8.3 degree Celsius on Friday morning, a decrease from the 13 degree Celsius registered at the beginning of 2026. The morning temperatures have fallen even in the traditionally warmer areas of Pune, such as Magarpatta and Chinchwad. Magarpatta recorded a minimum temperature of 15.3 degree Celsius and Chinchwad reported 14.2 degree Celsius on Friday, compared to the warmer temperatures of 17.8 degree Celsius and 17.1 degree Celsius, respectively, on New Year's morning. Anupam Kashyapi, the former head of the IMD's weather forecasting department, said that single-digit minimum temperatures will continue for the next 24 hours, "but a cold wave is unlikely". "A marginal fall in the night temperature of Pune with shallow fog or mist is likely in isolated areas. People should take precautions against the cold," he added. Kashyapi attributed the cold to the presence of an anticyclone wind pattern in Central India that is bringing cold northerlies to Maharashtra via Northeast Vidarbha. The presence of a clear sky leads to a drop in night temperature.

For those shivering in the morning, there is good news. The IMD issued a weather bulletin on Thursday, forecasting a gradual rise in minimum temperatures this week, reaching 12 degree Celsius on January 14. Before that, the minimum is likely to be below 10 degree Celsius at least on Saturday.

# Karnataka enumerators allege payment delays months after socio-economic survey ends

**Many teachers say they were pulled away from schools and offices and personal commitments, working long hours under difficult conditions, only to be left chasing payments.**

## BENGALURU. (Agency)

More than 1.7 lakh enumerators, bulk of them government school teachers, and hundreds drawn from different government departments deputed for the exercise, allege that payments, especially for Bengaluru, remain unpaid nearly two months after the government's flagship Socio-Economic and Educational Survey concluded on October 31, 2025.

Each enumerator was to receive a lump sum of Rs 5,100, in addition to Rs 100 for every household surveyed. With most enumerators covering between 100 and 200 households, the variable component alone was expected to fetch them an additional Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000 over and above their regular salaries. However,



sources say both the fixed honorarium and the household-based payments are either pending or only partially credited in several cases. Many teachers say they were pulled away from schools and offices and personal commitments, working long hours under difficult conditions, only to be left chasing payments.

"This is classic government apathy," said an observer, questioning the administration's sincerity towards those implementing its flagship programmes.

Former Backward Classes Commission chairman CS Dwarakanath said he was unaware of payment delays but said the enumerators deserved

immediate compensation. "They braved harsh weather, visited houses repeatedly, and some even faced caste and religious humiliation while collecting data. They must be paid without any further delay," he said.

Backward Classes Commission Chairman and former Advocate General Madhusudhan Naik said, "We have paid the amount about two-months-ago. We had inquired with the officers concerned about this a week ago." Sources said the money was not paid because the enumerators were drawn from different departments and the government does not have their personal bank details. Some pointed out there were delays for payments for enumerators even in the case of the Justice Nagamohan Das Commission.

**From rebukes to police, central agencies, to pothole compensation, personal liberty verdicts: Justice Mohite-Dere shaped rights at Bombay HC**

## Mumbai. (Agency)

Justice Revati Mohite-Dere, who is set to take over as Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court later this week, served over 12 years as Bombay HC judge since June, 2013. She delivered key verdicts pulling up Police, Central agencies and passed directives to protect personal liberty of people from various sections.

"For me, the judiciary was never just a profession, it was a calling. The chance to protect rights, uphold the constitution and impact lives in a meaningful way was deeply inspiring," the judge said while addressing full court farewell reference organised for her on Wednesday at Bombay HC. She also said lawyers should "speak truth to power, challenge injustice and stand firmly for the voiceless."

Known for being a judge with "soft voice and iron resolve," Justice Mohite-Dere initiated a suo motu plea after the 2024 Badlapur sexual assault case, compelling the Maharashtra government to issue directives for student safety.

Her bench repeatedly slammed Maharashtra police over the probe into the "encounter" death of an accused in Badlapur case, and ordered FIR against the cops. In October, last year, she ordered compensation for pothole deaths and injuries. Through orders over recent years, Justice Mohite-Dere expressed displeasure over the probe into forging of 880 maps in Madh Island; Police compelling doctors to reveal identities of minor girls seeking pregnancy termination; "shameful" delays in acting against "digital arrest" scam against senior citizens among others.

Her bench also ordered CBI probe into Rs 3,000 crore fraud allegations against Jai Corp Ltd and the Supreme Court appreciated the "courage" shown by the judges. In September 2024, the HC transferred probe into Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Abhishek Ghosalkar's murder to CBI. In August 2024, unhappy with the police probe, the HC formed an SIT for the demolition drive at Powai's Jai Bhim Nagar colony.

## Hubballi 'disrobing' incident takes political turn

## HUBBALLI. (Agency)

An incident in which a woman BJP worker was allegedly stripped and assaulted by police while being taken to a police station here a few days ago has taken a political turn.

While Congress leaders are backing the police action, claiming that the woman herself had removed her clothes and assaulted constables and officers who went to take her into custody, BJP leaders are demanding that members of the police team be suspended for their "shameful" act. Meanwhile, a case against local Congress corporator Survana Kalkuntla and eight others has been registered for allegedly threatening Vijayalakshmi Handi, the BJP worker, in connection with a clash during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) campaign in Hubballi recently. The police registered the case based on a complaint from Vijayalakshmi's family members and BJP workers. Survana Kalkuntla, however, is being treated in KMC-RC hospital for some ailment.

Senior BJP leaders, including Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, have expressed their anguish over the alleged incident. Local BJP leaders and workers staged a protest in Hubballi on Wednesday. Congress leader and district in-

charge minister Santosh Lad, who held a meeting with police officers here, said he never

felt that the police team, which went to take the

BJP worker into custody, would indulge in such

an act. The woman herself removed her clothes

despite the team stopping her from doing so.



Those who tried to stop her were allegedly beaten and bitten. The government has taken the alleged incident seriously and will act accordingly, he added. BJP women's wing president C Manjula, who visited Vijayalakshmi's house, alleged that police

inspector Hatti is a goon in uniform and the video that went viral is a proof of this. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah also spoke loosely about the incident. This shows the irresponsible mindset of the state government. It is clear that the police acted at the behest of Survana Kalkuntla, she alleged. "Will a helpless woman remove her clothes in the presence of many women constables and officers? The incident should be investigated by a retired judge," she said. In Dharwad, members of the BJP women's wing staged a protest in front of the deputy commissioner's office here on Thursday, seeking action against the police team involved in the alleged incident. 'Cong targeting BJP workers'

LoP in Council Chalavadi T Narayanaswamy has written to CM Siddaramaiah stating that the alleged incident in Hubballi harmed the dignity of women. The alleged incident showed the failure of the police department. It indicated that the state government is intentionally targeting BJP workers. If no action is taken against those responsible for the alleged incident, BJP will intensify its protest, he said.

## Gandhinagar typhoid cases: NHRC issues suo motu notice to Gujarat, seeks report

## Ahmedabad. (Agency)

The National Human Rights Commission has taken suo motu cognizance of a media report on surge in typhoid cases in Gandhinagar, said a release from the NHRC on Thursday. The commission has issued a notice to the state Chief Secretary, seeking a detailed report on the matter within two weeks, it added.

The release stated, "The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India, has taken suo motu cognizance of a media report revealing significant surge in the patients of Typhoid allegedly due to consumption of contaminated drinking water. The State Health Department has confirmed a total 70 active cases of typhoid concentrated in a particular area of the city. Reportedly, the surge in the patients of Typhoid has exposed serious flaws in the newly-laid water supply system in Gandhinagar City of Gujarat. Seven points of leaks have been identified in the water pipeline network causing sewage to mix with the drinking water supply."

"The Commission has observed that the contents of the news report, if true, raise serious issues of violation of the human rights of the victims. Therefore, it has issued a notice to the Chief

Secretary, Government of Gujarat, calling for a detailed report on the matter within two weeks."

The report is expected to include the present health status of the out-door and in-door patients of typhoid and the steps taken or proposed to ensure such incidents do not recur," the statement added.

Certain areas falling under Sector 24, 26, 28 and



Adiawada of Gandhinagar Municipal Corporation have witnessed outbreak of typhoid since late December and over 100 typhoid patients or suspected typhoid patients had been admitted at Gandhinagar Civil Hospital. The reason for the outbreak was cited as the mixing of drinking water with drainage water due to leakage in pipelines.

## 'Love jihad' charges: Lucknow's KGMU puts up notices seeking complaints, set to sack doctor

## Lucknow.(Agency)

As police probe one of its resident doctors for alleged forcible conversion, Lucknow's King George Medical University (KGMU) put up notices across its campus Thursday asking its staffers to come forward anonymously if they have similar complaints against anyone on its rolls.

The university earlier formed an investigation committee under Dean, Paramedics, and Senior Professor, Department of Surgery, K K Singh — which was later expanded to include former Uttar Pradesh DGP Bhavesh Singh among its seven members — to probe allegations of involvement of other faculty members and individuals on the campus in "religious conversion". This committee has now put up notices inviting complaints, at hostels, faculties and outside classes.

Rameezuddin Nayak, a Junior Resident at the Department of Pathology at KGMU and enrolled for MD, has been declared an absconder with the authorities

announcing a reward of Rs 50,000 for anyone giving information on him. On January 5, his parents were arrested too on charges of alleged forcible religious conversion. Authorities have begun the process of seizing Nayak's properties.

KGMU is also set to recommend "termination of Nayak's services", after its internal Vishakha Committee to check sexual harassment of women at workplace found him guilty of the charges levelled against him. Nayak attended a hearing of the panel before he went "missing". The committee has submitted its report to the Vice-Chancellor, a senior KGMU official said.

The official added: "The committee found Nayak guilty on three fronts. First, he concealed his marriage while entering into a relationship with a fellow resident. Secondly, after she came to know of the previous marriage, he stalked her. Lastly, he has been found guilty of threatening the fellow resident that he would make their relationship as well as some videos public."

## Identical names with identical addresses, new neighbourhoods in Ahmedabad; How BLOs in the SIR cracked it

**From NRI outreach to verifying "duplicate" names, how Gujarat's largest constituency Ghatlodiya, is reconciling the gaps between 2002 electoral rolls and 2026 voters list.**

## Ahmedabad.(Agency)

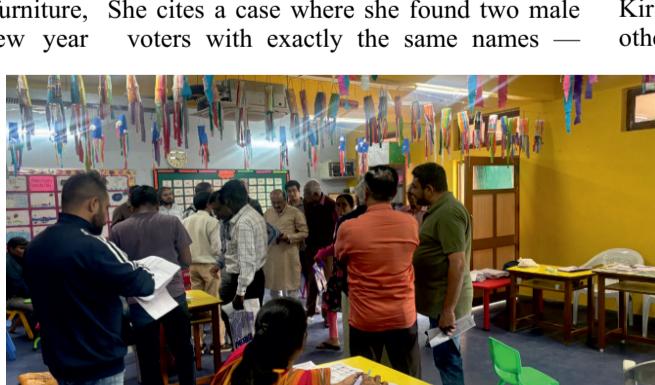
In a primary school with colourful furniture, bunting left over from the new year celebrations still hanging from the ceiling, Ankita Sahibra Balpande signs off for the day with a "zero-zero" report. A primary school teacher in a government school for eight years, Balpande, 34, has been assigned a target enumeration of 1258 voters as a Booth Level Officer (BLO) under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Ghatlodiya Assembly constituency of Ahmedabad.

The task has been arduous, not only because it is a high-profile constituency represented by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, but because it has voters, many of whom have migrated from the walled city areas, after they were last

enrolled in 2002.

She cites a case where she found two male

voters with exactly the same names —



"Their age became an identifier for me, as one Kirikumar was 10 years younger than the other. It would have been tough had the age gap been lesser," says Balpande.

A "zero-zero" report indicates there is no voter left to be mapped. She had mapped forms of 502 voters and was completing the rest of her assigned target at the camp last weekend. "Among these 110 had shifted, 26 died, 20 were duplicate and nine were absent," Balpande tells The Indian Express, stationed in a classroom on the ground floor at JG International School designated as the camp. The school is also a polling booth with 7,100 listed voters in the last Assembly election.

Ghatlodiya, an urban Assembly constituency, is the largest in Gujarat with 463 polling booths covering over 3.65 lakh voters (as per the 2026 draft roll). Former CM Anandiben Patel has also represented this constituency which is a constituent of the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha seat represented by Union home minister Amit Shah. The other common issue for the BLO here was societies that did not exist in 2002. "I had two such societies — Mirant Cooperative and Sudarshan Towers — in my area," she tells the paper. Gujarat was among the six states and Union Territories whose deadline for completing the SIR exercise was extended.

Among those who came for the camp is Jyotiben Trivedi, 72, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Khushboo. She sat on a tiny chair in the kindergarten classroom awaiting her turn to submit documents for inclusion of herself and four family members — son, daughter-in-law and two grandsons as she also recorded the deletion of her husband's name who had died a few years back.

Kirikumar — including the middle name, which is usually the father's name, and surname, who were residents of the same pol neighbourhood in Kalupur 23 years ago and had moved to Ghatlodiya.

## The 'foreign hand' that made Indira Gandhi paranoid

Taking Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores out of their Caracas home in the middle of the night and transporting them across land, air and water to New York City was a wild script that only Trumpian realism could produce. Reason, cultivated by decency and diplomacy, cannot easily delineate why the US government did what it did, and how much more it wishes to unsettle the world.

Many have tried to argue that the US has lost its moral authority from this one act of extravagant crudity and ruthlessness. But one wonders if the US, over the past century, ever aspired to moral authority. It has been singularly obsessed with unqualified authority, sans frontier, backed by the dollar and military machines. An Epsteinian metaphorical strand of deceit, which carries the power to consume even conscience-keepers like Noam Chomsky, has perhaps always been part of this worldview.

Perhaps it is only weak countries that aspire to moral authority. Henry Kissinger, the controversial American diplomat who normalised the US foreign policy of regime changes in Latin America and across the globe, had an interesting comment on India's foreign policy under Jawaharlal Nehru. This was after Indira Gandhi had visited the US in November 1971 during Richard Nixon's first presidential term, and had famously not gotten along with him. Kissinger wrote: "We took at face value Nehru's claim to be a neutral arbiter of world affairs. We hardly noticed that this was precisely the policy by which a weak nation seeks influence out of proportion to its strength." Further extending his reading to Indira Gandhi, he said that "her almost hereditary moral superiority" and "moral pretensions" irritated Nixon. Forwarding moral currency, it could be assumed, has been viewed as a sign of camouflaged poverty by the US. Therefore, it would naturally not be bothered about moral authority. Since we are speaking about Indira Gandhi, it may be instructive to mention a pestering thought and a lurking fear that occupied her mind in the early 1970s. It has resonance today, when Maduro has just been "abducted" by the US. According to people who worked closely with Indira Gandhi, she thought over 50 years ago that she could similarly be dislodged by the US with the help of the "notorious" Central Intelligence Agency. She seriously entertained the thought that there was a "foreign hand" fomenting trouble in India, designed to end her rule.

The idea strengthened in Indira Gandhi's mind after what happened in Chile, a country south of Venezuela on the Latin American map. In a CIA-backed operation in September 1973, Chilean President Salvador Allende was killed and a puppet regime under General Augusto Pinochet was installed. Indira Gandhi imagined that the fate of Allende, a fiercely independent socialist, could become her fate as well. Indira Gandhi had by then antagonised Nixon, who was behind the fall of Allende. The 1971 war with Pakistan, which led to the creation of Bangladesh, had upset the US's strategic plans in South Asia. India had exploded a nuclear device in May 1974 to the chagrin and shock of the US. Plus, India's growing ideological alignment with the erstwhile Soviet Union had led to Cold War suspicions and frostiness. India as a poor country under Indira Gandhi, with what Kissinger described as her "moody silences" and "moral views", had exasperated the US. One of Indira Gandhi's closest advisors, P N Dhar, in his 2000 book titled *Indira Gandhi, The Emergency, and Indian Democracy*, wrote: "Indira Gandhi herself had apprehensions of foreign involvement in the affairs of the country on the pattern of what had happened in Chile."

ON January 3, as the United States seized a sitting President and began speaking of "running" a country, the world saw more than a dramatic operation. It sensed a message about how power now speaks. Disregard for sovereignty is not new. Ukraine has shown how force can be claimed as entitlement. Gaza has shown how necessity becomes the justification for collapsing restraint. Venezuela now feels like a more direct assertion of power: a leader can be seized, and the aftermath managed through shifting rationales.

"Narco-terrorism" reframes military intervention as international policing. "Transnational crime" recasts the use of force as a cross-border arrest. Oil provides the strategic subtext, quietly shaping priorities beneath the surface. The "Trump corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine reintroduces spheres of influence as doctrine, sold as national security common sense. Terms like "illegitimacy" and "democracy" add a moral veneer. Democracy sells outward; illegitimacy licenses inward.

Even migration is folded in, turning foreign policy into campaign messaging about border control. Each rationale speaks to a different constituency: military, moral, economic, political. Together they converge on one claim: Washington chooses when rules apply, and to whom. What has changed is that the old narrative of a broadly consensual order is harder to sustain when the exception is asserted so openly.

What makes this moment disconcerting is the portability of precedent. Once such actions are normalised, they stop being news and start becoming a tool. Precedent outlives the target. It travels further than intent, and it gives other powers a script they can borrow under different flags and in different theatres. There is also a practical warning that many in the Global South remember with painful clarity. Regime change does not reliably yield democracy or peace. Libya remains the clearest exhibit. Remove the centre, fracture institutions, splinter the security sector, and the vacuum fills with militias, revenge and foreign patrons. Outsiders can topple a ruler. They rarely build legitimacy. That is why many capitals, even those with no affection for Nicolás Maduro, judge this episode less by who was removed than by how removal was undertaken.

The global response is coalescing into three camps, not

## When rules are bent, the world splits

India has no interest in defending Nicolás Maduro, but it has every reason to resist a precedent that weakens sovereignty as a general norm.

along ideological lines, but according to the language each state chooses to describe the episode. First, there are the norms-first states. They read the episode through international law and the UN Charter's core restraint on the use of force. They speak in the language of sovereignty, restraint and precedent. Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Uruguay, South Africa, Malaysia and Singapore fall into this camp, along with the African Union representing its 55 members. Their argument is structural and anticipatory: if forceful capture becomes routine and restraint becomes optional, any power with a plausible pretext will claim the same licence. Precedent is contagious. China and Russia, too, have adopted a

templates and the logic will reappear elsewhere. The third group signals what might be called exceptions-implied states. They treat the outcome as justification in itself, using the language of freedom, justice and anti-crime while bypassing the legality of the method. Argentina and Ecuador illustrate this posture, as does the incoming Chilean leadership. Italy has also leaned in this direction, framing the US action as legitimate and defensive, aligning more with exceptions' logic than with Europe's cautious consensus. The claim is not that rules do not matter, only that the target does not qualify for protection under them. Once "narco" becomes the solvent that dissolves sovereignty in one case, it begins to travel. Labels are sticky. They do not stay contained.

India's position warrants a more thoughtful reading than it usually receives in Western commentary. Hedging is not evasiveness; it is risk management by a state shaped by experience, where moral theatre rarely stabilises real crises. India has no interest in defending Maduro, but it has every reason to resist a precedent that weakens sovereignty as a general norm. Its calibrated language reflects a balancing act: registering concern without gratuitously alienating Washington, avoiding entanglement in someone else's script and protecting wider interests in a volatile world. This is not indecision. It is strategic autonomy as practice, not posture. For India, there is also an opportunity. It can help define the

boundary between legitimate concern and procedural collapse. It can defend sovereignty without defending strongmen, and uphold accountability without endorsing impunity. That means working with norms-first states to raise the diplomatic cost of shortcuts, and with hedged-norms states to keep restraint credible without turning every crisis into spectacle.

The UN Charter's promise is not moral perfection. It provides predictability that power will be fenced in by procedure. Precedents travel faster than armies. Today's exception becomes tomorrow's tool. The real damage will not be measured in Caracas, but in the permission slip we let power write. Once bent, rules are borrowed everywhere.

## Record harvests: Align policies, infra with diversification goals

The Tribune Editorial: Without guaranteed procurement, reliable markets and processing facilities, diversification remains an act of faith rather than a viable business decision.

INDIA becoming the world's largest rice producer, overtaking China, is a milestone that underlines the country's formidable food security architecture. Along with this, reports of wheat acreage touching record highs reveal a deeper paradox: even as policymakers push for crop diversification, farmers continue to double down on the familiar wheat-paddy cycle. This is not a failure of farmer imagination but of policy signals. Rice and wheat remain the most remunerative and least risky crops because they enjoy assured procurement at minimum support prices (MSPs), backed by decades of institutional support. Irrigation networks, storage facilities and credit systems have been built around these staples. In contrast, alternative crops — pulses, oilseeds, millets or maize — often lack comparable price assurance, market depth and post-harvest infrastructure. Farmers, understandably, follow the incentives. Yet the costs of this success are mounting. The rice-wheat system has become



environmentally unsustainable in Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh. Paddy cultivation has led to

alarming groundwater depletion, soil degradation and rising input costs. Diversification is an ecological necessity. Government programmes promoting crop diversification acknowledge this reality, but their impact remains limited. Financial incentives for shifting crops are often short-term, while the risks farmers face are structural and long-term. Without guaranteed procurement, reliable markets and processing facilities, diversification remains an act of faith rather than a viable business decision. The record rice output and expanding wheat acreage should therefore be read as a warning, not merely a triumph. The agricultural policy must move beyond celebrating volume and confront the skewed incentive framework that locks farmers into a narrow cropping pattern. Aligning policies and infrastructure with diversification goals is essential. Otherwise, India risks being trapped in its own foodgrain success — producing more, but progressing less.

## When Trump parachuted into the Kennedy Center

The Center was renamed 'The Donald J Trump and the John F Kennedy Memorial Center For The Performing Arts' by its Board of Trustees handpicked by him.

ON December 18, 2025, the Kennedy Center — a revered and iconic cultural institution in Washington, DC — was renamed 'The Donald J Trump and the John F Kennedy Memorial Center For The Performing Arts' by its Board of Trustees, followed by the installation of a new exterior signage and changes in digital branding. Earlier, in February, soon after assuming office, President Trump had replaced the existing board with handpicked members, who elected him Chair. The new board changed the bylaws to exclude ex-officio members appointed by Congress from a vote or quorum, clearing the way for Trump's full control. While the White House has celebrated the new name, many voices — official and unofficial — have questioned the legality of the decision. Since Congress had passed a federal law in 1964, specifically designating the arts institution as a memorial to President Kennedy, legal activist groups have challenged this decision in court, stating that only Congress has the authority to rename the Center.

Kennedy family members have also expressed outrage, viewing Trump's plans for the renamed Center as antithetical to the former President's humanistic cultural vision, as his niece stated recently: "[President Kennedy] was a man who was interested in the arts, in culture, interested in education." Furthermore, a spate of programme cancellations has followed the Kennedy Center's renaming, indicating the artists' opposition to MAGA ideals. For instance, an all-star Jazz group, which cancelled its New Year's Eve performances, stated that "jazz was born from struggle, from a relentless insistence on freedom: freedom of thought, of expression and of the full human voice." And a New York dance company that pulled out said it was "financially devastating, but morally exhilarating." More cancellations are happening, including Hamilton, the famed musical, while the board threatens to sue the producers. Other US

institutions, often promoting intellectual and creative freedom, have also been targeted by the Trump administration. For instance, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) have been mostly defunded. The exhibits at various Smithsonian museums are also being reevaluated by the Trump administration under the pretext that they depict "American and Western values as inherently harmful and oppressive." Historians see this as a move to sanitise American history to a single narrative and to erase the voices of formerly disenfranchised peoples. Several major universities have also been pressured to submit to broad government surveillance or lose federal funding. Harvard University resisted this threat while remaining committed to "open inquiry and freedom of speech" followed by several others, such as UPenn and UChicago. Overall, despite cuts in both sciences and humanities, as well as some compromises, a basic commitment to intellectual and creative freedom is largely holding in US academia. In addition, some media organisations, legal professionals, religious leaders and ordinary citizens are also pushing back on Trump's agenda. Given these unrelenting struggles against authoritarian policies, what lessons can we learn, as we mark the new year, 2026?

In our divisive times, populist regimes worldwide seek to usurp and revamp cultural institutions for their nationalist agendas, typically based on religious, ethnic, racial and cultural purity. Thus, citizens are called to self-identify with a purified, homogeneous nation, via myths of "national greatness" while excluding groups or individuals, marked as outsiders or "others". Many citizens embrace these narrow national identities, often losing the ability to encompass historical complexity, or to envision alternative and plural worlds.

Trump's new programming vision for the Kennedy Center seems to follow this script: he calls for "a Golden Age in Arts and Culture", implying that the spirit of "Make America Great Again" is not far from a xenophobic white Christian nationalism.

Trump's pushback against liberalism echoes populist trends worldwide. In India too, the call to "make India



great again" — namely to Hinduise it by recuperating an imagined ancient splendour, antithetical to modernity — permeates public discourse. For instance, explicit on the RSS website is the idea of a pure Hindu nation: "The Hindu culture is the life-blood of Hindustan. If Hindustan is to be protected, we should first nourish the Hindu culture." Once citizens are offered an organic image of Hinduism as a "life-blood" that nourishes the body of the nation (Hindustan), then they can more strongly self-identify with the Hindu nation and feel excluded if they are Muslim, Christian, etc. Given its

widespread legitimacy, this ideology now increasingly informs educational planning and policies at different levels. This move is a clear departure from the Nehruvian approach to education, in which no single ideology intruded on curricular arrangements for several decades after Independence. One response to this exclusionary vision in India has been to defend and protect the rights of minorities. Another different, though equally powerful, riposte to a monolithic Hindutva is to expose its reductive and simplistic representation of Hinduism itself. This rigorous intervention has in recent years been offered by several eminent Indian historians, perhaps most visibly by Romila Thapar, though often in conversations with her other professional colleagues. What we can draw from these contemporary discussions — in print, in media and in live lectures — are complex historical facts and related questions that undermine Hindutva as a hegemonic ideology of nationalism.

Thus, facts emanating from these conversations about Indian history raise provocative questions: How can a society as diverse as India be reduced to a single, uniform and static heritage? What will happen to Hinduism's inherent pluralism, its coexistence with diverse sects, mythologies, animist elements and its overall relative syncretism? We must also stop to think of the extraordinary influence of Hindu cultures across South-East Asia. Instead of accepting Indian nationalism as qualified by a single religious identity, we must recognise that Hinduism itself encompasses varied cultures. In this vision, we can realise the true dynamism of India's ancient civilisation.

For all aspirational Indians today, especially the younger generation, let us re-engage with history as a discipline — return to our past with curious yet critical minds. How will history judge our divisive times?

## Severe cold tightens grip over J&K, Ladakh; Drass records -24.6°C

Srinagar.(Agency)

Severe cold conditions have firmly tightened their grip over Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh, with the mercury plummeting across the region and several places recording season-low temperatures. Srinagar witnessed the coldest night of the season, while Drass remained the coldest in Ladakh at -24.6°C. The biting chill has led to the freezing of water bodies, including sheets of ice forming along the fringes of Srinagar's famed Dal Lake. In the Kashmir Valley, Srinagar recorded a low of -6.0°C, down from -5.1°C the preceding night, making it the coldest night of the season. The tourist resort of Pahalgam in Anantnag district recorded -7.6°C last night, compared to -8.6°C during the preceding night.

Similarly, the ski resort of Gulmarg registered a low of -7.2°C, making it slightly warmer than the previous night's -9.2°C. In south Kashmir, Pulwama and Shopian continued to reel under severe cold at -7.5°C and -7.7°C, respectively, while Sonamarg recorded -5.4°C, showing improvement from -9.8°C the previous night. In the Jammu region, the winter capital Jammu recorded 5.6°C, lower than the earlier night's 7.1°C. Katra settled at 3.5°C, Banihal at -0.9°C, Batote 1.0°C, Baderwah -3.4°C, Kathua 6.0°C, and Poonch 1.7°C.

The Ladakh union territory continued to bear the brunt of the harshest cold. Leh recorded -14.4°C, while Kargil dipped to -13.2°C. Drass, known as one of the coldest inhabited places in the world, remained the coldest in the region at -24.6°C. Padum recorded -20.3°C and Nyoma -21.6°C. The ongoing cold wave conditions are likely to continue in Jammu and Kashmir with a significant fall in minimum temperatures till January 10, even as light rain and snowfall have been forecast at isolated places in the Kashmir division during the coming days.

## Key reforms underway to boost quality education in Himachal: R S Bali

Nagrota, (Kangra). (Agency)

Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Tourism Development Board (Cabinet rank) R.S. Bali said that significant reforms are being implemented to ensure quality and inclusive education in this hill state.

Addressing the annual prize distribution function of Maharana Pratap International Public School at Dharmagiri as the Chief guest, Bali said the life of Maharana Pratap continues to inspire courage, duty and compassion. He lauded the school management, teachers and students for their commendable performances and efforts in shaping young minds.

Bali said, "The state government has developed 850 educational institutions as centres of excellence and has fulfilled its promise of introducing English-medium education from Class I in government schools."

He added that modern Rajiv Gandhi Day Boarding Schools are being established in "every assembly constituency, including at Kabri in the Nagrota area", with a focus on the holistic development of students through academics and co-curricular activities.

He announced a grant of Rs 15 lakh for the construction of the school playground, Rs 5 lakh from his personal account for school development, and Rs 50,000 for students.

Earlier, school manager Kuldeep Singh and principal Aishwarya Samyal highlighted the institution's progress and achievements, while students presented colourful cultural programmes.

## Rural India to be in focus on union Budget 2026: BJP

Dharamshala. (Agency)

Member of Parliament Dr Rajeey Bhardwaj on Friday said the focus of the union Budget has decisively shifted towards rural India, asserting that villages, rather than cities, are now the government's top priority.

Speaking at a press conference, Dr Bhardwaj noted that nearly 75 per cent of India's population resides in rural areas, yet past governments allocated roughly 75 per cent of budgetary resources to urban centres and only 25 per cent to villages. "The present government has corrected this imbalance. A significant portion of the budget is now being directed towards rural development," he said.

Addressing concerns about funding for hill states, he clarified that Himachal Pradesh would continue to benefit from the Centre's special 90:10 ratio funding pattern. He also criticised the opposition, accusing them of avoiding meaningful parliamentary discussions.

Dr Bhardwaj also launched a sharp attack on the opposition, alleging that it avoids serious discussions in Parliament. He said the historic Nari Shakti Act was debated for nearly 18 hours, with the Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan present till late night, but when it was time for the government's reply, the opposition resorted to disruptions.

"The historic Nari Shakti Act was debated for nearly 18 hours, with Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan present until late at night. Yet, when it was time for the government's response, the opposition chose to disrupt proceedings," he said.

Highlighting reforms in MGNREGA, he said a record allocation of Rs 1.51 lakh crore has been made, with guaranteed employment increased to 125 days. He added that provision has also been made for unemployment allowance if eligible beneficiaries do not get work. Senior BJP leaders, including state spokesperson Rakesh Sharma and district President Sachin Sharma, were present at the press conference.

## Administration Takes Tough Stand in IGRS Review

The Sikh Times

Manoj Pal

Muzaffarnagar. A detailed review meeting was held on Friday at the District Panchayat Auditorium in the Collectorate to ensure effective, timely and quality disposal of public grievances received on the IGRS. The meeting was chaired by ADM Finance Gajendra Kumar and was convened as per the directions of District Magistrate Umesh Mishra. During the meeting, the updated status of complaints registered on the IGRS portal by various departments, progress in their disposal, and the satisfaction percentage of complainants were reviewed point by point. The ADM clearly instructed officials that IGRS is a highly important and sensitive system of the government, through which citizens directly convey their problems to the administration. Therefore, grievance disposal should not be a mere formality but must be carried out with seriousness, impartiality and quality. He stated that

any disposal done without field verification, factual confirmation or through arbitrary action would

ing. During the review, departments found with zero satisfaction percentage in grievance disposal

Education Officer, Charthawal; Executive Officer, Nagar Panchayat Sisauli; and Executive Officer, Nagar Panchayat Bhokarhedi. All concerned officers were issued stern warnings with directions for immediate improvement. The ADM directed the concerned officials to promptly review their working methods, dispose of pending complaints strictly as per rules, and ensure satisfactory resolution by establishing communication with complainants. He also made it clear that if there is no improvement in satisfaction levels in the future, recommendations will be made for action against the concerned officers at a higher level. At the conclusion of the meeting, instructions were issued to all departments to regularly monitor the IGRS portal, treat complaints with seriousness, and mandatorily review feedback received after disposal. He emphasized that maintaining public trust is the top priority of the administration, and IGRS is an effective medium in achieving this objective.

not be considered valid. Ensuring the satisfaction of the complainant is the primary responsibility of the administration, and no negligence in this regard will be tolerated. The ADM warned that failure to resolve complaints within the stipulated time frame directly reflects poorly on departmental function- included the Executive Officer, Nagar Panchayat Shahpur; Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Khatauli; Deputy Director, Consolidation Project Officer, DUDA; District Probation Officer; District Programme Officer; Tehsildar, Khatauli; MOIC, Shahpur; Block Education Officer, Shahpur; Block

## Winter blues to continue as IMD forecasts cold wave, dense fog across Haryana, Punjab

**According to the forecast, cold wave conditions are likely at isolated places over southern and southwestern Punjab, including Fazilka, Faridkot, Muktsar, Bathinda and Mansa, while cold day conditions may prevail over Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Kapurthala and Patiala in the coming days.**

Jalandhar. (Agency)

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday warned that cold wave conditions, accompanied by dense fog, especially during night and early morning hours, will continue over the next few days across Punjab and Haryana, keeping large parts of the region under severe winter stress.

According to the forecast, cold wave conditions are likely at isolated places over southern and southwestern Punjab, including Fazilka, Faridkot, Muktsar, Bathinda and Mansa, while cold day conditions may prevail over Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Kapurthala and Patiala in the coming days. In Haryana, cold wave conditions are expected at isolated places over Mahendragarh, Rewari, Jhajjar, Gurugram, Mewat, Palwal, Sirsa, Fatehabad, Hisar, Bhiwani and Charkhi Dadri, with cold day conditions likely over Ambala, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Karnal and Jind. A cold day is defined

by the IMD when the maximum temperature departs from normal by -4.5°C to -6.4°C, while a severe cold day is declared if the departure is -6.5°C or lower. A cold wave over plains is declared when the minimum temperature departs from normal by -4.5°C to -6.4°C, while a severe cold wave occurs when the departure is -6.5°C or more

## Cyber Fraud Using DM Umesh Mishra's Photo and Identity, People Contacted from Vietnam Number

The Sikh Times

Manoj Pal

Muzaffarnagar. A serious case of cyber fraud has come to light in the district, where miscreants are using the name and photograph of Muzaffarnagar District Magistrate Umesh Mishra to create a fake WhatsApp account and contact citizens. Messages and calls being circulated on social media through this account have no connection with the actual District Magistrate. The district administration has taken immediate cognizance of the matter and issued an official clarification. In an important notice, the District Magistrate stated that some anti-social elements are attempting to mislead people by misusing his photograph and identity. He clarified that this act is completely illegal and strict legal action will be taken against those involved. The District Magistrate has appealed to the general public not to believe or forward any false or unverified information and not to share personal details with unknown individuals. He emphasized that people should rely only on information released through official administrative channels. According to the administration, the fake account holder has been contacting people using a Vietnam-based mobile number. An investigation is underway, and the cyber cell has been directed to take necessary action. Officials have urged citizens that if anyone receives any suspicious message, call, or chat in the name of the District Magistrate, they should immediately inform the local police station or the cyber cell so that the culprits can be identified and strict action can be taken promptly.

## HPBOSE declares SOS result of Class 10, 12 improvement examinations

Dharamshala. (Agency)

The Himachal Pradesh Board of School Education (HPBOSE) on Thursday declared the results of the SOS (State Open School) Special Improvement Examinations for Classes 10 and 12 held in September 2025.

Board Chairman Dr Rajesh Sharma said the overall pass percentage stood at 77.84 per cent for Class 10 and 89.19 per cent for Class 12.

Candidates can check their detailed results on the official website [www.hpbse.org](http://www.hpbse.org). He said some results have been placed under different categories, including results withheld due to eligibility issues (RLE), results kept pending due to discrepancies (RLD), provisional results (PRS), and cases where previous results remain unchanged (PRC). Candidates may complete further formalities as per their respective categories.

Students dissatisfied with their marks can apply online for re-checking/re-

Family angered by love marriage abducts banker daughter in broad daylight in Mathura, incident caught on CCTV

Mathura.(Agency)

A shocking incident was reported on Thursday morning in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura district, where a young woman working as a bank employee was allegedly abducted in broad daylight by her own family members who opposed her love marriage.

The entire incident was captured on a nearby CCTV camera, based on which the police have launched an intensive search operation, officials confirmed on Friday. The abducted woman has been identified as Priyanka, a resident of Banaskantha district in Gujarat. She had married Mathura resident Ravinder Singh four years ago against her family's wishes. Both Priyanka and Ravinder are employees of ICICI Bank. Priyanka is posted at the Bhuteshwar branch in Mathura, while Ravinder works at the Kosi Kalan branch.

According to Ravinder, Priyanka's family had strongly opposed the marriage from the beginning and had been pressuring her to leave her husband and return home.

He alleged that in November last year, her relatives had come to Mathura and attempted to forcibly take Priyanka away. When they failed, they allegedly threatened to kill him.

On Thursday morning, when Priyanka was on her way to work, a group of men arrived in a car, forcibly dragged her inside the vehicle, and fled the scene. The incident caused panic in the area. Upon receiving information, the police immediately initiated a search operation.

CCTV footage revealed that the vehicle used in the abduction had a Gujarat registration number, strengthening suspicion that Priyanka's family members were behind the crime.

Kotwali Station House Officer Vinod Babu Mishra stated, "The police have contacted the woman's father and issued a strict warning. The vehicle's location is being tracked, and multiple teams have been formed to ensure the safe recovery of the woman."

## 322 cartons of illicit liquor hidden inside fuel tanker crosses Punjab barriers, seized in Rajasthan

**The Sadulshahar police of Sri Ganganagar district, along with the Bikaner Range Special Team, caught the tanker, which had entered Rajasthan via Abohar constituency of Fazilka district of Punjab, was intercepted at the Rajputra-Patli check post on the Punjab-Rajasthan border in Sadulshahar town.**

Ludhiana. (Agency)

A large consignment of illicit liquor concealed inside a diesel tanker, reportedly originating from Punjab, was seized by the Rajasthan Police, the liquor was being smuggled from Punjab to Gujarat, hidden inside the fuel tanker. The seizure has drawn attention as it comes a day after the Punjab government launched the second phase of its anti-drug campaign, 'Yudhh Nasheyen Virudh', from Jalandhar.

Sadulshahar Station House Officer (SHO) Malkit Singh told mediapersons that the police had been receiving intelligence inputs for several days about large-scale supply of liquor from Punjab towards Gujarat. "Acting on this information, teams were put on alert and barricading was carried out at the Patli check post on the Punjab-Rajasthan border," he said. The SHO added that late Wednesday, a Bharat Petroleum diesel tanker coming from the Punjab side was stopped on suspicion. "During questioning, the driver appeared nervous and failed to give satisfactory answers. On searching the tanker, liquor cartons were found concealed inside instead of diesel." Police sources said the seized consignment included 252 cartons of Indian-Made Foreign

Liquor (IMFL), 70 cartons of beer, and other brands, taking the total to 322 cartons.

The arrested accused has been identified as Suresh (26), a resident of Ramsaray village in Bayt area of Barmer district, who was driving the tanker. The tanker has been seized, and the accused is being interrogated to trace the entire liquor smuggling network, Rajasthan Police officials said. The incident also triggered political reactions. Abohar MLA Sandeep Jakhatri questioned how the tanker managed to cross Punjab without being intercepted. Posting on X, he

said, "State of affairs... spurious liquor mafia at work. Rajasthan police stopped this oil tanker at the Rajputra/Patli border (near Abohar) and found illicit liquor hidden inside. Wonder where in Punjab it was made and by whom, and how it managed to cross all the barriers. For your information, 'Yudhh Nasheyen Virudh' part 2 was launched Wednesday." When Gurmeet Singh, SSP Fazilka was questioned as to how the tanker crossed the Rajputra barrier located in Fazilka district to enter Rajasthan, he said, "I need to check the details of the case".

# The ugly divorce battle of Zoho's Sridhar Vembu and a Rs 15,000 crore bond

**A US court has directed Zoho's Sridhar Vembu to post a \$1.7 billion (Rs 15,278 crore) bond in the ongoing divorce case. It has brought into focus the high-stakes divorce battle between Vembu and his estranged wife, Pramila Srinivasan. Here is all about the case.**

2025 was a year to remember for Zoho's Sridhar Vembu as several ministers endorsed the desi tech company and its software products amid a 'swadeshi' push by the government. Zoho and Vembu quickly hit the headlines. However, the same year, Vembu was embroiled in a bitter divorce battle with his US-based estranged wife in California. Now, it has come to light that a US court directed Vembu to post a \$1.7 billion (Rs 15,278 crore) bond in the ongoing divorce case, according to a report in the News Minute.

The report has prompted a counter by Vembu's lawyer, with the development bringing into focus the high-stakes divorce battle between Vembu and his estranged wife, Pramila Srinivasan. It involves disputes over child custody and Zoho's ownership stakes. At the centre of the dispute is the division of marital assets acquired by the couple when they were staying in California. Under California law, property acquired during a marriage is treated

as jointly owned, regardless of where the assets are located. Before going into the intricacies of the divorce battle, here is a brief backstory of Vembu.

## THE HIGH-PROFILE DIVORCE CASE

After graduating from IIT-Madras, Vembu arrived in the US in 1989 to pursue his PhD in electrical engineering from Princeton. Four years later, he married Pramila Srinivasan, an academic and entrepreneur, in 1993. In 1996, Vembu, along with two of his brothers and his friend Tony Thomas, started a software development company called AdventNet. It was renamed Zoho Corporation in 2009.

Vembu and Srinivasan lived in California for nearly three decades. The couple have a 26-year-old son, who is diagnosed with autism. In 2019, Vembu relocated to India and began running Zoho from his ancestral village of



Mathalamparai in Tamil Nadu. In 2021, he initiated divorce proceedings. However, in court filings, Srinivasan alleged that Vembu "abandoned" her and their son with special needs when he moved back to India. While much is not known about Srinivasan, a report by Forbes in 2023 said she worked to support the family during the early years. In 2010, she founded a company called MedicalMine. She also takes care of their son.

In 2019, she started a non-profit, The Brain Foundation, to support research and treatment for those diagnosed with autism.

A source close to Srinivasan said Vembu told her WhatsApp, in November 2020, that he wanted a divorce and filed papers in August 2021, Forbes reported.

## CHARGES BY VEMBU'S WIFE

A major allegation by Srinivasan was that Vembu transferred Zoho stakes and intellectual property holdings to India via a web of complex transactions without her knowledge or consent. She claimed that she was entitled to a portion of the wealth generated during Vembu's time as Zoho's founder. She alleged that Vembu eventually placed a majority of the shares with his sister, Radha Vembu, and brother, Sekar. Radha currently holds an estimated 47.8% stake in the company, while Sekar, founder of Vembu Technologies, owns 35.2%. Vembu himself owns just 5%, worth USD 225 million.

## Amid ruckus, Delhi Assembly session extended by a day; AAP MLAs troop into well

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
The fourth day of the Delhi Assembly's Winter Session witnessed intense disruptions as the BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) clashed over demands related to Leader of Opposition Atishi. BJP legislators launched protests inside the House, even staging demonstrations from the visitors' gallery, demanding the cancellation of Atishi's membership.

After resuming the House proceeding on Thursday morning, BJP MLA and Delhi Cabinet Minister Parvesh Verma proposed that the matter related to the alleged derogatory remarks by LoP Atishi about Sikh Guru be referred to the Delhi Legislative Assembly's Privileges Committee. The Speaker directed that the entire issue be sent to the Assembly's Privileges Committee and asked it to submit a report. The Speaker adjourned the House three times before adjourning it for the next day.

BJP legislators launched protests inside the House, even staging demonstrations from the visitors' gallery, demanding the cancellation of Atishi's membership. The AAP, however, rejected these allegations and instead demanded the cancellation of Kapil Mishra's membership along with the suspension of BJP legislators linked to the controversy. In response, the AAP MLAs entered the well of the House, raising counter-slogans and demanding the resignation of BJP minister Kapil Mishra.

### AAP & BJP trade bars

BJP legislators launched protests inside the House demanding the cancellation of Atishi's membership, while AAP leaders demanded the cancellation of Kapil Mishra's membership

**Delhi govt to frame SOP for faster handling of major power outages, ensure faster restoration**

**Expert committee with DTL, SLDC, discoms to draft procedure within a month after review meetings involving Delhi Transco Limited, State Load Dispatch Centre and Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission**

### New Delhi.(Agency)

In the wake of reports of power outages in several parts of the city last year, the Delhi government is working on a standard operating procedure (SOP) to deal with any major power outages in future and ensure faster restoration of supply, officials said on Thursday.

In August last year, major power cuts had affected lakhs of power consumers in various areas in north Delhi including Civil Lines, Rohini, Shalimar Bagh, and Kashmiri Gate, among others. The outage was caused by a sudden load drop of 550 MW in the incoming supply from the 220 kV grid. In June 2024, several localities in parts of northeast, east, central, south, and north Delhi faced power outages due to a disruption caused by a fire at a power grid substation in UP's Mandola.

The need for a standard operating procedure was agreed upon in a meeting of Delhi Transco Limited (DTL), State Load Dispatch Centre (SLDC) and Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) to review the outage in North Delhi, said a power department officer. Further, in a meeting of Delhi's operation coordination committee (OCC) last month, it was decided to form an expert committee of different agencies of the government, including the power discoms, to develop the SOP.

In the OCC meeting, it was decided that the SOP should include necessary steps to be followed to prevent north Delhi-like power outages in the future, to ensure fast restoration due to failure of power elements and enhance the overall reliability of the power system of the capital, officials said.

The Committee, after its formation, will come up with the SOP within one month, after considering the technical, operational and other aspects of the power transmission distribution and restoration processes, they said. The SOP will be placed before the OCC for further deliberations before being put in place.

## WhatsApp audio spread mosque demolition rumour, says Delhi Police

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Misleading audio messages circulated on multiple WhatsApp groups were key to fuelling rumours about the alleged demolition of the Faiz-e-Elahi Mosque near the Turkman Gate, even as officers moved swiftly to counter the narrative, an official said on Thursday.

An anti-encroachment drive near the mosque in Delhi's Ramlila Maidan area on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday triggered violence as many people pelted stones at police personnel, injuring five of them, including the area's station house officer.

In all, 10 people were arrested, and a juvenile was apprehended. According to police, rumours claiming the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) was

demolishing the mosque spread primarily through voice notes shared across community, religious and neighbourhood WhatsApp groups ahead of a court-ordered anti-

encroachment drive. Investigators said several WhatsApp groups were already under police watch when the audio messages began

circulating. "Our teams had penetrated these groups and actively countered the false claims.

This helped restrict the crowd size and prevented wider mobilisation," a senior officer said.

Around four to five WhatsApp groups that showed an aggressive or provocative tone were placed under close surveillance, police said, adding that no fresh groups appeared to have been created immediately before the incident -- a factor that is being examined while probing whether the rumours were pre-planned.

"As soon as the misinformation surfaced, our ACPs and SHOs reached out to Aman Committee members, community elders and religious leaders to clarify that the mosque would not be touched," the officer said, adding that senior officers personally engaged with clerics to dispel fear.

## Delhi Assembly stalemate over Atishi video; Speaker orders forensic probe

### New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta on Thursday directed a forensic examination of a video that carries the alleged insult to Sikh Gurus by Leader of the Opposition Atishi and referred the matter to the Privileges Committee. The winter session of the Assembly was paralysed for the second day in a row as the BJP MLAs launched protests demanding action against Atishi. Opposition AAP MLAs also protested, shouting slogans and waving posters. The BJP MLAs on Tuesday accused Atishi of "insulting" the Sikh Guru after a special discussion on a programme held by the Delhi government to mark his 350th martyrdom anniversary in November last year. Gupta said that both the ruling party and the opposition Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) members have demanded a

forensic examination of the video clip. He ordered the forensic probe report to be submitted within 15 days. "The matter related to the remarks allegedly made by the Leader of Opposition regarding Sikh Gurus has been referred by Speaker Vijender Gupta to the Privileges Committee for examination and report," a statement from the Delhi Assembly secretariat read.

On Thursday, the speaker adjourned the House for the entire day amid protests. It was adjourned without transacting any business on Wednesday also.

The session has been extended for one day to complete important business, including tabling of CAG reports, motion of thanks on LG address to the House, tabling of Jan Vishwas Bill, and appropriation Bills.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Parvesh Verma demanded a time-bound completion of the probe into the matter by the Privileges Committee. Earlier, Atishi strongly rejected the charge against her and said she was talking about the BJP running away from a discussion on pollution and about their protest in the Assembly over the issue of stray dogs. "But the BJP deliberately added a false subtitle and inserted the name of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji into it," she had said.

## Tax Rate On Air Purifiers Is Sole Domain Of GST Council: Centre To Court

**"It is settled law that courts do not substitute themselves for constitutionally designated decision-makers, particularly in matters involving economic policy and fiscal structuring," the affidavit said.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
The Centre has told the Delhi High Court that matters relating to the rate, classification, and reduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on air purifiers fall exclusively within the domain of the GST Council, cautioning that any judicial direction in this regard would not only be constitutionally impermissible but would also violate the framework of cooperative federalism.

In a detailed counter-affidavit filed in response to a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking reduction of GST on air purifiers and their declaration as "medical devices", the Union government said that the GST Council is a constitutional body constituted under Article 279A of the Constitution and is the "sole constitutionally designated authority" empowered to make recommendations on GST rates, exemptions and classifications.

"The constitutional text leaves no scope for parallel, substitute, or competing recommendation-making by any other institution or authority in matters expressly entrusted to the GST Council," the Centre said, adding that any court-mandated fixation of GST rates would amount to bypassing the carefully calibrated constitutional mechanism.

"It is settled law that courts do not substitute themselves for constitutionally designated decision-makers, particularly in matters involving economic policy and fiscal structuring," the affidavit said.

"GST decisions, particularly on rates, are the outcome of a complex process of cooperative federalism, balancing competing fiscal interests of the Union and States. Judicial interference in such matters would necessarily bypass this constitutionally mandated process and

disturb the federal equilibrium," the reply document added.

It cautioned that any direction issued by the Delhi High Court to modify GST rates, convene a meeting of the GST Council, or



compel the Council to consider or adopt a particular outcome "would amount to the Court stepping into the shoes of the GST Council," an exercise that would violate the doctrine of separation of powers.

Referring to the classification

## New Delhi World Book Fair returns with free entry for first time

### New Delhi.(Agency)

For the first time since its inception in 1972, the New Delhi World Book Fair (NDWBF) will offer free entry to all visitors to enhance its accessibility. The nine-day event will commence on Friday with a special focus on the armed forces and the valour they have displayed right from the 1947 Battle of Budgam to Operation Sindoora.

Over 20 lakh people are expected to visit the fair, which will be organised at the Bharat Mandapam. 'Indian Military History: Valour and Wisdom @75' will be the central highlight of the event, which will be inaugurated by Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. While Qatar will serve as the 'Guest of Honour' country, Spain will be the 'Focus' country. Over 1,000 publishers, authors and cultural institutions from 35 countries—including Russia,



Poland, France, Abu Dhabi, Iran, Kazakhstan, Chile and Hungary—will take part in the fair, apart from a 30-strong delegation from Japan.

Milind Sudhakar Marathe, chairman of the National Book Trust (NBT), noted in a press briefing on Thursday, "For the first time in the history of the NBT, we are making entry to the fair absolutely free so that we can accommodate the maximum number of people from Delhi and around. It shows the NBT's commitment to making book-reading accessible for all."

Vijay Malak, director of the fair, said a pavilion of 1,000 square metres will honour the courage and sacrifice of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force. Sessions on major wars and military operations will take place during the nine days."

Kumar Vikram, joint director of NBT India, told this reporter, "The chiefs of the armed forces and the defence minister will be taking part in the event." Dwelling on the legacy of the fair, he noted, "The event began as a biennial affair in Delhi in 1972, and it has been organised as an annual affair since 2012. Only one fair was missed in 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic."

framework, the Centre said that air purifiers fall under tariff heading 8421, attracting 18 per cent GST, whereas medical devices are classified under headings 9018 to 9022, which attract a merit rate of 5 per cent following recent rationalisation by the GST Council. "Air purifiers are not taxed at the highest slab. They are subjected to 18 per cent GST, the highest slab being 40 per cent," the affidavit clarified. The Union government stated that the issue of GST on air purifiers is already under consideration through parliamentary procedure, following recommendations of the Departmental Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change. "Entertaining the present petition at this stage would amount to parallel consideration of issues presently pending consideration in accordance."

## NEWS BOX

## Rajinikanth punchline tattooed, New Zealand spinner Adithya Ashok ready to face India

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Having spent a couple of weeks at the CSK academy in Chennai last year, 23-year-old New Zealand leg spinner Adithya Ashok has got a basic understanding of the Indian conditions and is ready to put that knowledge to test in the three-match ODI series beginning in Baroda on January 11.

Ashok, the latest Indian-origin spinner to represent the Black Caps, moved to New Zealand from Vellore in Tamil Nadu with his family at the age of four. He was very close to his grandfather and remains connected to his roots in Tamil Nadu. As a tribute to his late grandfather, he got a tattoo inked on his bowling form that reads 'En vazhi thani vazhi' in Tamil (my way is a unique way). It is a famous line from a Rajnikanth movie that he watched with his ailing grandfather. Ashok is



a frequent visitor to India but last year was special as he got to train at the CSK Academy in Chennai. He learned about the different type of pitches (red soil, black soil) in India while back home he is usually bowling on pace friendly surfaces. Against the likes of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the three-match series, Ashok hopes the Chennai experience comes in handy.

"First of all, just on the experience in Chennai, I was very fortunate to get that opportunity. I am grateful for the opportunity from New Zealand Cricket to send me over there and with a few of our boys and learn," said Ashok in a select virtual media interaction on Thursday. "We have a great connection with Sriram Krishnamurthy, who's obviously the lead there. The things that we learned there were amazing, to be honest. Understanding about potentially how you can go about setting up batters and things like that."

"There's a lot of stuff that I learned that was really cool. For example, black soil and red soil and how those pitches behave and things like that. I think those are the big takeaways for me and it's just kind of building my library as a cricketer which is probably the most important thing." Does that stint last year make him more confident going into the series against India? "It just gives me a little bit of like a base understanding."

## New Year surprise? Virat Kohli shares training photos on Instagram after 2 years

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Virat Kohli has ended a streak that lasted nearly three years. Just days ahead of the ODI series opener against New Zealand in Vadodara, the former India captain shared photos from a training session at Kotambi Stadium on Instagram.

So, what's the big deal?

It is this: Kohli has posted images from a training session on his Instagram page for the first time since the 2023 World Test Championship final. The star batter shared



three photographs in total — one showing him striking the ball in the nets, another capturing him taking part in running drills alongside his teammates, and a third where he is seen walking towards the training ground with his kit bag. For Kohli and his fans, it marks a refreshing change. Supporters have long been eager to catch a glimpse of the veteran's preparation ahead of major series, something that has been largely absent from his social media presence in recent years. Kohli has mostly restricted his Instagram activity to commercial endorsements, holiday posts with his wife Anushka Sharma, and messages marking major career milestones. These have included celebrations following India's T20 World Cup triumph, the Champions Trophy victory and Royal Challengers Bengaluru's IPL 2025 title win. Several fans have previously expressed disappointment over Kohli's reduced engagement on social media. Once known for being highly active online, the former captain has, in recent years, chosen to limit his posts to a select few themes — making this latest training update all the more notable.

# Vinicius Jr vs Diego Simeone explained: Atletico boss criticised for crossing line

What did Simeone say to Vinicius Jr. during the Super Cup?

- How significant is Real Madrid's Super Cup final against Barcelona?
- What reasons did accused cite for transfer request?

New Delhi. (Agency)

Real Madrid booked their place in the 2026 Spanish Super Cup final with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over city rivals Atletico Madrid in the semifinal in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, but the result was overshadowed by a tense sideline exchange between Real's star forward Vinicius Jr. and Atletico manager Diego Simeone. The match, played at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium, saw Real Madrid take control early thanks to goals from Federico Valverde and Rodrygo, putting Los Blancos ahead in a fixture that pitted two of Spanish football's fiercest rivals against each other. Atletico struck back through a header from Alexander S. rloth, but Real held on to secure victory and set up a



Super Cup final clash with Barcelona. However, much of the post-match attention centred on an altercation on the touchline late in the game, when Vinicius was substituted in the 81st minute. Broadcast cameras captured Simeone addressing the Brazilian winger with provocative remarks as he walked off the pitch, reportedly telling

him: "Florentino is going to kick you out," referring to Real Madrid president Florentino Prez. The exchange, which unfolded in front of millions watching worldwide, drew immediate reactions from both benches. Vinicius appeared animated in response and was later shown a yellow card as emotions flared. Real Madrid coach Xabi

Alonso intervened, visibly displeased with Simeone's conduct and defending his player. After the match, Alonso did not hold back in condemning the incident, saying that Simeone's behaviour "crossed the line" and lacked respect. "I heard what Simeone said to Vini, and I didn't like it," Alonso said.

"You cannot talk like that, some things cross the line. It's unacceptable and it's a lack of fair play." Speculation around Vinicius has resurfaced in recent months, with reports linking the Real Madrid forward to interest from clubs in the Premier League and Saudi Pro League. However, Real Madrid officials have consistently dismissed any possibility of a move.

Simeone, meanwhile, downplayed the exchange when questioned by the media, saying he believes that "what happens on the field stays on the field," and declined to elaborate on his comments.

The incident sparked significant reaction on social media ad from supporters of both clubs. Despite the distraction, Real Madrid's focus now shifts to the final against Barcelona, a fixture that promises another fierce Clasico showdown on Sunday, January 11.

## Nick Kyrgios withdraws from Australian Open singles, set to compete in doubles

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios announced on Friday that he will not compete in the singles draw at the upcoming Australian Open, admitting he is not yet ready for the physical demands of five-set matches. Kyrgios was expected to be one of the three remaining wildcard recipients from Tennis Australia for the grand slam event, but has now pulled just a few days ahead of its start. The 30-year-old, who reached the quarter-finals of his home Grand Slam in 2015, has endured a prolonged battle with injuries in recent years. He will now feature only in the doubles competition at Melbourne Park alongside compatriot Thanasi Kokkinakis, with the tournament set to begin on January 18. Announcing his decision to withdraw from the singles event, Kyrgios revealed that his body was not quite ready for the demands of five-set matches and that he wanted the wildcard to go to someone who could "make their moment count". "After some good conversations with TA, I've made the call to focus on doubles for this year's AO. I'm fit and back on court, but five-setters are a different beast and I'm not quite ready to go the



continued to deteriorate, several reports emerged in the Bangladeshi media suggesting that the BCCI offered to allow Mustafizur Rahman to return to the IPL in an attempt to ease tensions and bring an end to the strained relationship between the two boards. However, Aminul Islam Bulbul has categorically denied that any such discussions ever took place between the two boards. "I have not had any written or verbal

discussions (with the BCCI) regarding Mustafiz's (return to the IPL). I have not spoken to anyone from my board about this. There is no truth to this news," Bulbul was quoted as saying by Ajker newspaper. Following Mustafizur's release, the BCB informed the ICC that it would not play its matches in India during the T20 World Cup 2026, citing security concerns, and expressed its desire to play those matches in co-host Sri Lanka instead.

The World Cup is scheduled to get underway on February 7, with Bangladesh set to play four matches — three in Kolkata and one in Mumbai. As of now, the ICC has not provided any indication that it will shift Bangladesh's fixtures from Kolkata and Mumbai to Colombo. The BCB has, however, asserted that the ICC has shown a willingness to work with it in assessing the stated security concerns. The board formally sent a second communication to the ICC on January 8, outlining the specific safety issues related to travelling to India for the T20 World Cup, while reiterating its request for a change of venue to Sri Lanka.

## Did BCCI offer IPL return to Mustafizur Rahman BCB president reacts to rumours

BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul denies reports of any IPL return talks for Mustafizur Rahman with the BCCI.

Bangladesh has also requested ICC to shift its T20 World Cup matches outside India over security concerns.

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

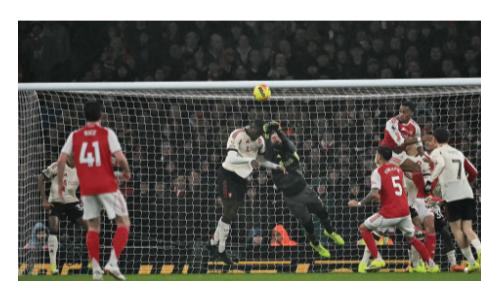
Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Aminul Islam Bulbul has responded to reports claiming that the BCCI offered to allow Mustafizur Rahman to play in the IPL 2026 amid the ongoing controversy between the two cricket boards. The BCCI had earlier asked the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) to release the Bangladeshi fast bowler from their squad, following

## Arsenal miss chance to stretch lead in Liverpool stalemate

New Delhi. (Agency)

Arsenal wasted the chance to move eight points clear at the top of the Premier League as Liverpool came to life in a 0-0 draw at the Emirates Stadium. The Reds are one of only two sides to beat Mikel Arteta's men this season and came closest to breaking the deadlock when Conor Bradley hit the crossbar. Arsenal failed to score for the first time at home all season but did enough to extend their advantage over second-placed Manchester City to six points. Three consecutive draws for City over the past week had opened the door for Arsenal to close in on their first league title in 22 years. The Emirates was bouncing before a ball was kicked in anticipation, but the spectacle between the defending champions and apparent champions elect fell flat. Both sides struggled to deal with the treacherous conditions as Storm Goretzka unleashed torrential rain and swirling winds. Liverpool

have long since fallen out of the title race since beating the Gunners at Anfield in



August, but are now 10 games unbeaten. To consolidate their place in the top four, the visitors were panned in for much of the first 45 minutes but still came closest to opening the scoring before the break. William Saliba's backpass nearly caught out David Raya and, with the Spanish goalkeeper stranded, Conor Bradley's lob came back

off the underside of the crossbar. The roles were reversed in the second period as Liverpool dominated possession and territory. However, the Reds were shorn of three of their biggest attacking threats with Alexander Isak and Hugo Ekitike out injured and Mohamed Salah away at the Africa Cup of Nations. That lack of firepower in the final third showed as Arsenal were only ever troubled by the pace of Jeremie Frimpong, who lacked the final ball to make his dangerous bursts count. Dominik Szoboszlai's stunning free-kick separated the sides when the last met and nearly repeated the trick with a powerful effort that dipped just too late. At the other end, Viktor Gyokeres was hauled off by Arteta after another poor performance as his goal drought from open play extended to 10 games. Arteta had to turn to his wealth of options off the bench to try and turn the tide as Gabriel Jesus.

distance yet. This tournament means everything to me, but I'd rather give my spot to someone who's ready to make their moment count. It's all building blocks, and I will be back next year and pumped to compete. See you out there," Kyrgios wrote on his Instagram story.

Since losing the 2022 Wimbledon final to Novak Djokovic, Kyrgios has undergone wrist reconstruction surgery and two knee operations, setbacks that have seen his world ranking slip to 670. He suffered a straight-sets defeat to Aleksandar Kovacevic in the opening round of the Brisbane Open on Tuesday and had been expected to seek a wildcard entry for the singles draw in Australia. Kyrgios previously lifted the men's doubles title at the Australian Open in 2022, partnering Kokkinakis to defeat compatriots Matthew Ebden and Max Purcell in straight sets in the final.



## WPL 2026 preview: A SWOT-driven analysis of all five teams

The 2026 WPL, taking place from January 9 to February 5 with five competitive franchises, promises high-stakes, action-packed women's cricket. Here, we break down each team's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

New Delhi. (Agency)

The 2026 Women's Premier League (WPL) promises an electrifying season of women's cricket, running from January 9 to February 5, featuring five competitive franchises — Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Gujarat Giants, and UP Warriorz. With 22 matches across venues in Navi Mumbai and Vadodara, the

tournament blends a double round-robin league with high-stakes playoffs, ensuring every game counts. Defending champions Mumbai Indians open the season against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, while each franchise looks to leverage fresh squad combinations from the mega auction, alongside a mix of seasoned internationals and emerging Indian talent. From explosive batting line-ups to tactical bowling units, every team brings distinct strengths and challenges, creating an intense and unpredictable contest. This landscape sets the stage for a team-wise SWOT analysis, examining how squad balance, leadership, domestic talent, overseas signings, and past performances could define each franchise's journey in WPL 2026.

Strengths: Mumbai Indians

Retaining key performers and adding marquee buy Amelia Kerr strengthens both batting and bowling. The squad blends experienced match-winners with emerging talent, offering tactical flexibility and a deep lineup capable of thriving under pressure. Weaknesses: Despite a strong core, MI's pace attack lacks depth beyond Shabnim Ismail and part-time options, leaving them vulnerable on batter-friendly pitches. Heavy reliance on a few overseas stars could backfire if form dips or injuries

occur. The lower order and domestic pace resources need reinforcement, while balancing overseas slots with local talent remains a

selection challenge. Opportunity: Emerging players like G Kamalini and Samskriti Gupta could grow into key contributors, bolstering MI's domestic spine. With consistent past success, the team enters 2026 confident in reclaiming the title, while new auction addition Nicola Carey adds middle-order depth. Strong early-season momentum could see MI emerge as title favourites once again. Threats: Competition in WPL 2026 is fierce, with teams like RCB and Delhi Capitals boasting deep squads. Injuries or form slumps among key overseas players could disrupt MI's balance, while opponents may exploit their seam-bowling weaknesses in the middle overs. Any failure to defend totals could threaten their playoff ambitions despite their championship pedigree.



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**Nirmala Sitharaman Endorsing Govt Scheme With Rs 25.5 Lakh Earning In 1st Month Know Truth Behind The Claim**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

A social media post is going viral that shows Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman endorsing a government scheme. In the video FM Sitharaman is heard saying that people can get Rs 25.5 lakh on the very first month of the scheme.

Fact-checking agency PIB has refuted the social media claim. PIB has stated that the claim being made in this post is misleading. Sponsored advertisements circulating on Facebook are using AI-generated and digitally manipulated videos of Union Finance Minister @nsitharaman to falsely promote an investment scheme," PIB FactCheck has tweeted.

It added that this claim is completely fake. Neither the Finance Minister nor the Government of India has endorsed or promoted any such investment scheme. PIB has also cautioned the people and urged them to follow these preventive steps

- Always verify financial claims through official government portals or regulatory bodies like RBI and SEBI. - Avoid clicking on suspicious links shared via ads or unknown pages.
- Never share personal, banking, or OTP details on unverified platforms. - Report such fraudulent ads or videos directly on the social media platform.

**Sensex, Nifty Open Lower Amid Fresh Concerns Over US Tariffs**

**CHENNAI.(Agency)**

The Indian benchmark indices posted mild losses early on Friday amid rising geopolitical tensions and renewed threats of 500 per cent US tariffs on Indian goods under the provisions of the Russia Sanctioning Act. As of 9.29 am, Sensex slipped 107 points, or 0.13 per cent to 84,073 and Nifty eased 26 points, or 0.10 per cent to 26,850. ONGC and Bharat Electronics were among top gainers on the Nifty pack. Nifty realty and media were the top losers, down 2.14 per cent and 1.34 per cent, respectively. All sectoral indices were trading in red, except IT and PSU Bank. Immediate support lies at 25,700-25,750 zone, and resistance placed at 26,150-26,200 zone, market watchers said.

After the sharp correction on Thursday triggered by the possibility of about a 500 per cent tariff on India under the provisions of the Russia Sanctioning Act approved by US President Donald Trump, the market will be focused on the verdict, expected from the US Supreme Court on the legality of Trump tariffs, analysts said. On Thursday, Nifty extended its losing streak for a fourth consecutive session, falling 263 points to close at 25,876. Asia-Pacific markets traded mixed in the morning session as investors parsed China's inflation data which accelerated in December to the fastest pace in nearly three years.

In Asian markets, China's Shanghai index gained 0.3 per cent, and Shenzhen added 0.57 per cent, Japan's Nikkei advanced 1.14 per cent, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index dipped 0.07 per cent. South Korea's Kospi advanced 0.69 per cent. The US markets were mostly in the green zone overnight even as Nasdaq lost 0.44 per cent. The S&P 500 gained 0.01 per cent, and the Dow moved up 0.55 per cent. On January 8, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) sold net equities worth Rs 3,367 crore, while domestic institutional investors (DIIs) were net buyers of equities worth Rs 3,701 crore.

**Elon Musk's xAI to build 20 billion dollar data center in Mississippi**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Elon Musk's artificial intelligence company xAI is set to spend \$20 billion to build a data center in Southaven, Mississippi. Gov. Tate Reeves announced Thursday, calling it the largest private investment in the state's history.

The data center, called MACROHARD, is being built in Mississippi's DeSoto County near Memphis, Tennessee. It will be the company's third data center in the greater Memphis area. xAI CFO Anthony Armstrong said the cluster of data centers will house "the world's largest supercomputer" with 2 gigawatts of computing power. The announcement comes as xAI faces scrutiny over its data center projects in the Memphis area. The NAACP and the Southern Environmental Law Center have raised concerns over air pollution generated by xAI's supercomputer facility located near predominantly Black communities in Memphis. A petition by the Safe and Sound Coalition, a Southaven group opposing xAI's developments, calls for shutting down xAI's operations in the area and has received more than 900 signatures as of Thursday afternoon. xAI did not immediately respond when asked for comment about environmental concerns. A fact sheet released by the Mississippi governor's office said environmental responsibility is a "core commitment" for xAI.

During the announcement, Reeves personally thanked Musk. Reeves predicted the investment would bring hundreds of permanent jobs to the community, thousands of indirect subcontracting jobs, and tax revenue to support public services. Under the incentives for data centers passed in 2024, the state will waive all sales, corporate income and franchise taxes on the xAI development. Saving sales taxes on the computing power that xAI is purchasing would likely be worth a substantial amount of money, but the Mississippi Development Authority did not immediately respond to The Associated Press' questions about how much tax revenue Mississippi will give up. DeSoto County and the city of Southaven have also agreed to allow substantially reduced property taxes.

# NSE, IGX Collaborate To Launch Indian Natural Gas Futures Contract

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

The National Stock Exchange of India Ltd (NSE) is in ongoing discussions with the Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) to launch an Indian Natural Gas Futures contract, a move aimed at strengthening the country's natural gas market ecosystem, according to an official statement on Friday. The proposed futures product aims to offer market participants a transparent, efficient risk-management tool aligned with India's evolving natural gas pricing framework, the exchange said. NSE said the collaboration would combine its deep derivatives market expertise with IGX's leadership in spot natural gas trading, price discovery and physical market development. "The introduction of Indian Natural Gas Futures is expected to benefit gas producers, city gas distribution companies, power generators, fertiliser manufacturers, industrial consumers, traders and financial participants, by enabling effective hedging against price



volatility and improving long-term planning," the statement said.

NSE Chief Business Development Officer Sriram Krishnan said the partnership "marks a significant step in NSE's efforts to deepen India's commodity derivatives

markets," adding that natural gas is emerging as a critical transition fuel for India's energy mix. Krishnan said that a domestic futures contract would "enhance price transparency, improve risk management capabilities, and support the

## Bought 3BHK Flat Without Any Fancy Job Or Inheritance; CA Explains Real-Life Story Of Surat Man

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Chartered accountant Nitin Kaushik recently posted on X the real-life story of a person who purchased a 3BHK apartment in Surat for Rs 55 lakhs without an inheritance or fancy career but with consistent discipline.

Kaushik said that he had recently met a person who despite not belonging to any privileged background, recently bought a 3BHK apartment in Surat for Rs 55 lakhs. Kaushik said this man's simple story will "change your view on wealth". When Kaushik asked the person how he managed the purchase of the home the person said that he had saved Rs 45 lakhs over 12 years and took a home loan of Rs 10 lakh. "No panic about EMIs or inflation. Just quiet confidence and planning," Kaushik said. Kaushik said, "This was not

overnight success." The man saved consistently through recurring deposits, gold savings schemes and local real estate investments in his village near Surat. Kaushik said that

or reinvested, building more wealth quietly," wrote Kaushik.

According to Kaushik, the person accumulated over Rs 40 lakh through consistent saving and reinvestment, without using stocks or mutual funds. The man's accumulation of wealth showed that "wealth is not about quick compounding but long term discipline. Many chase complex, risky strategies, but steady, patient investing builds real wealth brick by brick," he said.

According to Kaushik, wealth develops based on how long you stick to your discipline and not how much you make. "Wealth grows by how long you hold your discipline, not just by how much you earn. Even small streams, flowing steadily, become rivers. Formula for success is Consistency × Patience × Simplicity. Anyone can start this today no matter your income level," Kaushik said.



consistency added with patience over 12 years is the key to the man's success. The person already owned a two-storey home and a small commercial shop in the village, which were both rented out. The rental inflows were roughly Rs 22,000 per month. "Every rupee saved

## IIFCL seeks budget to boost borrowing programme, interest subvention for infra sector

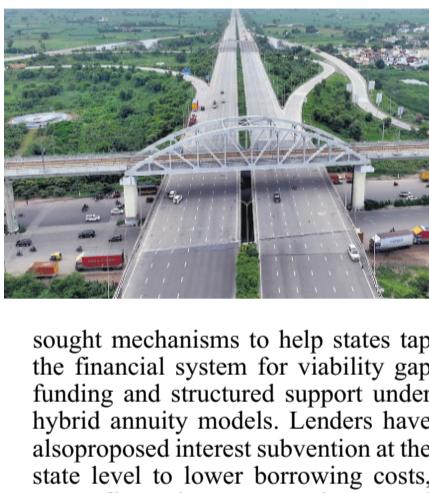
**New Delhi.(Agency)**

India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL) has suggested the Ministry of Finance to introduce measures that would promote borrowing programmes for infra lenders, alongside bringing interest subvention support for the sector. As a part of the pre-budget consultation meeting with the ministry, banks and infra financiers have even requested it to bring measures to onboard more state and urban bodies in infra financing. "We have given our recommendations to her (Finance Minister). These are on promoting borrowing programmes which actually will make it easier for developmental financial institutions to borrow from international markets at very cost-effective rates. The second track, which we have included, is on promoting a lot of distributed financing to state and urban local bodies," said Palash Srivastava, Managing Director

(Addl.Charge), IIFCL to the TNIE. Infrastructure lenders have asked the finance ministry to facilitate greater access to funding for states to support infrastructure development. They have

improved the viability of projects. "We are also looking at some interest subvention support for such financing at the state level," added Srivastava.

According to media reports, in Budget 2026, the government may announce a Rs 25,000-crore risk guarantee fund for infrastructure projects to spur bank lending. The proposed fund would offer partial protection to lenders against financial and execution risks, helping crowd in private investment and potentially fast-track stalled projects, particularly in sectors such as roads and railways.



The Center has announced a three-year Public-Private Partnership (PPP) project pipeline for FY26-28 that includes a total of 852 infrastructure projects across central ministries, states and Union Territories, with a combined investment value exceeding Rs 17 lakh crore.

## Budget 2026: Why insurance sector needs more than an FDI boost

**With FDI reforms in place, Budget 2026 must prioritise affordability, trust and protection-led incentives to close India's insurance gap and turn reform momentum into real coverage for citizens.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

As Budget 2026 approaches, expectations in the insurance sector are being shaped by the sweeping reforms of last year.

The move to allow 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) under the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha framework marked a structural shift, improving capital availability, global competitiveness and product diversity. But industry voices caution that while capital matters, it will not by itself fix deeper, long-standing issues. "The reform momentum of 2025 was significant, but the real test now is whether it translates into wider and more effective protection for citizens," said



Prantik Mitra, Director, Client Advisory Group at Alliance Insurance Brokers. He pointed out that measures such as exemptions from GST on individual life and health insurance premiums have the potential to accelerate consumer access while also improving regulatory efficiency and transparency. Despite these gains, insurance penetration remains low, and the sector continues to

struggle with trust deficits, driven largely by complex products and persistent mis-selling.

According to Mitra, Budget 2026 needs to address this imbalance by clearly separating protection from investment. A key expectation from the upcoming Budget, he said, is higher and well-defined tax incentives for pure protection products, particularly term life

development of a credible gas price benchmark aligned with Indian market fundamentals. "By leveraging NSE's market infrastructure and IGX's physical market expertise, we aim to create a futures product that is relevant, liquid and trusted by the entire gas value chain," he further said. The proposed collaboration is aligned with India's broader objective of increasing the share of natural gas in the energy basket and promoting market-based pricing mechanisms. Following regulatory approvals, NSE and IGX will announce details and timelines on contract design and work closely with stakeholders to ensure a smooth launch of the proposed derivatives contract.

The government has taken various measures to enhance the availability of natural gas for power generation, which include expansion of the National Gas Grid to connect domestic gas sources as well as Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals to power plants.

## Vodafone Idea Confirms AGR Relief, To Repay Dues In Staggered Instalments Till 2041

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Vodafone Idea said on Friday that its adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues for the period FY 2006-07 to FY 2018-19 will remain frozen from December 31, 2025, and it will repay the liability in staggered instalments through 2041. Shares of the telecom operator rose in early trade, hitting an intraday high of Rs 12.40 on the BSE, up 7.8 per cent, and were trading at Rs 12.05 on the NSE at 9:55 a.m., up 4.7 per cent. Under the repayment plan, the company said in an exchange filing that it will pay Rs 124 crore annually for six years from March 2026 to March 2031, followed by Rs 100 crore annually from March 2032 to March 2035. The



balance of the AGR dues will be paid in equal annual instalments from March 2036 to March 2041. Department of Telecommunications (DoT) will constitute a committee to reassess the AGR liability, and the committee's decision will be final, the debt laden telecom operator said.

Vodafone Idea has been grappling with a prolonged financial crisis marked by intense price competition and high debt following redefinition of AGR. Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) dues refer to payments owed by telecom companies to the government based on their (AGR). It is the revenue on which telecom operators must pay license fees and spectrum usage charges. It is defined to include all revenues, even non-telecom income (like interest, rent, asset sales).

The company has reported persistent losses, decline in subscriber base and constrained capacity to invest in network expansion, even as competitors accelerated 4G and 5G rollouts.

The relief measures approved by the Union Cabinet aim to protect the interest of the government, enable orderly payment of dues to the Centre, ensure competition in the sector and safeguard the interests of 20 crore consumers of Vodafone Idea, according to analysts.

insurance. Such a move could help close India's protection gap, attract first-time buyers, and encourage consumers to prioritise risk cover over savings-linked policies. The industry is also looking beyond tax tweaks to structural changes in how insurance is offered. Progress on composite licensing, which would allow insurers to sell life, health and general insurance under a single framework, could significantly improve efficiency and lower operating costs. Mitra noted that this would also support the development of simpler, bundled products that are easier for customers to understand and afford, addressing one of the sector's biggest pain points.

For policymakers, the message from the industry is clear. While an FDI reset may grab headlines, the insurance sector needs a broader policy push focused on affordability, trust and access.

A budget that builds on last year's reforms while correcting product incentives and distribution gaps could help move India closer to the long-term goal of Insurance for All by 2047, something no ownership reform alone can achieve.

# Dhanashree Verma

**Yuzvendra Chahal To Reunite For The FIRST Time After Divorce? Find Out**

**D**hanashree Verma and Yuzvendra Chahal are likely to reunite for the first time ever since their divorce. If a report by Siasat is to be believed, the former couple has been approached for the upcoming reality show, The 50. While it remains unclear if either Dhanashree or Yuzvendra has agreed to participate, strong

buzz suggests that both are in discussions with the team.

**What Is The 50?**

Like Bigg Boss, The 50 will be available on JioHotstar and Colors TV, making it easily accessible to viewers. However, the show aims to stand out with a format Indian audiences have not witnessed before.

Centered around a bold concept involving 50 contestants

living together in a grand mahal without a fixed set of rules, the show leans into chaos and unpredictability. As per reports, a mix of celebrities, social media influencers, and former Bigg Boss contestants are being considered for the show as of now.

The 50 is India's version of the popular French series, Les Cinquante. The format also inspired an American adaptation back in 2023, titled Los 50, which aired on Telemundo. The 50's premiere date has not been announced as of now.

**Dhanashree Verma-Yuzvendra Chahal's Divorce**

Verma and Chahal, who tied the knot in 2020, finalised their divorce in February 2025. Dhanashree, who was last seen in Rise and Fall, often talked about her former husband on the show. In one of the episodes, she opened up about their relationship, revealing details of their engagement, marriage, and eventual split. "Even though I saw him changing, I put my trust in him and the relationship. My problem is that I love giving too many chances to the people around me. But eventually, I got done with it. I tried to do everything I could from my side and give my hundred per cent. I'll always be concerned for him; that much I can guarantee," she had said.



## Ananya Panday

**Brings Effortless Elegance In Stunning Purple Dress**

**A**nanya Panday has slowly built a reputation for her fashion choices, and over the years, she has delivered several looks that have stayed with fans long after the event. Whether it's a red carpet appearance or a casual outing, the actress often keeps her style clean, current and easy to relate to. She was last seen on screen in the rom-com Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri alongside Kartik Aaryan, and the promotions for the film saw her stepping out in one striking outfit after another. During the promotions of the film, she experimented with different silhouettes, colours and textures, giving fashion lovers plenty to take notes from. Even after the film's release, Ananya hasn't slowed down on the style front. She recently made an appearance at an event where her outfit instantly grabbed attention for its rich colour and graceful design.

**Ananya Panday turns head in purple dress**

Ananya Panday recently attended an event in a purple dress from luxury label Taller Marmo. The La Luna crystal kaftan stood out for its relaxed yet

refined appeal. The draped silhouette gave the outfit an easy movement, while the crystal-buckle belt cinched the waist just enough to add definition. The subtle shimmer from the belt added a hint of drama without overpowering the look, making it both elegant and modern.

Keeping her accessories minimal, Ananya paired the dress with a diamond necklace and matching earrings, letting the outfit remain the highlight. Her styling



stayed clean and fuss-free, allowing the rich colour and detailing of the dress to do all the talking. According to the brand's official website, the dress is priced at 1,400 euros, which roughly translates to 14,703. Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri, starring Ananya Panday alongside Kartik Aaryan, released on Christmas last year. Backed by Dharma and directed by Sameer Vidwans, the movie received negative reviews and bombed at the box office. Meanwhile, Ananya will next be seen in Dharma's rom-com Chand Mera Dil alongside Lakshya. She will also reprise her role as Bella Rajvansh in Amazon's series Call Me Bae, season 2.

**Why Comedian Bharti Singh's 3-Year-Old Son Wanted To 'Leave The House'**



**C**omedian Bharti Singh, who frequently captures her life events in her popular vlogs, recently shared an emotional moment with her three-year-old son, Laksh. In a video shared by Singh, Laksh is seen making an unusual demand: he wishes to leave the house. The kid tells Singh to pack his bags so that he can leave. Singh was worried. Later in the video, Laksh innocently explains the reason behind his demand, bringing relief to the actress.

In the video, a visibly distressed Singh notes that it made her feel so weird when her son kept insisting on leaving the house. Wiping her tears, she then faces her son: "You should not say like this."

**What Laksh Said In Video**

Sharing more about the moment on Wednesday, Bharti said, "Pata nahi achanak se bolne lag gaya mera bag pack kardo, mujhe jaana hai. Aapko chhod ke chala jaaunga. Mujhe itna ajeeb feel hua. Aise nahi bolte Laksh. Aap papa ko bologe papa bhi rone lag jaayeng."

Hum aapko achhe nahi lagte? Phir aise kyun bolte ho main ghar chhod ke chala jaaunga? Aapko acha lagta hai mumma roti hai? (I don't know why, suddenly he started saying, 'Pack my bag, I want to go. I will leave you.' It felt so strange. Laksh, you don't say things like this. If you say this to papa, he will start crying too. Don't you like us? Then why do you say you will leave the house? Do you enjoy seeing mumma cry?")

**Laksh Reveals Reason Behind Demand**

As the video progresses, Laksh reveals the reason behind his abrupt demand. He sweetly explained that he just wanted to go downstairs to play and would return soon. Relieved, Bharti smiled and told him she loved him the most, even more than Kaju (her second child). "I love you very much, even more than Kaju. I love you the most, and Kaju comes second," she said. Singh embraced motherhood again in December 2025, welcoming her second son, Kaju. She and Haars Limbachiyaa married in 2017 after dating for a few years and had their first child, Laksh, in April 2022. Just three weeks after giving birth, Bharti has already returned to work.

**Alia Bhatt FINALLY Breaks Silence On Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar, Calls It 'Movie Magic'**



**A**lia Bhatt has finally reacted to the success of Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar. Dhurandhar has firmly established itself as one of Bollywood's biggest blockbusters, ensuring that Hindi cinema ended 2025 on an emphatic high. The Aditya Dhar-directed film has generated significant buzz, and many big names in Bollywood have appreciated the film. However, if there is one person whose silence Reddit could not seem to comprehend, it was Alia Bhatt.

Now, Alia Bhatt has finally appreciated the film. Her production house, Eternal Sunshine Productions, took to Instagram to celebrate the film's success. The post read, "It's the voice of today's India. It's the choice of today's India. It's based on a chapter in history. And now it's the number one chapter in India's cinema history. Cheers to Dhurandhar. And three cheers to the ENTIRE team. You not only created waves —you brought the high tide back to the theatres. If this is what part one did in winter, imagine what part two will bring in spring!!! She reposted it with the caption, "Movie magic."

Not just Eternal Sunshine Productions, even YRF took to their social media account and, while applauding the film, shared, "DHURANDHAR is not a film... It's a milestone moment in Indian cinema that will be remembered forever. Congratulations to Aditya Dhar and Jio Studios for becoming the highest-grossing Indian film of all time (in a single language)." The production house continued and added, "As the captain of the ship, Aditya Dhar's clarity of purpose, fearless storytelling, and unwavering commitment to excellence have set a new benchmark for Indian cinema. We also congratulate every cast member and technician of this brilliant film for giving their all. You are the Dhurandhars who made the thought of the film explode so loudly and so gloriously on the big screen. Thank you for giving us cinema that inspires us to strive forward in the pursuit of creative excellence."

**About Dhurandhar**

Directed by Aditya Dhar, Dhurandhar is the first part of a two-film series. Ranveer plays Hamza, an Indian spy who infiltrates Lyari's criminal and political underworld in Pakistan as part of a covert anti-terror mission. The story blends fiction with real geopolitical events, including the 1999 IC-814 hijacking, the 2001 Indian Parliament attack, and the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.



Build your immunity for

# Winter



## Which foods are the best and why?

**Cabbage:** It helps the skin gain immunity against dryness and acne.

**Cauliflower:** It has anti-inflammatory properties and is rich in antioxidants.

**Nuts:** Nuts keep your internal body temperature warm and regulated and provide immunity against fever.

Even as you are enjoying the pleasant change in weather, the winter chill will soon bring along with it ailments like cold, flu and fever. The best way to prevent falling ill during this season is to boost your immunity. As it is, one tends to feel hungrier than usual in winter, so it is important to indulge in the right kind of food. You also need to follow a proper exercise regime, so make lifestyle changes to ensure you get maximum benefits.

### Opt for homemade meals

Foods that stimulate immunity are typically fresh, home-cooked foods, which include milk, yogurt, green leafy vegetables, whole grains and clarified ghee (in moderation) and are strongly recommended by Ayurveda. It also encourages the consumption of foods with sweet, salty and sour tastes during the cold months of winter for the required boost. At the same time, remember to avoid cold drinks and cold foods since these dampen the gastrointestinal digestive juices. Avoid

and seeds, apart from fresh fruits and vegetables. Keep your digestive system healthy to build up your immune system. Add good bacteria to your diet in the form of fermented foods. Yogurt, kefir and kimchi are some such foods which should be included in your diet.

### Get a balanced diet

During winter, the market gets a bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables. So, your focus should be on getting as many nutrients through proper food. A balance of Vitamins A, C, D and E, minerals like selenium and zinc, antioxidants and Omega 3 is required to support your immune system and they can be found in meat, legumes, cereals, whole grains, nuts

eating stale, left-over items, deep fried foods, soft drinks, processed meats, baked products, and artificial sweeteners or refined sugars, since they excessively load the system with extra and unnecessary calories. They also dampen the increased gastrointestinal digestive fire thus having a negative impact on immunity.

### Add herbs and spices to your food

Herbs and spices contain all the required components that help boost the immune system. Use ginger, garlic, black pepper, turmeric, thyme, basil and cinnamon.

### Avoid getting dehydrated

Most of us don't feel very thirsty in the cold weather, thus leading to dehydration. It is important to drink lots of water, so that it can spread to various parts of the body and increase blood circulation. Infuse your water with citrus fruits and sip on it throughout the day to get an extra dose of Vitamin C as well.

### Get adequate rest

Getting proper sleep for around seven to eight hours every night will rejuvenate you. It also takes care of putting your body to proper rest before it starts work again the next day. It increases the body's ability to fight infections and keeps the viruses at bay.

### De-stress yourself

Stress can increase your chances of falling ill so manage your anxiety levels. The cold weather can make you prone to depression so it is important to take steps to relax. Try meditation and yoga for the

body, watch comedy shows on TV, keep the company of witty friends, visit your neighbours or do a good deed! All these will affect you positively and help strengthen your immune system.

### Get some sun

This is the best weather to go for sunshine walks, since, in winter, the sun is not too harsh. A morning walk will ensure you get natural Vitamin D, which is needed for better bone health. You can also indulge in simple exercises in the open like walking, jogging or stretching exercises.

(with inputs from weight management expert Dr Amrapali Patil and nutritionist Dr Monica Jacob.)



## Seven hacks to good Health for mothers

Eat well, stay hydrated and snack smart for good health while balancing pregnancy with busy schedules, says an expert.

Poornima Shankar, Senior Research Scientist at The Himalaya Drug Company, gives some tips on how mothers and mothers-to-be can recharge their energy:

**Striking the energy balance:** Eating healthy food is important but ensuring that the energy intake is just as much as the energy you release, is more important. If your food intake is greater than the energy spent, you will experience a positive energy balance and gain weight. Likewise, when the energy spent is higher than the energy intake, there is a negative energy balance and results in weight loss and exhaustion.

**Tip:** During pregnancy, eat healthy and stay active. Do not try to lose weight. Post-pregnancy, continue to eat healthy and begin an exercise routine that will help you lose weight and keep it off.

**Rainbow on your plate:** A balanced diet is all about macronutrients and micronutrients. The former provide energy in the form of carbohydrates, proteins and fat. The latter includes vitamins and minerals that help the body function well. An expectant mom's diet should contain a balance of both micronutrients and macronutrients for baby's healthy development.

**Tip:** Ensure your diet is rich in proteins, good fats, sprouts, fish, fruits and vegetables.

**Relax and rejuvenate:** It is important for every mother to break out from the daily routine and rejuvenate in order to stay both mentally and physically strong. Something as simple as a long and deep breath can double up as a break at times. A lot of mothers tend to worry about post-pregnancy weight gain and other skin-related concerns. Such concerns do have an impact on their overall health.

**Tip:** Regular deep breathing exercises and mild yoga as per physician's advice will help mothers relax.



**Not all fats are bad:** Healthy fats found mainly in plant-based natural liquid forms, like olive oil, are good for health as they reduce bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol. Intake of saturated fats like butter or ghee, should be limited as they can raise

bad cholesterol and reduce good cholesterol which, in turn, increase health risks. Consuming omega 3 fats is important for good skin health and overall heart health.

**Tip:** Include fatty fish and vegetarian sources like flaxseeds and walnuts in your diet to make it rich in good fat.

**Snack smart:** Pick nutrient and fibre-rich, low-to-medium calorie munchies that keep you full for longer. Choose lighter snacks instead of heavy,

greasy snacks to avoid heartburn and gastric issues during and post-pregnancy. Nuts are rich in protein, fibre, vitamin E and essential fatty acids or good fats. Dairy products contain protein, calcium, Vitamins A and D, and essential fats. Eggs are a source of protein, Vitamins A and D, and essential fats. Vegetables and fruit contain fibre, vitamins, minerals, and nutrients from plants.

**Tip:** Eating often and having smaller portions should be the mantra.

Cut on salt: Reduce salt intake as extra salt can raise blood pressure. In pregnant women, excessive salt intake can increase the risk of hypertension which can lead to further complications. Limit the addition of excessive table salt to food.

**Tip:** Avoid pickles, papad, and salted snacks.

**Stay hydrated:** Last but not the least, it is very important to keep yourself well hydrated all the time. Pregnant women and lactating mothers should drink plenty of fluids including water, milk, buttermilk, juices, ice and tender coconut water.

## Is your shoe right for you?

Marilyn Monroe has famously said, "Give a girl the right shoes, and she can conquer the world." She may not be talking about workout shoes here but one can easily co-opt it for those. Because what you choose to wear on your feet for your next workout can make or break your body, say fitness experts. And it's not just a 'good' shoe you are looking at but the 'right' shoe. "Shoes are the most important part of your workout gear. It's what your entire body rests on and forms the base for all your workouts," says Mumbai-based celebrity fitness trainer, Mustafa Ahmed.

There's a reason why sports goods companies spend so much time and money on research on shoes. "Each sport or workout has a different movement and shoes are designed to adhere to that," says sports medicine expert Dr Pushpinder Bajaj.

If the shoe fits

Dr Bajaj says that every fitness need requires a different shoe. Runners need something with more cushioning and bounce, tennis players' shoes should be able to handle the side-to-side movement and walkers need shoes with a stronger base. "The reason for wearing the correct shoe is to minimise the impact on your foot and knees," he says. For problem feet (like flat foot), you should follow expert advice.

Ahmed has seen people's attitude towards their workout shoe change. Earlier, people would do double duty with their shoes – making it a case of one shoe fits all, they have now realised wrong shoes can cause injury. "Serious gym-goers won't go in for 'buzzwords' like zigzag soles or butt-toning shoes now," he says.

The life of a shoe

When looking for a shoe, Dr Bajaj says the safest bet is to pick an "upper-end brand". His rationale: big brands do solid research before putting a shoe out. Start with a budget of at least Rs 3,000 for a good shoe. But even the best brands are not going to last you more than a year. "If you are a runner and run five times a week, change your shoe every 6-9 months or 500 miles, whichever comes first," he advises.

For walkers, the life of a shoe is a year, not more.

But follow some shoe-tiquette and don't treat your workout shoe as outdoor shoes. "Always carry your shoes in a gym bag and change while at the gym," Ahmed advises. The point: treat your shoe well, and it will return the favour.

### 6 COMMON SHOE MISTAKES TO AVOID

Starting new workout with old shoes

Don't grab the old trainers and start a new workout. They may not have the same support as before and may not be suited to the activity.

Wearing them everywhere

Keep your workout shoes as workout shoes. Don't wear them around town. You will break down a good pair of shoes by running errands and not exercising.

Pick a cross-trainer for everything

Shoes are activity specific. A good cross-trainer can't be a go-to shoe for all activities – they are best kept for gym workouts. Anything more intense requires a specialised shoe.

Not changing them often

The life of a workout shoe is not more than a year (and that's stretching it). Experts recommend that runners replace their shoes every 500 miles. If you exercise five days a week, a year is the most your shoe will serve you.

Sticking to the same size

Get your shoe size checked every year. It can change. It's said that our feet tend to grow bigger as we age.

Buying at a department store

Don't go to buy a shoe in a multi-brand department store looking for a bargain. Shop for a shoe at a speciality athletic shoe store and ask their in-house expert. Get a foot evaluation and discuss your specific need.