

CM Bhagwant Singh Mann appears before Sri Akal Takht Sahib as humble Sikh

The Sikh Times
Simmi Kaur
Babbar

AMRITSAR, 15th January 2026:
Walking barefoot while reciting prayers, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Thursday bowed before Sri Akal Takht Sahib as humble Sikh, devoting the entire day to the supreme temporal seat of the Sikhs. Appearing before the Jathedar Sahib at the Akal Takht Secretariat, the Chief Minister

offered a detailed clarification on his earlier statements, reiterating that he stands as a humble Sikh with complete faith in the authority of the Sri Akal Takht Sahib, accepts every decision taken by it, and has no question whatsoever of challenging or undermining its supremacy. Interacting with the media after his appearance at the Sri Akal Takht Sahib Secretariat, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said he had personally come in compliance with the directions of the Jathedar Sahib. "As per the orders of the Jathedar Sahib, I appeared here as a humble Sikh and submitted my explanation in response to the queries raised. Sri Akal Takht Sahib is the supreme authority for the entire Sikh community, and it is supreme for me as well," he said, adding that the Jathedar Sahib had recorded his statement and that further action would be taken after consultations with the Singh Sahibans. Reaffirming his complete



respect for every decision of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, the Chief Minister said, "I will abide by every decision of the Jathedar Sahib. My appearance here has given me immense contentment, inner peace and satisfaction."

He categorically rejected the narrative being created by imidical forces about any alleged tussle between Sri Akal Takht Sahib and the Punjab government, calling it "totally false." "There is no question of challenging or weakening the authority of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, which is supreme for all the Sikhs. The domain of my government is crystal clear, to work for the progress of Punjab and the prosperity of its people," he said. Declaring himself

as Punjab's sewadar, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said he would leave no stone unturned for the well-being of Punjab and Punjabis. "I perform ardas daily for the chardi kala of the state. My head bows before every religious place even at a single glance. It is impossible that any action of mine can be against the state or its people," he said. The Chief Minister said that as an advocate of the sentiments of millions of people, he had submitted 25,000 to 30,000 pages of complaints, to the

Jathedar Sahib. "These complaints reflect the emotions of people who have flagged various anomalies in the functioning of the SGPC. I have humbly requested the Jathedar Sahib to get these complaints investigated, as the feelings of millions are attached to them. Institutions are always supreme while individuals heading them can err. Such individuals deserve no leniency for their misdeeds," he added.

Continued news page 2

Court Refuses To Stay Trial Against Lalu Yadav, Son Tejashwi In IRCTC Case

The court, however, said the trial court could hold the cross-examination of witnesses "next-to-next" week, by which time it would decide the petitions by the father-son duo against a trial court order framing charges in the case.

New Delhi (Agency)
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday said it will not stay the ongoing trial against RJD leader Lalu Prasad and his son Tejashwi Yadav in the IRCTC scam. The court, however, said the trial court could hold the cross-examination of witnesses "next-to-next" week, by which time it would decide the petitions by the father-son duo against a trial court order framing charges in the case. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal appeared on behalf of Lalu Prasad, the RJD supremo, and submitted that on the last occasion, the court had posted the matter today for hearing on the issue of stay of the trial during the pendency of the present petitions against framing of charges. He said after the examination of witnesses, the trial court would begin the proceedings for cross-examination of witnesses.

"Let examination-in-chief be done. I am not giving them a stay," said Justice



Swarana Kanta Sharma, adding that she would adjudicate the matter finally next week instead of first deciding the issue of stay. "Start cross-examination next-to-next week and I will conclude arguments and

cheating, criminal conspiracy under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act. The trial court had also made a scathing observation that the land and share transactions in the case were "possibly an instance of crony capitalism fostered in the garb of eliciting private participation in the Railways' hotels at Ranchi and Puri." Lalu said in the chargesheet that there was no material to incriminate him. "From the perusal of the entire chargesheet papers, it is evident that the CBI has neither adduced any iota of evidence, either documentary or oral, nor have they recorded any statement of any witness, nor have they been able to establish from the circumstantial evidence that there was an agreement between two or more persons to commit an offence," the petition said. "No single document has been placed on records, which even indicates that the petitioner had any meeting or meeting of the mind with any of the officials posted.

Rahul Gandhi to meet Indore diarrhoea victims as state rolls out Rs 800-crore water project

Bhopal (Agency)
Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi will visit Indore on January 17 to meet families who lost their loved ones in a diarrhoeal outbreak triggered by contaminated water in the city's Bhagirathpura locality since the last week of December 2025.

Confirming the visit, Madhya Pradesh Congress president Jitendra Patwari said on Wednesday evening, "I received Rahul Ji's message today that he will be meeting the bereaved families in Indore." Since December 24, 2025, at least 23 people, including a six-month-old infant, have died in Bhagirathpura and nearby localities due to the outbreak. However, the local administration has placed the official death toll at 15, based on an audit conducted by a team of specialised doctors.

The Indore district administration has so far provided compensation of Rs 2 lakh each to 18 affected families. According to the office of the district chief medical and health officer, 27 patients are currently undergoing treatment in various hospitals in Indore, with eight of them admitted to intensive care units.

Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Wednesday performed the bhoomi puja of a long-pending drinking water supply project worth over Rs 800 crore in Indore under the Swachh Jal Abhiyan. The project is part of the AMRUT 2.0 Indore Water Supply Scheme (Package-1) and is aimed at providing a long-term and modern solution to the city's drinking water needs. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said Indore had emerged as one of the fastest-growing cities in the country. "Indore has carved a distinct identity in the fields of development, cleanliness, industry, trade, and good governance, making the entire State of Madhya Pradesh proud. Indore's true identity lies in its resilient and hardworking people, indomitable spirit and progressive mindset."

Referring to the recent incident, he said, "During challenging times, the government, municipal corporation and administration stood firmly with citizens, making every possible effort with sensitivity and commitment. The recent water-related incident in the Bhagirathpura area had caused deep anguish. Indore would not resort to opportunistic politics in times of disaster."

"No Indian Company Will Be...": Shashi Tharoor On Trump's Iran Tariffs

New Delhi (Agency)
Expressing "serious concern" over US President Donald Trump's 25 per cent tariff announcement against countries trading with Iran, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Congress MP Shashi Tharoor asserted that "no Indian company will be viable in exporting to America at 75 per cent. The Congress MP said he had been "troubled" by the US tariff regime from the very beginning, adding that India was already at a disadvantage compared to its regional competitors.

Speaking to ANI on Wednesday, Tharoor said, "I have always been troubled about these tariffs because even the very first 25 per cent that was given to India was a problem



because all the other economies, our rivals in South East Asia, who are competing with us in terms of labour-intensive industries that we produce, that we export to America like gems, jewellery, marine products, shrimp, leather, all these kinds of goods countries like Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and even

Pakistan and Bangladesh were all given tariff between 15 per cent and 19 per cent. He added that the situation had worsened with additional sanctions-related tariffs. "So, the 25 per cent was already a problem. Now, you have 25 per cent more for Russian sanctions which takes it up to 50 per cent and if there are 25 per cent more in Iranian sanctions, that it takes it up to 75 per cent. So, let's face it, no Indian company will be viable in exporting to America at 75 per cent," Tharoor said.

"It will be only those items that are not so far sanctioned, like pharmaceuticals and so, which we can continue selling. The other items will not be viable. So, it is troubling. I don't know what the Government is saying, but from my point of view, this is very serious," he asserted.

Hundreds of lies are being told to prove one lie as truth : Sirsa

The Sikh Times
Sourabh Sharma

New Delhi, January 15, 2026:
Honorable Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa launched a scathing attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Leader of Opposition Atishi, and the Punjab Government during a press conference yesterday. He stated that this entire matter is an organized attempt to prove a lie as truth. The Hon'ble Minister remarked that the political character of AAP has been based on lies from the very beginning. Arvind Kejriwal promised he would not take security, a government house, a car, or air travel, and then did all of it. This is the true reality of AAP's politics. Continuing this tradition, Atishi is now trying to cover up the derogatory words used in reference to Guru Teg Bahadur Ji inside the Delhi Assembly with lies and the cover of a false forensic report.

Sirsa clarified that this case is State vs Meta, not against individuals whose social media accounts are being scrutinized.

Despite this, Police presented a list of several people's Facebook, Instagram, and X (Previously Twitter) accounts in court, but none were made parties to the case.

He questioned why, if the intention was to bring out the truth, the accused individuals were not made parties to the case.

Sirsa stated that the so-called forensic investigation used to mislead the Hon'ble court was conducted:

- Without the original Assembly video,
- Without summoning Atishi,
- Without taking her voice sample,
- And without any IT or cyber forensic expert instead prepared by a constable using an AI tool.

He added that the report nowhere specifies which part of the video, from which second



to which second, was tampered with. Merely stating that "the video is doctored" is not forensics but storytelling. Using the police to protect Atishi is highly shameful. The police, which should handle law and order in the state, is busy in searching our social media accounts. The Punjab Government itself is fighting the case to save Atishi. The insult to Guru Sahib

by Atishi inside the Assembly deserves as much condemnation as possible. Sirsa noted that since the incident, Atishi has not come forward publicly, appeared in the Assembly, or clarified her statement. Registering an FIR by the police before the independent forensic investigation initiated by the Honorable Assembly Speaker shows fear of the truth emerging.

In an emotional tone, Sirsa said that the words spoken during the honoring of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji are not just a political controversy but a grave religious offence. He stated that he himself bows before Guru Sahibs daily and understands Guru Maryada, while AAP is mocking the entire issue and hurting religious sentiments. Sirsa emphasized that no matter if one hundred or a thousand lies are told to prove one lie as truth, the truth will not change. He said that neither Atishi nor Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann will ever be free from this sin.

Front continued news
CM Bhagwant Singh Mann appears before Sri Akal Takht Sahib as humble Sikh

The Chief Minister asserted, "Every order of Sri Akal Takht Sahib is acceptable to me. It is the highest temporal body of the Sikhs, and my family and I abide by it fully," he said, expressing gratitude to the Jathedar Sahib for presenting him with two important books related to the Sikh Rehat Maryada and the Gurdwara Act.

On the constitution of the Special Investigation Team (SIT), CM Bhagwant Singh Mann clarified that it was not a political move. "The SIT has been constituted solely to trace the missing sarops of Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji. Its mandate is strictly confined to tracing them so that they are not misused," he said. He added that he had also sought the intervention of the Jathedar Sahib to direct the SGPC to provide the unique codes assigned to each sarop published by it, to facilitate tracing of the missing sarops.

CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said the Punjab Police and the state government would trace the sarops and inform Sri Akal Takht Sahib and the SGPC about their location, ensuring further action strictly as per Rehat Maryada. "The police have already been instructed not to enter the premises of religious places where the sarops are traced," he said, adding that the Jathedar Sahib had informed him that prior to 1998, the printing of Sri Guru Granth Sahib had been carried out at several places.

News box

Six perform stunts on moving car in Gurgaon, held after clip goes viral

Noida.(Agency)

Six persons have been arrested for performing stunts on the roof of a moving car in Sector 85, near Dwarka Expressway. A video of the incident went viral on social media, raising safety concerns. A case was registered on Monday for negligent and dangerous driving. The accused, Shaikin (33), Manish (32),



Lokesh (24), Subhash (39), Vikash (29)—all residents of Alakhpura village in Bhiwani district—and Saleem (35), a resident of Sulkhani village in Hisar district, were arrested by Kherki Daula police on Tuesday.

The accused told investigators they were travelling from Delhi to Shaikin's office in Daulatabad after partying. Police have seized the vehicle, Shaikin's Scorpio bearing the number HR16AE5012. Further investigation into the case is underway. "Such actions amount to serious negligence and can lead to fatal accidents. We request the public to avoid stunts and irresponsible behaviour on roads to avoid any legal action. Gurgaon police will continue stringent action against those endangering public safety," police spokesperson Sandeep Kumar said.

Wanderlust, work and edu fuelling demand for international driving permits

Noida.(Agency)

Applications for International Driving Permits (IDPs) have steadily risen over three years, reflecting growing overseas mobility. As per Noida Transport Department data, 1,990 applicants obtained IDPs in 2025—up from 1,808 in 2024 and 1,758 in 2023. Officials link the surge to increased travel for work, education and tourism as more residents seek international driving credentials. An IDP enables Indian driving licence holders to legally drive motor vehicles in foreign countries where such permits are recognised.

"We receive applications from people travelling to the United Kingdom, the United States of America and several other countries for leisure and work. A significant number of applications also come from students going abroad for higher studies," said Noida assistant regional transport officer (ARTO) Nand Kumar.

To apply for an international driving licence, an applicant must hold a valid Indian driving licence along with a valid passport and visa. The application process is online, and the prescribed fee is Rs 1,000. In the application form, the candidate needs to mention their name, address, date of birth, qualification, blood group, whether they received an IDP in the past, criminal cases, if any, etc. The officials issue the IDP after verification of the details.

Applications are usually processed on the same day, allowing applicants to receive the permit without delay. An IDP is valid for one year from the date of issue, the ARTO said. According to transport officials, an IDP functions as an official translation of the domestic driving licence and is often required by foreign authorities. It is commonly used while renting vehicles and for identity checks by traffic enforcement agencies in host countries. In many countries, car rental companies insist on an IDP along with the original Indian driving licence before handing over a vehicle.

An IDP serves as a crucial legal document for Indians living or travelling abroad, officials said. It helps to ensure compliance with local traffic laws and offers peace of mind by reducing the risk of fines or legal complications while driving in a foreign country.

Agent who sold Rs 1.5 lakh per month pay dreams handed Indians to cybercrime cartel held

Noida.(Agency)

A man rescued from Myanmar, where he was allegedly forced to work for a cybercrime cartel, has helped police crack an international "cyber slavery" network. On Wednesday, a cybercrime unit arrested an agent from Jalalpur, Shamli, for luring young Indians with high-paying overseas job offers but handing them over to Southeast Asian syndicates. According to police, Shubham Pundir acted as a local recruiter for foreign-based cybercriminal groups, playing a key role in trapping Indian youths into exploitative work abroad. DCP (cybercrime) Shavya Goyal said Pundir used Instagram to advertise lucrative data-entry jobs in Thailand, promising salaries over Rs 1.5 lakh per month, along with free accommodation and meals. Prospective candidates were invited for "interviews" and charged fees between Rs 80,000 and Rs 1 lakh for travel arrangements. The case came to light after a resident of Sector 73, filed a

complaint on Jan 12, claiming that he contacted Pundir through Instagram, trusting him as a legitimate overseas placement consultant. He paid Rs 80,000 and travelled to Thailand in July 2023. Upon arrival, he was detained by unidentified men and later forcibly taken to Myanmar, where he was coerced into working for a cyber fraud syndicate, Goyal said. The victim claimed he was subjected to physical torture, severe psychological pressure, and compelled to run online scams targeting foreign nationals. During captivity, he was forced to manage fake social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and Tinder, befriending and emotionally manipulating targets to draw them into fraudulent investment schemes or online relationships. Refusal to comply resulted in beatings and threats, officials said. The man was rescued in Nov last year through a coordinated operation between the Indian and Myanmar govt, which freed 360 Indians trapped in similar cybercrime networks. Upon



returning to India, he approached the cybercrime cell and registered a case that led to Pundir's arrest. Investigators said Pundir had so far sent at least six youths abroad, who were subsequently handed over to cybercrime groups. Police have seized his mobile phone for forensic examination, while his bank accounts

Rera nod to 131 projects, 35k housing units to come up in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The city's property market remained on a strong growth trajectory in 2025, with Real Estate Regulatory Authority approving projects involving investments of Rs 86,588 crore last year. The authority cleared 131 projects, paving the way for the development of 35,455 units and underscoring robust investor confidence in the city's real estate prospects. Officials said 28 of these projects alone accounted for Rs 59,360 crore, reflecting the continued dominance of large-scale developments. Residential projects dominated the approvals during the year, spanning multiple housing segments. The approved housing stock includes 17,405

group housing units and 5,720 mixed land use units. In addition, 4,040 residential floor units were cleared, catering largely to plotted and low-rise housing demand. The regulator also approved 2,122 affordable group housing units and 1,954 units under the Deen Dayal housing scheme, in an effort to ensure a more balanced and inclusive housing supply. Another 214 units were cleared under the RPC category. Commercial real estate also saw steady traction, with about 4,000 commercial units approved during 2025. Of these, 168 units were earmarked for IT parks, reinforcing the city's role as a key office and technology hub in the NCR. Experts said the continued expansion of

office and IT spaces is likely to support housing demand, particularly in sectors with established connectivity and social infrastructure. To strengthen the project approval process, Gurgaon RERA introduced several institutional reforms during the year. These included stricter scrutiny of documents and disclosures submitted by developers, mandatory site inspections by domain experts before granting approvals, and making public consultation through public notices a compulsory step in the registration process. Officials said these measures were aimed at improving transparency, enhancing regulatory oversight, and protecting the interests of homebuyers.

Rooms built on govt land razed in Gurgaon amid protest from locals

Noida.(Agency)

Amid resistance from villagers, Haryana Shahari Vikas Pradhikaran (HSV) carried out a demolition drive on Thursday, razing the house of Congress functionary Rajesh Yadav and several other residential structures that obstructed the construction of a main road between sectors 68 and 69.

Around 100 rooms and shanties were demolished during the day-long operation. Yadav was detained after he stood in front of a bulldozer along with villagers to protest the action. The demolition team, led by HSV sub-divisional officer (survey) Gyan Chand Saini, reached the site near Pareena Micasa Society in Sector 68 around 10 am, accompanied by bulldozers and police. Officials said the structures stood on govt land falling within the alignment of a proposed main road linking Sohna Road with the



Gurgaon-Sohna Highway. Yadav claimed that no prior notice was served. "The house has existed for nearly 30 years. If the land was acquired, rehabilitation and compensation should have been ensured first.

The matter is pending in court," he said. When the demolition proceeded despite objections, Yadav and several villagers protested by standing in front of the bulldozers. Following instructions from HSV officials, police

detained Yadav and dispersed the crowd, with locals alleging the use of force. The demolition resumed and continued till evening.

Officials said the land had already been acquired and compensation awards issued. "Villagers can collect their compensation from the land acquisition office. Demolition will continue on Thursday and Friday to clear the remaining structures obstructing the project," Saini said. HSV said the road project had been stalled for over 1.5 km due to these structures.

Once completed, the road will connect Sohna Road to the Gurgaon-Sohna Highway, easing pressure on the Southern Peripheral Road and providing residents of sectors 68, 69 and 70 direct access to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway and Delhi-Jaipur Highway.

Cab fare soars to Rs 600, Dwarka Expressway commuters seek buses linking Gurgaon to metro stations

Noida.(Agency)

Residents of newly developed sectors along the Dwarka Expressway have written to Prime Minister and chief ministers of Delhi and Haryana, seeking introduction of dedicated, high-frequency bus services connecting metro stations in Delhi's Dwarka with the millennium city. In their letter, residents highlighted severe gaps in last-mile and intercity public transport despite rapid residential and commercial growth along the corridor.

Residents said the absence of reliable bus connectivity has forced thousands of daily commuters to rely on private vehicles, app-based cabs or informal transport, worsening traffic congestion, travel time and pollution.

"We are witnessing massive development along the Dwarka Expressway, with housing societies, offices, schools and healthcare facilities becoming operational, but public transport has not kept pace. There is an acute shortage of dependable bus connectivity between Dwarka metro stations and new



sectors in Gurgaon, making daily commuting difficult and expensive," said Sunil Sareen, deputy convenor of a citizens' group called Dwarka Expressway Gurgaon Development Association. Residents pointed out that the lack of scheduled and frequent bus services leads to severe congestion on service roads and arterial junctions, particularly during peak hours. The situation worsens during traffic restrictions and pollution-

control measures such as the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), when commuters are left with limited alternatives.

A resident of Imperial Gardens in Sector 102, Medhavi Saluja, said, "My college is in Delhi, and my parents have to drop me off at and pick me up from the Sector 21 metro station every day. With no reliable public transport, both my studies and my parents' work suffer. Cab fares have also gone up after toll collection started on the Dwarka

Expressway." Earlier, cab fares between Gurgaon's Sector 102 and the Sector 21 Dwarka Metro station typically ranged between Rs 300 and Rs 350. However, after toll collection began on the Dwarka Expressway, the same trip now costs commuters between Rs 550 and Rs 600. Residents also flagged the broader economic impact of poor connectivity. "Although we own factory land in Gurgaon, we were compelled to set up operations in Delhi's Noida due to the absence of public transport. Private vehicles may work for owners, but workers depend on buses. That connectivity simply does not exist," said a resident of Shapoorji Pallonji Joyville in Sector 102. The residents noted that the Dwarka Expressway was envisioned as a high-capacity urban corridor. However, without a robust bus network integrated with the metro system, its potential for sustainable mobility remains unrealised.

Currently, around 150 GMCL buses operate on 23 routes across the city. However,

are being scrutinised to trace payments from foreign operators. According to cops, Pundir is not a first-time offender. He is also wanted in Mumbai and other parts of Maharashtra for fraud, cheating, and criminal conspiracy. Three criminal cases have been identified in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. Despite having studied only up to Class 12, he is believed to be deeply embedded in organised cybercrime networks.

He was arrested under Bns 318(4) (cheating), 319(2) (cheating by personation), 143(2) (trafficking), 238 (causing the disappearance of evidence of an offense or gives false information to screen an offender from punishment), 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) and Section 66 of the IT Act. Officials emphasised that the case involves more than financial fraud. "This is a serious matter of human trafficking, cyber slavery, and transnational organised crime," a police officer said. Authorities are coordinating with other state police units and central agencies to identify additional victims.

1 held in Gurgaon for murder near Kherki Daula toll plaza, 'voice message' blames his aide

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A day after a 34-year-old history-sheeter was shot dead three kilometres before the Kherki Daula toll plaza, police arrested a suspect. Meanwhile, the brother of the victim—Manoj Ojha—has blamed one of his accomplices, citing a WhatsApp voice message. The aide is absconding.

Lokesh (21), a resident of Patparganj in Delhi, was arrested from the national capital on Wednesday following an intensive investigation, led by the crime branch in Manesar. Ojha, shot dead on Tuesday evening, had 16 criminal cases registered against him, including murder, attempted murder, dacoity, robbery and theft.

Lokesh, a taxi driver, accompanied Ojha, a resident of Chhattarpur in Delhi, and another accomplice—Tanish—on Tuesday. Police said information was received at Kherki Daula police station on Jan 13 about a man being shot near the toll plaza. A police team rushed to the spot and learnt that the injured man was already shifted to Medanta Hospital by ambulance. Senior officers were informed and teams from the scene-of-crime unit, forensic science laboratory and fingerprint bureau were called to examine the area. During inspection, a Bolero vehicle was found parked near the spot, from which two loaded pistols were recovered. Police then reached Medanta Hospital, where doctors declared Ojha dead.

The body was sent to the mortuary in Gurgaon for an autopsy. "Ojha's brother later submitted a written complaint stating that he received a voice message from his brother's WhatsApp number around 4.48pm, claiming that a person named Tanish shot him. When he tried calling back, the ambulance driver informed him that Ojha sustained a gunshot injury and was being taken to hospital," an officer said. A case was registered at Kherki Daula police station. Preliminary investigation revealed that Ojha was released on bail in 2025 after being convicted in two cases. The officer said, "Lokesh, Tanish and Ojha went to Hisar with the intention of carrying out a murder and conducted reconnaissance there."

THE SIKH TIMES

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

Printed at Qaumi Patrika Printing
 Press, A4/A-144, Tronica City
 (Loni), Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh)
 Corporate Office:

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

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RNI No. DELENG/2008/25465

Water Supply and Sanitation Department releases results of departmental examination for promotion of Grade IV employees

Cabinet Minister Hardeep Singh Mundian congratulated the employees who passed the examination

The Sikh Time

Malagar khamano

Fatehgarh Sahib, January 15: In the Water Supply and Sanitation Department of the Punjab Government, a departmental examination was conducted for the promotion of unqualified field employees from Grade IV (Helper Technical) to Grade III Junior Technician. Deputy Director Administration of the department, Mr. Preneet Garg, said that under the directions of the Cabinet Minister of the department, Hardeep Singh Mundian, the promotions of grade four employees, which were pending for a long time, were taken at Shaheed Major Harminderpal Singh Government College, S.A.S. Nagar, Mohali under the supervision of the Chairman of the Departmental Committee, Superintending Engineer Circle Chandigarh. 390 employees had applied for this examination, out of which 334 participated in the examination, out of which 322 employees passed, 12 employees could not pass this departmental examination and 56 employees were absent from the departmental examination. This result has been sent to all the Superintending

Engineers after the approval of the Principal Secretary



of the department. The cabinet minister of the depart-

ment, Hardeep Singh Mundian, congratulated the field employees who passed the departmental examination. He said that under the guidelines of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, while every family in Punjab has been covered under health insurance of Rs 10 lakh per person, promotion opportunities are being given to class four employees. He said that soon the employees who have passed the examination will be given promotions, he said that the Punjab government is making efforts to give promotion opportunities to the employees on priority basis. On this occasion, the conveners of the PWD Water Supply Coordination Sangharsh Committee, Malagar Singh Khamano, Bikkar Singh Makha, Sukhinder Singh Mainia, congratulated all the employees and said that the promotion channel of class four employees was stopped since 2017 and hundreds of posts have been lying vacant for the last eight years. They demanded that all 334 employees be promoted and those employees who are completely illiterate should also be promoted on the basis of experience. Photo caption: Cabinet Minister Hardeep Singh Mundian

Doctor arrested for threatening property dealer with false rape case

Gurugram: Gurugram Police have arrested a suspended government doctor on charges of cheating, extortion and criminal intimidation after he allegedly threatened to implicate a property dealer in a false rape case while posing as a senior health department official. Police are searching for the doctor's wife, who is suspected to be involved in the conspiracy. The case was registered following a complaint by Rahul Yadav, a property dealer from Wazirabad village, who runs an office in Sector 51. According to Yadav, in 2023 a man named Tinu, a resident of

Gargi Harsaru, stayed at his office during his father's medical treatment. During this period, Tinu's associate, Dr Krishan Kumar alias KK, began visiting the office frequently. Yadav alleged that Krishan Kumar initially borrowed ₹10,000, claiming his bank account had been frozen. Over time, he allegedly took between ₹5 lakh and ₹6 lakh on various pretexts, including vehicle repairs. When Yadav demanded the money back, the accused refused, claiming to be the Deputy Director of the Health Department, and allegedly threatened to implicate him in a false

rape case. In his comment, Yadav stated that on August 12, 2023, a woman came to his office demanding money and threatening consequences if pay- ment was not made.



Subsequently, an email complaint alleging rape was sent to the women's police station in Sector 51. However, the woman did not appear before the police when summoned. The complainant further alleged that on October 24, 2023, the woman, along with Krishan Kumar, again submitted a written rape complaint

NAME CHANGE
I, praveen Kumar S/O: Shivcharan, R/O MANPURI, Manipur, Aligarh, Gidaul, Uttar Pradesh, 202124, have changed the name of my minor daughter Lavnvi aged 8 years and she shall hereafter be known as Lavi Sharma.

NAME CHANGE
I, Rashi D/o Anu Kumar R/o 24/105, Trilokpuri, Chilla Saroda Khadar, Delhi-110091, have changed my name to Rashmi Gautam for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE
I, Kumar S/O Yogesh Tyagi R/O House No-211, Village Holamb Kalan, Holamb Kalan, North West Delhi, Delhi -110082, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Karan.

NAME CHANGE
I, Dalbir Singh S/O Narayan Singh R/O Khasra No.178, Rithala Village, Rohini, PO: Rohini Sector -7, Dist: North West Delhi, Delhi -110085, have changed the name of my minor daughter Rashi aged 16 years and she shall hereafter be known as Rishi.

NAME CHANGE
I, Full Kumar Tanti S/O Nr Narayan Tanti , R/O S-100, S- Block, Pandav Nagar, Laxmi Nagar, Laxmi Nagar, PO: Dist: East Delhi, Delhi -110092, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Kular Tanti.

NAME CHANGE
I, Sher Singh S/O Bhoop Ram R/O E-2/45, Gali No. 1, 4-1/2 Pusta , Sonia Vihar, Karawal Nagar, PO: Karawal Nagar, Dist: North East Delhi, Delhi -110094, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Khunni Lal.

NAME CHANGE
I, Neeraj S/O Gagan Shankar Jha R/o T-498, First Floor Left Side, S Block Primary School, Kharana Market, Bajaj Nagar, Patel Nagar, Central Delhi, Delhi -110008, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Neeraj Jha.

NAME CHANGE
I, Parveen Begum W/o Anwar Ansari R/o 262, Gali No. 16, Block-B, Sangam Vihar, Delhi, Lal Kuan, Nct Of Delhi-110080 have changed the name of my minor son Mohd Arman Ansari aged 16 years and he shall hereafter be known as Md Arman Ansari.

NAME CHANGE
I, Shafeeda Begum W/o Harpal Singh, R/o House NO-R-13, 3RD FLOOR, NAVEEN SHAHDARA, DELHI-110032 have changed my name to PRAVEEN KUMAR RATHI for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE
I, BHAGIRATH S/O BHOLA NATH HALDAR R/O H NO-138 POCKET-5, SEC-A-6, PUNRAS COLONY, NARELA, DELHI-110040, have changed my name to BHAGIRATH HALDAR for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE
I, AKRITI MADAAN D/O SANJEEV MADAAN R/O H NO-267, SEC-16 KHERI KALAN FARIDABAD HARYANA-121002 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as AKRITI MADAAN.

NAME Correction
I, NAFIS AHMED S/O Shri JAFER HUSAIN Resident of House No B-14/78 A GALI NO 13 SUB-HASH VILLAGE NORTH GHONDA, Delhi 110053 do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that my Passport No F 8374907 under mention my incorrect name is NAEFFES AHMED My Correct name NAFIS AHMED.

NAME CHANGE
I, Sonal Jain D/O Ravi Jain R/O. R.G-316, Flat No-301, Mahavir Enclave, Palam Village, Delhi-110045 have changed my name to Sonal Agarwal for all future purposes.

against him and his friend. Later, Tinu reportedly informed Yadav that Krishan Kumar was demanding ₹7 lakh initially and later increased the demand to ₹16 lakh in exchange for withdrawing the complaint, while deliberately refusing to accept the money through banking channels. Following the complaint, an FIR was registered at Sector 50 police station, and the accused was arrested from Panchkula on Sunday. Police identified the accused as Dr Krishan Kumar Zaildar (42), a resident of Manuwas village in Nuh district. A police spokesperson said the accused is an MBBS doctor employed with the Haryana government but

is currently under suspension. "He has previously served at government hospitals in Panchkula and Sector 10, Gurugram. During interrogation, he admitted to financial dealings with the complainant. To avoid repayment, he allegedly conspired with his wife to frame him in a false rape case. Further investigation is underway," the spokesperson said.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as RAM KUMARI D/O MADAN LAL R/O House No-12, Near Allahabad Bank, Rajokari Village, A F Rajokari, South West Delhi, Delhi-110038 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as KOMAL.

NAME CHANGE
It is for general information that I, HARSHA GROVER R/O Flat No-103, Tower-09, Near Leela Palace, Sarojini Nagar, PO- Sarojini Nagar, DIST- South West Delhi, Delhi-110023, declare that name of my mother was been wrongly written as ANITA GROVER in my 10th and 12th. Class educational documents. And name of my father and my mother has been wrongly written as JYOTI SUDAN GROVER and TANVI GROVER in my birth certificate 220664. The actual name of my father and my mother are JYOTI GROVER and ANITA , which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as RANI TEOTIA alias RINKI SINGH D/O RAJKUMAR TEOTIA and W/O VISHAL SINGH R/O 1/82, 1st FLOOR, SUNDER VIHAR, PASCHIM VIHAR, DELHI-110087 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RINKI SINGH.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as Z HAKK BAHADUR S/o NAR BAHADUR R/o 279C 1st FLOOR, BABA FARIDPUR, PATEL NAGAR WEST, CENTRAL DELHI, DELHI-110008 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as ZHAKK BHADUR SHAHI.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as KAMLESH SAHNI S/O ADALAT SAHNI R/O 159/435, Main Road, Gopalpur, Village, Civil Line S/O North Delhi, Delhi-110054 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as BINDA SAHNI.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as URVASHI alias URVASI D/O SURINDER KUMAR KARIR W/O SANJEEV KOHLI R/O 12C C 5B Block, Janakpuri, West Delhi, Delhi-110058 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as URVASHI KOHLI.

NAME CHANGE
This is to inform you that Mr. Ram Lakhan Agnihotri intends to purchase Residential Plot No. 7, measuring 102 sq. meters, out of Khasra No. 1048, situated at Vidhya Nagar, near Anand Vihar, Kastur Dadi, Pargana & Teshi Dadi, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P., from Ms. Landmark, through its Partner. The original owner of the entire property was Mr. Mahender Pal Singh, who purchased the same from Mrs. Bhagwati Devi, vide Sale Deed dated 27.06.2001. The entire property was duly mutated in his name in the revenue records on 12.05.2004. Unfortunately, Mr. Mahender Pal Singh expired on 24.03.2012, leaving behind the following legal heirs: (1) Mr. Ompral Singh (Son), (2) Mr. Krishan Pal (Son), (3) Mr. Inder Pal Singh (Son), (4) Mr. Yash Pal Singh (Son), and (5) Mrs. Rajpal (Daughter). Subsequently, Mr. Inder Pal Singh also expired, leaving behind his legal heirs: (1) Mrs. Dinesh Kumar (Wife), (2) Mr. Jai Pal Singh Rawal (Son), (3) Mr. Khagendra Pal Singh Rawal (Son), (4) Mrs. Manita (Daughter), and (5) Mrs. Mohini (Daughter). Further, Mr. Yash Pal Singh also expired, leaving behind his sole legal heir, Mrs. Pramila Rawal (Wife). The chain documents relating to the Partition Deed and Mutation in the names of (1) Mr. Ompral Singh, (2) Mr. Krishan Pal, (3) Mrs. Dinesh Kumar, (4) Mr. Jai Pal Singh Rawal, (6) Mrs. Manita, (7) Mrs. Mohini, (8) Mrs. Pramila Rawal, and (9) Mrs. Rajpal are not available, as the partition was an oral partition. Thereafter, Mr. Ompral Singh, Mr. Krishan Pal, and Mrs. Dinesh Kumar sold their respective shares in the entire property to Ms. Landmark, through its Partner, vide Sale Deed dated 17.03.2025. Consequently, Ms. Landmark is now the absolute owner of the aforementioned property. The property is confirmed to be free from all kinds of litigation, encumbrances, liens, charges, or claims. Please also note that the property is presently being financed by DCB Bank Limited, Ghatkopar Branch, U.P. If any person(s) objection & regarding subject property, then kindly submit his/her objection within 07 days from the date of the Notice in writing. The said objection may be kindly sent to the undersigned by way of the Registered Post on the address given below and by E-mail, failing which, the claim as per aforesaid shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.

NAME CHANGE
I, ASHWANI KUMAR Advocate Chamber No. 122, Tehsil Compound, Ghaziabad, U.P.

Woman shot at in Gurugram club, 1 held

Gurugram: A jilted lover allegedly shot at his 25-year-old female friend inside a club after she refused to marry him. The woman sustained injuries and is undergoing treatment at a hospital. The police have arrested the accused along with one of his friends and are questioning them. According to the police, they received information about a woman injured in a firing incident on MG Road in the early hours of December 20. The victim was admitted to a private hospital and was unfit to give a statement at the time. The woman's husband, a resident of Najafgarh in Delhi, lodged a complaint stating that his wife, Kalpana (25), worked at a Gurugram club. In his complaint, the husband said, "Kalpana had gone to work at the club on December 19. Around 1 am, I received a call that she had been shot at by Tushar, a resident of Sangam Vihar, Delhi. About a month earlier, Tushar had come to our house, had an altercation and left. He later fired at my wife." Following the complaint, an FIR was registered at Sector 29 police station. During the investigation, a team from the Crime Unit, Sector 40, arrested two accused from Baraut in Uttar Pradesh. They were identified as Tushar alias Jonty (25) and his friend Shubham alias Jony (24), both residents of Sangam Vihar, Delhi. A Gurugram police spokesperson said that during interrogation, Tushar revealed that he worked with a private company in Delhi and had befriended Kalpana about six months ago. He wanted to marry her, but she repeatedly refused. The accused admitted that he had earlier fired at the victim's house and on the night of December 19, he, along with Shubham, again pressured her to marry him. When she refused, he allegedly shot at her and fled the spot.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, I, MAYANK SARWARI S/o Rajender Kumar, R/o R-1119B, Gali No-14/6, Sadh Nagar, Palam Colony, New Delhi-110045 declare that name of my father's correct name is Rajender Kumar which is there in my Aadhar/Pan & all educational certificates but in my father's class 10th certificate it is wrongly written as Rajender Kumar. Rajender Kumar and Rajinder Kumar is the name of same & one person

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Suraj Prakash S/o Narayan Das Arora Add:11/163 Geeta Colony, Delhi 110031 Changed my name to Suraj Prakash Arora

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, hitherto known as RINKI SINGH D/O RAJKUMAR TEOTIA and W/O VISHAL SINGH R/O 1/82, 1st FLOOR, SUNDER VIHAR, PASCHIM VIHAR, DELHI-110087 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RINKI SINGH.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

I, ASHWANI KUMAR Advocate Chamber No. 122, Tehsil Compound, Ghaziabad, U.P.

NEWS BOX

Elon Musk's X To Prevent Grok AI Users From Undressing Images

World. (Agency)

Elon Musk's platform X on Wednesday announced measures to prevent its AI chatbot Grok from undressing images of real people, following global backlash over its generation of sexualized images of women and children. X said it will "geoblock the ability" of all Grok and X users to create images of people in "bikinis, underwear, and similar attire" in those jurisdictions where such actions are deemed illegal. "We have implemented technological measures to prevent the Grok account from allowing the editing of images of real people in revealing clothing such as bikinis," X's safety team said in a statement. "This restriction applies to all users, including paid subscribers."

The statement comes just hours after California's attorney general launched an investigation into Musk's xAI -- the developer of Grok -- over the generation of "non-consensual, sexually explicit material" in recent weeks. International pressure had been building on xAI to rein in Grok after its so-called "Spicy Mode" feature allowed users to create sexualized deepfakes of women and children using simple text prompts such as "put her in a bikini" or "remove her clothes." Indonesia on Saturday became the first country to block access to Grok entirely, with neighboring Malaysia following on Sunday.

India said Sunday that X had removed thousands of posts and hundreds of user accounts in response to its complaints. Britain's Ofcom media regulator said Monday it was opening a probe into whether X failed to comply with UK law over the sexual images.

And France's commissioner for children Sarah El Hairy said Tuesday she had referred Grok's generated images to French prosecutors, the Arcom media regulator and the European Union.

NASA Astronauts Begin Early Return Flight From ISS With Ailing Crew Member

WORLD. (Agency)

A SpaceX capsule departed the International Space Station on Wednesday carrying a four-member crew on an emergency return flight to Earth necessitated by an unspecified serious medical condition afflicting one of the astronauts aboard.

The Crew Dragon capsule carrying two US NASA astronauts, a Japanese crewmate and a Russian cosmonaut undocked from the space station and began its descent from orbit at about 5:20 p.m. EST (2200 GMT) headed for a splashdown in the Pacific Ocean off the California coast early on Thursday.

Live video from a NASA webcast of the departure showed the capsule separating from the ISS and drifting away from the orbiting laboratory as the two vehicles soared some 260 miles (418 km) over the Earth south of Australia. The astronauts were seen strapped into the Crew Dragon cabin, seated side by side and wearing their helmeted white and black space suits as the undocking proceeded. The plan to bring all four members of Crew-11 home a few weeks ahead of schedule was announced January 8, with NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman saying one of the astronauts faced a "serious medical condition" that required immediate medical attention on the ground. NASA officials have not identified which of the four crew members was experiencing a medical issue or described its nature, citing privacy concerns.

The crew consists of US astronauts Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke, Japanese astronaut Kimiya Yui and Russian cosmonaut Oleg Platonov. They arrived at the space station following a launch to orbit from Florida in August. Fincke, the station's designated commander, and Cardman, assigned as flight engineer, had been scheduled to conduct a six-hour-plus spacewalk last week to install hardware outside the station. The spacewalk was canceled on January 7 over what NASA then characterized as a "medical concern" with an astronaut.

Venezuela Looking To "New Era" After Maduro Ouster, Says Interim President

London. (Agency)

Venezuela's interim president Delcy Rodriguez declared Wednesday her country was entering a new era marked by greater tolerance towards political rivals, following the US ouster of her former boss Nicolas Maduro. At her first press conference since Maduro's dramatic capture by US forces on January 3, Rodriguez cast herself as a unifier. Following 12 years of repressive rule by Maduro, Venezuela is "opening up to a new political era," Maduro's former deputy told reporters at the presidential palace.

The new Venezuela, she said, "allows for understanding despite differences and through ideological and political diversity." After toppling Maduro, US President Donald Trump agreed to let Rodriguez take over, provided she toes Washington's line.

Calls for 'peace' in doing so, Trump sidelined the leader of the anti-Maduro opposition, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Corina Machado, claiming she did not have enough "respect" in Venezuela. Machado will meet Trump on Thursday at the White House to press her demands for a democratic transition that includes herself and Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, her candidate in 2024 elections which the opposition claims were stolen by Maduro. So far, Trump has focused his energies on securing access to Venezuela's vast oil reserves. But he claimed that he had also been planning a second attack on Venezuela until the government last week announced the release of "large numbers" of the dissenters languishing in prison, sometimes for years. Rodriguez claimed authorities had released 406 prisoners since December in a process that accelerated since last week, and which she said "has not yet concluded."

The Foro Penal legal rights NGO, which defends many of the detainees, gave a much smaller tally of around 180 freed.

Japan and the Philippines sign new defense pact as they face growing Chinese aggression

MANILA. (Agency)

Japan and the Philippines signed a defense pact on Thursday that would allow the tax-free provision of ammunition, fuel, food and other necessities when their forces stage joint training to boost deterrence against China's growing aggression in the region and to bolster their preparation for natural disasters. Japan has faced increasing political, trade and security tensions with China, which was angered by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's remark that potential Chinese action against Taiwan could spark Japanese intervention. Japan and the Philippines have also had separate territorial conflicts with Beijing in the East China Sea and South China Sea that have continued to flare and threaten to draw in the United States, a treaty ally of the two Asian nations. Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi signed the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement with Philippine Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro in Manila. During the ceremony, Japan also announced

new security and economic development assistance to the Philippines, including funding for the construction of security boat shelters and expanding internet access in poor southern Philippine provinces once affected by a separatist rebellion by minority Muslims. "We both recognized the value of promoting the rule of law, including the freedom of navigation and overflight, especially in the South China Sea," Lazaro said after the signing. Motegi said he and Lazaro "concurred on continuing to oppose unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East and South China seas," in a clear rebuke of Beijing's increasing assertiveness without naming China.

The military logistical agreement, which has to be ratified by Japanese legislators before it takes effect, is the latest key defense pact to be forged between Japan and the Philippines to deepen their security alliance. Aside from facilitating joint



combat drills, it would also help Japan and the Philippines jointly respond to natural disasters, a mutual concern, and participate in peacekeeping operations by the United Nations, according to Japanese and Philippine officials. In mid-2024, both countries signed the Reciprocal Access Agreement, which allows the deployment of forces of either country to the other's territory for joint and larger combat exercises, including live-fire drills. The RAA took effect in September.

Japanese and Philippine officials are still negotiating another agreement that aims to boost the security of highly confidential defense and military information the countries could share. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and then-Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba jointly announced the start of negotiations for the Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreement in Manila in April last year.

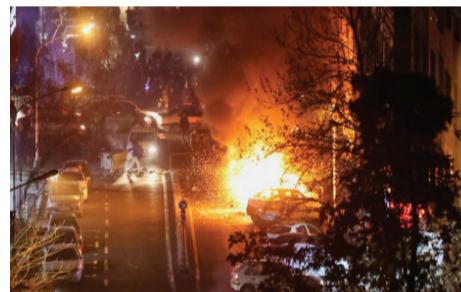
Ishiba also criticized Beijing's aggressive actions without naming China. "I hope that our two countries will continue to work closely together to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific based on the rule of law," Ishiba said then. Chinese and Philippine coast guard ships have had increasingly hostile confrontations in the South China Sea under Marcos, who took office in 2022. His predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, nurtured cozy ties with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

US Could Hit Tehran In 24 Hours, Warn European Officials Amid Iran Protests

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

The United States is withdrawing some personnel from bases in the Middle East, a US official said on Wednesday, after a senior Iranian official said Tehran had warned neighbours it would hit American bases if Washington strikes. With Iran's leadership trying to quell the worst domestic unrest the Islamic Republic has ever faced, Tehran is seeking to deter US President Donald Trump's repeated threats to intervene on behalf of anti-government protesters. The UN Security Council is due to meet on Iran on Thursday at the request of the United States. A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the United States was pulling some personnel from key bases in the region as a precaution given heightened regional tensions. All the signals are that a US attack is imminent, but that is also how this

administration behaves to keep everyone on their toes. Unpredictability is part of the strategy," a Western military official told Reuters later on Wednesday.



At the White House, however, Trump suggested he was adopting a wait-and-see posture toward the crisis.

Trump told reporters that he has been told that killings in the Iranian government's crackdown on the protests were subsiding and that he

believes there is currently no plan for large-scale executions. Asked who told him that the killings had stopped, Trump described them as "very important sources on the other side."

The president did not rule out potential US military action, saying "we are going to watch what the process is" before noting that his administration had received a "very good statement" from Iran. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Wednesday "there is no plan" by Iran to hang people, when asked about the anti-government protests.

"There is no plan for hanging at all," the foreign minister told Fox News in an interview on the "Special Report with Bret Baier" show. "Hanging is out of the question," he said.

According to the Norway-based Iran Human Rights Society, hangings are common in Iranian prisons.

3,400 Dead In Iran, Trump Says Tehran Won't Execute Protesters

Islamabad (Agency)

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday claimed that several countries were in talks with Pakistan to acquire its fighter jets following last year's conflict with India. Addressing a federal cabinet meeting, Shehbaz said that the demand for Pakistani fighter jets has increased and many countries are "actively engaged with us to acquire the jets," state-run Radio Pakistan reported. He did not specify the aircraft which were at the centre of talks. However, local media reports said that JF-17 Thunder fighter jets were part of talks with countries like Sudan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Indonesia and Bangladesh. Some countries were also interested in the Mushshak training aircraft. Shehbaz's remarks came a day after Minister for Defence Production Raza Hayat Haraj told BBC Urdu in an interview that several countries were interested in buying JF-17 Thunder. These negotiations are taking place and they take some time.



"Many countries have shown interest in these aircraft," the minister was quoted as saying. "I cannot take the name of any country. Neither can I tell on what level our negotiations are with any country," he said, adding that when these jets are exported, then the world will know which countries have bought them. Haraj also said that Pakistan must ensure that JF-17s were sold to friendly countries so that "they are not used against us." He added that China is on board whenever Pakistan signs such a deal with any country. The minister termed the price of the jet "an important" aspect, detailing that while the average value of such planes around the world was \$250-350 million, the JF-17 Thunder was cheaper.

Trump to meet Venezuelan opposition leader Machado after cozying up to Maduro's successor

In endorsing Rodríguez, Trump has sidelined Machado, who has long been a face of resistance in Venezuela.

BANGKOK. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump is set to meet Thursday at the White House with Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, whose political party is widely considered to have won 2024 elections rejected by then-President Nicolás Maduro before the United States captured him in an audacious military raid this month.

Less than two weeks after US forces seized Maduro and his wife at a heavily guarded compound in Caracas and brought them to New York to stand

trial on drug trafficking charges, Trump will host the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Machado, having already dismissed her credibility to run



Venezuela and raised doubts about his stated commitment to backing democratic rule in the country.

"She's a very nice woman," Trump said in an interview about Machado. "I've seen her on television. I think we're just going to talk basics." The meeting comes as Trump and his top advisers have signaled their willingness to work with acting President Delcy

Rodríguez, who was Maduro's vice president and along with others in the deposed leader's inner circle remain in charge of day-to-day governmental operations. Rodríguez herself has adopted a less strident position toward Trump and his "America First" policies toward the Western Hemisphere, saying she plans to continue releasing prisoners detained under Maduro — a move reportedly made at the behest of the Trump administration. Venezuela released several Americans this week.

Trump said Wednesday that he had a "great conversation" with Rodríguez, their first since Maduro was ousted. "We had a call, a long call. We discussed a lot of things," Trump told reporters. "And I think we're getting along very well with Venezuela." In endorsing Rodríguez, Trump has sidelined Machado, who has long been a face of resistance in Venezuela.

Federal officer shoots person in leg after being attacked during Minneapolis arrest

PARIS. (Agency)

A federal officer shot a man in the leg in Minneapolis after being attacked with a shovel and broom handle while trying to make an arrest Wednesday, officials said. Smoke filled the street near the site of the shooting as federal officers and protesters squared off. A group of officers wearing gas masks and helmets fired tear gas and grenades into a small crowd while protesters threw snowballs and chanted, "Our streets." Such scenes have become common on the streets of Minneapolis since an immigration agent fatally shot Renee Good on Jan. 7. Agents have yanked people from cars and homes and been confronted by angry bystanders who bare demand that officers pack up and leave. The Department of Homeland Security said in a statement on the social media platform X that federal law enforcement officers stopped a person from Venezuela who was in the U.S. illegally. The person drove away and crashed into a parked car before taking

off on foot, DHS said. After officers reached the person, two other people arrived from a nearby apartment and all three started attacking the officer, according to DHS. "Fearing for his life and safety as he was being ambushed by three individuals, the officer fired a defensive shot to defend his life," DHS said. The two people who came out of the apartment are in custody, it said. The city of Minneapolis said on X that the man shot was in the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. "We understand there is anger," it said. "We ask the public to remain calm."

The shooting took place about 4.5 miles (7.2 kilometers) north of where Good was killed. Clashes in court as well

Earlier Wednesday, a judge gave the Trump administration time to respond to a request to suspend its immigration crackdown in Minnesota, while the Pentagon looked for military lawyers to join what has become a chaotic law enforcement effort in the state. "What we need most of all right now is a

pause. The temperature needs to be lowered," state Assistant Attorney General Brian Carter said during the first hearing in a lawsuit filed by Minnesota and the cities



of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Local leaders say the government is violating free speech and other constitutional rights with the surge of law enforcement. U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez promised to keep the case "on the front burner" and gave the U.S. Justice Department until Monday to file a response

to a request for a restraining order. The judge said these are "grave and important matters," and that there are few legal precedents to apply to some of the key points in the case. Justice Department attorney Andrew Warden suggested the approach set by Menendez was appropriate. The judge is also handling a separate lawsuit challenging the tactics used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other federal officers when they encounter protesters and observers. A decision could be released this week. During a televised speech Wednesday evening, Gov. Tim Walz described Minnesota as being in chaos, saying what's happening in the state "defies belief." "Let's be very, very clear, this long ago stopped being a matter of immigration enforcement," he said. "Instead, it's a campaign of organized brutality against the people of Minnesota by our own federal government."

NEWS BOX

Truffles drops third-party valet agency as puppy killing accused remains absconding in JP Nagar

BENGALURU.(Agency)

With the man accused of slaying a puppy to death in JP Nagar currently absconding, it has emerged that Truffles (JP Nagar), the restaurant where he was engaged, had hired his services through a third-party valet agency. Animal welfare activists associated with the case have alleged that the agency, which partners with several premium brands in Bengaluru, failed to conduct adequate background verification of the accused, identified as Nepal Kiran.

Following the incident, Truffles discontinued its association with the valet service agency. Activists who approached the agency claimed that its staff admitted to lapses in conducting proper background checks before recruiting and deploying drivers at partner establishments.

On Wednesday, Truffles Hospitality Private Limited issued a public statement clarifying its position. "We strongly support animal welfare and hold deep respect for all living beings. We were deeply disturbed to learn of an incident involving harm to an animal by an individual who was off duty and associated with a third-party valet service. The individual was not an employee of our organisation. However, in keeping with our values and our zero-tolerance policy towards such actions, we have terminated our association with the valet agency concerned with immediate effect," the statement said.

Drugs worth Rs 1.2 crore seized in separate ops in Bengaluru

BENGALURU.(Agency)

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) and city police arrested four persons, including a foreign national, in two separate operations for allegedly peddling drugs, and seized narcotics worth over Rs 1.20 crore.

In the first operation, the Anti-Narcotics Wing of the CCB arrested Uche Ndudi (25), a Nigerian national residing within the KR Puram police station limits. Police said the accused had come to India in 2025 on a medical visa but continued to stay in the city even after the visa expired. During this period, he allegedly procured drugs from another foreign national, who is currently absconding.

Police apprehended Ndudi and seized 101 grams of cocaine worth Rs 50.6 lakh from his possession. In a separate case, the CCB arrested Chesed Akash, a DJ from Meghalaya who was residing in Begur, for allegedly peddling 481 grams of hydro ganja valued at Rs 48 lakh. Meanwhile, in another operation, the Vivek Nagar police arrested two drug peddlers from Odisha, Sanjith Bhaga (35) and Mithun Kumbar (18). Based on a tip-off, police nabbed the accused and seized 21.2 kg of ganja worth Rs 21 lakh.

Anna university MBA student's body found near Cooum estuary



CHENNAI.(Agency)

The body of a 25-year-old student of Anna University was recovered near the Cooum estuary on Wednesday morning, a day after she allegedly ended her life.

The Anna Square police identified the deceased as Yuvarasi Dhananjay (25) of Perungulathur, who was pursuing an MBA through distance education.

It was a passerby who alerted the police after noticing the girl in distress near Napier Bridge on Kamarajar Salai on Tuesday night. Though the police came to the spot, they could not find her and could only recover her personal belongings, including her mobile phone and university identity card. A note found among the items said no one is responsible for her death and contained a message addressed to her family.

The Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services personnel who carried out a search could not find the body of the student on Tuesday before halting the operation for the day. On Wednesday morning, they found near the estuary, and sent it for postmortem. A case has been registered, and a probe is underway.

BJP secures control of seven standing committees in Thiruvananthapuram corporation

The decision of the UDF councillors to abstain from the elections eased the BJP's path, enabling it to bag key committees including town planning and welfare.

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.

(Agency)

In a major development on Wednesday, the BJP — the single largest party in the Thiruvananthapuram city corporation with 50 councillors — secured control of seven standing committees with the support of an Independent member. The decision of the UDF councillors to abstain from the elections eased the BJP's path, enabling it to bag key committees including town planning and welfare.

The LDF came down heavily on the UDF's move, alleging unholy alliance between the latter and the BJP. "If the UDF had participated, the contest would have resulted in draws of lots to elect the chairpersons in at least two committees. They stayed away to help the BJP," alleged LDF councillor S P Deepak.

Independent councillor Pattoor Radhakrishnan assumed charge as chairperson of the Town Planning Standing Committee. With no absolute majority in the council, the BJP is relying on the Independent member to bolster its control of the civic body.

Nemom councillor M R Gopan was elected chairperson of the Health Standing Committee, while councillors Karamana Ajith, Chempazhanthy Udayan, G S Manju and V Sathi Devi will head the Development, Education and Sports, Works, and Welfare Standing Committees respectively.

Senior Congress councillor Mary Pushpam defended the UDF's abstention, stating the front did not

want to "waste time" participating with limited representation in each committee. Meanwhile, election to the Tax Appeal Committee was

The constitution of the tax appeal committee will happen after the swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected UDF councillor from Vizhinjam ward. LDF with a clear majority in the tax appeal committee is expected to take over the panel once the election happens.

The first full council meeting after the committee elections will take place on January 19. Newly elected health chairperson M R Gopan said the council faces urgent work.

"Only a few weeks are left before election notification, and several revision projects need timely approval as the financial year is about to end," he said.



deferred following the resignation of two BJP councillors. Officials said it would be constituted in line with the State Election Commission directions.

Caste, communal thoughts seeping into Kerala: Mariam Dhawale

CPM Politburo member and All India Democratic Women's Association general secretary Mariam Dhawale said that the state is witnessing changing perspectives, with potential political impact.

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.

(Agency)

Reminding that Kerala should never lose its bond with the progressive movement, CPM Politburo member and All India Democratic Women's Association general secretary Mariam Dhawale said on Wednesday that the state too is witnessing changing perspectives, with potential political impact. "Honour killings are now happening all over the country, including Kerala. This means that the arrogance of caste and religion is slowly seeping into the minds of the Kerala population," Dhawale said. Pointing out that the condition exists in Kerala despite its high ranking in education,

health, and human development indices, the CPM leader said it is up to the people to decide if these thoughts will take them forward or backward. She was speaking at the 'Contemporary Indian Politics' lecture hosted by Kanal — the Kerala Secretariat Employees Association (KSEA) Women's Committee — at the Central S t a d i u m i n Thiruvananthapuram.

On the repeated instances of human rights activists, advocates, and journalists getting arrested in the country, Dhawale said many of them remain prisoners because of an influenced judiciary. "Once the judiciary gets influenced by

communal ideology, then nobody is safe in the country," she said.

Taking a dig at the Union government for its moves to alter



history in textbooks, Dhawale said the BJP wants to turn India into a theocratic nation and destroy its secular values. "Even though the BJP promises to be by the side of Hindus, what did they do to the

Hindu farmers, workers, children, and the youth," she asked.

She also mentioned that by inserting the formalities of census and seat delimitation, the Centre no longer holds any commitment to the concept of the Women's Reservation Bill.

Criticising the Congress over the demolitions in Karnataka, Dhawale mentioned that even though the Congress talks about secularism, only the Left parties protested against the demolition. Lauding the LDF government for its progressive moves, she said the women of Kerala are fortunate to live in a state where there are people to protect citizens' rights.

A forest official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the state government has allotted large portions of the forest land to various agencies, including the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB), Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) and Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB).

"The land allotted to BMRCL and BWSSB received forest clearance in exchange for land parcels in Dandeli and Raichur. KIADB was given the lion's share -- around 450 acres -- before the 1980 Land Acquisition Act. KIADB is now allotting this land to industries and real estate developers," the official said.

The official added that special petitions have been filed in both the Supreme Court and the Karnataka High Court to reclaim the land. "Despite a status quo order, construction activities are being undertaken by KIADB. Efforts to clear illegal expansion of Dinnur Colony have also landed the matter back in court."

Vigilance registers case over Rs 35 lakh ghee sale irregularities at Sabarimala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.(Agency)

The Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau has registered a case on the alleged irregularities in the sale of 'Adiya Sishtam Ghee', a sacred offering to the devotees.

S P Mahesh Kumar will lead the team. The Kerala High Court had earlier directed the Vigilance to probe the incident after the irregularities regarding the sale of ghee came to its attention via the report of the Sabarimala Special Commissioner.

Preliminary findings had revealed that within a short span of less than two months, an amount of approximately Rs 35 lakh was siphoned off exclusively from the sale of Adiya Sishtam Ghee. The proceeds from this offering form a crucial part of the Travancore Devaswom Board's revenue.

The chief vigilance and security officer of the Travancore Devaswom Board disclosed that the sale proceeds of 16,628 packets of ghee sold from the counter situated in the Maramath Building were not remitted to the devarswom account.

The court pointed out that the Board had entrusted Preman, of Anugraha Veedu, Palakkad, with the

task of filling 'Adiya Sishtam Ghee' into packets for sale at various counters. The contractor is paid at the rate of Rs 0.20 per packet for the assigned work. Significantly, the entire infrastructure for packing, which includes the packing machine, packing materials, and the ghee itself, is provided by the Devaswom Board.



There is a steel tank with a capacity of 700 litres into which ghee is filled using a motor. It is the duty of the contractor to fill each packet with 100 millilitres of ghee, which is thereafter sold to devotees at the counters for a sum of Rs 100 per packet. Similar packing arrangements are stated to exist for other articles of sale, such as turmeric, kumkum, and holy ash. The inspection revealed that during the period from November 17, 2025, to December 26, 2025, the contractor had packed 3,52,050 packets of 100 ml each, and those packets were entrusted to the Temple Special Officer for sale. Out of the 3,52,050 packets, about 89,300 packets were sold from the counter in the Maramath Building on various days.

MTC remodels five old buses into vintage models for sightseeing

CHENNAI.(Agency)

Giving life to sepia-tone pictures is Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC), helping Chennaites experience how it will be like to travel in buses that crisscrossed the city some 50 years ago.

The corporation has remodelled five of its nine-year-old buses into vintage-style models to offer sightseeing tour for residents and tourists. The service

"A bus will be operated every 30 minutes from designated points. The vehicles are equipped with GPS and a public announcement system. Based on the response, we plan to introduce more guided tours and combo tickets to tourist spots in the future," he said.

Styled in a heritage-inspired 1970-80s design, the buses aim to evoke nostalgia and highlight the evolution of Chennai's public transport system.



The service will start from Chennai Central and return to the same point after halting at 18 locations enroute, including Park Station, Ripon Building, Victoria

Hall, Egmore Railway Station, Government Museum, Valluvar Kottam, Semmozhi Poonga, Luz Corner, Kapaleeswarar Temple, Santhome Church, Lighthouse, Kannagi Statue, Vivekananda House, Marina Beach, War Memorial, Fort St. George (administrative complex), Madras High Court and Pallavan House.

No repeat of Sai Layout flooding, get railway vent work done by April-end: GBA Chief Maheshwar Rao

Rao also inspected the white-topping work on Hennur-Bagalur Road. The work has been taken up on a 5-km stretch and white-topping has been completed for 3.2 km.

BENGALURU.(Agency)

Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao directed officials to complete the Geddalahalli railway vent work by the end of April. During an inspection at various locations on

Wednesday, Rao reviewed the progress of the railway vent project and instructed officials to complete the work before the onset of pre-monsoon. The inspection was taken up in the backdrop of floods at Vaddarapalya and Sai Layout in Hormavu during the monsoon in the last few years. Noting that the casting work of one vent has already been completed and needed to be pushed beneath the railway track, he

directed officials to commence the work immediately and complete the casting of the second vent on priority. Officials were instructed to complete the entire project, including the RCC retaining walls, by the end of April.

Rao also inspected the white-topping work on Hennur-Bagalur Road. The work has been

taken up on a 5-km stretch and white-topping has been completed for 3.2 km. Vehicular traffic has been allowed on some sections where curing has been completed. Continuous inspections are being carried out to ensure the timely completion of the remaining work. He instructed officials to install green cloth barriers in newly

concretised areas to prevent pedestrian movement and footprint marks, and to give equal priority to completing footpath work in parallel. After inspecting Nagawara Junction, where Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) pipeline

work is in progress, the chief commissioner told officials to expedite the work and develop the road immediately after that. He instructed North City Corporation officials to coordinate with Metro officials to clear certain properties and provide a free-left turn from the junction towards Tannery Road. "White-topping work is being taken up on a stretch of 5 km, including 2.4 km of Nagawara Road and 2.6 km of Tannery Road. As the BWSSB pipeline work has been completed on a 1-km stretch of Nagawara, instructions have been given to the police department to grant immediate permission for white-topping work on half the carriageway," Rao said.



equal priority to completing footpath work in parallel. After inspecting Nagawara Junction, where Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) pipeline

Citizens step in to protect Kadugodi reserve forest amid rising construction near Whitefield

BENGALURU.(Agency)

As Bengaluru rapidly loses its lung spaces to unchecked urbanisation, concerned citizens are stepping in to protect what remains. One such effort is under way to safeguard the Kadugodi Reserve Forest patch near Whitefield.

Alarmed by large-scale construction activities in and around the forest patch, residents and environmental activists have launched campaigns to protect the green space. An online petition is also being circulated to mobilise public support before approaching the government.

In the petition, the campaigners alleged that despite clear directions from the Supreme Court and Karnataka High Court to state agencies to transfer all forest land to the forest department, little or no action has been taken so far.

Residents and activists have also flagged increasing construction activity within the forest patch and accused forest officials of failing to act against these violations.

The Kadugodi Reserve Forest spans 711 acres, but the forest department currently holds only around 200 acres, of which plantation work has been carried out on 120 acres.

A forest official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the state government has allotted large portions of the forest land to various agencies, including the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB), Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) and Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB).

"The land allotted to BMRCL and BWSSB received forest clearance in exchange for land parcels in Dandeli and Raichur. KIADB was given the lion's share -- around 450 acres -- before the 1980 Land Acquisition Act. KIADB is now allotting this land to industries and real estate developers," the official said.

The official added that special petitions have been filed in both the Supreme Court and the Karnataka High Court to reclaim the land. "Despite a status quo order, construction activities are being undertaken by KIADB. Efforts to clear illegal expansion of Dinnur Colony have also landed the matter back in court."

Paradoxical products of piety

It's a new year, but the debates are old. In January 2024, Nationalist Congress Party leader Jitendra Awhad had declared in Maharashtra's Shirati that Lord Ram must have eaten meat during his 14-year exile because he could not have been a vegetarian in the jungle. Awhad should have curbed his enthusiasm. It is not very wise to project our own appetites and limitations onto others. Lord Ram could have easily survived on fruits, roots and tubers—as countless ascetics have done. We don't know for sure. It is speculation laced with modern biases.

But in India, speculation fixates on the mythical past, not the probable future. Our sense of time has always been a little warped because we suspect, sadly, that the best has already happened. The future as nostalgia.

Awhad's remarks added decibels to the cacophony over a proposal to ban meat and alcohol on January 22, the Ayodhya Ram Mandir consecration day. No slaughter of the animals, then. Before we go further, we must clarify: the proposed ban is for that single day, just in and around Ayodhya. Meat delivery, however, is banned indefinitely as an 'administrative measure'.

One of the great utilitarian philosophers of our time is Peter Singer. He disputes the existence of any god—Christian, Jewish, Islamic or Hindu—because a truly beneficent and omnipotent deity would have protected not only humans, but also animals—which god supposedly created—from pointless suffering.

Singer's gaze turns to factory farms, those grim assembly lines of agony where billions of animals endure lives of confinement before the blade. And while they wait, they are all sentient enough to know it's the end. Liberals, ever vigilant against state overreach, do not subscribe to the view that the State should intrude into personal space, such as dictating what one eats or wears. On the surface, this is a fair position. But liberals often falter when defending that freedom at the expense of another living, feeling organism. How do you justify a pork chop when the pig screamed in the truck?

The best argument in defence of vegetarianism is that it avoids inflicting pain on another breathing thing merely for your fleeting pleasure or convenience. Singer's 1975 book titled *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Rights Movement* doesn't preach from a pulpit. It deploys cold logic. If sentience equals moral weight, the species is irrelevant. In Islam, dietary law meticulously distinguishes halal (permissible) from haram (forbidden), prohibiting pork and blood. Halal meat demands animals be slain in a prescribed manner, with the blood fully drained to purify the flesh. Purity is not just a 'desi' obsession with ghee; it's at play in flesh, too. Halal is clearly a condition of meat consumption.

Similarly, Judaism's kosher laws define permitted species—those that chew the cud and have cloven hooves—and mandate slaughter methods designed to minimise suffering while upholding ritual cleanliness, a balance of ethics and sanctity. What makes the whole thing insane, of course, is that it is an act of murder. In Christianity, most denominations impose no strict dietary restrictions; meat consumption, including pork, is commonplace. Exceptions persist, like the fasting traditions of Orthodox Christians or subgroups such as the Seventh Day Adventists, but general doctrine prohibits no meat on theological grounds. With regard to Hinduism, the picture is far more complex than the recent controversy suggests. Dietary practices have varied widely by region, caste, community, occupation and historical circumstance, defying any monolithic narrative. The Mahabharata, central to Hindu identity, depicts the Pandavas and Kauravas participating in hunting and meat consumption as integral to Kshatriya life. There is no textual emphasis on strict vegetarianism as a universal code. And they all went to heaven, no matter which side of the truth they fought for.

SUCCESSIVE years of rapid economic growth have encouraged commentators to suggest that the economy may at long last be on a higher growth track. This is because growth in the last five financial years (2021-26), taking into account the advance estimates for the current fiscal year, averages a handsome 8.1 per cent—the best on record. But this number should be seen in context. The latest five-year record is on the back of a depressed base, because the economy had shrunk in the Covid year, 2020-21. If one takes the pre-Covid year (2019-20) as the base, growth in the latest six years has averaged a less flattering 5.7 per cent. That is slower than the growth record of the previous 19 years, from the turn of the century to the pre-Covid year, a period that averaged 6.5 per cent growth. The key question is how much of the latest growth record represents recovery from the 2020-21 downturn, and what is the sustainable growth rate now. Some published growth forecasts for the next financial year hover around the 6.5 per cent level. On that basis, looking at the three-year cycle (2024-27), growth would average 6.8 per cent. That is the same as in the first term of the Modi government. This suggests that there is as yet no marked increase in the sustainable growth rate. Going beyond the headline growth numbers (which in any case raise questions about data quality), one needs to look at several other numbers to understand the economic situation. For, at most times in earlier periods, one or the other economic indicator was often out of kilter. Either inflation was high, or the trade deficit was large, as was the fiscal deficit, or banks and companies had troubled balance sheets. In contrast, the economy today has been characterised as being in the Goldilocks phase, with low inflation, balanced trade, a reduced fiscal deficit, and with bank and corporate balance sheets in their best-ever shape.

Yet key macro numbers suggest caution. The fiscal deficit at 4.4 per cent of the GDP, while on a declining trend, is higher than the average for the first term of the Modi government (3.6 per cent)—perhaps because of an investment push and also reflecting more honest accounting! But public debt too remains high, though on a declining trend. At 81 per cent of the GDP, it does not provide headroom for counter-cyclical fiscal action if the economy suffers a downturn. Meanwhile, savings and investment rates (critical for growth) are lower than earlier. Gross fixed capital formation has been put at 30 per cent of the GDP for the current year. This is lower than the average of 34 per cent for eight years till 2012-13. The number dipped below 30 per cent in 2015-16.

DESPISE repeated pledges and piecemeal interventions, India's road safety crisis remains alarming. With over 1.6 lakh deaths annually, road accidents kill more people than many public health emergencies combined. The Centre's recent decision to identify 18 high-risk highway corridors and focus on 100 accident-prone districts is, therefore, a welcome acknowledgment that generic advisories and one-size-fits-all policies have failed. Targeted intervention is the right approach. A badly designed curve, poor lighting, missing signage, lax enforcement or reckless driving habits could be unique to a stretch or district. Mapping corridors with high fatalities allows authorities to deploy engineering fixes, enforcement and emergency response where they are most needed. Evidence suggests that focussed enforcement delivers results. The

The longer road to faster growth

Much work remains to be done before the economy can gain significant momentum

before going back over that threshold in 2022-23. Meanwhile, the share of merchandise exports in economic activity has reduced over time. That is usually a contra-indicator for faster growth.

If one wants data to support a growth-ascendant narrative, one has to look to other numbers. Critically, the country may transition in the current year from the "medium" to the "high" category on the UN's human development index, having progressed from the low to medium category two decades ago. This reflects sustained improvement in education levels, life expectancy and incomes, but note that there is also a "very high" index category that encompasses over 70 countries.

When it comes to economic management, tax rates (corporate tax, income tax, GST) are now more

output has grown the slowest among industrial segments). The good news at the bottom of the income ladder is that there has been a sharp drop in the absolute poverty numbers, but this may not translate into much consumer demand, especially since employment has shifted towards rather than away from an already overpopulated agriculture sector. Higher up the income ladder, consumer debt is at a high point. Household financial liabilities doubled from Rs 8.99 trillion in 2021-22 to Rs 18.79 trillion in 2023-24. These liabilities used to be about a quarter of household financial savings; that ratio has gone up to a third. This will weigh against future consumption growth because of the pre-emption of income streams by loan repayment obligations. Already, there is slower growth in many sectors. Railway

passenger traffic, in particular, has been on a slow track, with net passenger kilometres showing virtually no growth over a full decade (despite the proliferation of Vande Bharat trains). One is not surprised therefore when the chief executive of a leading consumer goods company tells an interviewer that he is focused on the top 20 per cent of consumers because that is where the growth is. But even airline traffic grew only 11 per cent over five years to 2024. The surge in the number of airports is a poor indicator of aviation activity.

The underlying issue is that there hasn't been enough of a structural change in the economy since the launch of reforms in 1991, despite per capita incomes multiplying nearly five-fold. Industry accounted for a quarter of the GDP then, as it does now. The share of agriculture has declined, with crop yields in many cases well below world standards (necessitating a high level of tariff protection, bedeviling trade negotiations).

The service sector has become the largest chunk of the economy, but much of it remains in the unorganised part of the economy. Gig employment is not a substitute for proper jobs. A productivity uptick depends critically on three structural changes that are yet to happen: A substantially bigger manufacturing sector, greater formalisation of the economy, and rapid urbanisation. There is as yet not enough evidence of any of the three. If anything, urbanisation may have slowed down. While many things have improved in recent years, much work remains to be done before the economy can gain significant momentum.



reasonable than before. The digital public infrastructure that has been put in place and gained wide usage should improve system-wide productivity. So too should the massive investment in physical infrastructure, which has sped up goods movement on both road and rail (though paradoxically, it has negatively affected the sales of commercial vehicles!). Many sectors have benefited from reform, like real estate; and manufacturing may at last be getting some momentum, led by the electronics sector. The recent free trade agreements should also yield some benefits down the road. The structural constraint most frequently mentioned is consumption, whose sluggish growth has held back private corporate investment (capital goods

Fatal roads: Execution is key to corridor-specific push

The Tribune Editorial: Mapping roads with high fatalities allows authorities to deploy engineering fixes, enforcement and emergency response where they are most needed.



experience of Bengaluru, where fatalities have fallen even as accidents rose for the second consecutive year, offers a clue to what works. Other cities must replicate its model of

data-driven policing, CCTV surveillance and strict tracking of traffic violations.

However, the Centre's plan will succeed only if it goes beyond identification and symbolism. Past road safety initiatives have stumbled on weak coordination between Central, state and local authorities. Fixing black spots requires sustained funding, accountability for implementing agencies and regular audits of outcomes. Crucially, states must be empowered to act. There is also a danger of focusing on highways. Though comprising barely 2-3 per cent of the road network, national highways account for a high number of fatalities—more than 26,000 in the first half of 2025. Urban roads—where pedestrians, cyclists and two-wheeler riders account for a disproportionate share of deaths—tend to be ignored. These roads also demand investment. Safer design, speed management, helmet and seatbelt compliance and faster trauma care must move in tandem.

Why the Saudi-UAE rift matters to India

What happens in the Gulf now directly affects India's economy, energy, security and diaspora.

THERE is a churn in the Gulf. This does not mean that India's recent foreign policy upsets in the neighbourhood and North America will be repeated in the region to the west of Pakistan up to the Red Sea. This region not only comprises the existential foundations of India's security and sustenance, but it is also an extension of its demography. The transition of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates from blood brothers to competitors, however, calls for caution in New Delhi. The mindlessness visited upon India-Canada relations or the complete lack of artifice in India-United States engagement since Donald Trump became the US presidential candidate in 2024 must not be repeated in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The expansion in relations with the UAE and Saudi Arabia, in that order, has been a stunning success story for India's diplomacy over the last 10 years. But as Bangladesh demonstrated last year, foreign policy is never static. Complacency in dealing with rapidly changing circumstances in the Gulf can cost India dearly. Caught up in trade tariffs and concerns about protection of minorities abroad, there has been very little public awareness or discourse on the recent ominous changes in the Gulf. Pakistan was once the pre-eminent South Asian influencer in the Gulf, long before that term became associated with social media in the 21st century. Well before he became Pakistan's President, Zia-ul-Haq became a hero to Gulf monarchs. Zia found his way into the hearts of these sheikhs for his role in personally putting down the Black September revolt by Palestinians and saving the Jordanian monarchy. At that time, Zia was posted in Amman as the head of a Pakistani military training mission to Jordan. Pakistan's army was formally drafted to protect the House of Saud and it played an informal,

but important, role in dealing with frequent, multiple threats to other sheikhdoms. India in those years was little more than a source of apolitical and dependable labour—in large numbers—as fodder for huge, petrodollar-funded construction projects, from housing to refineries, which were coming up in these newly-rich nations. Before Prime Minister Narendra Modi successfully changed India's profile in the UAE, Indira Gandhi attempted to compete with Pakistan. She was not successful because conditions in India were then not compatible with those in the Gulf for any engagement other than seeking work for India's ayahs, bearers, cooks and drivers—ABCD, as they were called locally.

The sea change in New Delhi's role—mainly because India is now an emerging economy and not a mid-level developing country—has also raised India's stakes in the region. Important developments like the rift between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the earlier boycott of Qatar by its neighbours or the colour revolution-like uprising in Bahrain now have consequences for India's economy, labour mobility and national security.

The long regional boycott of Qatar ended in a shaky compromise and the uprisings in Bahrain continue to occur from time to time. It is the Saudi-UAE rift that is ongoing—and worsening by the day. It is also the most consequential for Indian interests there. The UAE has an Indian expatriate population of 4.5 million, second only to the number of ethnic Indians in the US. Saudi Arabia ranks third in the world, with about 2.8 million Indians.

Together, the UAE and Saudi Arabia account for the



biggest inflow of remittances into India. The GCC is the biggest component of India's foreign exchange reserves. India's strategic petroleum reserve is almost entirely made up of crude from Abu Dhabi. Fifty-five per cent of all Indians travelling abroad pass through the UAE or make it their final destination. The

biggest inflow of remittances into India. The GCC is the biggest component of India's foreign exchange reserves. India's strategic petroleum reserve is almost entirely made up of crude from Abu Dhabi. Fifty-five per cent of all Indians travelling abroad pass through the UAE or make it their final destination. The

in Saudi-UAE relations is their differing approach to Yemen, where both countries fought together from March 2015 to restore the globally recognised government in Sanaa, which was overthrown by Houthi with Iran's support. Four years later, as the UAE's fatalities rose, it began to scale down its boots on the ground. Saudis, on the other hand, did not lose as many people because they confined the attacks on Houthi to aerial bombardment. As a measure of compassion, the Khalifa Foundation Charity—named after a former UAE president— even sent plane loads of wounded Yemenis for medical treatment in Indian hospitals. As the Saudi-led "Coalition of the Willing" unravelled, the UAE decided to make a separatist group—the Southern Transitional Council (STC)—its proxy in Aden. Saudi Arabia wants a unified Yemen under its legal government based in the national capital. Last week, the UAE-backed STC was practically controlling all the territory of what used to be South Yemen. This territory's main airport in Aden was closed following attacks launched from Sanaa with Saudi support.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are also at loggerheads over Sudan, where the Kingdom supports General Abdel Fattah Al Burhan, Commander of the Sudanese armed forces. The UAE arms and funds a rival army, the Rapid Support Forces, led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. For India, the conflict in Sudan is not some faraway war on television screens. It can quickly come home. There are 2,396 Indian troops in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). The UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), an area disputed between Sudan and South Sudan, has another 596 Indian peacekeepers.

Security agencies to hold joint disaster response rehearsal in Gulmarg

Srinagar.(Agency)

Police will conduct a joint disaster preparedness and security response rehearsal on Thursday at the famous ski resort of Gulmarg as part of routine security and public safety measures.

The joint exercise will involve personnel from the Police, Army, CRPF, and BSF, aimed at strengthening coordination and assessing response readiness among the agencies.

Police said the rehearsal is purely precautionary in nature and aims to assess preparedness levels, response mechanisms, and inter-agency coordination among the participating forces.

"During the exercise, security personnel may be seen carrying out area domination, routine checking, and public assistance activities in and around the area," a police statement said.

Police have urged the general public not to panic, assuring that all essential services, tourism-related activities, and daily life will continue to function normally. Citizens and visitors have been requested to cooperate with security personnel during the rehearsal, police said.

Himachal: Car-borne consignment of charas seized; three traffickers arrested

Dharamshala.(Agency)

Stepping up its crackdown against the drug mafia, Kangra district police have seized a consignment of charas from a car and arrested three persons in connection with the case. Acting on a tip-off, a police team under the Kangra police station conducted a raid in the Kachiyari area and recovered 852 grams of charas from a car. Two of the accused are residents of Mandi district, while the third hails from Kangra district.

According to the police, specific information was received that a car was parked in the Kachiyari area carrying a large quantity of charas and two occupants were planning to sell it. The police team immediately reached the spot, cordoned off the area and searched the vehicle.

During the search, 852 grams of charas were recovered from the car. The police arrested the two occupants—Ramlal, son of Bangla Ram, a resident of Jhatingiri, Tehsil Padhar, Mandi district, and Sanjay Kumar, son of Sunka Ram, resident of Markhan, Tehsil Padhar, Mandi district. The intended recipient of the contraband was also arrested and identified as Shamsher, a resident of village Sahora, Tehsil and district Kangra.

A case has been registered against all three accused under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Himachal: Lahaul-Spiti warns tourists about frozen rivers

Keylong.(Agency)

The Lahaul Spiti district administration has issued a stringent advisory cautioning tourists and local residents against venturing near frozen riverbanks, particularly along the Chandra and the Bhaga rivers, warning that such acts pose a grave threat to life during the harsh winter months.

Meeting held to prepare for Grand Tricolour March

Muzaffarnagar: A Grand Tricolour March will be organised in Budhana town on the occasion of Republic Day under the leadership of Kashyap community's khap leader Dr Sonu Kashyap. In view of the preparations, Dr Kashyap held a meeting with members of the community on Thursday and finalised the programme outline. Responsibilities were also assigned to those present to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the march. Dr Sonu Kashyap said that the Grand



Tricolour March is being organised in Budhana as a symbol of patriotism and national unity. He informed that the march will commence at 11 am on Republic Day from the premises of Chandni Wala Temple. According to the schedule, the march will pass through the main routes of the town. It will proceed via Paith Bazaar, Bharat Talkies Tiraha, Parsi Bus Stand, Harnandeswar Dham, Tiraha, Mahavir Tiraha, Chaudhary Charan Singh Tiraha, and in front of DAV Public School, before returning to Chandni Wala Temple, where it will conclude. Dr Kashyap stated that the main objective of the march is to strengthen the spirit of national integration and unity among the younger generation. Through this collective patriotic programme, preparations are being made to set an example of brotherhood and solidarity in the town.

Cambodia bound 'Cyber Slavery' racket exposed: Victims who returned tipped off police, 2 arrested

The Sikh Times

Manoj Pal

Muzaffarnagar. A highly sensational case linked to cybercrime has come to light in the district, where Indian youths were allegedly lured with promises of attractive jobs abroad and sent to Cambodia. After reaching there, their passports were seized and they were held captive. The youths were then forced into "cyber slavery" and made to carry out cyber fraud, fake call-centre operations and online scam activities. The major breakthrough in the case came after victims, who somehow managed to return safely from Cambodia, approached the police and narrated their ordeal. According to the victims, they were continuously threatened, brutally assaulted for refusing to cooperate, and were even subjected to torture including electric shocks. They alleged that Chinese and Pakistani nationals present there pressurised them to cheat people in India, and those who resisted were further harassed

and punished. Acting on the victims' information, the Cyber Crime

and Javed, resident of Khataula, Shahpur police station area,



Police Station of Muzaffarnagar initiated an investigation. Under the supervision of SSP Muzaffarnagar Sanjay Kumar Verma, a team led by SP Rural Aditya Bansal, SP Crime Indu Siddharth and Cyber Crime Station In-charge Sultan Singh arrested two key accused of the gang on January 15. The arrested persons have been identified as Ash Mohammad, resident of Tawli village, Shahpur police station area,

Muzaffarnagar. Police also recovered three mobile phones and one laptop from their possession. Meanwhile, the prime accused believed to be playing a central role in running the network, Anwar Ahmad Ansari alias Shabri, a resident of Rahmatnagar locality in Muzaffarnagar, has been declared absconding. Police said he is currently in Cambodia and is allegedly operating the cyber slavery net

work from there. During interrogation, Ash Mohammad revealed that he had earlier worked in Qatar and later started working as a travel agent after returning to India. Along with his associate Anwar Ansari alias Shabri, he used to identify youths with typing and computer skills and lure them with promises of well-paying overseas jobs, before sending them to Cambodia. Once there, their passports were confiscated and they were forced into cyber fraud operations. In his statement, accused Javed said his brother Sajid has been living in Cambodia for a long time and had offered him a commission of Rs 50,000 per person for sending people from India. Tempted by the offer, Javed along with his associates sent youths to Cambodia, where they were allegedly forced into cyber fraud. SSP Sanjay Verma said the investigation has been intensified, efforts are on to arrest the absconding accused, and further arrests may follow as the police continues to crack down on the cyber slavery gang.

Night temperatures show slight recovery across Kashmir ahead of fresh Western Disturbances

Srinagar.(Agency)

Ahead of a fresh series of Western Disturbances expected to affect Jammu and Kashmir from Friday, night temperatures across Kashmir showed a marginal improvement at most places, though conditions continue to remain intensely cold.

According to meteorological department data, Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of -3.9°C last night, up from -5.2°C the preceding night.

Qazigund, the gateway town to Kashmir, also witnessed a slight rise, settling at -4.7°C compared to -5.3°C earlier. South Kashmir, however, continued to reel under severe cold conditions. Pulwama and Shopian emerged as the coldest places, both recording -6.1°C, though this was an improvement from the previous night when Pulwama logged -7.0°C and Shopian plunged to -7.5°C. The tourist resort of Pahalgam recorded -5.0°C, up from -6.0°C a night earlier. The other tourist destinations also showed mixed trends, with Gulmarg recording -3.2°C compared to -3.8°C earlier, while Sonamarg saw a sharp drop to -5.8°C from -2.2°C the previous night.

In north Kashmir, Kupwara registered -4.9°C, improving from -6.2°C. On Wednesday, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed unusual weather conditions, as Jammu city turned colder than the snow-bound resort of Gulmarg. Jammu recorded a maximum temperature of just 7.4 degrees Celsius, marking the fourth-lowest maximum temperature in the city's history.

Meanwhile, Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 13.3°C, Pahalgam settled at 10.6°C, while Gulmarg recorded 8.2°C.

At least three week Western Disturbance are expected to impact J&K from January 16 in coming days. The weather department has forecast isolated light rain or snowfall over the next two days. On January 19 and 20, light rain or snowfall is likely at scattered to fairly widespread places. From January 22 to 24, the weather is expected to remain generally cloudy with light to moderate rain or snowfall at most places.

Kabaddi promoter murder case: Three arrested in Kolkata sent to 3-day police remand

A total of eight accused were arrested, while one was killed in an encounter with police: Mohali SSP

Chandigarh. (Agency)

Three accused, including two alleged shooters, arrested at Howrah railway station in Kolkata two days ago in connection with the murder of kabaddi promoter Kanwar Digvijay Singh, alias Rana Balachauria, were handed over to police on remand for three days by a Mohali court on Wednesday. With these arrests, the total number of accused apprehended in the case rose to eight, while one accused was killed in a police encounter, police said.

Balachauria was shot dead during a kabaddi tournament at Sector 79 in Sohna on December 15 last.

Addressing the media, Mohali Senior Superintendent of Police Harmanpreet Singh Hans said, "The arrested accused were produced before the court on Wednesday, and were handed over to police on remand for three days for further investigation."

The SSP said, "The arrested persons were acting on the directions of foreign-based gangsters Balwinder Singh, alias Donny Bal, and Amarjit Singh, alias Khabba."

"On the directions of the Director

said. The SSP identified the accused as 23-year-old Karan Pathak, alias Karan Defaulter, 25-year-old Tarandeep Singh, and 22-year-old Sukhsherpal Singh, alias Akash Uppal.

"Investigation has revealed that Karan Pathak, along with Aditya, alias Makhan, fired at Balachauria," SSP Hans said. A resident of Amritsar, Karan, a Class VIII pass, has two cases of quarrel and fighting registered against him at Division-B police station in Amritsar, police said.

"Tarandeep was present near the crime scene with a motorcycle and facilitated the escape of the shooters after the murder," the SSP said. A resident of Barewal village in Ludhiana district, Tarandeep, an MA in sociology, has a case under the Arms Act registered against him at the Aero City police station in Mohali, police said.

General of Police, Punjab, special teams of the Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF) and Mohali district police were constituted, which, with the help of CCTV footage analysis and technical surveillance, successfully tracked and arrested the accused in Kolkata," the SSP

'Nobody is above Sri Akal Takht': Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann to appear before Jathedar amid tight security at Golden Temple

Chandigarh. (Agency)

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann is scheduled to appear before acting Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaj at the Akal Takht Sahib from Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) records, a matter linked to an FIR against 16 individuals.

Despite a cold and smoke-laden day in Amritsar, devotees continued to pay obeisance at the Golden

Temple and Sri Akal Takht Sahib without disruption.

Baldev Singh, a visitor from Muktsar who came to the Golden Temple to celebrate his daughter's birthday, said, "It is good that CM Mann is coming as a humble Sikh. Nobody is above Sri Akal Takht Sahib."

Narinder Singh from Jalandhar said the responsibility lay with the Akal Takht leadership. "It will be on the

Sri Akal Takht Sahib Jathedar to remain neutral. Otherwise, those who wish to harm Sikhs could take advantage of the situation," he said.

Harmeet Singh from Amritsar described the situation as unfortunate. "All sides are responsible. Politicians are interested only in politics and try to use everything for their benefit. History shows that whoever has tried to use the Akal Takht Sahib for personal gain has faced consequences," he said.

Sources said that, apart from the CM's remarks and the alleged video, discussions during the interaction could also touch upon the issue of 328 missing

saroops of the Guru Granth Sahib from Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) records, a matter linked to an FIR against 16 individuals.

Chief Minister Mann is expected to arrive barefoot via the heritage path and will first pay obeisance at the

Golden Temple before appearing at the Akal Takht between noon and 2 pm.

As head of Mann's appearance, the police have put in place elaborate security arrangements around the Akal Takht Sahib and the Golden Temple complex. A heavy police deployment in civilian attire

— white kurta, pyjamas, and red turbans — has been stationed across the

premises.

Police personnel generally avoid wearing uniforms

while on duty inside the Golden Temple, but this

marks the first time kurta and pyjamas have been

adopted as a special-duty uniform. Special langar

arrangements have also been made for the deployed

personnel since Wednesday night.

"All sides are responsible"

Prayagraj.(Agency)

The second bathing day of the Magh Mela, the largest religious fair held on the sands of the Sangam in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, is being celebrated on Wednesday on Makar Sankranti.

A massive crowd of devotees gathered at the Sangam ghats for

the holy dip, undeterred by the cold and fog. From Brahma Muhurta (pre-dawn) until 11 am, around 2.2

million people had already taken a dip in the Triveni Sangam. Officials

estimate that between 10 and 15 million devotees could participate in the bathing rituals on Thursday.

Earlier, on Ekadashi, 8.5 million

devotees took a dip, while 3.1 million participated on Paush Purnima on January 3. Around 2 to 2.5 million Kalpavasis are performing a month-long penance at the Magh Mela, and over the 1.5-month fair, 120 to 150 million devotees are expected to take part in the bathing rituals.

A 12,000-foot-long bathing ghat has been prepared at the Magh Mela. Deep water barricades, water police, NDRF, SDRF, and divers have been deployed at the bathing ghats. Officials associated with the fair are also present on the ground.

The Irrigation Department has

ensured the availability of 10,000

cusecs of water for the Magh Mela.

160 km of checkered plaites have

been laid by the Public Works Department at the Magh Mela. 242 km of drinking water pipelines

have been laid by the UP Jal Nigam.

Over 85 km of sewer lines have

also been laid, and 25 temporary power substations have

been set up by the UP Power Corporation.

Two hospitals with 20 beds each have

been established for the quick treatment of devotees. Twelve primary health centers and two health centers have been established.

A vector control unit, five Ayurvedic

and five homeopathic hospitals have also been opened at the fair. 50 ambulances have been provided. 25,000 toilets, 8,000 dustbins, more than 10 lakh liner bags, and 30 suction vehicles have been deployed at the Magh Mela.

Besides, 3000 sanitation workers have been deployed. The fair's area has been expanded, covering 800 hectares across 7 sectors. Parking facilities have been arranged at 42 locations for devotees arriving from different directions.

Within the fair area, 17 police

stations, 42 outposts, 20 fire

tenders, seven fire stations, 20 fire

watchtowers, a water police

station, and a water police control

room have been established. ATS

commandos have also been

deployed at the bathing ghats.

Crowd management, crowd density

analysis, and incident reporting are

being carried out using CCTV

cameras and 400 AI-enabled

cameras. 3800 Uttar Pradesh State

Road Transport Corporation buses

have been deployed for the Magh

Mela.

The fair will conclude with bathing

rituals on January 18 (Mauni

Amavasya), January 23 (Basant

Panchami), February 1 (Maghi

Painful life or dignified death for Harish Rana? Order reserved in euthanasia case

Harish Rana, a resident of Delhi, sustained severe head injuries in 2013 after falling from the balcony of his PG accommodation. He has remained in a vegetative state ever since.

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Supreme Court on Thursday said it would consider withdrawing life-sustaining treatment for a 32-year-old man, Harish Rana, who has remained in a vegetative state for the past 13 years, as it reserved its order in the passive euthanasia petition filed by his parents. A bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and KV Viswanathan, who met the parents of Harish before the hearing, called it a "delicate issue".

"These issues are delicate. We are also mortals. Who are we to decide who lives or dies? We will consider withdrawing life-sustaining medical treatment," the Supreme Court said. The court's observations came after detailed submissions by the amicus curiae, who represented Harish's parents, and ASG Aishwarya Bhati, who appeared for the Centre.

THE HARISH RANA CASE

Harish, a resident of Delhi's Mahavir Enclave, left home in his teens to pursue college in

Chandigarh. However, the world of the Ranas came crashing down on August 20, 2013, after Harish fell from the fourth-floor balcony of his PG accommodation, suffering severe head injuries. It left him with 100% disability. Since then, Harish has remained in a permanent vegetative state, depending on tubes for breathing and nutrition.

During the hearing, the amicus curiae sought passive euthanasia for Harish, calling it a case of accelerating natural death. The advocate, citing the reports of the two medical boards, said Harish had a negligible chance of recovery. "Continuing such treatments violates the right to live with dignity," she said.

PARENTS SEEK PASSIVE EUTHANASIA
Explaining the passive euthanasia process, the amicus said Harish would be put in palliative care, where his feeding tubes would be removed. "There will be no intervention. He



will be given sedatives so he doesn't feel any pain. He will be made comfortable till his death," the amicus said.

While active euthanasia is illegal, passive euthanasia was recognised by the Supreme Court in 2011 in the Aruna Shanbaug case. Shanbaug, a nurse in Mumbai's KEM Hospital, was sexually assaulted by a ward boy in 1973, leaving her in a vegetative state for over 40 years. While the court approved

euthanasia for her, Shanbaug eventually died of pneumonia in 2015. In 2018, the Supreme Court legalised passive euthanasia and framed guidelines.

Concurring with the amicus's argument, ASG Bhati also sought euthanasia for Harish. The ASG underlined that this would be the first time that the guidelines laid down by the court would be implemented.

"The death should not be caused due to the omission. The death should be due to the underlying condition. The act of omission should not be the direct cause of death," the ASG said.

She also urged the court to lay down guidelines related to the views of the caregivers of terminally ill patients, citing the hardships and the fraught legal battle of Harish's parents. Concluding her arguments, ASG Bhati said Harish had been in an irreversible permanent vegetative state for the last 13 years. "He is on his skin and bones," she said. The court has now reserved its judgment.

MCD clears proposal to set up women-only pink toilets using old city buses

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has approved a proposal to set up "Pink Bus Toilets" exclusively for women by converting old and condemned public buses into toilet units across the capital.

According to sources aware of the matter, the proposal was submitted by the PINKI Charitable Trust and has been cleared by the concerned authority. The initiative aims to address the shortage of safe, hygienic and accessible public toilet facilities for women in public spaces and aligns with the larger objective of supporting women's dignity, health and mobility.

Under the approved plan, 14 locations have been identified for setting up the pink toilets. These include Lajpat Nagar Market, Green Park Market, Nehru Place, Hauz Khas Market, PVR Complex Saket, Ajmal Khan Road in Karol Bagh, Kamla Nagar Market, Rajouri Garden Market, South Extension Part-I Market, New Friends Colony Market, PVR Vikaspuri Complex and Netaji Subhash Place.

In addition, two more locations have been selected near major transit hubs. One toilet unit will be installed opposite Old Delhi Railway Station at Kacha Bagh, while another is planned opposite New Delhi Railway Station at Ajmeri Gate. The toilets will be created by repurposing scrapped public buses and will be used exclusively by women. While the proposal has received formal approval, on-ground execution is yet to begin. As part of the preparatory process, Zonal Executive Engineers from the Department of Environmental Management Services (DEMS) have been directed to inspect the identified sites along with representatives of the PINKI Charitable Trust. The inspections will assess the feasibility of the locations and examine the availability of essential infrastructure, including sewer connections and water supply, which are mandatory requirements for installing the toilet units.

DMRC to roll out integrated last-mile transport services

In this regard, DMRC has executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sahkar Taxi Cooperative Ltd.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation is set to roll out Integrated Last Mile Connectivity (LMC) services across metro stations in the NCR to strengthen urban mobility and promote sustainable transport. Aligned with the vision of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), the initiative aims to provide seamless end-to-end travel for passengers, improve first- and last-mile access to the metro network, and reduce dependence on private vehicles, contributing to the fight against rising air pollution in Delhi.

In this regard, DMRC has executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sahkar Taxi Cooperative Ltd. (STCL), a multi-state cooperative society operating the mobility platform branded as "Bharat Taxi".

The "Bharat Taxi" platform is an initiative of the Ministry of Cooperation, Government of India, and is designed to promote cooperative-based economic models while ensuring fair and transparent service delivery. Under the collaboration, affordable, reliable and safe last-mile connectivity services will be provided from DMRC metro stations through bike taxis, auto-rickshaws and cab services.

These services will offer commuters multiple travel options based on distance, time, affordability and convenience, thereby reducing dependence on unorganised or informal modes of transport. Under the proposed arrangement, Sahkar Taxi will operate bike taxis, auto-rickshaws and cab services on an aggregator model for last-mile connectivity initially from 10 identified metro stations. As part of the pilot phase, dedicated bike taxi services will be deployed at Millennium City Centre and Botanical Garden metro stations by January 31, 2026, to assess commuter response, operational feasibility and service effectiveness before further expansion. A key feature of the initiative is digital integration, under which the "Bharat Taxi" mobile application, available on Android and iOS platforms, will be integrated with the DMRC Sarthi app.

Late Air India captain's pilot nephew summoned for crash probe, pilots protest

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) has raised strong objections after the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) summoned Captain Varun Anand, nephew of the late Captain Sumeet Sabharwal, in connection with the Air India Flight 171 crash probe. The FIP has sent a legal notice to the AAIB, terming the move "wholly unwarranted" and amounting to harassment. Captain Anand, a serving Air India pilot and FIP member, was informed by his employer about the summons to appear on January 15. The FIP highlighted that the notice failed to specify the statutory basis, purpose, or relevance of the summons, or the capacity in which Captain Anand is required to appear. "Summoning Capt. Varun Anand, especially when

he has no association with the incident and without adequate notice, is wholly unwarranted. It amounts to harassment and distress in the



aftermath of a tragic loss and exposes our client to professional and reputational prejudice," the pilots' federation said in its communication to AAIB officials. Captain Anand, however, has agreed to appear via video conference to answer any queries. The background

of the probe dates back to June 12 last year, when the London-bound Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crashed shortly after takeoff from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad. The aircraft crashed on a hostel complex of BJ Medical College in Meghni Nagar, killing 241 of the 242 passengers onboard, including former Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani.

Following the crash, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation ordered enhanced safety checks on Air India's 787-8/9 Dreamliner fleet. Air India's parent company, the Tata Group, announced compensation of Rs 1.25 crore to the families of the victims. The AAIB continues to investigate the cause of the disaster, which remains one of India's deadliest aviation accidents in recent years.

Delhi Sets Barapullah Project Phase 3 Completion Deadline To 2027

New Delhi.(Agency)

The wait for high-speed connectivity between East and South Delhi is set to get longer as government sets Barapullah phase-3 completion deadline to 2027, officials said on Wednesday. The Public Works Department (PWD) has also informed the Delhi government that the delay in completion and the increase in construction costs of the project -- connecting Sarai Kale Khan to Mayur Vihar -- were due to factors "beyond its control".

The project has been under construction since 2015, has had several cost escalations and missed deadlines. The initial deadline was 2017. According to the officials, 95 per cent of the work at the site has been completed and now 15 more months would be

required to complete the final portion. In its latest Expenditure and Finance



Committee (EFC) meeting held, the government was informed that the overall construction cost of the project has also increased by Rs 374.40 crore. Initially estimated at Rs 1,260.63 crore, now the construction cost has

escalated to Rs 1,653.03 crore. "Hindrances such as land acquisition and the shifting of high-tension (HT) lines have caused an inordinate delay in the project's scheduled completion. These delays were beyond the control of the department and ultimately led to an arbitration award in favour of the agency and escalation of cost," the minutes of the EFC meeting state.

In July last year, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta ordered an inquiry into alleged "irregularities" in the construction of the project, seeking the opinion of the law department on arbitration awards and other details of the project.

The Delhi government has also directed the PWD to prepare a fresh, comprehensive proposal for cabinet approval to accommodate cost overruns in the long-delayed project.

Cold wave grips city for fourth day as temperature drops

New Delhi.(Agency)

The capital stayed locked in a cold wave for the fourth consecutive day on Wednesday, though temperatures showed a slight improvement from the previous day but the winter chill continued to dominate, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The IMD said Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 20 degrees Celsius on Wednesday, which was 0.1 notch above normal, while the minimum temperature settled at 3.8 degrees Celsius, 3.6 notches below the seasonal average. The weather department said the city has been experiencing one of its coldest spells in recent years, with minimum temperatures hovering near 3

degrees Celsius since the beginning of the week. Delhi had last recorded a lower January minimum temperature of 1.4 degrees Celsius on January 16, 2023. Safdarjung recorded a minimum temperature of 3.8 degrees Celsius, 3.6 notches below normal. Palam logged a minimum of 4.4 degrees Celsius, 2.9 notches below normal, while Lodhi Road recorded 3.6 degrees Celsius, 2.4 notches below the seasonal average.

Ridge reported a minimum temperature of 4.6 degrees Celsius, 3.5 notches below normal, and Ayanagar recorded a low of 4 degrees Celsius, 3.1 notches below normal, the IMD data showed. According to the weather department, Tuesday recorded the coldest January morning in three years.

The IMD has issued a "yellow" alert for cold-wave conditions for Thursday, with temperatures expected to range between 5 degrees Celsius and 22 degrees Celsius.

Meanwhile, the air quality in the capital remained in the "very poor" category. The 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 353, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). In the evening, 30 monitoring stations witnessed "very poor" air.

Suspend Bengal top cop: ED's fresh plea in Supreme Court ahead of I-PAC hearing

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed another plea in the Supreme Court, seeking the suspension of West Bengal's Director General of Police (DGP) Rajeev Kumar ahead of today's hearing on last week's agency's raids on political consulting firm, I-PAC. The agency claimed that Kumar and other top officials interfered during the searches at I-PAC director Pratik Jain's residence in Kolkata on January 8.

I-PAC has been engaged in curating poll strategy for the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress for the upcoming Assembly elections scheduled later this year. The ED, in its plea, flagged the conduct of Rajeev Kumar, saying he sat on a dharma (sit-in protest) with Mamata Banerjee when he was the Kolkata Police Commissioner.

The Supreme Court will hear today the ED's petition accusing West Bengal

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of obstructing a search operation at the premises during the search along with senior Trinamool leaders and atmosphere for officers and Kolkata office of the I-PAC. The petition, filed under Article 32 of the Constitution, has further alleged that the Chief Minister will be taken up by a bench comprising Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra and Justice Vipul M Pancholi.

Apart from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the ED has named the West Bengal government, Rajeev Kumar, Kolkata Police Commissioner Manoj Kumar Verma and South Kolkata Deputy Commissioner Priyabratra Roy as respondents in the case.

The petition stems from an incident last week when ED officials were conducting searches at the I-PAC office in Kolkata as part of a money laundering probe linked to the alleged coal scam. According to the central agency, Mamata Banerjee arrived at the premises during the search along with senior Trinamool leaders and atmosphere for officers and



during the operation, an act it claims seriously hampered the investigation.

In its plea, the ED has contended that the Chief Minister's presence at the

search site created an intimidating atmosphere for officers and compromised the agency's ability to independently carry out its statutory duties. The agency has also alleged repeated obstruction and a lack of cooperation from the state administration during the course of the investigation.

Following the incident, the West Bengal Police registered an FIR against ED officials, further escalating the standoff between the state government and the central agency. Citing these developments, the ED has approached the Supreme Court seeking directions for an independent inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), arguing that a neutral central agency is required in view of the alleged interference by the state government.

NEWS BOX

Mohammad Rizwan should leave Big Bash League and return to Pakistan: Former batter

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former Pakistan wicket-keeper-batter Kamran Akmal has urged Mohammad Rizwan to return to the country from the ongoing Big Bash League (BBL) in Australia. Rizwan is currently representing the Melbourne Renegades in the tournament but has endured a difficult and largely forgettable campaign so far. In the eight innings he has played in the competition to date, Rizwan has managed to score 167 runs at an average of 20.87 and a strike rate of 101.82. The 33-year-old was also asked to retire out during a match against the Sydney Thunder after scoring 26 off 23 deliveries. Following the decision taken by his team management, Rizwan was subjected to widespread criticism and trolling on social media, with Kamran Akmal labelling the entire episode as humiliating. Akmal went on to cite the example of former Pakistan captain Younis Khan from the inaugural season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) in 2008 and urged Rizwan to stand up for himself in a similar manner. "We have spoken at length on various shows and on YouTube about how



Babar and Rizwan need to improve their strike rates. What happened to Rizwan has not only led to mockery across the world but has also created a sense of humiliation. Some people are even saying that Rizwan should leave the league and return home. During the first season of the IPL, Younis Khan was kept on the bench while playing alongside you for the Rajasthan Royals. He famously said, 'I am the captain of Pakistan; I will not sit on the bench. You must send me back with respect.' We have seen players stand up for themselves like that," Akmal said while speaking on GTV Sports.

Akmal also touched upon the fast-paced nature of T20 leagues around the world and stated that Rizwan must evolve his game in line with modern-day demands.

Virat Kohli's priceless reaction as fan jumps barricades to meet him in Rajkot

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Star India batter Virat Kohli's crazy fandom was on display once again during the second ODI against New Zealand on Wednesday, January 14, at the Niranjan Shah Stadium in Khandheri, Rajkot, as a fan breached security to meet him. During the second innings of the match, the fan ran onto the playing area to approach the batting stalwart, who welcomed him with a warm embrace. However, as security personnel rushed in to escort the fan out of the ground, Kohli gestured to them to go easy on him, a heartwarming moment that has since gone viral on social media. The individual was then calmly taken towards



the boundary rope by the security staff. Meanwhile, Kohli endured a rare failure in the match, being dismissed for 23 off 29 balls by Kristian Clarke, who finished with figures of 3/56 from eight overs. The right-handed batter struck two boundaries during his stay at the crease but was dismissed after chopping a delivery back onto his stumps. It was the first time in five ODI innings that Kohli was dismissed without registering a fifty-plus score. Following Kohli's return to the pavilion, KL Rahul played a vital role in bringing India back into the contest with a splendid century. The wicket-keeper-batter scored an unbeaten 112* off 92 deliveries, laced with 11 fours and a six, to help the team post a competitive total of 284/7 in their allotted 50 overs. New Zealand beat India by 7 wickets.

Rahul stitched together crucial partnerships, first adding 73 runs off 88 balls for the fifth wicket alongside Ravindra Jadeja, who contributed 27 off 44 deliveries. He later forged a 57-run stand off 49 balls with Nitish Kumar Reddy, who chipped in with a brisk 20 off 21 balls for the sixth wicket.

WPL 2026: Winless UP Warriorz seek revival against in-form Mumbai Indians

WPL 2026, MIW vs UPW Preview: UP Warriorz, still searching for their first win of the season, come into the match after a seven-wicket defeat to Delhi Capitals. Mumbai Indians, meanwhile, beat Gujarat Giants in their previous outing and have enjoyed a day's rest ahead of the clash.

New Delhi. (Agency)

UP Warriorz remain the only winless side three matches into the season and face another stiff challenge as they take on an in-form Mumbai Indians side chasing a third straight win in the 8th match of the ongoing Women's Premier League (WPL) in Navi Mumbai. The WPL schedule has drawn criticism, with teams playing back-to-back games and little time for recovery. UPW are feeling the strain, having played Delhi Capitals the previous night before heading into Thursday's clash at the D.Y. Patil Stadium. There were positives in their last outing as the bowlers kept Delhi under pressure, but the batting once again let them down. Meg



Lanning led from the front with a fluent half-century, but wickets continued to fall around her. A tactical call also backfired when Harleen Deol was retired out on 47, triggering a collapse of four wickets for 11 runs. The Warriorz have struggled through the middle overs and are still searching for the right opening combination. While Lanning has been consistent, the Indian



middle order has failed to deliver. With tougher matches ahead, the team management has key decisions to make, including a possible reshuffle of the bowling attack. Mumbai, on the other hand, are flying. Nicola Carey has contributed with both bat and ball, Hayley Matthews returned from injury in style, Amelia Kerr has been impressive with the ball and Shabnim Ismail

has been sharp throughout. With Nat Sciver-Brunt set to return, MI face a selection headache among their overseas players. After bouncing back strongly from an early defeat, Mumbai come into the match well-rested and full of confidence. Despite the absence of spectators due to local municipal elections, both teams will be eager to make a statement on the field.

WPL 2026, MIW vs UPW: Head-to-head

Mumbai Indians Women and UP Warriorz Women have faced each other seven times in the Women's Premier League so far. MIW have held the upper hand in this rivalry, winning five of those encounters, while UPW have emerged victorious on two occasions.

WPL 2026, MIW vs UPW: Weather and pitch conditions

The pitches in Navi Mumbai have generally favoured batters, but with multiple matches already played at the venue, the surfaces are now starting to show signs of wear. The increasing abrasions have brought the slower bowlers into the game, a trend clearly evident during the UP Warriorz vs Delhi Capitals clash.

Daryl Mitchell continues to haunt India: Rajkot ODI adds to list of fruitful knock

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

There is something about India that brings out the most assured version of Daryl Mitchell. Calm under pressure and clinical once set, Mitchell once again played the role of tormentor as New Zealand leveled the ODI series in Rajkot, leaving India with a familiar sense of déjà vu.

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For a local poll Zerodha CEO slams poor planning as markets shut for BMC election

New Delhi.(Agency)

Zerodha founder and chief executive Nithin Kamath has criticised the decision to shut Indian stock exchanges for Mumbai's municipal elections, calling it a sign of poor planning and a lack of understanding of the wider impact such closures can have. His comments come on a day when Dalal Street is closed after the Maharashtra government declared January 15 a public holiday to ensure smooth polling for local body elections, including those for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. The timing of the market holiday has drawn attention as Indian equities are already under pressure. Markets have had a weak start to the year, weighed down by global uncertainty, concerns over trade relations and continued foreign investor selling. The struggles follow a disappointing 2025 as well, when benchmark indices remained volatile and failed to deliver strong returns.

In a post on X, Kamath said that shutting stock exchanges for a local municipal election shows poor planning, especially at a time when Indian markets have strong international linkages and global investor participation.

"The fact that our exchanges, which have international linkages, are shut down for a local municipal election shows poor planning and a serious lack of appreciation for second-order effects," he wrote on X. Quoting legendary investor Charlie Munger, Kamath wrote, "Show me the incentive, and I will show you the outcome." He added that market holidays continue because there is little incentive for those in decision-making positions to oppose them. Kamath also said the episode highlights how far Indian markets still have to go before global investors take them seriously. His remarks come at a sensitive time for Dalal Street, with investor confidence already fragile due to prolonged underperformance and rising volatility.

Getting corporate investment in start-ups is a major challenge, says DPIIT secretary

New Delhi.(Agency)

One of the biggest challenges faced by the start-up ecosystem in India is lack of proper corporate investments, said Amardeep Singh Bhatia, secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) on Wednesday. However, the government has been pushing the corporate and even signed MoUs with several companies to have better investment. "We are working on the major challenge - getting some corporate to deepen their partnership with start-ups. So that is something we are pushing for; it is work in progress. There are instruments in place, that is something which we are actively, the entire government is working on ensuring that innovation is deepened, innovation is much deeper," said Bhatia. As confirmed by the Ministry of Commerce, DPIIT has been pushing the corporate to get more involved with the start-ups so that they can innovate and build products for the big corporates. While the Ministry is taking measures to ensure more investment from both domestic and international corporate, there has been an inflow of around \$51 billion in the last six months. DPIIT is currently focusing on enhancing the manufacturing capacity through various means. "It is not only access to the domestic market but also access to global supply chains," added Bhatia. To ensure more foreign corporate to come and invest in the start-up sector, DPIIT is taking several measures "to provide an environment which is conducive for investment."

The government will continue to prioritise deep tech to boost manufacturing by enabling greater access to the domestic market, the DPIIT said. Alongside 21 lakh crore in direct R&D funding, DPIIT expects private capital and support from other schemes, noting strong investor interest in long-term, patient funding for Indian start-ups.

Forget tariff wars: The EU and Mercosur build one of the world's biggest free-trade zones

New Delhi.(Agency)

Talks on a landmark free trade deal between the European Union and four South American countries started so long ago that the euro wasn't even in circulation, China hadn't yet joined the World Trade Organization and Venezuela was still America's top oil provider.

But against a starkly different geopolitical background and tough odds — including backlash from powerful protectionist lobbies — the EU and the South American alliance known as Mercosur are expected to formally sign their quarter-century-in-the-making trade pact this Saturday at a ceremony in Paraguay.

This is the first major trade agreement for Mercosur, which includes the region's two biggest economies, Brazil and Argentina, along with Paraguay and Uruguay. Bolivia, the newest member, was not involved in negotiations but can join the agreement in the coming years.

The trans-Atlantic trade deal — lifting tariffs on products ranging from Argentine steaks and Brazilian copper to German cars and Italian wine — still has to be ratified by the European Parliament. The significance of creating one of the world's largest free-trade zones — home to more than 700 million people and accounting for a quarter of global gross domestic product — while President Donald Trump yanks the United States out of the international economy is not lost on the signatories.

Can Budget 2026 unlock the next phase of India's clean energy transition

With targeted actions from the upcoming Union Budget, India's energy sector could move beyond capacity building and towards more reliable, flexible, and competitive clean power for industrial and commercial consumers nationwide.

New Delhi.(Agency)

As India heads into Union Budget 2026, voices from the renewable energy sector are growing louder around one clear message: clean power must be reliable, not just renewable. Industry leaders say the next phase of India's energy journey will depend heavily on storage, hybrid

projects and strong domestic manufacturing. After years of rapid solar and wind capacity addition, the focus is now shifting towards round-the-clock clean power that supports the grid and meets real demand from businesses and industries.

STORAGE TO BECOME AS IMPORTANT AS POWER GENERATION

Sunil Rathi, Executive Director, Waaree Energies Limited, believes Budget 2026 could be a turning point for India's clean energy transition. "The Union Budget 2026 is an important opportunity to move India decisively into the next phase of its clean energy transition, where storage becomes as central as generation," Rathi says. He explains that policy support must rest on three strong pillars. The first is deeper backing for vertically integrated manufacturing that covers solar modules, batteries and energy management systems. This, he said, will help build resilient supply chains within India and cut reliance on imports. Rathi also mentions the need for a more flexible and



expanded viability framework that supports large-scale storage deployment, especially when combined with solar and hybrid projects. According to him, domestic value addition should be sharpened to create skilled jobs and ensure long-term competitiveness for Indian manufacturers. "When solar and storage scale together, India's clean energy journey moves from capacity creation to system leadership," he says, adding that the right policy push could help India emerge as a global hub for clean energy technology. SHIFT FROM CAPACITY ADDITION TO RELIABLE

POWER DELIVERY
Siddharth Bhatia, Managing Director, Oyster Renewables Pvt. Ltd, says that the renewable energy sector has already entered a new phase. "2025 has been the year when India's renewable energy sector shifted its focus from capacity addition to delivering reliable clean power," Bhatia says.

WHY HYBRID AND STORAGE-BACKED PROJECTS MATTER

As India's power needs grow, experts believe hybrid assets backed by storage will play a key role in improving grid stability and making green energy more dependable. "As we step into 2026, competitiveness will be defined not by megawatts installed but by megawatts delivered when customers need them," Bhatia says. He adds that storage-linked hybrid projects can unlock higher utilisation, offer cleaner baseload power and deliver electricity at commercially attractive tariffs. From Budget 2026, the industry is looking for policy.

Composite Salary Account Package For Central Govt Employees: ATM Lounge Access Of 12 Major Banks Compared And Explained

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance, has introduced a composite 'Salary Account Package for Central Government Employees'. Composite Salary Account Package seeks to provide Central Government employees with a comprehensive suite of banking and insurance benefits under a single, seamless account structure. The packages have been carefully designed in consultations with banks to ensure maximum coverage, uniformity and convenience for employees across all cadres [Group A, B and C]. The product has three core segments — Banking, Insurance and Cards — making it a one-stop financial solution for employees. All Central



Government employees can avail the benefits of this comprehensive scheme through their salary accounts with 12 Public Sector Banks viz Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra, Punjab National

Bank, Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, UCO Bank, State Bank of India, Indian Bank, Canara Bank, Punjab & Sind Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Central Bank of India.

SMBC gets RBI nod for setting up wholly-owned subsidiary in India



New Delhi.(Agency)

Japan's Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC) is set to receive 'in-principle' approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for setting up a wholly-owned subsidiary (WOS) in India. SMBC is currently carrying on banking business in India in branch mode through its four branches located in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru. The 'in-principle' approval has been granted to the bank for setting up a WOS through conversion of its existing branches in India.

"The RBI would consider granting a licence for commencement of banking business in WOS mode under Section

22 (1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 to SMBC on being satisfied that the bank has complied with the requisite conditions laid down by RBI as part of 'in-principle' approval," the RBI said in a statement on Wednesday. Having a wholly-owned subsidiary in India means SMBC will have to create a separate legal entity with its own capital base and local board of directors. It will have to make clear delineation between the assets and liabilities of its India subsidiary with that of its foreign parent, with ring fenced capital and assets within the host country. Local incorporation provides effective control to the local regulator —

The 'in-principle' approval has been granted to the bank for setting up a WOS through conversion of its existing branches in India

the RBI. As per Indian regulations, a wholly-owned subsidiary can be permitted, subject to regulatory approvals and such conditions as may be prescribed, to enter into mergers and acquisition transactions with any private sector bank in India subject to the overall foreign investment limit of 74%. Last year, SMBC acquired 24.21% in Yes Bank, thus becoming the largest shareholder in the Mumbai-based bank. Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation or a part of the Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group (SMFG) is the second largest bank in Japan with \$1.72 trillion in total assets held across its operations in 39 countries, almost half of them in Asia-Pacific region. India allows up to 74% foreign direct investment in private sector banks, while the limit is 20% in public sector banks.

Malaysia and Indonesia took legal action and blocked access to Grok. The U.K. and European Union were investigating potential violations of online safety laws. France and India have also issued warnings, demanding stricter controls. Brazil called for an investigation into Grok's misuse. The Grok editing functions were "facilitating the large-scale production of deepfake nonconsensual intimate images that are being used to harass women and girls across the internet, including via the social media platform X," California's announcement said.

The avalanche of reports detailing the nonconsensual, sexually explicit material that xAI has produced and posted online in recent weeks is shocking. This material, which depicts women and children in nude and sexually explicit situations, has been used to harass people across the internet," it cited the state's Attorney General Rob Bonta as saying. "We have zero tolerance for the AI-based creation and dissemination of nonconsensual intimate images or of child sexual abuse material," he said.

SC to rule on Tiger Global's 2018 deal with Walmart in landmark tax case

Tiger Global and Indian tax authorities have been locked in a legal tussle over its 2018 stake sale in Indian e-commerce company Flipkart to Walmart worth ?14,440 crore (\$1.6 billion)

New Delhi.(Agency)

India's top court is set to rule on Thursday if taxes should be levied on US investment firm Tiger Global's \$1.6 billion stake sale in Flipkart to Walmart in 2018, in what could be a landmark ruling on international tax-treaty use by firms.

Keenly watched by foreign investors, the legal dispute relates to how Tiger Global used the India-Mauritius tax treaty to claim tax exemptions and New Delhi's

fierce objections to it. The ruling will have implications for how India applies tax principles in cross-border deals. "The ruling is likely to redefine the treaty interpretation law," said Mukesh Butani, managing partner of Indian law firm BMR Legal, which advises clients on international tax laws and treaties. Tiger Global and Indian tax authorities have been locked in a legal tussle over its 2018 stake sale in Indian e-commerce company Flipkart to Walmart worth ?14,440 crore (\$1.6 billion). The deal was part of the US retail company's \$16 billion acquisition of



Flipkart that year. The stake sold at the time, 17 per cent according to local media reports, was held by Tiger Global's units in Mauritius. While Indian tax authorities argued Tiger Global wrongfully used the India-Mauritius tax avoidance treaty to not pay any tax on its profits, the investment firm argued it can do so as the treaty exempted such a transaction. The tax authorities say the Tiger Global Mauritius units served merely as a conduit for Tiger Global US — a description the investment firm says is incorrect. The Supreme Court has been hearing the case since January 2025 as Indian tax authorities challenged a previous Delhi High Court ruling that was in favour of Tiger Global and found no wrongdoing. Walmart competes with Amazon in India's thriving e-commerce market, where online shopping has boomed in recent years. Walmart has previously not commented on the matter.



Priyanka Chopra

Blackpink's Lisa Hold Hands, Share Fun BTS Selfies From Golden Globes 2026



The 2026 Golden Globe Awards delivered a memorable cross-cultural moment when Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Blackpink's Lisa (Lalisa Manobal) took the stage together as presenters in Beverly Hills. Bringing together two global icons — one rooted in Bollywood and Hollywood, and the other a powerhouse from the world of K-pop — the duo quickly became one of the most talked-about highlights of the evening.

Even before they announced the winner for Best Actor in a Television Series – Drama, Priyanka and Lisa received loud cheers from the audience, underlining their immense global appeal. Soon after the ceremony, Priyanka gave fans a delightful peek behind the scenes by sharing a series of fun and heartwarming moments with Lisa on social media.

Priyanka Chopra Shares Adorable BTS Moments With Lisa

In one of the photos shared by the Dostana actor, Priyanka and Lisa were seen walking onto the stage hand in hand, both looking poised and radiant as they smiled warmly at the cheering crowd. The camaraderie between the two stars instantly caught fans' attention, with the image quickly circulating across social media platforms.

Several backstage glimpses also showed the duo laughing, chatting and enjoying each other's company between segments. Fans were especially delighted by their relaxed and playful energy, which contrasted beautifully with their elegant on-stage presence.

Mirror Selfies, Pouts And A Viral Introduction

In another set of pictures, Priyanka and Lisa struck playful poses, making pouts and clicking glamorous mirror selfies backstage. The candid moments further amplified the buzz around their Golden Globes appearance, with fans praising their effortless chemistry and style. Host Nikki Glaser set the tone for their appearance with a witty introduction, quipping, "One was in The White Lotus, and one wed the white Nick Jonas," which drew laughter across the room as the duo walked on stage. While Priyanka is no stranger to the Golden Globes — having previously presented at the ceremony in 2017 — the night marked a significant milestone for Lisa. The Blackpink star recently made her acting debut in HBO's The White Lotus during its 2025 season, earning praise for her seamless transition from music to acting.

Rashami Desai

On Shilpa Shinde Vs Shubhangi Atre As Angoori Bhabhi: 'Both Have Worked Really Hard'

Popular television actress, Shilpa Shinde, who is back as Angoori Bhabhi in "Bhabiji Ghar Par Hai 2.0" recently made a statement saying that she was always the Babiji. Actress Rashami Desai reacted to this statement by Shilpa during an exclusive conversation with IANS. She said that both Shilpa and Shubhangi Atre are great actors and both of them have given their best to the character of Angoori Bhabhi. Rashami told IANS, "See, being a senior actor, I did not think that she (Shilpa) would have liked to compare herself with Shubhangi Atre. If she is asked to compare, that itself is an insult to her as a senior actor."

"Shubhangi has worked really hard for that character. In fact, Shilpa has also worked really hard. Shilpa didi is a very bold personality to give a certain kind of statement, but she also has her own journey. She never wanted to leave the show, and now that she has come back, it is a homecoming for her, so I think you all should be welcoming. Whatever phase Shubhangi has lived as Bhabhiji, that is also her hard work, you cannot compare," she added. Earlier, speaking to IANS, Shilpa opened up on how she sees no comparison of herself with the former Angoori Bhabhi, aka Shubhangi. She shared that comparisons between her and Shubhangi do not bother her at all. Shilpa

said, "I don't see any comparison at all. I am sorry, but I can't compare myself with anyone."

She added, "Bhabhi ji was always Shilpa Shinde, and that is why I am here after ten years. This is not overconfidence; this is my hard work. I have made my own place, and I have proved myself."



Talking about whether it was a challenge for her to get into the shoes of the character after 10 years, Shilpa stated, "There is no big challenge in this. When I returned to the show, it felt like I was starting the show from where I had left off. So, there wasn't any particular challenge. The only challenge is that people should see me as this character and not look for Shilpa or Shinde in it. That, for me, is the real challenge."



Alia Bhatt Stuns In Gorgeous Saree As She Arrives Hand-In-Hand With Ranbir At Friend's Reception



Bollywood's most-loved couple, Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor, once again grabbed attention as they stepped out in Mumbai on Tuesday evening to attend a friend's wedding reception. Arriving hand in hand, the duo served understated elegance and couple goals, leaving fans and photographers swooning.

For the occasion, Alia opted for a timeless traditional look. The actress looked ethereal in a white sequinned embroidered saree, paired with a matching blouse featuring a plunging neckline. She styled her hair in a sleek bun and completed the look with a statement choker and minimal accessories, keeping her makeup soft and dewy. Ranbir complemented her perfectly in a classic black kurta-pyjama, layered with an embroidered Nehru jacket that added a regal touch to his ensemble.

Alia-Ranbir Step Out For Wedding Reception In Mumbai

The couple was seen warmly greeting family members and friends before leaving the venue. Later, they were spotted exiting Gauri Khan's restaurant Torri, still holding hands, much to the delight of the paparazzi waiting outside. Videos and pictures of their appearance quickly surfaced online, with fans praising Alia's elegant saree look and Ranbir's effortless charm.

The evening saw several other Bollywood celebrities stepping out for wedding celebrations across the city. Filmmaker Farah Khan, actors Ankita Lokhande, Karishma Tanna and designer Punit Malhotra were among the many familiar faces spotted at Nupur Sanon and Stebin Ben's wedding reception. Kriti Sanon also turned heads at her sister's post-wedding bash, dazzling in a mehendi green saree and embracing the festive spirit in full desi style.

About Alia Bhatt And Ranbir Kapoor

Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor, fondly referred to as RaLia by fans, continue to be one of Bollywood's most adored couples. Their love story began on the sets of Brahmastra in 2018, where they struck an instant bond and went on to date for several years. The couple tied the knot on April 14, 2022, in an intimate ceremony held at their Bandra residence in Mumbai, attended by close friends and family.

New Mom Bharti Singh Says She Misses Her Baby Bump After Second Son's Birth



Star comedian and new mommy Bharti Singh seems to be missing her baby bump and her pregnancy days. The comedian shared a beautiful picture straight from her maternity shoot, and wrote, "Missing the bump, loving the blessing."

In the picture, a heavily pregnant Bharti is seen posing for a serene maternity shoot, dressed in a soft blush-pink flowing gown. The then mommy-to-be is seen gently cradling her baby bump, with love and warmth in her eyes.

For the uninitiated, Bharti Singh and husband Harsh Limbachiyaa welcomed their second baby, a boy on December 19. The couple fondly calls him Kaju. The new mommy keeps her fans posted with baby and her daily life's details through her YouTube vlogs. Recently, Bharti in her vlog had revealed about her newborn baby boy's sleep cycle.

Bharti, in the vlog, was seen holding her baby boy in her arms as she wanted him to soak in fresh sunlight for vitamin D.

"The doctor told me to get Kaju's soak in some fresh sunlight face so here I am," Bharti said. The actress, sharing details about Kaju's sleep cycle, revealed how he sleeps throughout the day and is wide awake at night. "This kid in my arms sleeps at 2 AM, and wakes up at 7 AM, as if he's a factory worker who has to go to work early in the morning."

She added, "Now he will sleep on his mother's lap, all day and then at night, he wakes up with his eyes wide open." Just two weeks after giving birth to her second son, Bharti was seen resuming work, and was seen at the shoot location for the third season of 'Laughter Chefs Fun Unlimited'. She also distributed sweets to the paparazzi present at the location and said that they all have become "mamus" and requested to bless Kaju.

Bharti and Harsh are already parents to a three-year-old son Laksh Singh Limbachiyaa, fondly called Gola, whom they welcomed in 2022. The couple got married in 2017 after dating for a few years.

Do you struggle to get out of bed, feel constantly drained and rely on pick-me-ups like coffee and sugary treats to get you through the day?

9 reasons why you're Constantly Worn out

If so, you're far from alone. Research reveals that one in three of us admit we're permanently worn out because of the pace of modern life. A survey by a vitamin company revealed that a whopping 97% of us claim we feel tired most of the time and doctors' records reveal that 10% of people who visit them complain of unexplained tiredness. So much so that doctors have even created a handy acronym — TATT (Tired All The Time). Here, experts point to some of the causes and how to deal with them.

No Exercise

Avoiding exercise because you're tired actually makes you feel worse. Regular



exercise makes your heart and lungs work more efficiently, delivering oxygen and vital nutrients around the body. Remedy: Next time you're tempted to flop on the sofa, force yourself up for a brisk 10-minute walk — you'll feel more alert.

Lack of sleep

Recent research shows many of us survive on so-called 'junk sleep' — the kind when we wake up frequently throughout the night. It doesn't replenish our energy levels as well as long stretches of continuous sleep do. Remedy: Develop good sleep hygiene. Go to bed on time, avoid staring at screens an hour before bed time. If sleep evades you, have a

relaxing bath and a cup of warm milk. Throw in some easy reading, as that helps.

Caffeine addiction

Although we think of caffeine as a pick-me-up, it actually makes us feel more tired once the initial surge wears off. This is because our brain chemistry doesn't like being interfered by stimulants, so it releases chemicals to dampen down the alert response. Drinking coffee even six hours prior to bedtime meant poorer quality kip. Remedy: Avoiding caffeine will increase energy levels in the long run. But cut down gradually to

avoid headaches and irritability.

Iron deficiency

Figures show that around one third of women

are low on iron often due to heavy periods. Some have low enough iron levels to be anaemic. If you pull down your bottom eyelids and the inner rim looks pale rather than pink, it's an indicator.

Remedy: Include plenty of iron-rich foods in your diet, such as lean meats, dark green vegetables, pulses and dried fruits, and pair them with foods like citrus fruit high in vitamin C.

Dehydration

Losing even as little as 2 per cent of your body's normal water content can take its toll on

your energy levels. As we get older we lose our thirst reflex. Also, working in an air-conditioned office, going for a long walk can lead to depleted fluid levels. This causes blood pressure to drop and not enough blood gets to the brain or muscles. It results in headaches, fatigue and loss of concentration.

Remedy: Try to drink water every two hours. If you need encouragement, add mint, basil, lemon or cucumber to liven its flavour.

Sugar Overdose

Sugary energy drinks and snacks like biscuits, chocolate and crisps cause sharp spikes in blood sugar levels that can leave you tired. Remedy: Swap to low-sugar foods. Avoid white carbs such as bread and pasta which quickly convert to sugar in the body. Choose wholegrain carbs such as granary bread, wholemeal pasta and brown rice.

Missing out on protein

Surviving on fruit and salad might feel worthy, but avoiding protein will leave you exhausted, as it's a vital energy giver. Remedy: Eating a minimum of a palm-sized amount of protein with meals and eating seeds and nuts or nut butters can prevent tiredness. Meat, fish, cheese, tofu, beans, lentils, yogurt, nuts and seeds are good sources of proteins.

Breakfast high in protein better for kids: Study

A breakfast high in protein — like eggs — keeps children fuller longer than cereal or oatmeal, causing them to eat fewer calories at lunch, says a new study.

"It is really important that we identify certain types of food that can help children feel full and also moderate caloric intake, especially in children who are prone to excess weight gain," said lead researcher Tanja Kral, associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing in the US.

The study, published in the journal Eating Behaviours, also found that the effects of a protein-rich meal do not last throughout the day. It only impacts a mid-day meal. The study recruited forty, eight to 10-year-old children to consume one of three, 350-calorie breakfasts (eggs, oatmeal, or cereal), then play games with research staff and then eat lunch once a week for three consecutive



weeks.

On each occasion, every participant had to eat their entire breakfast, but could eat as much or as little lunch as desired.

According to the research, after consuming the egg breakfast (scrambled eggs, whole wheat toast, diced peaches, and one percent milk) children reduced their energy intake at lunch by seventy calories — roughly equivalent to one small chocolate-chip cookie.

Moderately active children in the same age range as those who participated in the study generally need between 1,600 and 1,800 calories daily.

The 70-calorie drop at one meal equals about four percent of a child's daily caloric needs.

Eating beyond the calorie threshold, even by a little, can cause excess weight gain and obesity in children, if sustained, the researchers pointed out.



3 home remedies to get relief from Acidity attack

Do you find yourself often under the deadly attack of acidity or acid reflux and have tried on varied medications to get rid of the deadly acidity attacks? While there might have been times when these medicines have showed their wonders and made acidity shoo off, there are certain home remedies which you can use, to get

rid of your problems without worrying much about the side effects. Here are some simple and easy home remedies to keep acidity at bay.

1. Bananas: Known to be rich source of potassium they keep the acidity levels in check. The next time keep a banana handy,

and in case of a bad bout of acidity eat an overripe banana.

2. Cold milk: Milk has a high amount of calcium, which helps to prevent acid build up by absorbing the excess acid produced. Also with if the milk is cold it sure does provides instant relief from the burning sensation that one feels during

3. Tulsi: One of the safest ayurvedic products, Tulsi helps in stimulating stomach to produce more mucus. It contains antiulcer properties and reduces the effects of gastric acids. One of the easiest way to beat the discomfort felt during acidity is by chewing 4-6 Tulsi leaves to find instant relief.

Exercises for a toned midriff

want to wear that crop top, but are afraid of showing off a flabby stomach? Attaining a flat and toned stomach is every woman's dream. However, even if most women follow a healthy diet and exercise regularly, getting a toned midriff is no cakewalk. Here's how you can work out the belly fat and look fab.

1. Bicycle crunches: Lie flat on the floor and press your lower back to the ground. Interlace your fingers, and put your hands behind your head. Bring your knees in toward your chest and lift your shoulder blades off the ground. Straighten your right leg out to about a 45-

degree angle, while turning your upper body to the left. Get your right elbow toward the left knee to create a pedalling motion. Do 10-20 reps

2. Downward dog: Lie on your stomach. Maintain a tight spine with your shoulder blades depressed and palms resting on the floor. Exhale and lift your back toward the ceiling in such a way that your legs are pushed back. Assume an upturned 'V' pose.

3. Side stretch: Lie on your right side with

knees slightly bent. Cross your left foot in front of your right foot. Place your right hand on the floor directly beneath shoulders and your left hand behind the head. Lift your hips off the floor, so that your body is diagonal to the ground.

4. Plank exercise: Lie with your face to the ground. Support your the weight of your upper body on your forearms with elbows firmly placed on the ground. Lift your torso off the floor to form a straight line with your body, which is propped up by your forearms and toes. Avoid drooping and hold for 10 to 20 seconds.



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