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MARKET

SENSEX	NIFTY
78139.01	23658.15
-109.12	13.25
GOLD	SILVER
76,777.00	87,226.00
517.00	-7.00

WEATHER

Sunrise	7:14 AM
Sunset	5:36 PM
Moonrise	8:32 AM
Moonset	6:58 PM
Today's Prediction	
Maximum	17°C
Minimum	8°C
Tomorrow's Prediction	
19°C	9°C



Fireworks from the rooftop of buildings in Melbourne city centre welcome in the new year.

Fresh escalation in Manipur: Kuki women, forces clash

Imphal/Churachandpur
A mob led by Kuki-Zo women clashed with security forces in Manipur's Kangpokpi district on Tuesday, triggering fresh tensions in the ethnic strife-hit state. The incident happened at Uyokching near Thamnappokpi after the mob tried to "disrupt" the deployment of a combined team of Army, BSF and CRPF, police said in a post on X. The joint forces "dispersed" the crowd with "minimum use of force" and now the situation is "peaceful and under control", they said. The security forces were deployed at the hilltop to "dominate the area and prevent any untoward incident in the area", they added.



Locals claimed that several people were injured in the action by the security forces that happened in Saibol village in Twiching, which is located in the so-called "buffer zone" between the Kuki-held Hills and Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley. Advertisement They said that the lo-

Kerala nurse sentenced to death in Yemen for murder

New Delhi
The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Tuesday confirmed its awareness of the death sentence handed to Nimisha Priya, an Indian nurse in Yemen, and assured that the government is providing all possible assistance.

In response to media queries regarding the case of Nimisha Priya, MEA official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We are aware of the sentencing of Nimisha Priya in Yemen. We understand that the family of Ms. Priya is exploring relevant options. The government is extending all possible help in the matter."

Nimisha Priya, who is sentenced to death in Yemen, is a trained nurse and has worked in private hospitals in Yemen for a few years.

Her husband and minor daughter returned to India in 2014 because of financial reasons and in that same year, Yemen was gripped by civil war, and they could not go back as the country stopped issuing new visas.

Later in 2015, Nimisha joined hands with a Mahdi to set up her clinic in Yemen's capital city Sana. She sought Mahdi's support because, under Yemen's

After 250 deaths in violence, Manipur CM says 'sorry'

Singh claimed that there has been relative peace in the state in the last three-four months, which gives him hope that normalcy will be restored in the new year.

Imphal
Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Tuesday apologised for the ethnic conflict in the state which claimed over 250 lives and rendered thousands homeless, and appealed to all communities to forget and forgive past mistakes and live together in a peaceful and prosperous state. Addressing reporters here, Singh claimed that there has been relative peace in the state in the last three-four months, which gives him hope that normalcy will be restored in the coming year, he said. "Whatever happened has happened...I want to appeal to all communities to forgive and forget our past mistakes and start life afresh by living together in a peaceful



and prosperous Manipur," CM Biren added. Singh said firing incidents in the state over the last 20 months since the ethnic conflict began in May 2023. "From May to October, 2023, 408 firing incidents were reported. From November 2023 to April 2024, there were 345 firing incidents, whereas from May this

year till now, 112 firing incidents were reported," he said. According to him 5,600 arms and 35,000 ammunitions were recovered. The chief minister further said that 625 people have been arrested and 12,047 FIRs registered so far. "There is a good progress in tackling the issue. Centre provided

enough security personnel and funds to help the displaced families. Altogether 2,058 families with a population of 7,549 persons have been resettled," Singh said. More than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups

since May last year. Meanwhile, several Kuki women were injured on Tuesday when central armed police forces (CAPF) allegedly used force to disperse women protesters at Saibol village in the Kangpokpi district. The trouble began when the local women allegedly resisted the "forceful occupation of community bunkers" by the central forces.

Condemning the assault, the women wing of Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum claimed more than 30 women were injured during their "peaceful protest against the violence in Saibol-Twichin area of Kangpokpi district". The organisation demanded that CAPF immediately cease its "intrusive operations" and allow the people to celebrate the New Year in peace.

"The government must stop being biased and take concrete steps to prevent such incidents and ensure that those responsible for the violence are held accountable," the organisation further stated. Agency

Dallewal to take medical aid if Centre agrees to talk: Punjab to SC



...As per the negotia-

New Delhi
The Punjab government on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court that farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on an indefinite fast for over a month, has agreed for medical aid given the Centre accepted his proposal to hold talks. A vacation bench of justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia took note of a plea moved by Punjab government seeking an additional three days to comply with SC's 20 December order. "As per the negotia-

which is acceptable to both sides and all stakeholders concerned, we will be equally happy. At the moment, we are only concerned with the compliance of our orders. If you want more time, we in peculiar circumstances are inclined to grant you some time." Also Read: Farmers protest: SC grants additional time to Punjab govt to hospitalise Dallewal Singh agreed with the bench on the point that no comments should be made on the negotiations at this stage and sought some time. Singh said, "therefore, the state government was seeking some more time and work positively towards compliance of the directions." The bench said, "We will not comment on what's going on as far as negotiations or your law and order is concerned. If something happens,

Adani loses Tamil Nadu smart meter deal

Chennai
The Tamil Nadu government has canceled its smart meter procurement tender, despite Adani Energy Solutions being the lowest bidder, due to high pricing that exceeded the Electricity Board's budget. The decision was made after negotiations failed to reduce the cost sufficiently, prompting the state-run utility to plan a fresh tender. This project is part of the Rs 19,000 crore Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme, which aims to install smart meters for all electricity connections in the state,



except for agricultural connections. The state government plans to implement the project with financial assistance from the central government, which has offered an average subsidy of Rs. 900 per meter. The central government has introduced a

scheme to make smart meters mandatory for accurate electricity consumption calculation and reducing technical and commercial losses. As per the scheme, smart meters should be installed in a significant number of electricity connections by March 2025. Agency

Fresh escalation in Manipur: Kuki women, forces clash

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"It was like a battlefield," said one protester, adding, "We came to voice our concerns, not to face war tactics."

Following the incident, the Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) blocked the National Highway 2, a critical road connecting the region to the rest of the country, for an indefinite period, demanding the withdrawal of central forces.

"Our people have suffered enough. The use of excessive force on unarmed women is unacceptable," a CoTU spokesperson said.

Blocking the NH-2 would disrupt the supply of commodities to the Meitei areas in Imphal Valley.

The Women's Wing of the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) claimed that many women were injured in the use of force by the security personnel.

"This incident is particularly disturbing as it occurs during the Christmas-New Year period, a time when people come together to celebrate peace, love, and joy. Instead, the CAPF's actions have brought fear, trauma, and suffering to the community. Since it wounded the sentiments of the Kuki-Zo community, the Saibul-Twihin incident would be closely monitored by the Kuki-Zo community worldwide," it added.

There was, however, no confirmation from the government on the number of people injured.

The Kuki Women Organisation for Human Rights (KWHR) alleged that the security forces targeted Kuki women who were peacefully protesting against the increasing violence activities perpetrated by adversary community and insecurity caused by these forces.

"It is deeply troubling that these central security forces, entrusted with maintaining peace and order, have instead engaged in actions that exacerbate the suffering of the Kuki-Zo community," it alleged.

Kerala nurse sentenced to death in Yemen for murder

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The plea further alleged that the nurse, unable to cope with the torture, Nimisha complained to the police in Sana but instead of taking action against Mahdi, the police arrested her and put her in jail for six days. It was further alleged that on her return from jail, the severity of the torture increased manifold.

In July 2017, Nimisha took the help of a workman of a jail located near her clinic. The warden suggested that she should try to sedate him, and then convince him to give her passport. However, sedation did not affect Mahdi, who was a substance abuser. She tried sedating him again, using a stronger sedative in order to retrieve her passport but he died within a few minutes due to a drug overdose.

Advt Contact: 9818-799941

Kerala CM cautions against attempts to portray Narayana Guru as proponent of Sanatana Dharma

Varkala (Kerala)

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday cautioned against "organised efforts" to portray sage-social reformer Sree Narayana Guru, who advocated "one caste, one religion and one God for people" as a proponent of Sanatana Dharma.

He claimed that the Guru had neither been a spokesperson nor a practitioner of the Sanatana Dharma, but a saint who had reconstructed it and proclaimed a Dharma befitting to the new age.

Sanatana Dharma is nothing but 'varnasrama dharma' (caste-based social order), which Guru had challenged and overcome, he said, adding that the new age "humanistic dharma" advocated by him stands with time.

Trying to fix the Guru in the framework of Sanatana Dharma is a



great insult to the saint, Vijayan said, while inaugurating a pilgrimage conference held in Sivagiri, the headquarters of Sree Narayana Dharma Sangam here.

Varnasrama Dharma is synonymous with or an integral part of Sanatana Dharma, he said, adding that Guru's asser-

tion was the one which questioned and defied the entire chaturvarnya system.

"Attempts to downgrade social reformer Sree Narayana Guru as a mere religious leader or as a religious saint must be realised. It should be understood that Guru had no religion and had

no caste," the CM said.

If someone tries to place Guru himself within the boundaries of caste or religion, there can be no insult to the sage beyond that, he added.

Warning that there would be attempts to present the Guru as an advocate of whatever

Sanatana Dharma is nothing but 'varnasrama dharma' (caste-based social order), which Guru had challenged and overcome, he said, adding that the new age "humanistic dharma" advocated by him stands with time.

he had fought against, Vijayan urged people to be vigilant against such attempts.

"Don't let that happen. Be able to firmly state that such misinterpretations will not be tolerated," he said.

Meanwhile, the chief minister's remarks drew sharp reactions from the BJP, which alleged that Vijayan had insulted Sanatana Dharma in the holy land of Sivagiri.

The CM also insulted the followers of Sree Narayana Guru through

his remarks, it said.

"The crux of Vijayan's speech at the Sivagiri conference was that Sanatana Dharma should be hated. His remarks were a continuation of Udayanidhi Stalin's statement that Sanatana Dharma should be eradicated," senior BJP leader V Muralidharan told reporters here.

The former union minister sought to know whether the Left veteran would have the courage to say such things about the Holy Quran.

Alleging that the Hindu community in Kerala faced the greatest challenge during Vijayan's rule, he said the Left veteran tried to challenge the faith at Sabarimala and during Thrissur Pooram.

Muralidharan also said that the people of Kerala would reject the Communist propaganda portraying Guru as an enemy of Sanatana Dharma.

'Mamata's is no ordinary story', says Derek O'Brien as ADR report

New Delhi

The story of Mamata Banerjee is "no ordinary story", Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien said on Tuesday, after a report ranked her as the poorest chief minister in India.

"The life and times of Mamata Banerjee are not just exemplary by Indian or Asian benchmarks. Her record of selfless public service, nurtured with compassion from her simple home in a bylane in Kolkata, is what no public servant on the planet can match. Hers is no ordinary story—once in 100 years," Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha leader O'Brien said in a statement.

The remarks came after a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) ranked Banerjee as the chief minister with the lowest assets at just a little over Rs 15 lakh.

As per the report, Andhra Pradesh's N Chandrababu Naidu is the richest chief minister with assets worth over Rs 931 crore, followed by Arunachal Pradesh's Pema Khandu at over Rs 332 crore, while Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is ranked third with assets worth more than Rs 51 crore.

With Rs 55 lakh worth assets, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is the second poorest in the list, while Kerala's Pinarayi Vijayan is the third with Rs 1.18 crore.

The report said the average asset per chief minister from state assemblies and Union Territories stood at Rs 52.59 crore.

While India's per capita net national income of INR was approximately Rs 1,85,854 for 2023-2024, the average self-income of a chief minister is Rs 13,64,310, around 7.3 times the average per capita income of India.

Advt Contact: 9818-799941

Manipur accounted for 77% of total violence in Northeast in 2023: MHA

NEW DELHI

Manipur, which has been witnessing prolonged ethnic violence between majority Meitei and tribal Kuki communities, accounted for about 77 per cent of the total violence in the entire northeastern region in 2023, according to the latest annual report of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

In 2023, Manipur witnessed an increase in violent incidents owing to the prevailing ethnic strife and the resultant increase in the casualties of civilians and security forces personnel as compared to 2022.

The state accounted for about 77 per cent of the total violent incidents in Northeastern region in 2023, according to the MHA annual report.

The counter-insurgency operations in Manipur resulted in killing of 33 insurgents and arrest of 184 insurgents besides recovery of 49 weapons. Further, 80 cadres of insurgent out-

fits surrendered with 31 arms.

Large-scale ethnic violence erupted between the Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur on May 3, 2023. The violence resulted in numerous casualties, injuries, and incidents of arson.

Though the issue of violence primarily relates to maintenance of public order, which is a state subject, the central government has been consistently extending its support, as required by the state government.

The annual report said the central government took a series of immediate and sustained actions to handle the situation.

Immediate action was initiated by engaging with top officials of Manipur, progressively deploying additional companies of Central Armed Police Forces, Army and Assam Rifles columns, deploying helicopters and drones, and implementing a unified command system.

Dallewal to take medical aid if Centre agrees to talk: Punjab to SC

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Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and Haryana government, said he did not have any instructions on this issue.

The AG said the intervenors and negotiators had tried complying with the court directives by engaging with the farmers in a dialogue. Additionally, the government mobilised 7,000 personnel at the protest site, but on 30 December, a call for Punjab bandh was called by other farmer organisations, hindering its efforts, he said.

The bench recorded the submissions and posted the matter on 2 January 2025, for the compliance of its order on shifting of Dallewal to a hospital.

"We are inclined to accept the request to afford some more time for compliance with the directions issued by the court," the bench said.

Punjab chief secretary and director general of police were directed to continue to appear in-person virtually during the hearing.

On 28 December, the top court came down heavily on the Punjab

government for not moving Dallewal to a hospital even as it doubted the intention of the agitating farmers for resisting availability of medical aid to their septuagenarian leader.

The Punjab government said it faced huge resistance from the protesting farmers who had encircled Dallewal and prevented him from being taken to a hospital.

The top court blamed the Punjab government for allowing the situation to aggravate and not doing enough to contain the situation.

The SC remarked the farmer leaders who did not allow Dallewal to be taken to a hospital were involved in the criminal offence of abetment to suicide.

On 20 December, the apex court put the onus on Punjab government officials and doctors to decide on Dallewal's hospitalisation.

The court said Dallewal, 70, could be moved to the makeshift hospital set up within 700 metres of the protest site at Khanauri border point between Punjab and Haryana.

NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary KC Venugopal on Tuesday hit out at BJP leader and Maharashtra minister Nitesh Rane for calling Kerala a "mini Pakistan" and said it shows their "deep-rooted animosity" for people of the southern state.

He also demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should immediately sack Rane for making such "shameful" remarks.

"From time to time, the BJP deploys its hate-mongers to spew venom against Kerala. Using terms like 'Mini Pakistan' shows they have deep-rooted animosity for the people of Kerala," Venugopal said in a post on X.

The Congress leader said for the entire world, Kerala is a model state that has continuously topped the human development indices, especially on education, healthcare and overall standard of living.

Since millennia, Kerala has been a beacon of

Congress demands Modi to sack Maharashtra minister Nitesh Rane



communal harmony and brotherhood among all religions and sects, he added.

"To use abusive language for the land of Sree Narayana Guru, Chattampi Swamikal and Mahatma Ayyankali, who advocated for egalitarianism, inclusivity and social justice, shows the BJP's disregard for its own fellow citizens. If PM Modi has any shame about Mr.

Rane's statements, he should sack him immediately," the Congress general secretary said.

"The people of Kerala have rejected, and will never accept the BJP for this very reason - they do not understand the beauty of its harmonious living," Venugopal added.

Maharashtra minister Rane sparked a major controversy by calling Kerala a "mini Pakistan" and stating "all terrorists vote for Gandhis", a reference to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the Lok Sabha MP from Wayanad.

Speaking at a rally in Purandur tehsil of Pune district on Sunday, the BJP minister said, "Kerala is mini Pakistan. Terrorists (earlier) voted for Rahul Gandhi and now for his sister Priyanka Gandhi."

Facing sharp criticism from opposition parties for his comments, Rane on Monday said Kerala is very much part of India and he is merely raising issues of religious conversion of Hindus and "love jihad" in the southern state.

Rahul Gandhi had won from the Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency in Kerala in 2019 and again in 2024 along with Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh.

He retained Rae Bareilly seat and vacated Wayanad, which was won by Priyanka Gandhi in a bye-election last month.

Kerala minister flays delayed declaration of Wayanad landslide as 'disaster of severe nature'

Thiruvananthapuram

Criticising the Centre for taking five months before declaring Wayanad landslide as a 'disaster of severe nature', Kerala Revenue Minister K Rajan said on Tuesday that it would have been more beneficial if the Centre's announcement had come within two months after the calamity struck.

The state government had on Monday received an official communication from the Centre that the Wayanad landslides have been declared as a disaster of "severe nature", recognising its intensity and impact for all practical purposes.

Addressing reporters here, Rajan said it would have been more beneficial if the Centre's declaration had come within two months of the disaster.

"We can't just understand why it took more than five months for the Centre to make such a declaration," the minister said.

He said despite the Inter-Ministerial Central Team submitting its report to the Home Ministry within a month of the disaster, the Centre's high-level committee sat



on it for five months to recognise the landslide as disaster of severe nature.

Rajan said the Centre had not yet responded to the state's demand to write off the loans of the disaster-affected people and make new loans available for their rehabilitation under Section 173 of the 2005 Disaster

Management Act.

He said on the state government's request, the Kerala Bank had written off the loans of landslide-affected people of Wayanad district setting a model before the Centre.

The Centre's communication also does not mention anything about the state's request for Rs

219 crore as additional assistance for post-disaster recovery and reconstruction, he said.

If the Centre's classification of the disaster had come earlier, the reconstruction work could have been better managed with the help of NGOs and other agencies, he said.

However, the govern-

ment would now carry forward the reconstruction in Wayanad using the provisions envisaged in the Centre's declaration, he said.

In a communication to the Kerala government on Monday, the Union Home Ministry explained that financial aid for such severe disasters is initially provided by the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), which is then supplemented by the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) based on assessments conducted by the IMCT.

"However, keeping in view the intensity and magnitude of the Meppadi landslide disaster in Wayanad district, it has been considered by the IMCT as a disaster of severe nature for all practical purposes," the communication said.

Massive landslides triggered by torrential rains in Chooramala and Mundakkai regions in Wayanad district on July 30, had claimed over 200 lives and resulted in largescale destruction of property, leaving thousands of people homeless.

NEWS IN BRIEF

4 injured in cylinder blast in northeast Delhi factory

New Delhi
Four people were injured in an LPG cylinder blast in a heater factory in northeast Delhi's Shiv Vihar area, an official said on Tuesday.

A call regarding the blast in the mini LPG cylinder was received at 3:36 pm and four fire tenders were rushed, the Delhi Fire Service (DFS) official said.

The fire affected the ground floor of the two-storey building. Four people trapped on the premises were rescued and taken to the GTB Hospital, the official said.

The police said the fire was brought under control within an hour and further probe was underway.

Air Force seeks land inside Noida International Airport

Noida
The Air Force will build its office within the Noida International Airport premises. For this, 300 square meter of land has been sought from the Yamuna Authority.

The senior officials of the Air Force are expected to visit the Yamuna Authority soon. The authority will hand over the land to the Indian Air Force in the first week of next year. Preparations are going on for this.

The senior officials of the Air Force said that currently goods are imported and exported at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi. There is a lot of load there. To reduce that, new offices will be built in the cargo terminal building of Jewar Airport. The Air Force has demanded 300 square meter of land from the Yamuna Authority to build its office.

The work of Noida International Airport is going on day and night at Jewar. On 27 June 2024, the first plane landed at the Noida International Airport and then took off a few minutes later. During this time no problem was faced. The Noida International Airport is the only and first such airport in the country, which was completed in a very short time. This was the dream project of UP CM Yogi Adityanath. Now in April 2025, this airport will be ready.

'Depositing money mandatory after getting map passed'

Ghaziabad
Recovery will be made from those who do not deposit the amount after getting the map approved from the Ghaziabad Development Authority (GDA). A list of all such defaulters will be prepared so that notices can be sent to them.

If they still do not deposit the amount, departmental action will be taken against them. Maps are passed in the GDA under the online building plan approval system.

Now the officials concerned of the planning section will prepare a list of all the defaulters. A detailed report will be made of those old maps on which the installation has not been deposited. Along with this, notices will also be given to the defaulters. A large number of such maps have been passed in the GDA for which installations have been made but they are not being paid on time.

At the same time, in future, the maps for which installations are made, will also be monitored.

New Year's Eve: Police intensifies vehicle checking across Delhi

All the roads leading to Connaught Place, including KG Marg, Parliament Street Barakhamba Road and Janpath, are closed for traffic and the police is directing commuters to take alternative routes.

New Delhi
The Delhi Police ramped up vehicle checking across the city on the New Year's Eve on Tuesday, setting barricades and imposing restrictions of traffic movement, particularly in and around Connaught Place.

All the roads leading to Connaught Place, including KG Marg, Parliament Street Barakhamba Road and Janpath, are closed for traffic and the police is directing commuters to take alternative routes.

As a result, heavy traffic was witnessed in the central Delhi area.

Besides central Delhi, the vehicles are being checked intensively at key locations of the city, including south Delhi's Hauz Khas and Saket, east Delhi's Vikas Marg, west Delhi's Rajouri Garden, to prevent any untoward incident, a senior police officer said.

The personnel are also using breath analyser and checking the motorists whether they are driving under the influence of alcohol near Connaught Place and other areas. The sensitive areas are being checked through foot patrolling. The police are also using bikes for the narrow lanes at several locations, they said.

Apart from this, the drones have also been pressed into the job for maintaining law and order situation in the city, police said.



The officer further said that their focus is on the motorists who are not following the traffic rules.

"We have deployed around 50 teams with alcoholometers at key locations and they are monitoring and prosecuting any instances of drunk driving. The picket staff at different places have also been provided the alcoholometers so that they can also prosecute the violators," the officer said.

Around 20,000 police and paramilitary personnel have been deployed in the city to maintain law and order. They are also checking at the bordering areas of the city, another officer said.

The officer further said that the traffic personnel have also been deployed in significant numbers throughout the city, spe-

cially at the popular celebration hotspots like Connaught Place, Hauz Khas and India Gate.

According to the police, the crowd has gathered at various areas, including the Connaught Place where special arrangements have been made. Connaught Place is in the central part of the city and people from all across the national capital as well as neighbouring states also come here every year to celebrate the New Year, police said.

"The restrictions have been imposed in Connaught Place area till the end of the celebrations. It has been applicable to all private and public transport vehicles. Only those vehicles having valid stickers are being allowed in Connaught Place after 8 pm. Apart from this, ten spots have been identi-

fied at the Connaught Place where people can't go with their vehicles," the officer stated.

Additionally, staff has been deployed at 14 points at the India Gate with restrictions have been imposed to prevent overcrowding in the area.

Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora will also visit several locations across the city.

In south Delhi, the traffic has been regulated on certain roads near Select City Mall. The traffic has been diverted from Sheikh Sarai red light and Asian Market light, they said.

All medians/cuts between Sheikh Sarai and Hauz Rani have been closed. The movement of heavy vehicles and DTC/Cluster buses is not allowed on this stretch of Press Enclave Road, police said.

Two ambulance vans, two fire tenders, two jail vans, two teams of bomb disposal squad, 28 door frame metal detectors, two teams of SWAT, three teams of Prakram vehicles, 33 MPVs, 30 motorcycle-patrolling teams, 43 foot-patrolling teams, 29 border pickets, 30 vehicle-checking parties at parking lots, seven plain-cloth spotters and five arrest parties have pressed into the action in New Delhi area.

According to the police, the buses headed towards Connaught Place have been diverted. Two doctors have also been deployed in the area to conduct medical examinations of people driving under the influence of alcohol.

In east Delhi, a total of 41 high-visibility pickets have been set up across key locations. Additional 19 pickets dedicated to preventing drunken driving, the police said.

The key areas such as Preet Vihar, Laxmi Nagar, Mayapuri and other vital zones have given special attention, with enhanced patrolling on seven sensitive routes and roads, including Vikas Marg, NH-24 and Pustha Road, said DCP, East, Abhishek Dhania.

The DCP further said that 21 popular public spaces like restaurants, bars, clubs, malls and markets are being closely monitored to maintain law and order.

December power demand in Delhi crosses 5,000 MW for first time



New Delhi
The plummeting temperature in Delhi has raised power demand to newer heights with December clocking a peak of 5,213 MW, the highest ever for the month, discom officials said.

For the first time in Delhi's history, the peak power demand in December has crossed the 5,000 MW mark, they said.

As per the State Load Dispatch Centre (SLDC), power demand stood at 5,213 MW at 10:50 am on Tuesday, after touching 5,046 MW on Monday.

Delhi's peak power demand in December was 4,884 MW in 2023, and 4,964 MW in 2022, discom officials said.

The winter months in Delhi are expected to follow the record-breaking summer trend in peak power demand, which touched an unprecedented high of 8,656 MW this year.

As per officials, the peak power demand in the capital this winter is expected to cross 6,300 MW.

A BSES spokesperson said that green energy will meet up to 53 per cent of the over 3,900 MW peak power demand in areas under BSES

Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) and BYPL Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL).

Advanced Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning tools are also being used for accurate forecasting to tackle the growing winter power demand, he said.

BRPL and BYPL successfully met this season's peak winter power demand of 2,194 MW and 1,038 MW in their respective areas so far, the spokesperson said.

Last winter, the peak hit 5,816 MW on January 22, marking the highest level recorded in the national capital in winter months.

The peak power demand in areas within BRPL and BYPL are projected to exceed 2,600 MW and 1,240 MW, respectively, officials said. The Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL) met this winter season's peak power demand of 1,646 MW on Tuesday, the highest till date, without any power outages or network constraints, a spokesperson of the discom said. Adequate arrangements have been made by the discom for the remaining winter season by strengthening its power network and conducting preventive maintenance, she said.

Delhi Police bust online investment fraud syndicate, 5 held

New Delhi
Delhi Police has busted an online investment fraud syndicate and arrested five people in the case, an official said on Tuesday.

The syndicate, responsible for duping victims by promising high returns on investment, was found to have defrauded a complainant of ₹19.27 lakh. It was later linked to transactions exceeding ₹2.5 crore across multiple states, the official said.

The case came to light when a complainant from Sadh Nagar approached the Cyber Police Station on October 18. She reported being contacted in July by a woman posing as a lead analyst offering profitable investment guidance, police said.

Persuaded by stock tips and virtual training, the victim installed an application



and was assured over 100 per cent returns on investments.

"Initially, she invested ₹1 lakh but was later coerced into contributing ₹10 lakh towards a fabricated Initial Public Offering. Eventually, the syndicate defrauded her of ₹19.27 lakh," Deputy Commissioner of Police Surendra Choudhary said.

The officer said that an FIR was registered and further investigation was initiated. The police team tracked the money trail and the funds were traced to a private bank in Ludhiana, Punjab, registered under a fake firm

owned by one of the accused, Ravit Kumar.

The team later arrested Kumar, Swarnpreet Singh, Manpreet Singh, from Ludhiana, Jaspal, from Sangrur and Vansh Gupta, from Janmu, a commerce graduate managing accounts and cryptocurrency transactions.

The funds were transferred to international accounts, including those in Dubai. Interrogations revealed that Jaspal Singh and Vansh Gupta collaborated with two Dubai-based fraudsters, Amandeep Singh and Prabsimran Singh, who remain at large. These individuals allegedly partnered with Chinese nationals to orchestrate scams targeting Indian victims. The arrest of the accused has not only resolved the complainant's case but also linked the syndicate to 68 complaints from various states," said the DCP.

AAP leaders laud the launch of Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana

New Delhi
Senior AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Gopal Rai on Tuesday lauded the recent announcement of the Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana by the AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal, under which Rs 18,000 per month honorarium will be provided to granthis and pujaris per month in Delhi.

During his visit to the Jangpura Shiv Temple in Kikori village today, former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia addressed a gathering of priests and highlighted that priests from various temples had offered prayers for the victory of AAP and Arvind Kejriwal for the upcoming assembly elections in Delhi.

"In this temple in Kikori village under the Jangpura



constituency, priests from various temples offered prayers for Arvind Kejriwal's victory in the upcoming elections... Just yesterday, Arvind Kejriwal announced that granthis and pujaris will receive Rs 18,000 per month," Sisodia said. Meanwhile, Delhi Minister of Environment, Forest, Development, and General



Administration Gopal Rai also spoke about the scheme and noted that Delhi would be the first city to provide an honorarium of Rs 18,000 per month to priests and granthis.

"It is the first city where an honorarium of Rs 18,000 per month will be given to the priests and granthis. There were many

discussions on it," Rai said. Notably, Kejriwal on Tuesday launched the registration for Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana. He visited the Shri Marghat Wale Baba Mandir at Kashmiri Gate along with his wife, Sunita Kejriwal, to start the registration for the scheme.

"This comes after the former Chief Minister of Delhi on Monday announced 'Pujari, Granthi Samman Yojana,' under which he stated that the priests of temples and the 'granthis' of the Gurudwara will receive an honorarium of about Rs 18,000 per month. He further stated that this scheme would be implemented once the AAP from the government wins in the upcoming polls in the national capital.

BJP accuses Kejriwal of using children for his 'cheap, dirty' politics

New Delhi
The BJP on Tuesday accused Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal of using children for political gains, charging him with practising 'petty, cheap and dirty' politics.

Addressing a press conference, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said Delhi's ruling party has not taken down a post, which shows children raising pro-Kejriwal slogans, despite the National Human Rights Commission raising serious concerns on the matter.

Such a depiction of children is a violation of the Juvenile Act and the Election Commission guidelines, he said. "Kejriwal and Chief Minister Atishi are not sparing even children. They are violating the dignity of children. It is because Kejriwal



knows that he is losing the elections in Delhi," Bhatia asked.

He asked why Kejriwal was 'playing with young and impressionable minds for his petty, cheap and dirty politics'.

The BJP, he claimed, will ensure that the 'destroyer of children and a hater of children' is thrown out of power. He accused the AAP government of converting school

toilets into classrooms for children and deliberately failing students in Class 9 and Class 11 to ensure higher pass percentages in Class 10 and Class 12.

He added that people will celebrate 'Happiness Utsav' — a Delhi government initiative to commemorate the 'Happiness Curriculum' in its schools — by teaching the AAP a lesson in the upcoming polls.

Overcast sky marks year's last day in Delhi

New Delhi
An overcast sky marked the last day of the year in Delhi on Tuesday, with the national capital's maximum temperature settling 2.7 notches below normal at 17.7 degrees Celsius.

The minimum temperature had settled 2.6 notches above normal at 9.6 degrees Celsius, the Met office said.

The humidity level fluctuated between 81 per cent and 87 per cent, it added.

The Met has predicted partly cloudy skies for Wednesday.

Surface winds are expected to blow predominantly from the northwest at speeds lower than 8 kilometres per hour during the morning, accompanied by smog or shallow fog in most areas and moderate fog in isolated places.

The wind speed is likely to increase to 14 to 18 kilometres per hour during the afternoon and gradually decline to less than 8 kilometres per hour by the evening. Smog or shallow fog is expected through the evening and the night.

The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to settle at 17 and 8 degrees Celsius, respectively.

On Tuesday, the national capital's 24-hour Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded in the 'poor' category with a reading of 283 at 4 pm.

According to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data, the AQI on Monday was recorded in the 'moderate' category with a reading of 173, an improvement from Sunday's 225.

An AQI between 200 and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', 401 and 450 'severe' and above 450 'severe plus'.

Atishi, Kejriwal Conduct Registration For AAP Scheme On Priests

New Delhi
Delhi Chief Minister Atishi got the granthis of a gurudwara in the Karol Bagh area registered for the AAP government's recently announced monthly honorarium on Tuesday. During her visit, Atishi offered prayers at Sant Sujan Singh Maharaaj Gurudwara in central Delhi.

AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal also started the registration of 'Pujari-Granthi Samman Yojana' from Marghat Wale Baba temple at Kashmiri Gate.

After the registration, Kejriwal took to X, and wrote, "Today I visited Marghat Baba's temple (ISBT) and launched the Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana. Today is the birthday of the Mahant ji here. I also celebrated his birthday."

Engineer among three held for supplying illegal arms, ammunition

Three people, including a BTech graduate, were arrested for their alleged involvement in supply of arms and ammunition in Delhi, police said on Tuesday.

The accused have been identified as Rajesh Choubhe (46) from Madhya Pradesh, Aviral Sharma (35) from Uttar Pradesh and Jitender Singh (42) from Rajasthan, they said.



A trap was laid and Rajesh was arrested. Five semi-automatic pistols with 200 live cartridges were recovered from him, Kaushik said.

During interrogation, Rajesh disclosed that he had procured illegal arms from local supplier of MP and illegal ammunition from one Aviral Sharma of Agra in UP. Rajesh was supposed to further supply these arms and ammunition in the areas of Delhi and UP.

"On November 30, on the instance of Rajesh, Aviral was arrested from Agra, UP and 50 live cartridges were recovered from him. During interrogation, Aviral disclosed that he also supplied the ammunition to Jitender in Rajasthan," another officer said.

Subsequently, on December 2, Jitender was arrested from Rajasthan's Dholpur and 25 live cartridges were recovered from him, he said.

Rajesh is involved in the illegal supply of firearms since 2013.

In 2013, he met Mohsin, who lured him in the crime introduced him with the local supplier of arms of MP, the police said.

He procured illegal pistols from local supplier and live cartridges from Aviral Sharma and further supplied the same to various persons of Delhi, MP and UP. He was previously found involved in three criminal cases including an Arms Act case, they said.

Aviral is a BTech graduate and was working in a multinational company in Noida. He procured ammunition from various local suppliers of MP and further supplied the same to various persons including Rajesh and Jitender.

Jitender has allegedly committed several heinous crimes including dacoity, robbery, attempt to murder, riots, extortion in Rajasthan. He was previously involved in 10 criminal cases. He was earlier arrested by Special Cell in an Arms Act case in the year 2019, the police added.

Cong Dikshit to file criminal, defamation case against Atishi and Sanjay Singh



New Delhi Congress candidate from the New Delhi Assembly constituency Sandeep Dikshit has said that he will file defamation cases against Delhi chief minister Atishi and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh over their allegation against him of receiving financial support from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

As evidence," the Congress leader added further.

Dikshit, son of former Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit, is contesting the upcoming assembly elections in the national capital, against former CM and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal.

Earlier, Atishi and Singh alleged in a press conference that BJP was funding Congress candidates in Delhi. Atishi claimed Sandeep Dikshit and the Congress candidate from Jangpura, Farhad Suri, are receiving support from the BJP.

She said it's evident that Congress has a nexus with BJP in Delhi elections. "The day when CM Atishi said that we are taking money from BJP, that day former PM Manmohan Singh passed away. That is why we could not do a press conference. After this press conference, I will file a criminal and civil defamation case against CM Atishi and Sanjay Singh. I will ask them to give me Rs 10 crore. I will donate Rs 5 crore for Yamuna cleaning and Rs 5 crore for the issue of pollution in Delhi," Dikshit stated.

Mayor's New Year feast a wasteful expenditure, says Raja Iqbal Singh

The Leader of the Opposition in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and former Mayor, Sardar Raja Iqbal Singh, on Tuesday criticised the New Year feast organised by the Mayor, calling it a wasteful expenditure and an act of insensitivity.

He alleged that the civic body owes crores in unpaid salaries and arrears to its employees, yet it is spending lakhs on a lunch party, which reflects the Mayor's insensitivity. He added that while the people of Delhi are suffering from increasing pollution and broken roads, AAP leaders seem more focused on host-

Furthermore, Singh claimed that the MCD is grappling with a financial crisis, yet the Mayor continues to host lavish events, with the common people bearing the costs.

Furthermore, Singh claimed that the MCD is grappling with a financial crisis, yet the Mayor continues to host lavish events, with the common people bearing the costs.

BJP MLAs stage sit-in over CAG reports pending presentation in Assembly

The BJP MLAs, under the leadership of Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Vijender Gupta, staged a sit-in at Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel's office on Tuesday, demanding a special session of the Assembly to present the 14 Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports. During the sit-in, the Opposition MLAs handed over a memorandum to the Speaker, insisting him to direct the government to table the reports in the Assembly without further delay.

Attacking the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government on the issue, Gupta said, "The government has crossed all limits of shamelessness by



deliberately delaying the presentation of the 14 CAG reports in the Assembly despite mounting pressure from all sides. This delay appears to be a desperate attempt to conceal the corruption of the AAP hidden in these reports from the public while completing its

tenure."

Recalling that the BJP legislative party had submitted a memorandum on 10th December over the matter, he said, "Today, the Opposition submitted another memorandum, requesting the Speaker to call a special session of the Assembly. The memorandum underlined that the CAG regularly audits government departments to ensure transparency, accountability, and an assessment of financial and administrative practices."

"Performing its duty, the CAG submitted audit reports of various government departments for 2017-18 to 2021-22 to the government. But these reports have

been pending with the government for the past two years and are yet to be tabled in the Assembly. Failure to do so not only violates the constitutional rights of the Assembly members but also undermines public trust, as citizens have the right to know how public funds are being utilized," Gupta asserted.

The Leader of the Opposition said the extensive delay in presenting these reports raises serious doubts about the government's intent. "We have demanded that the Speaker should immediately call a special session and direct the government to table the CAG reports in the Assembly," he said.

AAP leaders join Delhi Cong

Many AAP leaders joined the Delhi Congress here on Tuesday. They were welcomed to the party fold by Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav.

With the support and cooperation of all those who joined the Congress today, the party will gain strength and play creative politics to bring Congress back into power in the upcoming assembly elections, Yadav said.

Some of those AAP leaders who joined the Delhi Congress included AAP's joint secretary from the Badli assembly, Sarbjit Singh and 2020 assembly election star campaigner Farid Shah.

Yadav said that disillusioned with the corruption and authoritarian attitude of former CM Arvind Kejriwal, people, leaders, ministers, MLAs, councillors and others were deserting the sinking AAP ship as it was heading for a total rout in the assembly elections.

Yadav said that leaders and workers of AAP and BJP were getting influenced by the democratic functioning of the Congress under the dynamic leadership of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and leader of opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, who were fighting to protect the constitution, uphold democracy, and the doors of Congress were always open for those who believed in the programmes and policies of the party. Others present on the occasion were ex-MP Udit Raj, AIC secretary in-charge of Delhi Danish Abrar, former Delhi minister Dr Narendra Nath, ex-MLAs Hari Shankar Gupta, Hassan Ahmed, Bisham Sharma and Darshana Ramkumar, district president Javed Mirza and Congress candidate for the Mustafabad assembly seat Ali Mehdi.

Atishi writes to LG over alleged demolition of religious structures in Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Tuesday wrote to Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena against alleged demolition of Hindu temples and Buddhist places of worship revered by Dalit community.

She has mentioned in her communication, requesting the LG that no such religious places be demolished, in view of the feelings of people and their religious sentiments.

In a letter to LG, she mentioned that it has been brought to her attention that



the Religious Committee has ordered the demolition of numerous religious structures all across Delhi, in a

meeting dated 22.11.2024. She alleged that the said committee has allegedly bypassed the elected government and decided to demolish several temples.

The CM has said that the demolition of these structures would hurt the religious sentiments of the concerned communities.

The CM has said that until last year, all decisions of the Religious Committee would be sent to the LG, via the CM and the Minister (Home), Delhi.

She claimed that the files regarding the committee are directly reaching his office after an order from the LG of late last year.

AAP Govt failed in Delhi, didn't provide benefits of welfare schemes to people: Sehrawat

BJP MP from West Delhi, Kamaljeet Sehrawat on Tuesday hit-out at the AAP Government and highlighted the alleged failures of the ruling dispensation across the assembly segments, which are part of her parliamentary constituency.

Sehrawat, while addressing a press conference at West Delhi District Office, issued a charge sheet against the state government, where she flagged its alleged false promises to the people in the area during the past 10 years. She accused the Delhi government of not being able to issue ration cards, stating that a total of 156800 such cards were to be made in her parliamentary constituency, but till 2015 68000 were made, while she questioned as to why the AAP government kept people away from centre's schemes.

Sehrawat also claimed that Kejriwal had alleged to bring up 11000 new buses, 500 schools and 20 universities in Delhi, but did not deliver on this promise.

The BJP MP accused the AAP government of not giving farmers their due



Sehrawat, while addressing a press conference at West Delhi District Office, issued a charge sheet against the state government, where she flagged its alleged false promises to the people in the area during the past 10 years.

status, and alleged that it was biased towards them.

She further alleged that the condition of Raotula Rao, Indra Gandhi Hospital and other hospitals is so bad in the area, that if a serious patient arrives, he or she has to go to Deendayal Upadhyay Hospital.

Sehrawat also pointed out the alleged delay in clearing the "garbage mountains," noting that instead of improving waste management, Delhi has become more polluted.

She also pointed out that the alleged failures of Delhi Jal Board, claiming that areas like Balbir Nagar and Dwaraka are experiencing sewage water entering households.

The MP also accused the AAP government of allegedly misusing Rs 80 crore under the guise of cleanliness, particularly in the Najafgarh zone.

She urged the Delhi government to sign the MoU for implementing the Ayushman Bharat scheme across the state by January 5, blaming Kejriwal for depriving Delhi residents of free healthcare under this initiative.

Delhi court faults victim's testimony, acquits two men in attempt to murder case

A Delhi court has acquitted two men in a 2022 attempt to murder case after finding gaps in the victim's testimony.

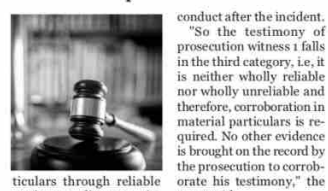
Additional sessions judge Vipin Kharsb said the testimonies in the category of neither wholly reliable nor wholly unreliable required corroboration on material aspects.

The court was hearing a case against Afshan and Faisal, who were accused of stabbing Mohammad Yawar on October 28, 2022.

In its verdict dated December 22, the court said there was no legal impediment in convicting a person on the sole testimony of the complainant or the victim but given the doubts in Yawar's statements, it had to insist on corroboration.

"Generally speaking, oral testimony in this context may be classified into three categories, namely, wholly reliable, wholly unreliable and neither wholly reliable nor wholly unreliable," the order said.

The court said it had to be cautious in the third category and look for corroboration in material par-



conduct after the incident. "So the testimony of prosecution witness 1 falls in the third category, i.e. it is neither wholly reliable nor wholly unreliable and therefore, corroboration in material particulars is required. No other evidence is brought on the record by the prosecution to corroborate his testimony," the court said.

The court said the second eye witness in the case turned hostile and did not support the prosecution's theory over the identification of the accused persons.

"The court has no hesitation to conclude that there are many contradictions in the testimony of injured Yawar and same is not consistent and its veracity is shaken... therefore, same cannot be relied upon being inconsistent and uncorroborated," the verdict held. Both men were acquitted on account of the prosecution failing to prove the charges against them beyond a reasonable doubt.

The Jamia Nagar police station registered an FIR against the duo under Sections 307 and 34 of the IPC.

NDMC to host 'Suvidha Camp' on Jan 4

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) announced on Tuesday that it will organise its next 'Suvidha Camp' on January 4 to provide information, facilitation, and grievance redressal services for its stakeholders. The Suvidha Camp will take place from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm.

The civic body stated that helpdesks from various departments will facilitate and address grievances for service users, employees, Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), Market Traders' Associations (MTAs), and residents.

mother was residing for more than 20 years and the son came in 2020 due to the family's financial hardship. Both of them have been deported to Bangladesh through the Foreigners Registration Office (FRRO).

The breakthrough came on December 29, when acting on a tip off, Naim Khan was intercepted from Shastri Market and his mother

was also detained subsequently from Katwaris Sarai in South West Delhi where they were residing. Choudhary mentioned. Also, the third migrant, Akhtar Seikh, a construction labourer was first apprehended in a case at Sarojini Nagar police station who later got bail and went into hiding after the verification process began.

However, yesterday he was

Three Bangladeshi immigrants held in SW Delhi

In its efforts to crackdown on the illegal migrants, Delhi Police have apprehended three Bangladeshi immigrants, including a mother and son, and another person who were living in South West Delhi, it said on Tuesday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South West) Surendra Choudhary said, "The

was also detained subsequently from Katwaris Sarai in South West Delhi where they were residing. Choudhary mentioned. Also, the third migrant, Akhtar Seikh, a construction labourer was first apprehended in a case at Sarojini Nagar police station who later got bail and went into hiding after the verification process began.

However, yesterday he was

traced near Sarojini Nagar railway station. He told the police that he belongs to West Bengal but on being asked about documents, he was unable to show or prove any of his identity proof. On further interrogation he disclosed that he was born in Madangra, Kochigahata, Bangladesh and he came to West Bengal in 2004 by illegal means by hand surreptitiously.

UP's religious hotspots packed with devotees for New Year celebrations

Avodhya
As the New Year approaches, Uttar Pradesh's iconic religious destinations — Ayodhya, Varanasi and Mathura — are experiencing an overwhelming influx of devotees. With enhanced security measures and detailed crowd management plans in place, these holy cities are prepared to accommodate the huge number of pilgrims flocking to temples and sacred sites for a spiritual start to 2025. Ayodhya is witnessing a massive surge in devotees ahead of the New Year, particularly with the newly consecrated Ram temple attracting thousands eager to seek blessings from Lord Ram.

The hotel accommodations in Ayodhya and nearby Faizabad are fully booked and the temple trust has extended the 'darshan' hours to manage the expected crowd.

"We are ready to welcome the devotees and all our rooms have been reserved through January 15," said Ankit Mishra, the owner of a hotel.

While the Hindu New Year is celebrated around March-April, many devotees opt to visit on the first day of the English calendar year for a glimpse of Ram Lalla.

"They wish to start the year with blessings from the deity," explained Ramakant Tiwari, a local priest.

This New Year marks the first since the Ram temple's consecration, making it a particularly significant occasion. Ayodhya Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rajkaran Nayyar confirmed robust security arrangements across key religious sites like the Ram temple, Hanumangarhi and Gupta Ghat.

Varanasi is also bracing for an unprecedented number of visitors this New Year.

To handle the influx, the Kashi Vishwanath Temple has banned 'sparsh (touch) darshan' from December 31 to January 1. The visitors will be allowed to view the deity from a distance to avoid overcrowding. The police have implemented extensive security measures, with 45 duty points across various locations, including Assi Ghat and Sankat Mochan Temple.

Kashi Zone Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Gaurav Bansal said the NDRF, Water Police and PAC teams have been deployed at key points.

With an estimated five to seven lakh visitors, the temple area has been divided into five sectors and 12 quick reaction teams are on standby to handle any emergency.

Mathura-Vrindavan is also seeing an enormous crowd of devotees. The temple authorities have urged the elderly, sick and children to avoid visiting during peak time.

"We advise the devotees to assess the crowd before visiting to prevent inconvenience," said Munish Sharma, the manager of Banka Bihari Temple.

Haryana governor, CM Saini, J P Nadda pay tributes to Chautala during condolence meeting

Chandigarh
Haryana Governor Dattatreya, Chief Minister Nayab Saini, Union Minister and BJP chief J P Nadda, SAD leader Sukhbir Singh Badal and others on Tuesday paid tributes to the Chautala family sent by President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria were also read out.

At the "shradhanjali sabha" (condolence meeting) in Chaudhary Sahib Ram Stadium in the Chautala village, condolence messages to the Chautala family sent by President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria were also read out.

Chautala played an important role in Haryana's politics during his long public life and he was always dedicated to the development of the region, Murmu said. The prime minister said that Chautala was an experienced leader and efficient administrator.



Addressing the "shradhanjali sabha", BJP chief and Union Health Minister J P Nadda said the demise of Om Prakash Chautala is not just a matter of grief for the family, but it is a sad moment for the entire state.

In a way, it is the end of an era in the political sphere, he said about Chautala's demise. Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria said

Chautala's demise is an irreparable loss for the state as well as the entire country. Addressing the gathering, Haryana Governor Dattatreya talked about various steps Chautala

"End of era in politics": JP Nadda pays tribute to OP Chautala

Sirsas
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national president and Union Minister JP Nadda on Monday paid homage to former Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala and said that the entire state and the country were saddened by his demise. "This is the end of an era in politics," Nadda said while addressing the gathering in a condolence program for the late Chautala.

Nadda further said that Chautala always raised his voice for the people including the middle class, labour class, farmers or any other section of society. As the Chief Minister of Haryana, he contributed a lot to the state's development, he added.

"His demise is heart-breaking for all of us. First of all, I want to pray his soul gets peace. May the god give strength to the family to get through this difficult time. His demise doesn't only affect his family or the community, but the entire Haryana and the country is saddened by his demise. This is the end of an era in politics. I got the opportunity to work with him. He was a cheerful person and a senior leader. He was always ready to raise his voice for the people — be it for the middle class, labour class, farmers or any other section of the society," Nadda said.

"He gave everything for Haryana's development as the Chief Minister. He contributed a lot towards making Haryana a Viksit state... He fearlessly raised the voice and issues of the people," he added.

Nadda was accompanied by Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini who also paid tributes to former Haryana CM Chautala.

OP Chautala passed away on December 20 at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram. He was accorded state honour



At the Tejjkhara farmhouse on December 21, people also paid their last respects to former Haryana CM at the Tejjkhara farmhouse. The Haryana government had declared a holiday for all schools in the state today following the demise of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) supremo.

Earlier, the Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini described INLD leader Prakash Chautala as a visionary leader and stated that he will always be remembered for his contribution to the politics of the state.

Paying his tribute, CM Saini said, "I express my deep condolences on the demise of senior leader Chaudhary Om Prakash Chautala ji. With his demise, a chapter of Haryana politics has come to an end. His contribution to Haryana politics will always be remembered. Chautala ji's personality was a symbol of simplicity and struggle."

Govt forfeits medal awarded to CBI inspector who was arrested in bribery case

New Delhi
The government has "forfeited" the Union Home Minister's medal for Excellence in Investigation awarded to CBI Inspector Rahul Raj in 2023 who was later caught by the agency red-handed, allegedly receiving Rs 10 lakh bribe and dismissed from the service, officials said.

The action comes on the recommendation of CBI director Praveen Sood who has cracked down on corrupt elements detected in the agency's internal vigilance process.

Raj, a recipient of a prestigious medal in 2023, was caught "red-handed" on May 19 while allegedly accepting an illegal gratification of Rs 10 lakh from Malay College of Nursing chairman Anil Bhaskaran and his wife Suma Anil, an official alleged. The couple were also arrested.

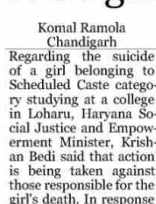
CBI swung into action after inputs and surveillance by its internal vigilance unit indicated that one of the support teams constituted on the orders of the Madhya Pradesh High Court to examine the infrastructure in nursing colleges in the state was indulging in corruption.

Officials in the know of developments said that CBI director Sood had made it clear in no uncertain terms that "internal vigilance is prerequisite to external action".

Police taking action against culprits of SC girl's suicide in Loharu: Bedi

Komal Ramola Chandigarh
Regarding the suicide of a girl belonging to Scheduled Caste category studying at a college in Loharu, Haryana Social Justice and Empowerment Minister, Krishan Bedi said that action is being taken against those responsible for the girl's death. In response to tweets made by Congress leaders on the matter, he said that instead of defending the culprits, those who tweeted should focus on demanding action against them. An FIR has been filed, and the police are working diligently to apprehend the culprits.

Speaking to media persons here today, the Minister said that the college where the girl studied had been talking about free education and transport facilities in the area for some time. He added that videos of the local MLA are also available on social media in the regard. In this case, the victim's father has filed a complaint with the police, alleging that the college principal and his brother had mentally and physically tortured the girl. An FIR



was registered in this regard at the Loharu police station on December 27, and the police are actively working to apprehend the culprits. He said that the leaders who are tweeting about this case should focus on demanding action against the culprits. He added that by tweeting half-heartedly, these leaders are attempting to shield the

culprits. They should instead work towards ensuring justice for the victim girl. He questioned why these Congress leaders did not tweet during the Mirchpur incident. Targeting the former Chief Minister, he asked whether Bhupinder Singh Hooda would ask his MLA about this matter.

He condemned such tweets that seem to defend the culprits, urging the leaders to retract their tweets and focus on demanding action against the culprits to ensure justice for the victim girl. Minister Krishan Bedi said that the government stands with the victim's family, and action will be taken against the culprits.

The Health Minister said that the Department is making dedicated efforts to realize Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini's vision of TB-Mukt Haryana. She said that the medical officers of the state should not consider this campaign as just a duty but should work with full commitment. She informed that the 100-day TB Mukt Campaign has been launched at the state level from December 7, 2024. She said that the present state government has set a target to eliminate TB from the state by December 2025.

The Minister informed that during this campaign, the team of the Health Department is identifying TB patients by going to every city and village in every district. In this, the patients diagnosed with TB are being provided tests and medicines free of cost under the government scheme.

Denied exam over fee, Dalit girl dies by suicide; probe on

Bhiwani
The alleged suicide of a BA final-year Dalit student from Fartia Bhim village, has sparked outrage in Singhaulvi village, Loharu subdivision, Bhiwani. Diksha, a student at a private college, reportedly ended her life after being denied permission to appear in her examinations due to unpaid fee.

According to the complaint by her father, Jagdish, the 22-year-old was set to take her fifth-semester exams earlier this month but was barred from doing so by the college authorities over a pending fee of Rs 35,000, along with the current year's dues. "I requested the college authorities to give more time to pay the fee. But the request was turned down," he said.

The Bhiwani police have registered a case against four persons including the college owner, his son and daughter besides the college principal, and started investigation.

Jagdish said her daughter hanged herself to a ceiling fan on the night of December 24. The family called the police. He said they cremated her next day and the police registered a case of suicide. But he submitted a complaint against the college authorities on December 27, alleging pressure from them which led her daughter to commit suicide. Jagdish said he was not in the right frame of mind after her death and thus he delayed lodging the complaint against the college authorities.

SGPC demands judicial enquiry into police encounter which killed three youths in UP

Chandigarh
The Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) executive held a meeting on Tuesday, extending the probe duration against Jathedar Gianj Harpreet Singh by one month. The committee also demanded a judicial inquiry into the police encounter of three Punjab youths in Uttar Pradesh and rejected the demand for excommunication of Naran Singh Chaura from the Panth.

The executive, led by SGPC president Harijinder Singh Dhani, passed a resolution extending the term of the investigation panel formed on December 19. The decision was made considering the upcoming election of Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (HISGMC).

A resolution condemned the police encounter of the three Punjab youths, terming it a serious violation of human rights and a deliberate act.

The executive also

formed. It was informed that 92 per cent work of renovation of existing 11 KV feeder line under Smart City Programme, Gurugram Maruti and IDC subdivisions and 79 per cent work of renovation of existing 11 KV feeder line under Smart City Programme, Gurugram South City & Kadipur subdivisions has been completed.

It was informed that the work of construction of Phase II of Swaran Jayanti Integrated Aviation Hub in Hisar has been almost completed and the remaining work will be completed at the ear-

liest. The Integrated Aviation Hub is being constructed at a cost of Rs 1,205 crore and will give a boost to air connectivity in Haryana.

For the construction of animal farms/animal sheds and construction of poultry farms shed buildings at LUVAS, Hisar, the tender has been floated and further construction work is underway, the Chief Secretary was in-

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By Priyanka Saurabh

Emerging concerns between humans and technology in 2025

Whether one expresses optimistic or pessimistic views about the year 2025, it is true that these thinkers have also expressed their concerns for the near future of humans and digital technologies. Most of their concerns center on the growing power of technology companies that control the flow of information in people's lives and their ability to compromise the privacy and autonomy of individuals.



The rapid automation of more business systems and processes due to telework is reducing the number of jobs available for humans. Additionally, people's mental health is being affected by such a period of extreme isolation. Who will take action to bring about the positive changes needed to tackle all these obvious issues?

and better service, but it will come at a great cost. Increased surveillance, loss of privacy, greater risk—both for individuals and political systems.

The confluence of deteriorating economic conditions, civil unrest, and uncertain long-term pandemic outcomes seems to me as more likely to lead to technology-related harm and abuse, especially as products come to market with less rigor on threat modeling, risk assessment, etc. The vast and largely unregulated power of technology companies operating with little or no transparency, accountability, or oversight worries me.

People will have a lot fewer friends because relationships are diminishing because of the lack of regular in-person contact. I think there will be a somewhat neo-traditionalist intense focus on the couple and the nuclear family that will be quite stifling. The monopolies of technology companies will grow; a lot of activity is concentrated in four or five megacorporations. Look at the negative impact of Amazon on the broader retail sector.

There is a lot of reliance on these companies' platforms; there will be a screen-centricity for everything, whether it's social life, entertainment, work, or art. There is too much emphasis in society on what technology can do well, i.e., convenience, rather than what it cannot do, such as the level of interaction or quality of experience.

Only we can save ourselves. The 'new society' is a society that is more divided than ever in history. We are already recording every breath, every step, every heartbeat. Which will also be quite dangerous.

About the Author

(Priyanka Saurabh, Research Scholar in Political Science)

Experts say the year 2025 will be even more technology-driven and present even greater challenges. People will have far fewer friends, as relationships are diminishing due to the lack of regular personal contact. I think the somewhat neo-traditionalist intense focus on the couple and the nuclear family will be stifling. Life will be even more technology-driven, bringing even greater challenges.

The unstoppable flow of lies, misinformation, and disinformation online is divisive, dangerous, and destructive. The health-monitoring, work-monitoring, and security solutions that could be implemented would expand mass surveillance, threaten human rights, and make more and more regions of the world more authoritarian.

The confluence of deteriorating economic conditions, civil unrest, and uncertain long-term pandemic outcomes seems to me as more likely to lead to technology-related harm and abuse, especially as products come to market with less rigor on threat modeling, risk assessment, etc. Technology will become even more pervasive in our lives, in every aspect. It will enable work, more choices,

The nexus of these companies with authoritarian and anti-democratic forces everywhere worries me. 2025 will be worse for the aver-

Breaking Time Sudoku

What to do
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digit 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only correct solution.

	3		9				1	
4							8	
		9		3	8			6
6	1	7		4				3
	9		3		2	5		6
	7		1	5		6		
		3						1
	5				9		2	

Solution, Sudoku

8	9	4	1	3	6	5	2	7
3	5	1	7	2	8	6	9	4
2	7	6	9	4	5	1	3	8
9	2	8	6	1	3	7	4	5
6	1	7	5	9	4	2	8	3
4	3	5	8	7	2	9	6	1
5	8	3	2	6	1	4	7	9
1	6	9	4	8	7	3	5	2
7	4	2	3	5	9	8	1	6

THE WISDOM TREE
BY SUVEEN KUMAR

Ever wonder how much someone misses you? Ever wonder how much someone thinks of you? Ever wonder how much someone wants you? The common answer for the different questions is—how much they need you. Every time they find someone similar to you they will think you, every time they find someone just opposite of you they will miss you, every time they find someone who reminds you they will remember you. Even if someone seems to have replaced you, even if someone seems to have made them forget you, even if someone seems to have made them change - your giving will remain with them. The intensity of your impression will go fading, their memories of the moments will go blurring, but no matter how much your form of giving deforms it will always have its existence, remember or forgotten, kept or forsaken but it will always have its space reserved on its own layer.

Just because someone misses you that doesn't mean they want you and just because someone wants you that means they will miss you. Sometimes people miss you because they don't seem to find someone to fill that gap, and sometimes people want you because they just want someone to fill that gap. Love is not defined by how much someone misses someone, it is defined by how you love them while you have them. You don't win by making someone miss you, you win by making someone thank you.



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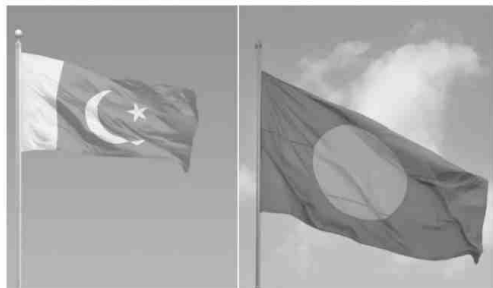
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Bangladesh towing Pakistan-implications

Bangladesh celebrated its victory day on Dec 15th after neglecting not only the army that made 93000 Pakistani soldiers to surrender but also its father of the nation Sheikh Mujibur-Rahman who worked for the independence of the country. There was no mention of India's contribution in the independence war of Bangladesh in the speech of Mohd Yunus. The present interim government under Mohd Yunus has not only neglected the atrocities of Pakistani army on Bangladesh but is but is trying to get cosy with Pakistan. The present turmoil in Bangladesh started with a student agitation is attaining new heights by adding horrific stories every day to its credit. The birth of Bangladesh was on the bases of language rather than religion but every day atrocities on Hindus, its anti-India trade, love for Pakistan, along with growing fanaticism emphatically conveys the interim government's aversion to idea of its founding fathers. It is important to point out here that the constitution of Bangladesh holds that the state shall ensure equal status and equal rights in the practice of Hindu, Christian and other religions. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by Bangladesh constitution. It calls for equal rights to all its citizens irrespective of their religious differences. The interim government pandering to extremists, an inactive military, shrinking space for minorities, voices to declare Bangladesh an Islamic state, makes one to see Bangladesh turning into a replica of Pakistan. All this indicates, Bangladesh can slide back in history with a mirror state with similar dispensation and moti-



hour? How India will respond to the present happenings in its neighbourhood? Why Bangladesh is acquiring arms from Pakistan, China and Turkey? Is it out of fear of India's reaction or has Bangladesh some other plan? Will there be more terrorist infiltration in India from its north eastern borders? Will the turmoil create more space for China in the region? Will India be facing another Pakistan on its eastern borders? what will be the impact of communal politics of Bangladesh on Bangladeshi Hindus and other minorities? Was CAA not required? Is Pakistan using it against India? What made Bangladesh to rejuvenate relations with Pakistan despite fighting against it for its freedom and ethnic identity as both have been Islamic countries?

Bangladesh has reportedly relaxed visa restrictions, including security clearance for Pakistani nationals in Bangladesh, this will carry two effects. Firstly, it will lead to an escalation in the movement of Pakistani intelligence people in Bangladesh which can pose a major security threat to India as India and Bangladesh share long and porous border of 4,096-kilom-

eters. It may ultimately result in more infiltration in India's north eastern states, especially Assam, West Bengal, Mizoram, Meghalaya etc. Secondly in the long run it will create problems for Dhaka too as the two countries are on different levels of economic growth so people from Pakistan will find it better to settle in Bangladesh.

The unrest in Bangladesh and mute reactions of Bangladesh interim Government will encourage terror elements. New Delhi's concern is about the release of Islamic extremists and terrorists from its jails can renew terror attacks. In Yunus Government Mufi Jashimuddin Rehmani chief of Ansarulh Bangla team - an affiliate of Al Qaeda was released from jail. He has his network in India and can disturb peace in the country. As per a report by India Today, a Pakistan-backed extremist organization, Jamaat, has established itself in Ambar Khana area in Sylhet, and is reportedly planning to infiltrate its cadres into India's northeastern states

ing the direct connection between Pakistan and Bangladesh under Yunus Government. This conveys the shift in Yunus strategy towards Pakistan. This initiative will accelerate existing trade flow and promote new opportunities for business from both sides. The revival of its relations with Pakistan will be a challenge for India. The resumption of maritime relations between the two countries can have geopolitical rather than economic importance because shipping route from Karachi to Chittagong is costlier and time consuming than other options available with Bangladesh. The direct shipping between the two countries will give Pakistan access to Bay of Bengal as well as a channel to India's north east both of these will be a challenge for India.

India enjoys favourable trade balance with Bangladesh as in September 2024 India exported \$ 864 M and imported \$206M from Bangladesh resulting in a positive trade balance of \$655 M between sept.2023 and sept.2024 the exports of India have decreased by \$- 8.53 M (-0.98%) from \$ 869 M to \$ 861 M while imports have increased by \$ 43 M (26.3%) from \$163 M to \$206M. The present anti India trade by Pakistani elements in Bangladesh will directly influence India's trade with the country and will pave way for easy flourishing of China.

On the economic front first time in 53 years a cargo vessel from Karachi docked in Chattogram port mark-

Bangladesh Govt initially tried to conceal its communal agenda as an internal affair of Bangladesh but could not contain things for too long and got exposed at international level. The soft shell of secularism in Bangladesh faded with the ouster of Sheikh Hasina from her post.

Naxals trying to expand to new areas without much success: MHA report

New Delhi Facing tough action from the security forces, the Naxals are making efforts to seep into new areas along inter-state borders but without any notable success, the latest report from the Union Home Ministry has said.

The government's multi-pronged approach — anti-Naxal operations by paramilitary and state police and simultaneous development initiatives in Maoist-affected areas — has resulted in a 48 per cent reduction in violent incidents, from 1,136 in 2013 to 594 in 2023, the report said. A 65 per cent reduction was also noticed in the deaths of civilians and security forces, which came down from 397 to 138 in 2023 as compared to 2013, it said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has said that the country would be free of Naxalism by March 31, 2026.

The geographical spread of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) violence has shrunk



considerably. In 2023, 171 police stations in 42 districts reported such incidents, compared to 288 police stations in 76 districts in 2013, the MHA report said.

"The arc of violence has been considerably restricted with just 25 districts accounting 91 per cent of the LWE violence," it said.

According to the ministry's annual report 2023-24, the CPI (Maoist) continues to be the most potent among the various LWE

outfits in the country, accounting for more than 90 per cent of total violent incidents and 95 per cent of resistant deaths.

"Amidst increasing reverses, the CPI (Maoist) has been making efforts to expand to new areas along inter-state borders, albeit without any significant success," the report said.

They wish to keep the population in their areas of influence marginalized to perpetuate their outdated ideology, it said.

"Consequently, the process of development has been set back by decades in many parts of the country under LWE influence," it said.

Various measures adopted by (state) governments and the developmental outreach by the Union government have seen an increasingly large number of LWE cadres shunning the path of violence and returning to the mainstream.

Continued operations and crackdowns in the

"core Maoists' areas" have slightly increased the number of resultant deaths and casualties to security forces when compared with the corresponding period in 2022, the report said.

Noting that improvised explosive devices cause the majority of casualties to security forces in anti-LWE operations, the Home Ministry issued a Standard Operating Procedure to promote best practices in IED management besides putting in place extensive counter-IED capacity building of CAPFs and state police forces, it said.

"During the first half of 2024, the LWE situation has witnessed quantum positive jump (1.7 times) in security forces-initiated operations (59 to 103), which have consequently resulted in a more than five-fold increase in the neutralization of Maoists (30 to 159) as compared to the corresponding period of 2023," the report said.

The overall improvement in the LWE scenario can be attributed to a greater presence and increased capaci-

Quad now a vital force for stability in Indo-Pacific: Jaishankar

New Delhi In a social media post on X marking the 20th anniversary of Quad, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday said the four-nation grouping now stands as a vital force for stability, progress and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

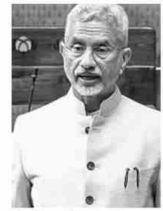
"Two decades ago, the idea of Quad began with a shared response to the Indian Ocean tsunami," he noted.

He also shared a joint statement issued by the foreign ministers of the four Quad nations (India, Australia, Japan and the United States) on the occasion of the grouping's 20th anniversary, reaffirming their commitment to addressing the region's needs together.

The joint statement said that 20 years ago, in response to the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, Australia, India, Japan, and the US came together in service to the people of the region for the first time as the grouping now known as the Quad.

The tsunami was one of the worst disasters in history, claiming the lives of nearly a quarter million people and displacing 1.7 million across 14 countries. "Together our four countries contributed over 40,000 emergency responders, working with other partners across the Indo-Pacific region to support millions of people affected by the catastrophe. We honour the memories of those no longer with us and recognize the survivors and the families of those who were lost," the statement said.

They said that their foundational commitment to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief remains strong. "We continue to work side-by-side to prepare for and respond quickly and effectively to disasters across the region. In 2024, our four countries collectively supported disaster preparedness and life-saving relief efforts across the Indo-



Pacific, and we continue to build on those efforts to identify new ways to respond rapidly to humanitarian crises and disasters."

The statement further noted that what began as an emergency response to a catastrophe has grown into a full-fledged partnership delivering positive outcomes for the people of the region. Quad countries now work together and with partners across the Indo-Pacific to address complex challenges, from fighting climate change, cancer, and pandemics, to bolstering quality infrastructure, maritime domain awareness, STEM education, counter-terrorism efforts, critical and emerging technologies, and cyber security.

"Since 2021, the Leaders of our four nations have met annually to drive the Quad's positive contributions across South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific," it added.

The Quad nations said that as four partners, they share a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific that is peaceful, stable, and prosperous, underpinned by effective regional institutions. "We reaffirm our unwavering support for ASEAN's centrality and unity as well as mainstreaming and implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. We respect Pacific-led regional architecture, foremost the Pacific Islands Forum. We are also steadfast in our support for the Indian Ocean Rim Association, the region's premier organisation," they added.

CRPF DG Anish Dayal Singh retires, Vittal Kumar to lead force as acting chief

New Delhi CRPF Director General Anish Dayal Singh retired on Tuesday from his position, passing the leadership to senior IPS officer Vittal Kumar who will serve as the acting chief until a permanent appointment is made.

Singh, an IPS officer of 1988 batch from the Manipal cadre, led the Central Reserve Police Force, CRPF during a critical year in which the world's largest paramilitary force made significant strides in the government's campaign to combat Naxalism.

Under his leadership, the CRPF established over three dozen forward operating bases (FOBs) in areas affected by Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) and introduced four new battalions, adding more than 4,000 personnel dedicated to anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh.

Singh's tenure also coincided with the successful conduct of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and the first assembly election in the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, as the CRPF played a vital role in ensuring security across the nation.

After beginning his career from Manipal, Singh transitioned to central deputation in the early 2000s, where he held various key roles within the Intelligence Bureau.

He later headed the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), a paramilitary force responsible for guarding the India-China border, before taking charge of the CRPF in December last year.

One of Singh's notable initiatives during his tenure was a comprehensive realignment of over 130 battalions within the CRPF to enhance operational efficiency.

This major restructuring, approved by the Union home ministry after an eight-year period, aimed to provide troops with better "family time" while reducing the average distance between units and their parent group centres (GCs) from 1,200 km to 500 km. The realignment also streamlined reporting and supply processes.

Quad renews pledge towards working for free, stable Indo-Pacific

New Delhi India and other Quad member nations on Tuesday renewed their firm commitment to work towards a free and open Indo-Pacific that is peaceful, stable and prosperous.

The foreign ministers of the member nations of the grouping made the pledge in a joint statement commemorating the 20th anniversary of Quad cooperation. The foreign ministers said the Quad will work together in responding to the future needs of the Indo-Pacific, an assertion that came against the backdrop of China's increasing muscle-flexing in the region. India, the US, Australia and Japan came together 20 years ago to extend assistance in re-



sponse to the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. The coalition is now known as Quad.

"As four partners, we share a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific that is peaceful, stable and prosperous, underpinned by ef-

fective regional institutions," the joint statement said. The Quad foreign ministers also talked about the centrality of 10-nation grouping Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the Indo-Pacific. "We reaffirm our unwavering support for

the worst disasters in history, claiming the lives of nearly a quarter million people and displacing 1.7 million across 14 countries," they said. "Together our four countries contributed over 40,000 emergency responders, working with other partners across the Indo-Pacific region to support millions of people affected by the catastrophe." In the statement, the ministers further noted that the foundational commitment of the four nations to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief remains strong. "We continue to work side-by-side to prepare for and respond quickly and effectively to disasters across the region," they said.

GSLV mission planned in January would be 100th launch from Sriharikota: ISRO chief

Sriharikota ISRO is gearing up to achieve a significant milestone with a Geosynchronous Launch Vehicle mission scheduled in January set to become the 100th launch from the Sriharikota spaceport, a top official said.

The 99th launch from Sriharikota was Monday's PSLV-C60 mission which successfully placed two spacecraft for conducting the Space Docking Experiment in a circular orbit, ISRO Chairman S Somanath said.

"So, all of you have seen the majestic lift-off and the launch of the SpaDeX (Space Docking Experiment) rocket, and for us, this is the 99th launch of any vehicle from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, so that is also a very important number. So, we are going for the 100th launch at the beginning of the next year," he said.

Somanath, also the Secretary, Department of Space, was talking to reporters after the PSLV-C60 mission successfully placed the Space Docking Experiment spacecraft A and Bin a circular orbit.

On future launches planned by ISRO, Somanath said, "In 2025, we will have many missions to start with the GSLV launching the (navigation satellite) NVS-02 in the



month of January." ISRO successfully placed a navigation satellite onboard the GSLV-F12/NVS-01 rocket in May 2023. This GSLV rocket successfully deployed the NVS-01 navigation satellite, weighing about 2,232 kg into a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).

The NVS-01 was the first of the second-generation satellites envisaged for the Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) services. On Monday's PSLV-C60 mission, Somanath expressed hope that many more Space Docking Experiments would be taken up by the scientists in the coming days.

"It is really an important mission with (India's) space sector reforms and expansion of space activities. There will be many more SpaDeX varieties including complex missions

Police failed to arrest Karad, Fadnavis has no right to remain CM: Congress

Mumbai Congress on Tuesday said Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis should resign as the police failed to arrest Walmik Karad, an accused in an extortion case linked to sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh's murder, until he turned himself in.

Elsewhere, BJP MLA Suresh Dhas targeted NCP minister Dhananjay Munde, claiming that he and Karad were two sides of the same coin, while Maharashtra activist Manoj Jarange demanded action against all "supporters" of the accused.

Karad, a close associate of Munde, surrendered before the police in Pune, days after the brutal murder of Massajog sarpanch Santosh created a wave of outrage.

Congress spokesperson Atul Londhe questioned the police's failure to track down Karad, who was wanted in an extortion case in Beed district, for three weeks.

"Mumbai Police, once considered on par with Scotland Yard, failed to deliver justice. Fadnavis has no moral ground to remain chief minister," he said, adding that the rising crime rate in Fadnavis's home district Nagpur was evidence of the broader law and order crisis in Maharashtra.

A sitting judge should oversee the investigation in the Deshmukh murder case, the Congress leader demanded. Meanwhile, BJP's Dhas, NCP (SP)'s Sandip Kshirsagar and Majalgaon MLA Prakash Solanke of Ajit Pawar-led NCP, all MLAs from Beed district where Santosh Deshmukh was abducted and murdered on December 9, were likely to meet CM Fadnavis on Tuesday. Speaking to a regional news channel, Dhas said, "Walmik Karad and Ma-



harashtra minister and Ajit Pawar-led NCP's leader Dhananjay Munde are two sides of the same coin. Munde's resignation has been sought by his own party leader. I still demand that CM Fadnavis should become the guardian minister of Beed so that he can crack down on the gangs controlled by Walmik Karad."

In Maharashtra, every district has a guardian minister, who is generally a cabinet member from the respective district or region. Munde represents Parli in Beed district. Guardian ministers in the new BJP-led government are yet to be named. "I am going to tell CM Fadnavis that there should be no leniency in the Deshmukh murder case," Dhas further said. The Crime Investigation Department is handling the murder as well as the extortion case. Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange, speaking

to reporters at his village in Jalna district, indicated that the Maratha community, to which Deshmukh belonged, would launch an agitation if the government failed to take action against the supporters of the accused, whether they be ministers, MLAs or MPs.

"The chief minister must ensure justice by acting against the accused (Karad) and those who supported him," he added.

Santosh Deshmukh's brother Dhananjay Deshmukh, who met Jarange at Antarwali Sarati village, told reporters that the CID should examine the mobile call detail records (CDR) of the accused to uncover their links.

Massajog village sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh was abducted and tortured to death in Beed's Kej tesli on December 9, allegedly for opposing an extortion bid by some persons who had demanded money from a windmill company. Four persons were earlier arrested in the murder case, while Karad was named as a wanted accused in the extortion case.

Opposition has alleged that Karad was the "mastermind" of the murder, though he claimed before surrendering on Tuesday morning that his name was dragged in the case for reasons of political vendetta.

Disappointed over 'failure' of Centre, Manipur govt to resolve crisis: Cong leader

Imphal

Manipur Congress Legislature Party leader Okram Ibobi Singh on Tuesday expressed disappointment over the alleged failure of the Centre and the state government to resolve the 19-month-long violence in the northeastern state.

The state assembly is the only appropriate platform to discuss and find solutions to Manipur's crisis, he told reporters at Congress Bhawan here.

Singh said the Congress has made repeated appeals to convene a state assembly session to address the critical issues affecting the northeastern state but the authorities have not paid any attention to the appeal.

"The state assembly is the only appropriate platform to discuss and find solutions to Manipur's crisis. Today marks the end of the calendar year, and yet, the assembly has not been convened despite memoranda being submitted to the governor and the CM," he said.

Singh emphasised the urgent need for an assembly session given the state's situation.

"Several states, like Karnataka, have established rules mandating a minimum of four assembly sittings annually. Manipur should adopt a similar practice. We are disappointed over the failure of the Centre and the state government to resolve the crisis," he claimed.

The Congress leader warned of "potential unrest if the government continues to ignore people's grievances".

"If the people lose trust in the government and reach a breaking point, the security forces might struggle to control people's anger," he cautioned.

4 villages in Assam's Cachar district 'child marriage-free': CM Himanta

Guwahati

Four villages in Assam's Cachar district have been declared child marriage-free, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

He maintained that initiatives focusing on the welfare of the girl child has helped in achieving this feat.

"Assam has taken a firm stance against child marriage. We are putting the last nail in the coffin of this social evil across the state," Sarma said in a post on X on Monday.

"Leading by example, 4 villages in Cachar have been declared child marriage-free recently ensuring a bright future for our girls," he added.

Rukni Part IV under Palonghat development block, Bhairabpur Part I under Kalain development block, and Rosekandy Grant I and Rosekandy Grant II under Tapang development block, have been declared child marriage-free under 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' initiative.

Sarma maintained that initiatives such as Nijut Moina scheme and The Assam Compulsory Registration of Muslim Marriages and Divorces Act, 2024, have helped in pushing for the eradication of this social evil.

Agency

Our top priority to provide safety and convenience of every pilgrim in during Mahakumbh: CM Yogi

H Lucknow highlighting that the safety and convenience of every pilgrim and tourist at Mahakumbh is the government's foremost priority, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasized on Tuesday that it is the administration's duty to ensure the well-being of everyone—whether they are Indians or foreigners, NRIs, or residents of Prayagraj—without any discrimination.

The Chief Minister stressed the need for further strengthening disaster management, cyber security, fire safety, ghat security, and emergency medical services during Mahakumbh, adding that all security agencies must remain vigilant and active 24x7.

Underlining the importance of enhanced intelligence measures, the Chief Minister directed the effective deployment of anti-drone systems and called for raising public awareness about cyber threats, including identifying and taking action against fake websites and apps exploiting the Mahakumbh theme.

He also expressed concern over reports of fraudulent activities by anarchist groups or individuals collecting money in the name of Mahakumbh. He instructed the police to identify and take strict action against those involved in such frauds.

The Chief Minister during his visit to



Prayagraj to review preparations for the Mahakumbh, assessed the progress of work from all departments in detail. He instructed the authorities to expedite the police verification of all street vendors, auto-rickshaws, and e-rickshaw drivers. Additionally, he emphasized the need for systematic traffic management on all inter-district routes leading to Prayagraj.

The Chief Minister also stressed the importance of curbing fake news on social and digital media. He remarked that individuals opposed to Indian culture and tradition are spreading misinformation about the Mahakumbh and called for a strong response to counter such propaganda.

Mela Adhikari Vijay Kiran Anand informed the Chief Minister that land allotment for revered Akharas, Mahala mandalashwar, Khalsa,

Dandibara, Khakhohk, and other institutions has been completed, while the process for allotment to Prayagraj and other new institutions is ongoing. Necessary resources are being provided to meet their requirements.

Expressing satisfaction with the progress, the Chief Minister emphasized the importance of respecting the sentiments of Akharas, saints, and sadhus. He instructed officials to maintain regular communication with them to address their concerns.

The Chief Minister directed construction of a new bathing ghat in the Arail area within three days. He also announced that approximately 550 shuttle buses would operate during the Mahakumbh starting January 5, ensuring no driver or conductor works continuously for more than eight hours. Additional provisions were instructed

for the convenience of divyangians, the elderly, and women.

Furthermore, the Chief Minister revealed plans for flower showers from helicopters on all six major bathing festivals and directed officials to finalize the necessary arrangements for the same.

Officials informed Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath that preparations for the Mahakumbh are progressing swiftly, with the entire police force and sanitation workers expected to be deployed in Prayagraj by January 3. Additionally, all doctors and paramedical staff have already been assigned.

Key infrastructure updates include completion of 28 pontoon bridges, 520 km of checkered roads, 610 signages, 494.30 km of DIP line for drinking water, 304 km of GIP line, 4,270 drinking water stand posts, over 176 km

The Chief Minister stressed the need for further strengthening disaster management, cyber security, fire safety, ghat security, and emergency medical services during Mahakumbh, adding that all security agencies must remain vigilant and active 24x7.

of drainage clearance, 54,700 streetlights, 173 km of HT line, 1,280 km of LT line, and 206 electricity substations.

For healthcare preparedness, 3,305 beds have been reserved in Swaroopani Nehru Hospital, Sapru (Bailey) Hospital, Motilal Nehru Hospital, Dufferin Hospital, and private hospitals.

A 1,200 sqm jetty has been constructed, all riverfront roads are ready, and 3,339 poles for thematic lighting, seven facade points, and more than 90,000 toilets have been installed, officials added.

The Chief Minister instructed officials to complete any remaining work within the stipulated time. To achieve the vision of a Swachh Mahakumbh-Swachh Prayagraj, he urged cooperation from the residents of Prayagraj, saints, and citizens.

He also directed officials to launch a campaign to ensure the city is entirely encroachment-free before the Maha Kumbh.

HP CM Sukhu Launches 'Har Din Sehat' Campaign



Sushil Kumar Sharma Shimla

Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh launched the 'Har Din Sehat' campaign on Tuesday from his official residence Oakover here.

In this historic occasion, Sukhu said that this comprehensive health awareness programme aims to promote a culture of health consciousness and disease prevention among the people of Himachal Pradesh.

Under this campaign, students of IGMC Shimla and Sister Nivedita Nursing College will organise health talks at various locations to raise awareness about adopting a healthy lifestyle. These activities will be conducted in different wards and OPDs of IGMC Shimla as well as public places under the Shimla Municipal Corporation.

The Chief Minister emphasized that the campaign's objectives include preventing diseases, increasing awareness about government health facilities, and

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encouraging effective utilization of government health services and schemes.

He further stated that this initiative is envisioned as a long-term effort to make health awareness a part of daily life and to transform Himachal Pradesh into a healthier and more conscious society. The campaign is a significant step toward improving public health in the state through a sustainable and inclusive approach.

Senior Medical Superintendent, Indira Gandhi Medical College Dr. Rahul Rao and other officers were present on the occasion.

Uttarakhand govt generates revenue of Rs 686 crores in nine months

Dehradun

The Uttarakhand government has showcased exemplary financial prudence, with mining revenues soaring to Rs 686 crores in just nine months — surpassing last year's total revenue of Rs 646 crore, according to officials.

Under Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama's leadership and instructions, continuous meetings are being held throughout the year with the revenue-earning departments under the chairmanship of the Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) and Secretary of Finance to maintain financial discipline in the state.

In the financial year 2019-20, total revenue from mining amounted to Rs 397 crore. This figure increased significantly to Rs 646 crore in the financial year 2023-24, representing a growth of approximately 36.86% compared to the previous year.

As of December 29, in the financial year 2024-25, total revenue from mining has reached Rs 686 crore. With three months remaining in this financial year, current trends suggest that revenue could exceed Rs 1,000 crore by the end of the year.

This projection indicates a rise of about 50% compared to the financial year 2023-24. Following the Chief Minister's instructions, the Finance and Mining Department has changed its strategy to increase revenue by assigning the monitoring of mining operations to external agencies. Previously, this monitoring was conducted by the Mining Department itself. This new approach has yielded positive results.

The state's tax revenue has been steadily increasing each year. In the financial year 2019-20, the state collected a tax revenue of Rs 11,513 crore, which rose to Rs 19,245 crore in the financial year 2023-24. This financial year, the total revenue from its tax is expected to be around Rs 22,500 crore.

Earlier, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama outlined all of the practical actions that should be implemented to mitigate the effects of the cold wave in the state.

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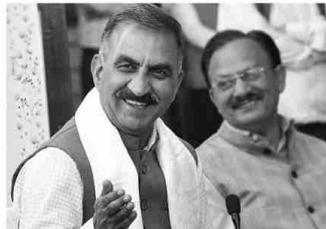
Digitization of milk procurement to be started in 10 societies on pilot basis: CM

Shimla

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said that digitization of milk procurement will be started in 10 societies on pilot basis. He said it would ensure hassle-free and seamless operations of the milk procurement, which would also go a long way in maintaining transparency.

While presiding over the review meeting of the Animal Husbandry Department here on Tuesday, he said that the present state government is strengthening the rural economy by providing remunerative prices to the milk producers. "Himachal Pradesh is the first state in the country to introduce a minimum support price for milk procurement which is the highest in the country," he said, adding that cow milk is being procured at Rs. 45 per litre while buffalo milk at Rs. 55 per litre from the farmers.

He said that to further bolster the rural economy many initiatives would be introduced in the budget 2025-26. The state government is going to spend Rs. 161.52 crore for establishing six



new milk chilling plants and milk processing plants in the state, he added.

"State government is also setting up a state-of-art fully automated milk processing plant at Dagwar in Kangra district with 1,50 lakh litres milk capacity per day expandable upto 3 lakh litres per day. This plant would become operational in March, 2026 benefiting the milk producers from Kangra, Una, Hamirpur and other neighbouring districts," he said, adding that till now 10 per cent work on this plant has been completed. He directed to expedite the construction work of all these projects.

The CM directed the officers to ensure qual-

ity milk products to the consumers and to conduct a seasonal study on the availability of milk from farmers. He also asked for adopting high-tech technology in its operation to maximize the benefits to the farming community. Directing to focus on individual milk testing, real time data management with web and mobile interface, he also instructed to ensure GPS enabled route tracking and optimization for efficient milk transport.

He said that separate marketing of Himachali dairy products must be ensured to provide better prices to the farmers for their hard work. Sukhu said that the money for the milk procurement would be directly

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transferred to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries and details regarding collection data, quantity, quality and pricing would be notified through SMS.

He also directed the officers to educate milk producers about animal care and evolve a mechanism to support the farmers. The CM said, "The state government is also promoting natural farming in a big way and cattle rearing is instrumental in this farming practices. These two activities are co-related and cattle rearing will also ensure reduction in chemical farming."

Akhilesh accuses BJP of conspiracy to tarnish image of Opposition leaders

L Lucknow Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav has accused the BJP of hatching conspiracies to tarnish the image of Opposition leaders through negative politics.

Addressing a large gathering of workers at the state party headquarters on the last day of the year, Akhilesh Yadav said farmers, youth, poor and middle class are all distressed by the policies of the government. "It is now clear that BJP will be out of power after the 2027 assembly

elections and the Samajwadi Party will form the government in UP. The BJP government and its chief minister have no vision. The ruling party is destroying the democratic system, abusing power and using administration to fulfill its political interests," he alleged.

The SP president blamed the BJP government for the violence in Sambhal. He held the administration responsible for the turn of events that took innocent lives. "The administration and officials are working under



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pressure. The BJP government promotes fake news and runs a narrative based on these to tarnish the image of others for political gains," he alleged.

Akhilesh Yadav said Mahakumbh was successfully organised in 2013 under the Samajwadi Party government. It was appreciated in the country as well as abroad. "This time, preparations have not been completed as yet for the first bath of Kumbh on January 13, 2025. He said, "There was chaos as the BJP government was playing with the sacred event. The focus of this government is its own publicity rather than providing facilities to the devotees in Mahakumbh."

In this Prayag Mahakumbh, the Akhara Shri Shambhu Panch Dashnam Avahan Naga Sanayasi and Shri Mahant Gopal Giri highlighted that 1220 years ago, under the guidance of Adi Guru Shankaracharya, 550 Mahatmas from Akhara Shri Shambhu Panch Dashnam Avahan Naga Sanayasi and Shri Mahant Gopal Giri embarked on a journey to visit the temples of Sanatan Dharma across India.

The sacred Chhadi will arrive at Prayagraj Mahakumbh tomorrow, where saints and devotees from various Akharas will extend a warm welcome at multiple locations. The Chhadi Yatra marks its 1220th year since inception.

Prayagraj Mahakumbh to ignite Sanatan Dharma's flame with sacred Chhadi Yatra

Maha Kumbh Nagar Crores of devotees attending the Prayagraj Mahakumbh to take a holy dip will also witness the revered 'Chhadi' (sacred staff), symbolizing the awakening of Sanatan Dharma.

Hundreds of Mahatmas from Shri Panch Dashnam Avahan Akhara are bringing the sacred Chhadi to Prayagraj. The Chhadi Yatra, which began in Haridwar, is being led by Dadaji Dhuniwale Shri Mahant Gopal Giri of Avahan Akhara.

According to Shri Mahant Gopal Giri, four Shri Mahants of the Chhadi have been appointed to accompany him as per the Akhara's directives, along with a group of sadhus from Avahan Akhara.

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South Korean court issues arrest warrant for impeached prez Yoon

Seoul
South Korean court has issued an arrest warrant for impeached, suspended President Yoon Suk Yeol, investigators said Tuesday, over his short-lived bid to impose martial law on the country.



Yoon briefly suspended civilian rule this month, plunging South Korea into its worst political crisis in decades.

He was stripped of his presidential duties by parliament over the action, but a constitutional court ruling is pending on whether to confirm the impeachment.

"The arrest warrant and search warrant for President Yoon Suk Yeol, requested by the Joint Investigation Headquarters, were issued this morning," the Joint Investi-

gation Headquarters said in a statement.

The conservative leader faces criminal charges of insurrection, which could result in life imprisonment or even the death penalty.

Investigators probing Yoon over his declaration of martial law requested the warrant Monday after the suspended

president failed to report for questioning a third time.

"The reason for the warrant is that there is a concern that the individual may refuse to comply with summons without justifiable reasons, and there is sufficient probable cause to suspect the commission of a crime," a Corruption Investigation Of-

fice (CIO) official told reporters at a briefing on Tuesday.

"The warrant is valid until January 6," the official said, adding that Yoon could be held at a police station or the Seoul detention center.

Yoon's lawyer called the arrest warrant for the impeached president "illegal and invalid," saying investigators lacked the authority to probe the president.

"The arrest warrant and search and seizure warrant issued at the request of an agency without investigative authority are illegal and invalid," a statement sent to AFP by lawyer Yoon Kab-keun said.

Arrest? Even though the warrant has been issued, it is unclear whether investigators and police will be able to execute it.

The Presidential Security Service has previously refused to comply with three search warrants.

It said Tuesday that "security measures regarding the execution of the warrant will be carried out in accordance with lawful procedures," in a statement to local media.

But lawyer Yun Bok-nam, president of Lawyers for a Democratic Society, told AFP that while there was a legal basis for rejecting a search warrant "there's no such provision for arrest warrants."

"I expect the (arrest) process will proceed smoothly," he said, adding that warrants were typically valid seven days and had to be executed within that time frame.

residence in central Seoul, in a likely bid to head off scuffles.

Yoon's supporters and protesters calling for his removal have both staked out his residence, with local media running images of altercations between the two camps overnight.

"Up to 3,000 people will move to protest against the unfair and invalid arrest warrant," said an official from the largest protest group supporting Yoon.

Local media reported that an imminent arrest or search of the presidential residence was unlikely, as investigators would seek to coordinate with the presidential security service.

Technically, anyone obstructing the execution of an arrest warrant could be arrested.

UK warns against satellite phones in updated India travel advisory

London
The UK government on Tuesday updated its travel advisory for India to warn British nationals against carrying or operating satellite phones in India without a licence.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) reviewed the Safety and Security section of its advisory for India to flag that Britons have been arrested for bringing in such devices illegally to India.

It highlighted that prior permission from the Department of Telecommunication was also required for listening devices and powerful cameras or binoculars and that advice around such equipment can be sought from the High Commission of India in London.

"It is illegal to possess and operate satellite phones in India without a licence.

British nationals have been arrested or detained for bringing satellite phones and other satellite-enabled navigational devices into the country without prior permission, reads the FCDO update. "Contact the Indian Department of Telecommunication to request a licence. You may also need prior permission from the Indian authorities to bring equipment like listening or recording devices, radio transmitters, powerful cameras or binoculars into India. Contact the High Commission of India for advice, it notes.

"The FCDO country-based advisory is a guidance on travel rather than a government-imposed regulation. It is intended to flag risks for travellers in order to make "informed decisions" and could lead to travel insurance being invalidated if the advice is overlooked.

UK Pledges £4.5m for Ukraine war crimes justice efforts

London
The UK government has announced an additional £4.5 million in funding to support Ukraine's efforts in seeking justice for war crimes committed during the ongoing conflict with Russia. The funding will be used to aid in the documentation, investigation, and prosecution of war crimes, complementing the UK's work with the US and EU partners via the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group.

To provide £3 billion in military aid to Ukraine annually for as long as needed. The government has also provided over £282 million in bilateral funding for humanitarian, energy, stabilization, reform, recovery, and reconstruction programs in Ukraine over the 2024-25 financial year.

The UK has also played a key role in facilitating international support for Ukraine, including securing a £2.26 billion loan from the World Bank and coordinating the efforts of the International Fund for Ukraine, which has received over

£1.3 billion in pledges from international partners to date. "Throughout 2024, the fierce courage of the Ukrainian people has continued to inspire the world," said UK Defence Secretary John Healey. "As we enter 2025, the UK's resolve to reinforce support for Ukraine is unwavering."

"I'm proud of UK leadership on Ukraine. From delivering cutting-edge equipment to training tens of thousands of troops, we have shown the UK stands with the Ukrainian people in the face of Putin's brutal, illegal invasion," he added.

Bangladesh's interim govt to announce 'proclamation of July uprising'

Dhaka
Bangladesh's interim government led by Muhammad Yunus has announced that it has decided to prepare a "proclamation of July uprising", a day after it distanced itself from a proposed declaration with an identical title by the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement that led to an upheaval four months ago.

"We hope within few days the proclamation will be prepared with the participation and consensus of all and presented before the nation," Shaiful Alam, Press Secretary to the chief adviser of the interim government of Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus, told reporters in a midnight press conference.



Addressing reporters in front of Yunus' official Jamuna residence, Alam said the declaration would be based on the views of all participating students, political parties, and stakeholders, including the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement that led to the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami

League regime on August 5. Alam said the government took the initiative to prepare the proposed charter to "consolidate the people's unity, anti-fascist spirit and desire for state reform developed through the July uprising".

The Anti-Discrimination Students Movement along with the National Citizens Committee, another

grouping led by the students, two days ago in a surprise development said it would announce the proclamation of the July uprising on Tuesday afternoon at Dhaka's Central Shaheed Minar.

But soon after the government's midnight announcement, the students' platform hurriedly called an emergency meeting and nearly two hours later told newsmen that instead of the proclamation they would rather stage a "march for unity" at the same venue and time.

The Mujibit '72 constitution will be buried (in the proclamation) in the very place where the one-point declaration was made during the July uprising," the plat-

form's convener Hasnat Abdullah told a press conference on December 29.

Abdullah at that time said that "Indian aggression was initiated through the principles of the 1972 constitution (and) the proclamation will make it clear how the Mujibit constitution destroyed the aspirations of the people and exactly how we want to replace it."

Anti-Discrimination Students Movement leader and chief organiser of the National Citizens Committee Sarjis Alam told the same press conference that "we believe the way our revolution was embraced by all anti-fascists; this proclamation will also contain everyone's hopes and aspirations".

BUSINESS

Small Savings Rates Unchanged for January - March 2025

New Delhi
The government on Tuesday left the interest rates unchanged on various small savings schemes, including PPF and NSC, for the fourth straight quarter beginning January 1, 2024.

The rates of interest on various small savings schemes for the fourth quarter of FY 2024-25, starting from January 1, 2025, and ending on March 31, 2025, shall remain unchanged from 4 per cent, respectively.

As per the notification, deposits under the Sukanya Samridhi scheme will attract an interest rate of 8.2 per cent, while the rate on a three-year term deposit remains at 7.1 per cent prevailing in the current quarter.

The interest rates for popular Public Provident Fund (PPF) and post office savings deposit schemes too have been retained at 7.1 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively.

The interest rate on the National Savings Certificate (NSC) will remain at 7.7 per cent for the January-March 2025 period.

The interest rates have been left unchanged for the last four quarters now. The government had last made changes in some schemes for the fourth quarter of the last fiscal.

India's Fiscal Deficit Hits 52.5% of Target: Government Data

New Delhi
The Centre's fiscal deficit at the end of the eighth month of financial year 2024-25 touched 52.5 per cent of the full-year target, government data showed on Tuesday.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit — the gap between the government's expenditure and revenue — was about Rs 847 lakh crore during the April-November period, according to the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).



In the Union Budget, the government projected to bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the current 2024-25 financial year. The deficit was 5.6 per cent of the GDP in 2023-24.

In absolute terms, the government aims to contain the fiscal deficit at Rs 16,13,312 crore during the current fiscal. The revenue-expenditure data of the Union gov-

ernment for the first eight months of 2024-25 showed that the net tax revenue was about Rs 14,43 lakh crore.

The central government's total expenditure in the eight months through November stood at Rs 27,47 lakh crore or 56.9 per cent of the budgeted estimate.

Of the total expenditure, Rs 22,27 lakh crore was in the revenue account and Rs 5,13 lakh crore in the capital account.

A fiscal deficit is the difference between the total expenditure and revenue of the government. It is an indication of the total borrowing needed by the government.

Iera Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said the anticipated miss in the capex target is expected to offset any shortfall on account of disinvestment and taxes, as well as the impact of the recent supplementary demand for grants.

Reliance Acquires USD 13 Billion in 5 Years

New Delhi
Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd has spent USD 13 billion on acquisitions in the past five years across new energy, telecom, retail and media business to script a pivot away from core oil and petrochemicals business to clean energy and consumer facing ventures.



Last week, Reliance bought oncology platform Karkinos Healthcare for Rs 375 crore, adding another stack to its diagnostic and digital healthcare ecosystem, Morgan Stanley said in a report.

2.6 billion in telecom and internet verticals. It spent USD 1.7 billion on acquisitions in new energy and USD 1.14 billion in retail, according to Morgan Stanley.

It acts like a care partner during a patient's cancer treatment.

Other investors in the company have included Tata Group, Rakuten, Mayo Clinic, and Hero Enterprise. "RIL aims to leverage its technological expertise and vast distribution networks to create more integrated healthcare system-digital health platforms, telemedicine services and advanced healthcare delivery models," the brokerage said.

Karkinos was incorporated in India on July 24, 2020 and is in the business of providing technology-driven, innovative solutions for the early detection, diagnosis, and management of cancer. It had a turnover of about Rs 22 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal year.

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Karkinos has cancelled the existing outstanding 30,075 equity shares held by the erstwhile shareholders of the company. Its previous principal investors included

Ewart Investments Ltd (100 per cent subsidiary of Tata Sons), Reliance Digital Health Ltd (a subsidiary of Reliance Industries), Mayo Clinic (US), Sundar Raman (Director at Reliance Foundation Youth Sports and former COO of Indian Premier League since 2008), and Ravi Kant (ex-MD of Tata Motors).

The company is focused on providing end-to-end services relating to early detection and effective treatment of cancer at substantially lower than prevailing rates, while still generating healthy profitability. In order to meet this vision, Karkinos started partnering with hospitals to provide oncology services (testing, radiation therapy, etc.).

The company has partnered with around 60 hospitals till December 2023. It is through a subsidiary setting up a 150-bed multi-specialty cancer hospital at Imphal, Manipur. Going for

India's Infrastructure Growth Slows to 4.3% in November

New Delhi
The output of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed down to 4.3 per cent in November 2024 against 7.9 per cent growth registered a year ago, according to official data released on Tuesday.

On a monthly basis, the production growth of these sectors was higher than the 3.7 per cent expansion recorded in October 2024.



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In November, production of crude oil and natural gas contracted. The production growth of coal, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, and electricity moderated to 7.5 per cent, 2.9 per cent, 2 per cent, 4.8 per cent, and 3.8 per cent, respectively, against 10.9 per cent, 12.4 per cent, 3.3 per cent, 9.7 per cent and 5.8 per cent in November last year.

Cricket

Is Rohit Sharma going to retire from Test cricket after Sydney match?

Sydney
Standing at the crossroads of his Test career, reports suggest that skipper Rohit Sharma will likely retire from test cricket after the last test match against Australia, in the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy, in Sydney.

Sharma has certain choices to make in the best interests of the Indian team heading into final and deciding Sydney test match.

With the series in line after his team's 184-run drubbing in the Boxing Day Test, the Indian captain might have to field his six best batters at the Sydney Cricket Ground, which will pave the way for Shubman Gill's inclusion in the playing XI after being dropped for the previous game in Melbourne.

With 866 runs in Test cricket in 2024, Gill is second only to Yashasvi Jaiswal in the list of highest scorers among Indian batters in last one year, and one can't blame the elegant player if he is feeling hard done by at being asked to sit out at MCC.

Rohit, though, informed that the team management explained Gill the reasons behind his omission in Melbourne. He was dropped to ensure better balance in the playing XI with Washington Sundar's bowling being an additional advantage.

Deepti jumps to fifth spot in ICC ODI rankings following WI success



The 27-year-old made headlines, taking eight wickets in two matches, including 6/31 in the last game as India completed a clean sweep in the three-match series in Vadodara.

Dubai
India off-spinner Deepti Sharma climbed a spot to enter the top 5 in the latest ICC women's ODI ranking for bowlers following her match-winning performances in the recently-concluded series against the West Indies at home.

Deepti, who is fifth now, has 665 rating points and is marginally behind fourth-placed South Africa's Marizanne Kapp (677 rating points).

The 27-year-old made headlines, taking eight wickets in two matches, including 6/31 in the last game as India completed a clean sweep in the three-match series in Vadodara.

Among batters, Jemimah Rodrigues (537 rating points) is closing in on a top-20 as she has jumped four spots to 22nd thanks to scores of 29 and 52 during the series.

The big-hitting Richa Ghosh (13 not out and 23 not out) has moved seven spots to 41st (448 rating points), with Chinelle Henry's half-century in the third ODI leading to a 21-spot leap to 65th (349 rating points).

However, charismatic India opener Smriti Mandhana (720 rating points), who scored two half-centuries in the series, has dropped one place to third and trails South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt (773) and Chamari Athapaththu (733).

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur has dropped three places to 13th.

Hayley Matthews' seventh ODI century in Vadodara has helped the West Indies opener climb six places to seventh in the ICC Women's Batting Rankings.



What are Rohit's options?

The question that arises now is how does Rohit accommodate Gill in the playing XI for the Sydney game, which India need to win at all costs to keep alive their slim chances of qualifying for next year's World Test Championship (WTC) Final.

Washington did himself no harm by scoring a 50 and was involved in a crucial hundred-plus stand with centurion Nitish Kumar Reddy. And if his bowling was penetrative enough, he would have certainly bowled more overs.

SCG has traditionally been a track that assists spinners as the match progresses and hence either Washington or Tanush Kotian is certain to play alongside Ravindra Jadeja, unless the skipper develops sudden faith in

the specialist batter (Gill) and not the batting all-rounder (Washington). The Adelaide Test, played under lights with the pink Kookaburra, presented the Indian team with the most challenging circumstances and Gill, with scores of 31 and 28, looked way more comfortable than both Rohit and Virat Kohli.

The second option could be more convenient and it involves dropping one among Mohammed Siraj and Akash Deep to include Gill as three specialist pacers could be a luxury at SCG with Jadeja and Washington expected to bowl more overs than in Melbourne.

Siraj redeemed himself with a fine spell at Sydney while Akash Deep was distinctly unlucky to get just one wicket across two innings.

The third option is the most inconvenient one but perhaps the need of the hour too if Rohit wants to lead by example. With just 31 runs in five innings and 155 runs in past 14 knocks, the skipper could himself volunteer to step aside and let the young turk play, with KL Rahul regaining his opening slot, where he has looked the most assured.

Taking a back seat to allow the team forward is a call that can only be taken if the heart is in the right place.

Mhatre becomes youngest to score 150 in List A cricket, breaks Jaiswal's world record

Ahmedabad
Mumbai's Ayush Mhatre on Tuesday set a new world record for the youngest player to score 150+ in List A cricket during the Vijay Hazare Trophy match against Nagaland here, bettering compatriot Yashasvi Jaiswal's effort.

At 17 years and 168 days, Mhatre broke the previous record set by India batter Jaiswal, who was 17 years and 291 days when he achieved the feat while playing for Mumbai against against Jharkhand in 2019.

Mhatre, who made his debut for domestic giants Mumbai earlier this season, clobbered 11 sixes and 15 fours to make 181 off only 117 balls while powering his side to an imposing 403 for seven in the 50 overs.

Mhatre, who bats from the Virar suburb in Mumbai, has been a regular fixture for the domestic heavyweights across formats ever since he broke into the squad earlier this season.



He was a part of the Irani Cup-winning Mumbai side which defeated Rest of India to win the trophy after a gap of 27 years in October. On his Ranji Trophy debut, Mhatre scored a fine 71-ball 52 but Mumbai lost the season opener to Baroda in an away game.

With the defending champions looking to bounce back after the loss in the first Ranji game, Mhatre led the charge with a brilliant 176 off 232 balls, which was studded with 22 fours and four sixes against Maharashtra. Mumbai won the game by nine wickets.

He had a couple of quiet outings against Tripura and Odisha but slammed his second first-class ton — 116 off 149 balls with 12 fours and three sixes — against Services and went on to represent India in the U-19 Asia Cup.

The right-handed batter carried his form by scoring fifties (54 and 67 not out) against Japan and UAE, but fell for a single digit score in the tournament's final which India lost to Bangladesh.

Having missed Mumbai's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy title triumph, Mhatre returned to the premier domestic 50-overs competition with a 78 in a high-scoring contest against Karnataka.

Head explains "finger on ice" celebration after dismissing Pant

Melbourne
Australia batter Travis Head has explained his unusual celebration after dismissing Rishabh Pant in the Boxing Day Test, stating it signifies "finger on the ice," a quirky gesture that he first showed during the tour of Sri Lanka.

After batting through an entire session, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rishabh Pant appeared poised to guide India to a draw on the final day of the Boxing Day Test.

However, Head turned the game on its head by dismissing Pant, which triggered a dramatic Indian collapse and paved the way for a 184-run Australian victory, giving the hosts a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

Pant mis-timed a pull shot and was caught at long-on, after which Head celebrated the moment with his distinctive gesture of folding the fingers of his left hand into a circle and dipping the forefinger of his right hand into it.

"Finger on the ice. I started in Sri Lanka. I put my finger on the ice and be ready to go for the next one," Head told 'Triple M Radio' after the Melbourne Test.

"I didn't expect to be bowling. I thought Galle would be my next bowling. I'll go put it down in a little cup of ice. Be ready to go up there next," he added, referring to Australia's upcoming tour of the island nation.

Head's celebration quickly gained attention and went viral on social media. After the match, Australian captain Pat Cummins was asked about it and he offered a lighthearted explanation.

"I can explain it. It's his finger so hot he's got to put in a cup of ice. Yeah that's what it is," Cummins told re-



ports. "So, that's normally the running joke. It was in the Gabba or somewhere he got a wicket as well and just straight to the fridge, grabs a bucket of ice, puts his finger in and just walks in front of Lyon (Nathan Lyon), just like that (he) thinks it's very funny.

"So that's what it would have been, nothing else." However, Head's celebration didn't sit well with former India cricketer Navot Singh Sidhu, who demanded "stringent action" against the Australian player, calling it "obnoxious".

"Travis head's obnoxious behaviour during the course of the Melbourne test doesn't auger well for the gentleman's game...sets the worst possible example when there are kids, women, young & old watching the game."

...this caustic conduct did not insult an individual but a nation of 1.5 billion Indians...stringent punishment that would serve as a deterrent for the future generations needs to be slapped on him so that no one dares follow suit!!!! Sidhu posted on X.

The two teams will play the pivotal final Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground, starting January 3.

Jaiswal's leg-breaks and decides to a play the specialist batter (Gill) and not the batting all-rounder (Washington). The Adelaide Test, played under lights with the pink Kookaburra, presented the Indian team with the most challenging circumstances and Gill, with scores of 31 and 28, looked way more comfortable than both Rohit and Virat Kohli.

The second option could be more convenient and it involves dropping one among Mohammed Siraj and Akash Deep to include Gill as three specialist pacers could be a luxury at SCG with Jadeja and Washington expected to bowl more overs than in Melbourne.

Siraj redeemed himself with a fine spell at Sydney while Akash Deep was distinctly unlucky to get just one wicket across two innings.

The third option is the most inconvenient one but perhaps the need of the hour too if Rohit wants to lead by example. With just 31 runs in five innings and 155 runs in past 14 knocks, the skipper could himself volunteer to step aside and let the young turk play, with KL Rahul regaining his opening slot, where he has looked the most assured.

Taking a back seat to allow the team forward is a call that can only be taken if the heart is in the right place.

Melbourne defeat brings fresh calls for Rohit, Kohli to exit test arena

Sydney
Speculation that India captain Rohit Sharma and batting stalwart Virat Kohli are set to call time on their test careers has snowballed as the veteran pair continue to struggle in the five-test series in Australia.

India, who won their last two test tours in Australia, went 2-1 down in the series after their stunning defeat in Melbourne on Monday, with the hosts needing only a draw in Sydney to reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy (BGT).

Opener Rohit has just one fifty and 10 single-digit scores in his last 15 test innings, and even a move down the order failed to pay dividends for the 37-year-old.

Under his captaincy, India have lost five tests this season, equalling their unwanted record from 1999-2000 under Sachin Tendulkar.

Kohli, one of the greats of the modern game, has not fared much better. The 36-year-old struck a century in the opening test in Perth but had a wretched season overall with nine single-digit scores in 17 innings this test season.



Both New Zealand and Australia have exploited his vulnerability to left-arm spin and outside the off-stump line, rendering him a walking wicket at times.

Bumrah named captain of Cricket Australia's Test team of year, Jaiswal too makes it

Sydney
Jasprit Bumrah was on Tuesday recognised for his splendid performances in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy as Cricket Australia named the Indian pace spearhead as the captain of its Test team of the year, which also features Yashasvi Jaiswal.

Bumrah has been the best bowler in Test cricket in 2024 with 71 wickets from 13 matches at an average of 14.92 and a strike rate of 30.16.

"One of the greatest calendar years by a bowler ever; not since Dale Steyn's 74-wicket 2008 has a pace bowler been as prolific and not since Imran



Indian cricket has depth to fill Rohit, Virat's void: Lehmann



Melbourne

Indian cricket has produced a generational superstar in Yashasvi Jaiswal and will remain in good health even when Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma decide to call time on their careers, feels former Australia head coach and two-time World Cup winner Darren Lehmann.

The 54-year-old, who played 27 Tests and 117 ODIs during his decade-long career, is also captivated by Jasprit Bumrah's skills, claiming to have never seen any player have more impact in a single series.

Talking about impending retirements of Rohit and Kohli following their poor show in the ongoing series where India trail 1-2, Lehmann was empathetic and practical about the transition in Indian cricket.

"Look whenever they decide to give it away and whatever happens in next few days they have been great players for India over a long period of time," Lehmann, a member of 1999 and 2003 ODI World Cup-winning teams said.

"Now actually we see younger players starting to step up for India and play well at next level. There is so much depth in Indian cricket I won't worry too much," Lehmann was pretty matter of fact.

"Whenever these two guys decide to retire, there are so many talented youngsters that Indian cricket will be in good stead." Having watched Jaiswal emerge as the flagbearer of Indian batting in the series, Lehmann made a bold prediction about the southpaw, who has scores of 161, 82 and 84 in this series.

"Oh, superstar. One of the best I have seen," Lehmann said quickly, before the question was finished.

"He (Jaiswal) and Harry Brook are two next generation players. They are the ones that people will sit back and say they are good players. He played very well in Melbourne and was outstand-

ing in Perth. He has come up leaps and bounds on this tour," the beefy left-hander of yesteryears said.

But Lehmann reserved his highest praise for Bumrah, equating him with all-time greats such as Wasim Akram and Glenn McGrath.

"I presume he (Bumrah) is the next captain when Rohit finishes. He did a really good job in Perth. He is the best bowler I have ever seen live.

"I have seen Wasim Akram, Glenn McGrath and all but I have not seen a bowler have impact like him in a single series like Jasprit Bumrah has since Mitchell Johnson in 2013-14 Ashes win.

"This is very similar as Bumrah already has 50 wickets. He has been outstanding to watch. He will do well when he gets a chance to lead India." Talking about transition, Lehmann noted that Australia's batting could be a concern, rather than the bowling, even though Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Scott Boland, and Michael Nester are all in their early to mid-30s.

"I am not so worried about bowling as lot of good kids are coming up. Lance Morris, Xavier Bartlett from Brisbane Heats, so there are plenty of them. Spinners are okay but it is the batting that is being tested at the moment," said Lehmann.

"There will be some changes with greats retiring but fast bowling will be good enough. How long Cummins and Starc survive time will tell, but hopefully, they will get to till next Ashes." Lehmann has had a decent reputation as a coach but when asked if he would consider coaching the Indian national team, the answer was negative.

"It would have been an honour to work with Indian national team but I am done with international cricket. I just want the young guys to get better," Lehmann signed off.

I thought it was just a regulation wicket: Star on KL Rahul dismissal



Vaishali wins World blitz finals qualifier, says it was completely unexpected

New York
Indian Grandmaster R Vaishali surprised herself with a stellar performance. Tomorrow will be a big day. Honestly, it (performance) was completely unexpected. I was not expecting the result like how it went today. Tomorrow, I have to be ready and prepare well and then see," she said.

Following Koneru Humpy's stellar performance in Rapid, which earned her the gold medal and a prize of USD 60,000, it was Vaishali's turn to impress her fans. She triumphed in the women's section, scoring 9.5 points out of a possible 11 with three draws.

"I'm very happy with today's performance. Tomorrow will be a big day. Honestly, it (performance) was completely unexpected. I was not expecting the result like how it went today. Tomorrow, I have to be ready and prepare well and then see," she said.

Russian Katerina Lagno came closest to Vaishali, scoring 8.5 points, while the remaining six qualifiers finished with an identical eight points. Despite meeting the points criteria, Humpy was eliminated due to the worst tiebreaker, finishing ninth.

In the Open section, 10 players were tied for first place, including world number one Magnus Carlsen. The Norwegian scored when needed and drew six of his 13 games, finishing among the co-leaders at the end of the qualifiers.

Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi was the qualifier with 9.5 points, benefiting from the best tiebreak, while Fabiano Caruana of the United States finished



second, ahead of Carlsen, who was placed third.

Surprisingly, none of the Indians made the top eight, despite some early promising performances.

Arjun Erigaisi played brilliantly at the start, securing victories in the first five rounds but faded away to finish with a sub-par seven points. R Praggnanandhaa was the best-placed Indian, with 8.5 points, but a last-round loss to Russian Daniil Dubov cost him a spot in the quarterfinals.

In the women's quarterfinal, Vaishali will face Chinese Grandmaster Zhu Jiner. Vaishali's back-to-back victories against GMS Nana Dzagnidze of Georgia and Valentina Gunina of Russia in rounds 7-8 provided the necessary

boost for the Indian player to top the event with ease.

The 23-year-old Indian played a dramatic match against Gunina, where she found herself under extreme time pressure and played 23 moves with hardly any time to think.

"You have nothing to think, you keep playing your moves. That was a very bad time management in that game (by me). She (opponent) was ahead on the clock and on the board, she was a full pawn up but I kept playing," said Vaishali, who virtually had seven seconds for each of her 23 moves.

"Towards the end, I offered a draw with the rook-knight 3 versus 3. I think she wanted to play but her clock

fell and that's how I won the game." Vaishali said there were many players stronger than her in Blitz and that she was just lucky to have led the field by one full point.

"I don't think I'm a great blitz player, honestly. There are many more strong players here. I think, today, I was lucky in many games and it just worked out." Talking about the knockout round, Vaishali said: "I haven't thought about it all. The last few days I've been sick, not gone out much," she said, adding that she would any day prefer classical games to Rapid chess.

"I prefer classical any day... rapid is fun to play but lots of emotions. Like, so many games you are playing in a day and it's hard to deal with sometimes. I think that's the major difference (between classical and Rapid)."

Indian standings:
Open: R Praggnanandhaa (8.5) - 23; Raunak Sadhwani (8) 46; Arjun Erigaisi (7) 64; Aravindh Chithambaram (7) 68; V Pranav (7) 67; **Women:** R Vaishali (9.5) 1; K Humpy (8) 9; Divya Deshmukh (7) 18; Vantika Agarwal (7) 19; D Harika (7) 22.

Qualifiers: Open: 1-8; Ian Nepomniachtchi, Volodar Murzin (Both Fide); Fabiano Caruana, Hans Niemann Moke, Wesley So (all USA); Magnus Carlsen (Nor); Duda Jan-Krzysztof (Pol); Alireza Firouzja (Fra).

Women 1-8: R Vaishali (Ind); Lei Tingjie, Wenjun Ju, Zhu Jiner (all Chn); Katerina Lagno, Valentina Gunina (Both Fide); Carissa Yu (USA) Bibisara Assaubayeva (Kaz).

Shooting Nationals: Ananya Naidu bags women's air rifle gold



Bhopal
Young Maharashtra shooter Ananya Naidu clinched the women's 10m air rifle gold defeating the experienced Meghana Sajjanar of the Railways by a fraction of a point in the National Shooting Championship Competitions here on Tuesday.

Ananya, who trains regularly at legendary rifle shooter Anjali Bhagwat's academy in Pune, shot 252.5 in the final at the MP State Academy range to beat Meghana by a mere 0.2 points for her maiden senior national title.

R. Narmada Nithin of Tamil Nadu bagged the bronze with a score of 231.3. Ananya, who was a part of the Maharashtra contingent at the Khelo India University Games and took up shooting as a 16-year-old, took a 1.4-point lead after the first five shots itself and never looked back.

However, Meghana closed the gap and was in contention for the top podium finish but finally missed out in the 24-shots final.

Ananya, who was a part of the Maharashtra contingent at the Khelo India University Games and took up shooting as a 16-year-old, took a 1.4-point lead after the first five shots itself and never looked back.

In the qualification round, Ananya finished eighth, while state-mate Arya Rajesh Borse topped with a score of 633.3. Nithin gave a consistent performance both in the qualifications and the final by maintaining her position in the top three. She qualified second with a score of 632.9 points.

In the 10m air rifle junior women's event, Gautami Bhanot secured the first position with a score of 251.5. Gautami took the silver while Disha Dankar (Haryana) bagged the bronze with a score of 229.9 points.

Man Utd in battle for survival as losing run goes on

Manchester United
Manchester United boss Ruben Amorim said the English giants are in a battle for Premier League survival after Newcastle cruised to a 2-0 win at Old Trafford to inflict a fourth consecutive defeat on the hosts.

Just two months into his tenure, Amorim conceded this week that his job is on the line unless results begin to improve.

The Portuguese has won just two of his first eight league games to leave United languishing down in 14th, just seven points above the relegation zone.

"That is really clear, so we have to fight," said Amorim on United being dragged into a relegation battle.

"It is a really difficult moment, one of the more difficult moments in the history of Manchester United and we have to address it with honesty."

Alexander Isak and Joelinton struck inside the first 19 minutes as a fifth consecutive win lifted the Magpies into fifth.

Amorim stood aghast at what he was witnessing in the first half as Newcastle cut through the home side at will.

"They are a better team and they started very strong," added Amorim.

"When we suffer a goal it is really hard to turn around because of all the losses we had before and we don't have the base of work behind to cope with the difficult moments."

Just over three minutes were on the clock when Isak was afforded space inside the six-yard box to head in Lewis Hall's cross and score for the sixth consecutive Premier League game.

United badly missed the presence of suspended captain Bruno Fernandes as the Newcastle midfield trio of Sandro Tonali, Bruno Guimaraes and Joelinton played around the ageing duo of Casemiro and Christian Eriksen with ease.

Isak blew a huge chance to double the visitors' lead when he fluffed an attempted dink over Andre Onana and the Swedish striker also had a goal ruled out for offside. However, it was just a matter of time before Newcastle added a second and it arrived when Joelinton burst in to meet Anthony Gordon's cross.

Zirkzee hauled out to cheer Amorim responded by replacing Joshua Zirkzee with Kobbie Mainoo after just 33 minutes - a move greeted with cheers by the frustrated Old Trafford crowd. Tonali should have made it 2-0 when he hit the post at the end of a flowing Newcastle move through the heart of the United defence.

Alexandersson poised to hand out more debuts in second Maldives friendly

Bengaluru
Joakim Alexandersson made a thumping start to his coaching career in India as the senior national women's team mauled Maldives 14-0 in the first of two FIFA Women's friendlies here.

What made it special was that as many as eight players made their senior India debut, and the Swede has assured that there will be more in the second game on Thursday.

The gulf in quality was obvious from the first whistle. While Alexandersson was happy that most of the things worked according to plan, he is now keen to see what his bench has to offer in the next game.

"I think we used the game well. We were too big for them. We used the advantage we had and made improvements with regards to moving the ball, using the space in behind, going wide, and using the central line. So yeah, I think overall it was a good performance from us," he said.

"We're going to use the opportunity to have more inexperienced girls in the next game from the start. We're going to make some rotations. Let's see what they can offer in the next game." Among the debutants, Lynda Kom Sarto proved to be the most impactful, scoring four goals. Those who have followed the striker from her younger years would label it as a routine performance despite it being her senior debut.

Lynda first made headlines when she scored two goals in the SAFF U15 Championship as a 12-year-old in 2017. She was the MVP and top-scorer in the SAFF U18 Championship in 2022, and was India's number nine at the FIFA U17 Women's World Cup later that year.

Lynda formed a good partnership with fellow senior striker and Odisha FC teammate Pyari Xaxa, with the duo scoring half of the team's goals.

"Lynda performed very well, I think. She was good tactically also, we talked about her before the game," said Alexandersson.

The 19-year-old said, "I'm very happy to score four goals. This was my first match in the senior team. I want to dedicate these goals to my family, coaches and teammates. I want to score more in the coming matches. These friendly games are useful for us as they help us get better as a team."



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IOA chief PT Usha recognises golf body headed by Harish Reddy

New Delhi
The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has given recognition to the Indian Golf Union (IGU) led by Harish Kumar Reddy while declaring the other body, headed by Brijinder Singh, void.

A letter signed by IOA president PT Usha issued on Monday stated that the National Olympic Committee had "reviewed the facts" and "examined the procedural adherence" before recognising the body headed by Reddy.

Two AGMs were held on December 15 to elect the new IGU office-bearers - one at the India Habitat Centre (IHC) where Singh was re-elected president with retired Punjab and Haryana High Court judge, Rameshwar Malik, as the Returning Officer, and the other at the Olympic Bhawan, where Reddy was elected with Justice OP Garg (Retd) as the RO.

In its letter, the IOA stated the reasons for recognising the body headed by Reddy, saying the Returning Officer, Justice Garg, had never resigned as alleged by the previous set of IGU office-bearers.

"After a detailed study of the documents of two different AGM and elections held on the same dates at two different venues at New Delhi, it is concluded that the AGM and election conducted by the Returning Officer Justice OP Garg (Retd) is valid with many rea-



trouversal reversal of his earlier order barring the five state associations from participating in the polls.

IOA chief Usha had sought an explanation from Singh for his "sudden" decision to postpone the elections and said strict action, including forming of an ad-hoc body to conduct the polls, could be taken if his response was found "unsatisfactory".

Singh then appointed former Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court, Permod Kohli, as the Returning Officer on December 31 to conduct the polls. But two days later, on December 5, Kohli resigned and Singh appointed Malik as the new RO.

The IOA letter further stated that the AGM and election held at the Olympic Bhawan had the "required quorum in accordance with the Article 22 of the IGU rules".

"A total of 21 Member Units with 39 Representatives participated in the AGM and election held on 15.12.2024. The letter/report received contains all the documents including the attendance sheet duly signed by the attendees."

"After reviewing the facts and examining the procedural adherence, the IOA recognises the election results announced by Justice (Retd) OP Garg at the AGM at Olympic Bhawan was legitimate."

The decision followed Garg's resignation as Returning Officer after a con-

Djokovic, Sabalenka win season-openers but Kyrgios loses on return

Brisbane
Novak Djokovic and Aryna Sabalenka launched their Australian Open preparations with straight-sets wins on Tuesday at the Brisbane International but Nick Kyrgios lost on his return from injury. Former world number one Djokovic, who is chasing a record 25th Grand Slam crown in January in Melbourne, eased to a 6-3, 6-3 victory over wildcard Rinky Hijikata. The 37-year-old Serb broke Hijikata once in the first set and twice in the second for a comfortable 74-minute win.

Djokovic, now ranked seven in the world, was all business against the young Australian and always looked in control as he set up a second-round clash against fellow veteran Gael Monfils. "To start the new season with a win is obviously very important," said Djokovic, who is pursuing an unprecedented 11th Australian Open title. "But Hijikata was really good tonight and he made me work for it."

Australian firebrand Kyrgios lost in three tight sets in his first singles match since June 2023. Kyrgios



went down 7-6 (7/2), 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/3) to Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard in almost two and a half hours as serve dominated. The 2022 Wimbledon finalist Kyrgios, 29, is making his comeback following wrist reconstruction and other

injuries over the past couple of years. Ahead of the Australian Open starting on January 12, big-serving Mpetshi Perricard said Kyrgios had shown enough to suggest that his comeback would be a success. Kyrgios played and won in the

Australian firebrand Kyrgios lost in three tight sets in his first singles match since June 2023. Kyrgios went down 7-6 (7/2), 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/3) to Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard in almost two and a half hours as serve dominated.

doubles with Djokovic on Monday. "Playing Nick here wasn't a good match-up for me," the 21-year-old Mpetshi Perricard said, asked about playing Kyrgios in front of his home crowd. "He did some good things, he played with confidence." The Frenchman, who has risen from 205 in the world at the start of

2024 to his current ranking of 31, fired down 36 aces. Women's world number one Sabalenka kickedstarted her bid to win the Australian Open for a third consecutive time with a straight-forward win after a sluggish start.

The Belarusian appeared bothered by the high humidity on Pat Rafter Arena in Brisbane, particularly during an error-strewn first set against Renata Zarazua. But after breaking Mexico's Zarazua at 5-4, the 26-year-old surged through the second set to wrap up the match 6-4, 6-0 in 65 minutes. "The first match is always a tricky one," Sabalenka said. "It was a tricky start for me but I'm glad that I closed it out in the first set, and in the second set I felt like whatever I tried to do it would work for me. So I'm really happy for the first win of the season." Sabalenka is bidding to be the first woman to win three Australian Opens in succession. She will play Yulia Putintseva next after the Kazakh's 6-2, 7-5 win over American McCartney Kessler.



Rashmika Mandanna marks 8 years in cinema, thanks fans for endless love

New Delhi — Pushpa 2: The Rule star Rashmika Mandanna on Tuesday celebrated completing eight years in the film industry and thanked fans for their constant love and support.

Taking to her Instagram Stories, the 28-year-old actor shared a message of gratitude for her fans.

"8 years in the film in-

dustry and the only way I could do what I have done so far is only because of your love and support. Thank you," she wrote in the caption.

Born and raised in Kodagu district of Karnataka, Mandanna made her acting debut in 2016 with the Kannada movie 'Kirik Parthy', opposite Rakshit Shetty, and then starred in Telugu hits like 'Geetha Govin-

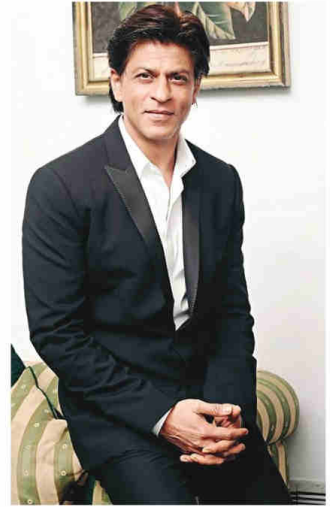
dam', 'Dear Comrade', 'Bheeshma' and 'Sita Ramam'.

Mandanna found country-wide success with 2021 hit 'Pushpa: The Rise', co-starring Allu Arjun. She made her Bollywood debut with 'Goodbye' and then starred in smash hit film 'Animal' with Ranbir Kapoor. The actor most recently starred in 'Pushpa 2: The Rule', which has be-

come a runaway hit at the global box office, earning over Rs 1,700 crore since its release on December 5.

Her upcoming movies include 'Sikandar' with Salman Khan, 'Chhaava' with Vicky Kaushal and Maddock's horror comedy universe title 'Thama', headlined by Ayushmann Khurrana. She will also be seen in Tamil movie 'Kubera'.

Shah Rukh Khan lauds PM Narendra Modi's WAVES initiative



Mumbai @narendramodi ji's vision towards promoting the Media & Entertainment sector... Waves 2025 summit will hopefully be a fabulous global forum to have the entire entertainment industry come and grow together."Anil Kapoor also called it a "groundbreaking step" for taking the Indian film industry to the global level. "The #WAVES2025 summit is a groundbreaking step towards making India the global hub for film and entertainment. Looking forward to seeing the world come together to celebrate creativity and collaboration #MannKiBaat," the actor said.

Mumbai — Shah Rukh Khan praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the WAVES Summit 2025, an initiative aimed at making India a hub of global creation. Recently, the Bollywood superstar took to his X (formerly Twitter) handle and explained how the summit will "champion and foster creativity."

"It is with great anticipation that I look forward to WAVES – a film and entertainment world summit – to be held in our country itself. An occasion that celebrates our industry and acknowledges the role it plays in the Indian economy as well as its strength as a soft power... and above all, an occasion that champions and fosters creativity," SRK wrote.

Previously, Akshay Kumar also called WAVES Summit 2025 a "wonderful idea" and wrote, "Now this is PM

Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt settle divorce after eight years of legal battle



Washington — After more than eight years of their legal fight, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie have finally settled their highly publicized divorce.

As per People magazine, Jolie's lawyers confirmed on Monday, December 30, 2024, that both parties have agreed to terms, marking a significant chapter in the protracted legal saga that began when Jolie filed for divorce in September 2016.

Jolie and Pitt had been married for 12 years and together for 12 before their relationship came to an end.

Jolie filed for divorce on September 19, 2016, citing "irreconcilable differences," shortly after an incident involving a private plane flight that she claimed escalated into an abusive altercation between Pitt and their six children.

Authorities investigated the matter, but Pitt was not charged, and Jolie later chose not to press charges.

In a statement to People magazine, Jolie's attorney, James Simon, reflected on the journey, stating, "More than eight years ago, Angelina filed for divorce from Mr Pitt. She and the children left all of the properties they had shared with Mr Pitt, and

since that time she has focused on finding peace and healing for their family. This is just one part of a long ongoing process that started eight years ago. Frankly, Angelina is exhausted, but she is relieved this one part is over."

A source close to Jolie told People magazine that the actress has remained focused on moving forward, saying, "She doesn't speak ill of Pitt publicly or privately. She's been trying hard to be light after a dark time."

The settlement concludes a highly complex and contentious divorce that involved significant disagreements, particularly over custody arrangements and their shared assets.

In the years following Jolie's divorce filing, the couple had been embroiled in lengthy and sometimes bitter legal disputes.

Early on, the former couple reached an agreement to handle their divorce proceedings privately, utilizing a private judge to resolve the legal details.

They also sought to seal all records related to their children to protect their privacy, as per People magazine.

Despite these attempts to keep matters out of the public eye, the divorce proceedings were far from smooth.

Sabrina Carpenter reflects on her coffee anthem 'Espresso' and upcoming projects

Washington — Sabrina Carpenter's infectious hit 'Espresso' took the music world by surprise when it dropped earlier this year, and the Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter admits she had no idea how much it would resonate with audiences.

Despite the track, which became a viral sensation, Carpenter was unsure if the song, which references the beloved coffee beverage, would connect with fans.

"I really didn't know if it would connect," Carpenter told The Hollywood Reporter in an interview, adding, "But the sentiment and the sound of the song and the confidence that it kind of just carries along with it was something that I really believed in. So, I had literally no idea that anyone would like it, but I liked it, and that was kind of all that mattered to me in that moment, and something I try to remember over and over again."

The song's success led to a collaboration with Dunkin', resulting in the creation of 'Sabrina's Brown Sugar Shakin' Espresso', a coffee



drink inspired by the track. Growing up on the East Coast, Carpenter shared, "I'm a born and bred East Coaster, and Dunkin' was my childhood. When they approach-

me about a collab, I realized my window for a coffee partnership was closing, and I hadn't done it yet. So it just felt like the perfect fit."

For Carpenter, this collab-

oration is more than just a chance to create a drink. It's about connecting with her fans in a meaningful way, especially when she can't be physically present at concerts.

"People really appreciate connection more now because it's such a rarity," she said, adding, "When I'm not on tour, it's finding partnerships like this that can bring me to your front doorstep, or your nearest Dunkin', or whatever is most convenient."

She added that the light-hearted nature of the project was important to her, "The partnership is light-hearted, collaborative, and fun. It's absolutely the perfect way for me to end the year."

When Carpenter released 'Espresso' in April, she had no idea the song would go on to become such a viral hit.

The track quickly became a fan favourite, inspiring everything from espresso martinis to memes and viral videos.

Carpenter's song even inspired a sketch on Saturday Night Live, which has accumulated 15 million views on YouTube, as per The Hollywood Reporter.



Payal Kapadia signs off 'wonderful' 2024: It has been way beyond expectations

New Delhi — All We Imagine As Light director Payal Kapadia bid farewell to 2024 on a happy note, saying the year was nothing short of wonderful.

Kapadia, an alumnus of Pune's Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), scripted history at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year with 'All We Imagine As Light', which became the first Indian movie to bag the Grand Prix Award. And released to great reviews in India in November.

Sharing artworks by the film's fans on her official X

handle, Kapadia said the year turned out to be beyond her expectations.

"Thank you everyone for a really wonderful year for our film. It has been way beyond our expectations. Signing off for the year with these amazing artworks some of you made," she wrote.

An official India-French co-production, "All We Imagine As Light" competed in the main competition of the Cannes. The film follows two nurses Pabha (Kani Kusruti) and Anu (Divya Prabha) from Kerala navigating life and love in Mumbai along with their friend and cook Parvati (Chhaya Kadam).

Ananya Panday to enter 2025 with "positivity and good vibes"

Mumbai — Actor Ananya Panday is extremely grateful for the opportunities she received in 2024, and now she can't wait to kick-start the new year with "positivity and good vibes."

As 2025 is around the corner, Ananya on Monday took to Instagram and posted a recap video showcasing her memorable moments from this year.

The video features visuals from her hit projects 'Call Me Bae' and 'CTRL'. It also has clips from her ramp walk for late fashion designer Rohit Bal's last show.

"WHAT A YEAR couldn't possibly be more grateful for all the opportunities and the people and the memories and the love going into 2025 recharged with all the positivity and good vibes let's goooooo," she captioned the post.

2024 turned out to be a great year for Ananya. Her web series 'Call Me Bae' and OTT film 'CTRL' did extremely well, garnering audience's attention. Recently, in an interview

with ANI, Ananya's mother Bhavana Pandey expressed gratitude to the audience for appreciating Ananya's hard work as she delivered back-to-back successful projects.

While opening up about her daughter's newfound success, Bhavana feels that Ananya's rise from being seen as a nepo kid to an actor who is capable of giving life to a character comes down to the mantra that exists within

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(I am) very grateful. I know she's worked hard and everyone does. She's worked hard. But the idea is to put your head down and work hard and take the important, necessary criticism in

your stride and work even harder. And the rest is noise," she said.



In the coming months, Ananya will be seen sharing screen space in a new romantic drama titled 'Chand Mera Dil' with Lakshya.