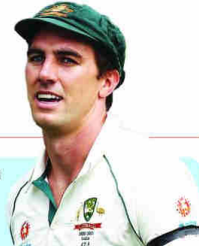




Diljit Dosanjh meets PM Modi, marks a memorable start to 2025

US Army veteran who killed 15 in New Orleans attack was inspired by Islamic State

Cummins says no let up in intensity as Australia eye win in Sydney Test



2 NATIONAL

BSF allowing infiltrators to enter India idea is to destabilise Bengal, alleges Mamata

4 DELHI

Atishi felicitates Paralympians from Delhi awards cash prizes

7 NATIONAL

SC agrees to hear Owaisi's plea for implementation of places of worship law

8 STATE

Retired IAS IPS officers VCs to be part of UP TB eradication campaign

9 BUSINESS

India-EFTA trade pact likely to be implemented before end of 2025: Goyal

11 SPORTS

Liverpool vs. Man United is a rivalry for the ages but looks like a mismatch now

MARKET

SENSEX	79943.71	NIFTY	24188.65
GOLD	1,436.30	SILVER	445.75
	77,736.00		89,212.00
	843.00		1,634.00

WEATHER

Sunrise	7:14 AM
Sunset	5:37 PM
Moonrise	9:56 AM
Moonset	9:09 PM
Today's Prediction	
Maximum	23°C
Minimum	9°C
Tomorrow's Prediction	
Maximum	25°C
Minimum	11°C

Rohit Sharma opts to 'rest' for Sydney Test, Bumrah to lead India in BGT finale

Melbourne may turn out to be the India captain's last Test as Shubman Gill all set to return to the playing 11; KL Rahul likely to open the innings with Yashasvi Jaiswal

Sydney
Battered by extra bounce and seam movement along with scathing criticism of his leadership, India skipper Rohit Sharma's career as a Test cricketer seems headed for a dispiriting climax amid swirling speculation that he is set to be dropped from the fifth and final Test against Australia starting here on Friday.



Rohit, just like Melbourne, was last among recognised batters to enter the nets but this was after head coach Gautam Gambhir refused to confirm whether the out-of-form skipper will be at the toss on Friday morning. "We will take a call on the playing XI after looking at the pitch," Gambhir gave a cryptic reply to a straight query on whether Rohit will play. If it happens, Rohit will become the first Indian captain to be dropped on account of poor form and he would have none to blame except for the abysmal return of 31 runs from five innings. Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who has

been the team's top performer with an astonishing 30 wickets in four outings at a sub-20 average, will take over the leadership role in that scenario. It was under Bumrah's captaincy that India won its only Test on the tour so far -- the lung-opener in Perth. Where would that leave Rohit? Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Anil Kumble walked into Test retirements mid-series as their bodies could no

longer take the rigours of the longest format. However, in Rohit's case, he will be dropped on the basis of form after Gambhir made it clear that performance is the only thing that would keep a player in the dressing room helmed by him. If he doesn't come out for toss on Friday, it would be safe to conclude that Rohit, the Test batter, played his last knock at the MCG earlier this week where he looked completely

out of place on a good track. While Gambhir didn't spell out the playing eleven, there were enough indications that India might bring back Shubman Gill at number three. "Indian cricket's transition is in safe hands as long as there are honest people in the dressing room. Only criteria to be in that dressing room is performance," Gambhir said at the pre-match press conference. **CONTD ON PAGE-2**

Bangladeshi court rejects Hindu monk's bail petition

Dhaka
A court in the southeastern port city of Chattogram on Thursday denied bail to Hindu monk and former ISKCON leader Chinmoy Krishna Das in a sedition case. A group of 11 lawyers stood for him with a bail petition during the hearing for which Das appeared virtually. "The hearing continued for some 30 minutes when (Metropolitan Sessions) Judge Mohammad Saiful Islam heard both the prosecution and the defence lawyers and then rejected his (Das') bail petition," a court official said. Das, formerly with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and now a spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammlita Sanatani Jagran Jote organisation, was arrested at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on November 25. He was brought to Chattogram where the court sent him to jail rejecting his bail petition the next day. Agency

Indian enters Pak to marry FB friend, lands in jail

Lahore/Aligarh
A young Indian man crossed over illegally into Pakistan to meet a Facebook friend he wanted to marry, but instead found himself behind bars. And the woman told the local police she does not want to tie the knot. Badal Babu from the Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh was arrested on December 28 in the Mandi Bahauddin district of Pakistan's Punjab province (some 240 kms from Lahore). Babu, who is in his 20s, crossed the border to meet the Facebook friend with whom he wanted to marry. Pakistan Police have recorded the statement of Babu's Facebook friend Sana Rani, 21, who said she wasn't interested in marrying him. "In her statement to police, Sana Rani says that Babu and she have been friends on Facebook for the last two-and-a-half years. But she is not interested in marrying him," a Punjab police officer, Nasir Shah, told PTI on Thursday. He said Babu illegally crossed the border and reached Sana Rani's Maung village in Mandi Bahauddin, where he was arrested by law enforcers. When asked whether Babu met Rani, the police officer said he couldn't confirm this. It is also not independently confirmed whether Rani gave a statement to the police refusing to marry Babu under pressure. Agency



Govt sets up working group to revise WPI base year

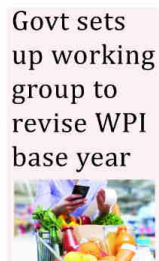
Doors open for you, says Lalu; Nitish smiles at offer

Patna
Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday came up with a cryptic response to RJD president Lalu Prasad's offer to return to the INDIA bloc. "Kya bol rahi hain (What are you saying)" was all the JD(U) boss said in reply to queries from journalists about Prasad's fresh offer. Kumar had aligned twice with the RJD, a constituent of the INDIA bloc, in the last one decade. Prasad's son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav, however, sought to downplay the remarks made by his father, in an interview to a local news channel, claiming that the RJD supremo had merely tried to satisfy the curiosity of the prying media. Prasad had said, "Our doors are open (for Nitish). He should also



unbolt his gates. This would facilitate movement of people from both sides". The remark, coming in the backdrop of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's stance on projecting the JD(U) supremo as NDA's face in the assembly polls due in less than a year, triggered intense speculations in a section of the media here. Kumar was approached with queries

HIGHLIGHT
Prasad's son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav, however, sought to downplay the remarks made by his father, in an interview to a local news channel, claiming that the RJD supremo had merely tried to satisfy the curiosity of the prying media. The government on Thursday said it has constituted an 18-member working group, under the chairmanship of NITI Aayog Member Ramesh Chand, to revise the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) base year from 2011-12 to 2022-23. The revision of the base year helps in presenting a more realistic picture of the price situation in the country. As per the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the group, it will suggest the commodity basket of WPI and Producer Price Index (PPI) with the base year 2022-23 in the light of structural changes in the economy; review the existing system of price collection and suggest changes for improvement; and decide on the computational methodology to be adopted for WPI/PPI. The group will also examine the methodology for the compilation of PPI, suggest further improvement in compilation and presentation and recommend a roadmap for switch over from WPI to PPI. The members of the group include representatives from the RBI, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Statistics, Department of Agriculture, Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas; Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Chief Economist, SBI Group. Agency



New Delhi

SC bristles over 'scurrilous' charge against judges

New Delhi
The Supreme Court on Thursday took exception to the "scurrilous and unfounded allegations" made in a plea against the conferment of senior designations to lawyers. "How many judges can you name whose offsprings have been designated as senior counsel?" a bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanath asked advocate Mathews J Nedumpara, who appeared for the petitioners. Referring to the averments in the plea, the bench observed it had insinuations against the judges. "We find that various



scurrilous, unfounded allegations have been made against the institution," it said. Free and Fair Journalism Will Continue to be Important in 2025 You are crucial in ensuring that independent journalism thrives. Support us in delivering un-

HIGHLIGHT
The bench said it would have proceeded with the matter, but Nedumpara wanted to reflect on the plea's averments and consult with other petitioners on the future course of action. biased, in-depth stories that matter. The bench referred to the averments made in the plea which read, "It is difficult, if not impossible, to find a judge sitting or retired, of the high court or Supreme Court, who has his **CONTD ON PAGE-2**

Manu Bhaker, Gukesh among 4 athletes to get Khel Ratna

New Delhi
The quartet of shooter Manu Bhaker, chess world champion D Gukesh, men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh and para-athlete Praveen Kumar were on Thursday named recipients of this year's Major Dhyani Chand Khel Ratna Award -- the country's highest sporting honour. The 22-year-old Bhaker became independent India's first athlete to win two medals in a single edition of the Olympics with her bronze-winning show in the 10m air pistol individual and 10m air pistol mixed team events in August. In the same Games, Harmanpreet led the Indian hockey team to its second consecutive bronze medal.



The 18-year-old Gukesh, on the other hand, became the youngest ever World champion while also helping the Indian team win a historic gold in the Chess Olympiad last

year. The fourth recipient will be para high-jumper Praveen, who was crowned the T64 champion in the Paris Paralympics. The T64 classification is for athletes who have one or both legs missing below the knee and rely on a prosthetic leg for running. "The awardees will receive their awards from the President of India at a specially organised function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 17th January, 2025 (Friday) at 11:00 hours," the sports ministry said in a press release. Agency



Punjab Land of Unlimited Opportunities

48% Reduction

In Road Accident Deaths



Sadak Surakhya Force (SSF)



9,553

injured persons provided with first aid



10,396

injured transported to hospitals



144

high-tech vehicles deployed



5,000

police personnel stationed on roads

“ For us, every Punjabi’s life is invaluable. We are committed to providing world-class services to every person in Punjab at every step. Let’s together build a Rangla Punjab. ”

Bhagwant Singh Mann
Chief Minister, Punjab



Join Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann's official WhatsApp channel



NEWS IN BRIEF

Modi, Kejriwal anti-farmers: Delhi Congress

Staff Reporter
New Delhi

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president Devender Yadav said that the AAP government, which was the first to notify the draconian farm laws on November 23, 2020, was now shedding crocodile tears for the farmers alleging, that the BJP was planning to bring back the revoked black farm laws through the "back door" eyeing the upcoming Delhi assembly elections.

Yadav said that former CM Arvind Kejriwal's double standards and anti-farmer stand were exposed when he notified the farm laws, while pretending to stand with the agitating farmers. He said that it was due to the strong support extended to the farmers by the Congress, led by leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, that forced the BJP government to scrap the black farm laws for which Kejriwal played no role.

Kejriwal's antipathy towards the farmers had been exposed time and again when he either failed to compensate or paid meagre compensation to the Delhi farmers when they suffered extensive crop damage due to seasonal rains, hail storms and other factors during the past 10 years, Yadav added.

Yadav said that Kejriwal was desperate to salvage his lost image and eroded political ground by indulging in various gimmicks like Rs 2100 for women, new health schemes for the elderly, Rs 18,000 for "pujaris and granthis" which will have any impact with the voters this time, as they remember all his past betrayals.

Land worth Rs 100 cr freed of encroachment in Gr. Noida

Noida

The Gautam Buddha Nagar district administration on Thursday freed land worth about Rs 100 crore of encroachment after removing encroachment from the farm house built in the submerged area of Greater Noida.

Acting on the orders of Gautam Buddha Nagar district magistrate Manish Kumar Verma, the encroachment drive was launched and land worth about Rs 100 crore was freed from encroachment.

The farm house was built in Sikan-darpur sub-merged area. According to the administration, 72 bighas of land was freed from encroachment. The price of the land is being said to be about Rs 100 crore.

According to the sources, a farm house was being built by illegally occupying government land in Sikan-darpur submerged area of Greater Noida. Land mafia had occupied about 72 bighas of land.

On Thursday, an anti-encroachment drive team reached here to remove the encroachment. The value of the land is being reported to be about Rs 100 crore. During the action, the police force of the Ecodech 1 police station was present on the spot.

DU exam postponed due to late dispatch of question papers

New Delhi

A Delhi University Bachelor of Science (BS) programme paper was postponed while another was delayed for several hours on Thursday due to the late dispatch of question papers from the department concerned, varsity officials said.

The disruptions affected around 170 students across several colleges, including Ramjas, Zakir Husain,

AAP, BJP face off over farmers' issues

New Delhi

The BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party clashed over farmers' issues on Thursday, with Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan accusing the AAP government in Delhi of denying peasants the benefits of central schemes, an allegation that comes ahead of the Assembly polls in the capital.

In response, Chief Minister Atishi hit back at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), saying it should ask Prime Minister Narendra Modi to hold talks with the farmers sitting on a fast unto death in Punjab instead of giving sermons.

She alleged that the condition of farmers was never as bad as it is under the BJP regime.

Former Delhi chief minister and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal, in a post on X, also claimed that the BJP-led Centre is preparing to implement the three re-



voiced farm laws "through the backdoor" by calling it a "policy". He said copies of the new "policy" have been sent to all states for their views on it.

In a letter to Atishi on Wednesday, Chouhan alleged that her government is depriving farmers of benefits under central schemes

and urged her to keep political differences aside in matters of farmer welfare.

The Union minister said the Delhi government has failed to implement major central initiatives, including the Integrated Horticulture Development Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and the Bej Kam

Delhi are upset and worried," Chouhan said in the letter.

Due to the non-implementation of multiple central schemes, Delhi's farmers are being denied crucial benefits, ranging from seed distribution to infrastructure development, he said.

The Union minister said the absence of the Integrated Horticulture Development Mission has prevented farmers from accessing benefits for nursery establishment, tissue-culture facilities, planting material procurement and post-harvest infrastructure.

In a separate video message, he alleged that the Delhi government has failed to submit proposals for implementing central agricultural schemes, effectively blocking benefits from reaching farmers in the national capital.

"The Centre stands ready with funds, but their release hinges on state proposals. Unfortunately, Del-

hi's government has not submitted any proposals, leaving farmers unable to access scheme benefits," Chouhan said in the video message.

He urged the Delhi government to set aside political competition for farmers' welfare, emphasising that many schemes operate on a 60:40 funding ratio between the Centre and states.

Responding to Chouhan's accusations, Atishi lashed out at the BJP, saying it should ask the prime minister to hold talks with the farmers sitting on a fast unto death in Punjab instead of giving sermons.

She said the condition of farmers was never as bad as it is under the BJP regime. "The BJP talking about farmers is like Dawood Ibrahim sermonising about non-violence," Atishi said, asking the saffron party to stop politics over farmers.

Atishi inaugurates new flyover in capital

New Delhi

Chief Minister Atishi on Thursday inaugurated the Punjabi Bagh Club Road flyover here and said it will ease traffic for three lakh daily commuters.

Speaking on the occasion, she said, "This flyover is not just a gift for the residents of Punjabi Bagh, Madipur, and Moti Nagar, but for all Delhiites. Millions of Delhiites will now experience relief from traffic jams and enjoy smoother travel."

Starting that flyover will benefit approximately 3.45 lakh people daily, including those traveling by cars, buses, and two-wheelers, the Chief Minister said. "It is estimated to save Delhiites about 40,800 hours daily. Over a year, this project will save 11 lakh litres of petrol and diesel, significantly reducing pollution in Delhi—equivalent to planting 65,000 trees."

Pointing out that pollution is a major issue in the national capital, she said today, the Delhi government has successfully mitigated pollution equal to planting 65,000 trees through this project.

"This Punjabi Bagh flyover is the 39th flyover constructed in the last 10 years under the AAP government. Infrastructure expansion in Delhi - including flyovers, elevated roads, and underpasses - has never progressed at the pace achieved under the AAP government, in Arvind Kejriwal's leadership," she said.

Atishi added the expansion of Delhi's infrastructure—construction of roads, metro projects, schools, and hospitals, has led to significant growth in the city's economy and a substantial increase in the per capita income of its residents over the past 10 years.

CM Atishi felicitates Paralympians from Delhi awards cash prizes

New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Thursday felicitated the Paralympians for their achievements and said that students of government schools would draw inspiration from their journeys.

The Delhi government awarded cash prizes to five distinguished Indian Paralympians for their exceptional achievements. Sharad Kumar, a para high jumper, won a silver medal at the Paris 2024 Paralympics and was awarded Rs 2.5 crore. Aman Sherawat, an Indian freestyle wrestler and the youngest Indian to win an individual Olympic medal, secured a bronze at the Paris 2024 Summer Olympics, was received Rs 1 crore.

Vikash Singh, a race-walker who earned a silver medal at the 2023 Asian Championships, received Rs 10 lakh. Tulika Maan, an



Indian judoka who claimed a silver medal at the 2022 Commonwealth Games, also received Rs 10 lakh. While, Amoj Jacob, an Indian sprinter, who won the gold medal in 400 metres event at the 2021 Federation Cup Senior Athletics Championships, received Rs 5 lakh. An athletics coach, Salaj Kumar Roy, was also presented Rs 10 lakh.

Speaking at the event,

Delhi and the country." Sharad Kumar shared his journey, saying, "My teacher guided me to become a sportsman. People with disabilities often face criticism, but I was fortunate to have teachers who encouraged me to do my best in this field."

"I never thought I would one day be felicitated by the chief minister and receive a government job. I am truly glad and fortunate this happened to me," Kumar said.

Aman also reflected on his achievements, saying, "The Olympic medal I won is not solely my effort, it also reflects the support of the Delhi government and my coaches."

"When I was ten years old, I lost my parents. But I joined the Delhi Government Stadium and received support and care," he added.

3 police stations of Gautam Buddha Nagar Police Commissionerate receives ISO 9001



Amar Saini
Noida

Three police stations of the Gautam Buddha Nagar Police Commissionerate have received ISO 9001: 2015 Quality Management System Certificate.

Director General of Police (DGP) UP Police through a video message increased the honor of Uttar Pradesh Police on this achievement and praised Police Commissioner, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Laxmi Singh.

Management System Certificate.

She said that on the call of the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, continuous efforts are being made for timely and quality disposal of public complaints in the state. It is a matter of immense joy that three police stations of Gautam Buddha Nagar have been awarded the ISO 9001: 2015 Quality Management System when their infrastructure, quality management and police station office process were found to be in conformity with the inter-

national standards of public and police services. "Earlier the Police Commissionerate Office has received the ISO certificate. It is a matter of pride for Police Commissionerate Gautam Buddha Nagar that three police stations of Gautam Buddha Nagar have received the ISO certificate," Police Commissioner Laxmi Singh.

"The three police stations have received the certificate when the ISO committee found all the works and processes related to various points such as infrastructure, quality management, police station office process, police services provided to the public, law and order, crime control, quick response in emergency situations, effective compliance of new laws and effective implementation of Citizen Charter for solving the problems of the common man to be in conformity with the international standards," said CP, Noida Laxmi Singh.

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that Mr. Shahroz S/O Mr. Mehar Iliah owner of Residential land area 250 sq. yds., at Mohalla Bhatol (in the abadi) village Dasna Pargna Dasna Tehsil & Distt. Ghaziabad, U.P. vide Sale Deed dated 21.08.2024, doc no. 10607, executed by Mr. Mohd. Arshad Qureshi & Mr. Mohd. Maruf Qureshi and Mr. Mohd. Yaqoob and in the property chain original sale deed dated 13.04.1997 was lost and on Line FIR lodged vide LR No:2455015/2025 said property to be financed by AU Small Finance Bank Ltd, if anybody has any charge/interest/pled/third Party in the said property of any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing and with proof within 07 days on the below mentioned address, failing which and I am aware that in case default with the mortgage property that all borrower / Owners are responsible for the same. Satvendra Gautam Advocate Shop no. 3, Property no. 126, Lal Kauna Ghaziabad, U.P

PUBLIC NOTICE

MY CLIENTS TEK CHAND & HIS WIFE MAGANWATI BOTH R/O C-110, LAL BAGH, LONI GHAZIABAD, U.P. severe all relations & disowned/debarred their son ISHWAR SINGH @ LUCKY AND DAUGHTER-H-LAW ANJALI from all movable/immovable property & assets due to their misbehavior/Disobedience. Anybody dealing with them shall do at their own risk. A. SHARMA & ASSOCIATES ADVOCATES CH. NO. 435, LAWYERS CHAMBER BLOCK ROHINI COURTS, DELHI

PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby informed that my clients Shri Ram Lakhman Maurya S/O Shri Ram Dulare and Smt. Savitri Maurya wife of Shri Ram Lakhman Maurya both R/O House No.G-384,Gali No.18, 17th Footha Road, Near Shubav Garden, Badarpur, Delhi at present residing at H. No. 174, Nandiyama Anshik, Musafirkhana, Uttar Pradesh-227813, have disowned their son Shri Raman Maurya as he is not obedient to them and is beyond their control and supervision, so my clients severe all relations from their all movable and immovable properties. Whoever will deal with him, will be doing so at his own risk and responsibility and my clients shall not be responsible for any act/liability of said Shri Raman Maurya. RAHUL CHANDRAN ADVOCATE CHAMBER NO. Y-15, CIVIL SIDE, TIZ HAZARI COURTS, DELHI-110054

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT MY CLIENTS MR. AMAR SINGH S/O RAGHU-NATH SINGH R/O H. No-102, 1st FLOOR, KHASRA NO-41/16, STREET NO-6, BHAGYA VIHAR, VILLAGE RAM KHERA, DELHI-110081, along with Mr. MAHESH GARG together formed a NGO with the name LOUIS BRAILLE BLIND WELFARE TRUST in the years 2003 for charitable purpose. That both the above persons were trustee of this trust but the above MAHESH GARG is missing for the last 12 years due to which my client is facing difficulties in the running of above named trust. That through this public notice, my client informs here to general public that he has appointed Mr. ASHISH KUMAR as a trustee in place of Mr. MAHESH GARG. That for any objection to this public notice, aggrieved party may contact my client within 30 days of print of this public notice in newspaper after which no objection shall be entertained. TARUN SHARMA & ASSOCIATES (Advocate and Legal Consultant) OFFICE AT: LAWYERS CHAMBER NO 1206, ROHINI COURT, DELHI-85

Depends on Centre how long our dharna will continue: Farmer leader

■ With farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewa's indefinite hunger strike entering its 38th day, Kohar said his health is deteriorating day-by-day and he has put his life at stake for the farmers' cause.

Chandigarh
Farmer leader Abhimanyu Kohar Thursday said it is in the hands of the Centre on how long their protest will continue as he asserted that there should be no hitch in accepting their demands as a parliamentary panel has recommended legal guarantee to MSP.

With farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewa's indefinite hunger strike entering its 38th day, Kohar said his health is deteriorating day-by-day and he has put his life at stake for the farmers' cause.

When asked how long their protest at Khanauri and Shambhu border will continue, Kohar told reporters, "That is in the hands of the Centre. If they fulfill our demands..."

On the Supreme Court Thursday observing that some farmer leaders are making irresponsible statements in the media to further complicate the situation on the ground, he said they are yet to go through the court's observations. "It is important to study today's proceedings..." he



said in Khanauri.

Kohar, however, said farmer leaders have only been expressing Dallewa's feelings that the Centre should fulfill the promises it made to farmers.

We always respect constitutional bodies, he said.

Referring to a recent incident, Kohar said Dallewa, despite his critical health and having fainted for a few minutes, still offered to connect through video conferencing to a top court proceedings hearing farmers

matter.

"We have only said that Supreme Court should give direction to the Centre that when even a parliamentary panel has recommended legal guarantee to MSP, the union government should implement that," he said.

"We have want that promises made to farmers should be fulfilled," he said. Farmers, under the banner of SKM and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, have been camping at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points

between Punjab and Haryana since February 13, after their march to Delhi was stopped by security forces.

"Dallewa ji's fast has entered its 38th day. A senior leader has put his life at stake. On January 4, respecting his sentiments to have a 'darshan' of farmers, at Khanauri morcha, a big gathering of farmers has been called in which he will give an important message," Kohar said.

When asked if Dallewa would take medical aid, Kohar said no such thing has come up that there will be a 'drip' gently.

The top court also issued notice to the Centre on a fresh petition filed on behalf of Dallewa seeking direction to the Union government to comply with the promises, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price on crops, made to the protesting farmers in 2021 after the farm laws were repealed.

Meanwhile, farmer leaders from some other states reached Khanauri in support of Dallewa and during a media interaction were introduced by farmer leader Lakhwinder Singh Aulakh. P R Pandian from All Farmers Associations Tamil Nadu said all farmers are united and supporting Dallewa's hunger strike in support of farmers' demands.

He alleged refusal by the Centre to negotiate and fulfill the demands of farmers has anguished Tamil Nadu farmers.

Another leader Shanbhakumar from Karnataka said the Punjab farmers are carrying out their agitation similar to country's freedom movement. He demanded the Centre to resolve the issue immediately.

A bunch of justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan said it needs to clarify that the court has never directed to break Dallewa's protest but is only concerned with his health and wants medical aid to be provided to him ur-

gently.

The top court also issued notice to the Centre on a fresh petition filed on behalf of Dallewa seeking direction to the Union government to comply with the promises, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price on crops, made to the protesting farmers in 2021 after the farm laws were repealed.

Meanwhile, farmer leaders from some other states reached Khanauri in support of Dallewa and during a media interaction were introduced by farmer leader Lakhwinder Singh Aulakh. P R Pandian from All Farmers Associations Tamil Nadu said all farmers are united and supporting Dallewa's hunger strike in support of farmers' demands.

He alleged refusal by the Centre to negotiate and fulfill the demands of farmers has anguished Tamil Nadu farmers.

Another leader Shanbhakumar from Karnataka said the Punjab farmers are carrying out their agitation similar to country's freedom movement. He demanded the Centre to resolve the issue immediately.

A bunch of justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan said it needs to clarify that the court has never directed to break Dallewa's protest but is only concerned with his health and wants medical aid to be provided to him ur-

gently.

The top court also issued notice to the Centre on a fresh petition filed on behalf of Dallewa seeking direction to the Union government to comply with the promises, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price on crops, made to the protesting farmers in 2021 after the farm laws were repealed.

Hand grenade found at gate of missing man's house



Imphal

A hand grenade was on Thursday found outside the house of Laishram Kamalbabu Singh, who went missing allegedly from the Leimakhong Military Station in Imphal West district, they said.

Police later retrieved the grenade and defused it. A note was also found along with the grenade, stating that the Joint Action Committee formed in response to the man going missing must be disbanded and a new JAC should be constituted.

It also said, "No contractors which sells the land can be part of the JAC." The JAC has been spearheading the protests that have been underway since the man went missing on

November 25. Last week, CM N Biren Singh, who claimed that Singh had gone missing from the military station, said the case would be handed over to the CBI.

Singh, a native of Assam's Cachar district, was a works supervisor for a contractor working with the Military Engineering Services (MES) in Leimakhong Military Station of the 57th Mountain Division, according to the Army.

Police had earlier said that over 2,000 security personnel were deployed to search for Singh, who belongs to the Meitei community.

Amid protests over his disappearance, state Social Welfare Minister Helikham Dingo had said that all documents related to Singh were sent to the Prime Minister's Office as well as the offices of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah.

Fresh snowfall in Kashmir brings relief from freezing temperatures

Srinagar
Several parts of Kashmir, including the plains of the valley, received fresh snowfall on Thursday, with moderate to heavy snow in the higher reaches, leading to an improvement in the minimum temperatures, officials said.

The Meteorological Department had forecast two back-to-back western disturbances affecting the region.

A feeble western disturbance hit Jammu and Kashmir overnight causing light to heavy snowfall across the valley, the officials said.

They said while the parts of Bandipora, Kupwara, Baramulla, and Anantnag received moderate to heavy snowfall, the plains in Srinagar, and Ganderbal recorded light snowfall.

Tourist destinations of Gulmarg, Sonamarg, and Pahalgam as well as Zojila axis also logged fresh snowfall, the officials added.

This marks the first snowfall of 2025 in Kashmir and the second in the plains of the valley this season. Srinagar and the other plain areas of the Kashmir had received the season's first snowfall last week.

Authorities have deployed snow clearance teams and machinery with control rooms set up at district headquarters to monitor the operations, the officials said.

Centre trying to 'bring back' revoked farm laws: Punjab CM

Komal Ramola
Chandigarh
Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday claimed that the Centre was trying to "bring back" the now-repealed farm laws, referring to the newly announced draft of the National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing.

The AAP-led Punjab government has termed the newly announced draft policy as an attempt to reintroduce the three central agricultural laws passed in 2020 "through backdoor."

Speaking to reporters here, Mann also stated that the demands of the protesting farmers pertain to the central government, which should hold a dialogue with the farmers.

"All the demands of the farmers pertain to the Centre, whether they come from the two forums leading the ongoing agitation at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders or from other farmers' unions. The demands are the same, even though the farm unions may differ," Mann said.

"Why does the Centre not invite farmers for a dialogue?" he asked.

Farmers, under the banner of Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, have been camping at the Shambhu and Khanauri



border points between Punjab and Haryana since February 13, after their march to Delhi was stopped by security forces.

They have been protesting with several demands, one of which is a legal guarantee for a minimum support price (MSP) for two crops.

"These are the two forums with which central ministers Piyush Goyal and the then Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda, along with a team of officers, held many rounds of talks earlier. Decisions have to be made by the farmers' organisations, and I was acting as a bridge (between the farmers and the Centre when talks were held in February)," said Mann.

He added that the Punjab government has made numerous efforts in the past that the Centre to talk to the farmers.

"The demands of farmers pertain to the Centre. At that time, consensus could not be reached, and later, the country went into general elections. Narendra Modi once again became

Prime Minister. After the Lok Sabha election process was over, no effort was made by the Centre to talk to the farmers again or call the stakeholders," he said.

Speaking about farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewa's hunger strike, he said, "Dallewa's fast has entered its 38th day, but (the Centre) don't care."

He further said that the Supreme Court had stated it was the Punjab government's responsibility to take care of Dallewa's health.

"We are discharging this responsibility. Fifty doctors are on duty at Khanauri where Dallewa's dhama is ongoing. Barely 500 meters away, we have set up a makeshift hospital," he said.

"The Supreme Court said Dallewa should not face any health problems. I spoke to Dallewa on Tuesday and told him his health is important to all of us. I told him that the agitation may go on for a long time, and it is crucial for him to be at the forefront, so his health is important," Mann said.

The chief minister added that he has received assurances from the prime minister and home minister that the National Conference government would remain stable and that they would receive the same cooperation extended earlier to the lieutenant governor earlier.

"They have stated they will respect the mandate of the people. Those spreading rumours that I will join NDA and that I have changed my ideology, I cannot help that. I am here to work and I will work," he said at the media interaction held at the Sher-e-Kashmir

CM Nayab Singh Saini felicitates mothers of Haryana's sportspersons

Komal Ramola
Chandigarh
Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Thursday participated in the Veer Mata Jija Bai State-Level Felicitation Ceremony organized by the Haryana state unit of Kreedha Bharti in Gurugram in the honour of mothers of medal winners and participating players in Paralympics and Olympic Games. During the programme, the Chief Minister felicitated the mothers of the winners who participated in the Paris Olympics and Paralympics in 2024.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said the ceremony, organized in Gurugram-the city of Guru Drona, is a celebration of the role of mothers in the field of sports. He said felicitating the mothers of players who raised the Indian flag in the country and the world is a matter of pride.

"The ceremony is an opportunity to express gratitude not only to our players but also to their mothers. He said Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi says that there is a mother behind every big success. It is the responsibility of the society to respect mothers."

The Chief Minister also congratulated the Haryana state unit of Kreedha Bharti for this unique initiative. He also announced a grant of Rs 21 lakh to the organization.

Nayab Singh Saini, while reminding the historical con-

tribution of mothers, said Mata Jija Bai, in whose name the ceremony has been organized, had prepared her son Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj as a true warrior and hard worker, the country got a great warrior like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, who laid the foundation of Swaraj at that time.

The Chief Minister said Haryana has become the pride of the entire country in the field of sports. The players here are succeeding in the Olympics, Paralympics, Asian and Commonwealth Games. A player is the heritage of the nation. We have made a sports policy called the 'Haryana Utkrishi Khiladi Seva Niyam 2021' to ensure employment for excellent players. Under this, 550 new posts were created in the Sports Department. Apart from this, 224 medal winning players have been given government jobs. Reservation has been pro-

vided to the players in direct recruitment of posts from Class I to Class II. Haryana is the first state in the country where highest cash prizes are given to the medal winning players. Apart from this, honorarium is also being given to 298 players who have performed excellently.

The Chief Minister said scholarships are being provided to the medal winning students participating in state, national and international sports competitions. From the year 2014 till now, scholarships of more than Rs 53 crore have been provided to more than 29,000 students. The government has opened sports nurseries to hone the skills of sportspersons from childhood. At present, there are 1,489 sports nurseries in the state where 37,225 sportspersons are getting training. In these nurseries, players aged from 8 to 14 years and players aged from 15 to 19 years are

being given incentives every month.

The Chief Minister said 5 out of 6 medals in Paris Olympics-2024 have been won by the players of Haryana. In the Paralympics also, out of the 29 medals won by the country, 8 medals were won by the players of Haryana. Earlier, 30 players from the state participated in Tokyo Olympics-2020 where India won 7 medals, out of which 4 medals were won by the players of Haryana. Similarly, the players of Haryana also waved the Indian flag in the Commonwealth Games. 43 players from Haryana participated during the Birmingham Commonwealth Games-2022. In this, the players of Haryana won 20 medals. These achievements are the result of Haryana's farsighted sports policies."

The Chief Minister said along with physical fitness and sports skills, a player also needs mental balance, discipline and courage. The development of these qualities in a child starts from his mother. The first coach of a player is his mother and there is no coach greater than her.

The Chief Minister said recently, the Central Government has selected the names of many players of the state for the Arjuna Award and Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award. These include Mamun Bhaker, Sawvati Bora and many other names.



vided to the players in direct recruitment of posts from Class I to Class II. Haryana is the first state in the country where highest cash prizes are given to the medal winning players. Apart from this, honorarium is also being given to 298 players who have performed excellently.

The Chief Minister said scholarships are being provided to the medal winning students participating in state, national and international sports competitions. From the year 2014 till now, scholarships of more than Rs 53 crore have been provided to more than 29,000 students. The government has opened sports nurseries to hone the skills of sportspersons from childhood. At present, there are 1,489 sports nurseries in the state where 37,225 sportspersons are getting training. In these nurseries, players aged from 8 to 14 years and players aged from 15 to 19 years are

being given incentives every month.

The Chief Minister said 5 out of 6 medals in Paris Olympics-2024 have been won by the players of Haryana. In the Paralympics also, out of the 29 medals won by the country, 8 medals were won by the players of Haryana. Earlier, 30 players from the state participated in Tokyo Olympics-2020 where India won 7 medals, out of which 4 medals were won by the players of Haryana. Similarly, the players of Haryana also waved the Indian flag in the Commonwealth Games. 43 players from Haryana participated during the Birmingham Commonwealth Games-2022. In this, the players of Haryana won 20 medals. These achievements are the result of Haryana's farsighted sports policies."

The Chief Minister said along with physical fitness and sports skills, a player also needs mental balance, discipline and courage. The development of these qualities in a child starts from his mother. The first coach of a player is his mother and there is no coach greater than her.

The Chief Minister said recently, the Central Government has selected the names of many players of the state for the Arjuna Award and Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award. These include Mamun Bhaker, Sawvati Bora and many other names.

The Governor praised the Department of Public Relations for creating a practical and visually appealing one-page calendar, highlighting its role in promoting public engagement. The calendar will soon be widely distributed across Chandigarh.

The Governor praised the Department of Public Relations for creating a practical and visually appealing one-page calendar, highlighting its role in promoting public engagement. The calendar will soon be widely distributed across Chandigarh.

The Governor praised the Department of Public Relations for creating a practical and visually appealing one-page calendar, highlighting its role in promoting public engagement. The calendar will soon be widely distributed across Chandigarh.

The Governor praised the Department of Public Relations for creating a practical and visually appealing one-page calendar, highlighting its role in promoting public engagement. The calendar will soon be widely distributed across Chandigarh.

The Governor praised the Department of Public Relations for creating a practical and visually appealing one-page calendar, highlighting its role in promoting public engagement. The calendar will soon be widely distributed across Chandigarh.

No pressure from PM or home minister on us: CM Omar Abdullah

Srinagar
Dismissing suggestions that his National Conference was under pressure to join the BJP-led NDA, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday expressed optimism that the promises made by the Centre to restore statehood of Jammu and Kashmir will be fulfilled at the earliest.

During his first media meet here since assuming office in October, Abdullah emphasised that the region's current status as a Union Territory should be viewed as a temporary arrangement, with the restoration of statehood being the "biggest chal-



lenge" his government faces. Abdullah dismissed rumours suggesting pressure from the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to alter the National Conference's ideology and join

the alliance. "There is no pressure from the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi), Home Minister (Amit Shah) or the Raj Bhawan on us to change our ideology," he said.

The chief minister added that he has received assurances from the prime minister and home minister that the National Conference government would remain stable and that they would receive the same cooperation extended earlier to the lieutenant governor earlier.

"They have stated they will respect the mandate of the people. Those spreading rumours that I will join NDA and that I have changed my ideology, I cannot help that. I am here to work and I will work," he said at the media interaction held at the Sher-e-Kashmir

International Convention Centre.

In response to a question whether his government was planning to approach the court for restoration of statehood, Abdullah said that confrontation should be the last resort.

"Simply going to court will be a fight. A fight should never be the first option, it should be the last option. If the Supreme Court had not spoken about the restoration of statehood, if the prime minister and home minister had not spoken about it, then we could have gone to court.

Punjab Gov & administrator UT Chandigarh Releases Chandigarh Administration's Calendar

Chandigarh
The Chandigarh Administration's Calendar for 2025 was officially released on Thursday by Gulab Chand Kataria, Governor of Punjab and Administrator of UT Chandigarh, at Punjab Raj Bhavan.

The ceremony witnessed the presence of esteemed dignitaries, including Shri Rajeev Verma, Advisor to the Administrator, Shri Surendra Yadav, DGP Chandigarh, Shri Mandep Singh Brar, Home Secretary, Ms. Prerna Puri, Secretary Public Relations, Sh.

Abhijit Vijay Chaudhari, Special Secretary to the Administrator and Sh. Rajiv Tewari, Director Public Relations.

The Governor praised the Department of Public Relations for creating a practical and visually appealing one-page calendar, highlighting its role in promoting public engagement. The calendar will soon be widely distributed across Chandigarh.



Abhijit Vijay Chaudhari, Special Secretary to the Administrator and Sh. Rajiv Tewari, Director Public Relations.

The Governor praised the Department of Public Relations for creating a practical and visually appealing one-page calendar, highlighting its role in promoting public engagement. The calendar will soon be widely distributed across Chandigarh.



By Priyanka Saurabh

Create policies for holistic development/ life skills instead of pass/fail

The abolition of the no-detention policy for students in classes 5 and 8 is a significant change in India's education system. Introduced under the Right to Education Act, the policy was aimed at ensuring universal access to education by preventing student failure. However, with concerns of declining learning outcomes, the amendment seeks to strike a balance between access and quality education by emphasizing academic improvement. Abolishing the no-detention policy ensures that students continue to receive education even if they struggle academically, thereby reinforcing the principle of universal access. Students who would have been expelled for failure now have the opportunity to retake exams and receive remedial support.

By retaining failing students, the policy encourages active participation and accountability while still prioritizing universal access to education. Students who fail in grade 5 now have a chance to improve before moving to the next grade, ensuring they are not left behind. The policy includes provisions for remedial instruction, promoting equitable access by ensuring no student is denied education due to academic struggles. For example, students who fail in grade 5 receive special support



and retesting opportunities, helping them to remain in the education system. Parents are actively involved in identifying struggling students and monitoring progress, ensuring all children, regardless of their performance, receive a quality education.

Parents are involved in the learning process through regular communication with teachers, ensuring that no child is overlooked due to academic failure. The policy aims to prevent students from dropping out of school by encouraging them to remain in the education system by giving them multiple opportunities to succeed. After the policy change, students who fail in Class 8 are given another chance to appear for the exams, reducing the dropout rate. The policy change also

prompts schools to identify students who need additional support, taking a more customized approach to improve learning outcomes. In Kendriya Vidyalayas, struggling students are now provided with additional coaching to bridge learning gaps, ensuring better academic performance.

The re-examination system focuses on competency-based tests rather than rote learning, ensuring that students' learning outcomes are more meaningful and impactful. In Sainik Schools, the recently implemented competency-based exams assess practical knowledge, enabling students to understand core concepts rather than memorizing facts. The policy promotes holistic development by ensuring that failing students receive

individual attention to address both academic and non-academic needs. In Delhi government schools, struggling students receive academic remediation as well as psychological and emotional support to promote holistic development. Teachers are now responsible for identifying and addressing learning gaps, ensuring they invest more in each student's progress.

Classroom teachers now maintain progress records and individually monitor students struggling in subjects, allowing for targeted intervention strategies. By providing multiple chances to pass, the policy reduces the stigma of failure, motivating students to stay engaged and improve. Students who had previously failed, at risk of stigma, are now given a

second chance, reducing dropout rates and facilitating persistence. Eliminating the no-detention policy balances universal access with improved learning outcomes. By emphasizing accountability and quality education, it can improve teaching and assessment. However, to make this change successful, better training of teachers, remedial support, and better infrastructure to strengthen students' foundational skills are needed.

Instead of addressing the root causes of the poor quality of education in the country, the focus is on reintroducing the pass/fail system. The need of the hour is for all parties to act more seriously, and it is now time to make efforts to address the remaining issues. As a result, the policy should be amended with suitable adjustments to minimize the negative impacts, or it should be replaced with a new, more balanced approach. The main goal should be to encourage the holistic development of children and provide them with life skills.

About the Author

Priyanka Saurabh, Research Scholar in Political Science, Poetess, Independent journalist and columnist

Under the no detention policy, no student from class 1 to 8 could be failed. However, now these students can be failed. Also, the failed students will get the opportunity to take the exam again within 2 months. If they fail in this too, they will not be promoted to the next class.

Challenges for New Year Reorient Development Strategy

With the arrival of the New Year, there are obvious challenges considering the not-so-favourable global geo-political situation as well as problems such as concerns over growing protectionism, subdued investment climate, low consumption and a large public debt. Recently, Prime Minister Modi held a high-level meeting with leading economists and experts to formulate the government's strategy for maintaining the growth momentum. He underscored the need for a fundamental shift in mindset to achieve 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India), emphasising structural reforms and inclusive growth as essential pillars of this transformation.

These are often talked about, and the word structural reforms has become more of a jargon while inclusive growth is often heard being said by political leaders, which may not be anything tangible. Several economists do not trust that the present government has been following a strategy of inclusive growth as policies and programmes are by and large tilted towards the upper echelons of society.

It is understood, the meeting decided that specific measures to support sectors such as MSMEs, agriculture and manufacturing were discussed with an emphasis on addressing global challenges and domestic structural issues. However, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) release stated the need for attracting private investment and mobilising public funds for infrastructure, and plans to boost growth and create jobs and promoting financial inclusion.

Meanwhile, keeping in view Donald Trump's rhetoric on tariffs, India can benefit so long as it is prepared to play the game by the American President's terms. This means offering some trade or political concessions in return for favourable policies towards India. In the political front, a sharpening of caste and religious tensions is expected to prevail as both Modi and the Opposition seek to gain at the other's expense. With Delhi and Bihar Assembly elections due in 2025, the BJP will go all out to woo the voter though the loss in the latter's neighbouring Jharkhand may have an effect and dethroning the AAP in the national Capital is going to be a tough order.

Most expect the Union budget to follow the same pro-business focus with expansion of physical infrastructure to favour the industry. Stock markets will mirror global trends though there is a possibility of the nifty moving up. However, there is very little possibility of a shift towards the rural sector as also the struggling unorganised working class and this will result in widening the disparity. The upper echelons of society, including a section of the middle class, may continue to prosper while the marginalised and backward sections will have to struggle for a dignified existence.

It is, however, significant to mention that the finance ministry recently told Parliament that the Centre's thrust is on improving the quality of public spending while strengthening the social security net for the poor and the needy. In the statement on deviation from the Fiscal

Responsibility & Budget Management (FRBM) Act targets, the ministry also pointed out that the government remained committed to pursue the path for fiscal consolidation and lower fiscal deficit under 4.5 percent by the next financial year.

If spending is increased, which obviously is a necessity and without higher taxation or a wealth tax of the super-rich, keeping the fiscal deficit below 5 percent may be rather difficult. More allocations are obviously necessary in the rural sector, both for social and physical infrastructure development, exceeding the fiscal deficit may not be much of a problem, which is the opinion of most economists. But the expenditure would have to be productive and help the marginalised and backward sections.

It's worth mentioning here the Reserve Bank of India's 'State of the Economy' report (published in December) stated that the slowdown in domestic economic activity bottomed out in the second quarter of the current fiscal and has since recovered aided by strong festive demand and a pick-up in rural activities. Co-authored by Michael Patra, RBI Deputy Governor, the report urged the need to exorcise inflation and revive investment with bright prospects for private consumption. The report rightly expressed concern about the slowdown in government capital expenditure and suggested that fiscal spending, including on capital expenditure, could be hindered by the slowing rate of nominal GDP.

In this connection, also refer to the latest report of Ernest & Young (EY) which suggested recasting the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) with revised targets for priority sectors such as roads, railways, smart cities, renewable energy and power. Plus, the report believed there is need to achieve a combined capital expenditure allocation of at least 6 percent of GDP annually for infrastructure over the next five years. Finally, it called for major reforms in India's Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act to align fiscal policy with the country's ambitious growth goals.

It would be better if the government reoriented its development strategy towards the unorganised sector, the small trader and the small farmer and evolve some way of ensuring a regular income for them. Added to this, there is a need for encouraging labour-intensive sectors in a big way and giving incentives to business units, so that employment is created, which is imperative at this stage. Various studies have confirmed that at least one million jobs need to be created per month or at least 12 million per annum.

Amidst this, what comes as a major surprise is that the government is planning to reduce the allocation for the three Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme by 30 percent for the current financial year, as per data of the Union Labour Ministry to a parliamentary panel. The government plans to spend around Rs 6800 crore in 2024-25 on ELI scheme against the finance min-

istry's allocation of Rs 10,000 crore. It is understood that the inability to spend the amount is due to limited availability of time. However, the total budgetary allocation in the next six-and-a-half years would be Rs 1.07 lakh crore.

As a result, the rupee is under great pressure, hitting a record low of over Rs 85 per dollar with global economic uncertainties and domestic macro-economic challenges very much evident. In such a situation, investment must be geared up, specially from the private sector. Moreover, with wages not increasing significantly for a major section of the middle class, not to speak of the low-income groups, compared to inflationary conditions, consumption is down as affordable surplus is not available to these sections. These need to be thoroughly examined before presentation of the Budget and remedial action taken by government planners and economists, close to the powers that be, to redress the critical situation from getting worse.

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

Solution, Sudoku

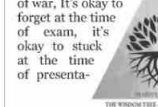
6	7	3	1	4	9	2	5	8
2	4	1	5	8	3	9	7	6
8	5	9	2	6	7	4	3	1
4	9	2	7	3	8	1	6	5
5	3	6	4	1	2	7	8	9
7	1	8	6	9	5	3	2	4
9	2	5	8	7	1	6	4	3
1	8	4	3	2	6	5	9	7
3	6	7	9	5	4	8	1	2

THE WISDOM TREE

BY SUVEEN KUMAR

A day with no want, a life with no purpose, a job with no gain is as vain as gone days and the day you start believing it, you start living it. Not all the days are to desire, not every life is to aspire and not every job is to obtain. Sometimes some days pass by like they never came, a life is spent like it was never given and a job is taken where there is nothing to achieve. Machines are for humans, humans are not for machines. Our calculated life with calculated objectives turns everything in number, where there is a lot to count but there is nothing you can count on.

It is okay to slow down, hanging in, get lazy, get untidy, go out of ways, sleep late and wake up late, not to push yourself, stay unmotivated, be carefree and careless. It is sometimes okay to relax at the time of war, it's okay to forget at the time of exam, it's okay to stuck at the time of presenta-



Moral: live the life, for the life.

TOP STORY

Dear Reader, If you have any news or you have any suggestion regarding our newspaper or you have any problem with any government department, you may contact us on 24 hour helpline no- 0120-4225517, 4241284 for Delhi & Ghaziabad (0582310372) for Noida (9818999989), Advertisement (9818799941), Circulation (08586925450)

Readers are recommended to make all necessary enquiries and seek appropriate advice before action on any advertisement and content published in this publication. The printer, publisher, editor and seller of the Top Story do not vouch for any claims. The publication is being sold on the condition that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having final authority or of binding in any way. We do not owe any responsibility for damage or loss to any person, a purchase of this publication is not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of court and forums in Delhi/ New Delhi only.

FOR ADVERTISING IN

TOP STORY PLEASE CONTACT: 9818799941

SC agrees to hear Owaisi's plea for implementation of places of worship law

New Delhi
The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to examine a plea of AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi seeking effective implementation of the 1991 places of worship law which asks to maintain the religious character of a place as it existed on August 15, 1947.



mad Ayubi.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar ordered Owaisi's fresh plea to be tagged with the pending cases on the issue and all matters, along with his plea, would be heard on February 17.

At the outset, advocate Nizam Pasha, appearing for Owaisi, the president of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), said that the court is seized of various pleas on the issue and the fresh one may be tagged with them as well.

"We will tag this," said the CJ.

Owaisi filed the plea on December 17, 2024, through advocate Fuzail Ah-

mad Ayubi. On December 12, however, the bench headed by the CJ, while acting on a batch of similar pleas against the 1991 law, restrained all courts from entertaining fresh suits and passing any interim or final orders in pending cases seeking to reclaim religious places, particularly mosques and dargahs.

The special bench is hearing about six petitions, including the lead one filed

by lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay, challenging various provisions of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.

The 1991 law prohibits conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947.

However, the dispute relating to Ram Jambhoomi-Babri Masjid at Ayodhya was kept out of its purview.

Owaisi's plea sought a direction to the Centre to ensure effective implementation of the law while referring to instances where several courts had ordered surveys of mosques on pleas by Hindu litigants, said his counsel.

The top court, through its December 12, 2024 order, effectively stalled proceedings in about 18 lawsuits filed by various Hindu parties seeking survey to ascertain original religious

character of 10 mosques including Gyanvapi at Varanasi, Shahi Idgah Masjid at Mathura and Shahi Jama Masjid at Sambhal where four persons' lives were snuffed out in clashes.

Muslim bodies like Jamiat Ulama-Hind seek strict implementation of the 1991 law to maintain communal harmony and to preserve the present status of mosques, sought to be reclaimed by Hindus on the ground that they were temples before invaders razed them.

On the other hand, petitioners like Updhyay have sought setting aside Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Act. Among the reasons was also the contention that these provisions took away the right of judicial remedy to reclaim a place of worship of any person or a religious group.

"Ultimately, we will have to hear the arguments," the bench had said, observing the primary issue was with regard to Section 3 and 4 of

the 1991 law.

While Section 3 deals with the bar of conversion of places of worship, Section 4 pertains to declarations as to the religious character of certain places of worship and bar of jurisdiction of courts, etc.

The Gyanvapi Mosque management committee, in its intervention plea, opposed several pending petitions that challenge the constitutional validity of the 1991 law.

The mosque committee listed a series of contentious claims made over the years concerning various mosques and dargahs (shrines), including the Shahi Idgah Masjid in Mathura, the Quswat-ul-Islam Mosque near Delhi's Qutub Minar, the Kamal Maula Mosque in Madhya Pradesh, and others.

It therefore said the petitions challenging the Act were filed with "mischievous intent" to facilitate lawsuits against these religious sites, which the 1991 Act currently protected.

Modigovernment created economic turmoil: Kharge

New Delhi
The Congress on Thursday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's new year resolutions are nothing short of 'jumlas' (rhetoric) destroying the lives of every citizen.

In a post on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the government has given no solution for the economic turmoil created by it as he cited seven indicators to substantiate his point.

"The Modi government has no solution for the economic turmoil it has created! Seven indicators that illustrate the extent of mess in the lives of ordinary Indians.

"50 percent increase in Gold Loans and 30 per cent jump in gold loan NPAs. Private consumption - the total value of goods and services purchased by households has slowed down in the last 8 quarters and has not recovered to pre-COVID levels," he said in his post.

Kharge said car sales growth has plunged to a four-year low and wages have grown at a compound annual rate of just 0.8 per cent in the engineering, manufacturing, process, and infrastructure (EPP) sectors in the past 5 years (2019-2023).

Food inflation, he said, has averaged 7.1 per cent over the last eight quarters. Indirect taxation in the form of GST on essential items are depleting household savings which are at a 50-year low, the Congress chief claimed.

"Household financial liabilities are now 6.4 per cent of GDP - the highest in decades. Rupee has hit all-time low, forcing foreign fund outflows and loss to small investors worth lakhs of crores.

"Narendra Modi ji, Your annual 'New Year Resolutions' have been nothing short of 'jumlas' destroying the lives of every citizen," Kharge alleged.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also said according to the RBI, the income of Indian

families is continuously decreasing and the number of borrowers is increasing.

"Due to falling income, it is becoming difficult to repay the loan, as a result, gold loans increased by 56 per cent in the first 7 months of the current financial year, but gold loan default increased by 30 per cent.

"According to the World Inequality Database, economic inequality has increased more during the BJP rule than during the British rule. More than half of the country's wealth is owned by one percent of the rich," she said in a post in Hindi on X.

Vadra claimed that private consumption has fallen for the last eight quarters and household savings are at a 50-year low and jobs have been declining continuously since demonetisation and this trend is continuing.

"The burden of indirect taxes on middle and lower income groups has increased inflation, due to which common people are not able to support their families, she said.

Quoting former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, she said, "Countries do not rise by a few people sitting on high chairs, countries rise when crores of people are happy and progress."

"The Prime Minister gave many slogans like '20 million jobs annually', '5 trillion dollar economy', 'Vishwaguru' and 'New Year resolutions', but in reality his economic wrong policies have weakened crores of countrymen," the Congress leader said.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh also alleged the government is responsible for "stealing" mangalstras from women due to rise in default on gold loans in the country because of its cronyism, erratic policies and warped priorities.

Ramesh said that people are defaulting on at least 30 per cent of gold loans and claimed women are losing their gold, including mangalstras.

PM Modi to inaugurate several development projects in Delhi



New Delhi
Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate a slew of development measures, including 1,675 flats for the residents of JJ clusters and two urban redevelopment projects in the city on Friday.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in a statement said that Modi will visit the newly-constructed flats for the dwellers of Jhuggi Jhopri (JJ) clusters as part of slum rehabilitation project at Swabhiman Apartments in Delhi's Ashok Vihar and hand over keys to the eligible beneficiaries.

He will inaugurate 1,675 newly constructed flats, the PMO said, adding the development is in line with the prime minister's "housing for all" initiative.

The objective of the project is to provide the residents of JJ clusters in Delhi with a better and healthier living environment equipped with proper amenities and facilities.

For every Rs 25 lakh spent on construction of a flat by the Central government, the eligible beneficiaries pay less than seven per cent of the total amount, comprising Rs 1.42 lakh as a nominal contribution and Rs 30,000 for five years of maintenance, it said.

The development push from the BJP-led government at the Centre comes ahead of the assembly polls in Delhi expected to be held in February.

The BJP has been locked in a bitter political confrontation with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), in power in the city since 2013, and is making all out efforts to end its reign.

II quarters at Sarojini Nagar. The World Trade Centre, the statement said, has transformed the area by replacing over 600 dilapidated quarters with state-of-the-art commercial towers, offering around 34 lakh square feet of premium commercial space with advanced amenities.

The project incorporates green building practices with provisions such as a zero-discharge concept, solar energy generation and rainwater harvesting systems.

The GPRR type-II quarters include 28 towers that house over 2,500 residential units, offering modern amenities and efficient use of space.

The project's design incorporates rainwater harvesting systems, sewage and water treatment plants, and solar-powered waste compactors encouraging eco-conscious living, it said.

Modi will also inaugurate the CBSE's integrated office complex at Dwarka built at around Rs 300 crore. It includes offices, auditorium, advanced data center and comprehensive water management system among others. The eco-friendly building has been constructed to high environmental standards and was designed as per Platinum Rating standards of the Indian Green Building Council, it said.

Among other initiatives, the prime minister will lay the foundation stone of three new projects worth over Rs 600 crore in the Delhi University. It includes an academic block in the Eastern Campus at Surajmal Vihar in East Delhi and an academic block in the Western Campus at Dwarka. It also includes building Veer Savarkar College at Roshanpura, Najafgarh, having state-of-the-art facilities for education, the statement said.

CISF says 'credible' steps led to lowest number of suicides over last 6 years

New Delhi
The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) on Thursday said it has recorded the lowest number of suicides amongst its personnel in 2024 - at 15 - over a six-year period due to some "credible" steps taken to resolve the problems of its staffers.

As per official data, the force, which guards vital and sensitive installations in the aerospace, nuclear and government domain, saw 15 deaths last year due to suicide, a 9.86 per cent rate in an organisation that has an operational strength of over 1.51 lakh personnel.

The comparative data of deaths due to suicide in the force over the last five years

stood at 25 (2023), 26 (2022), 21 (2021), 18 (2020) and 17 (2019).

"The CISF has taken credible steps in combating this challenge by implementing a series of proactive measures, which has led to substantial reduction in suicides of force members in 2024," said a CISF spokesperson.

As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, the spokesperson said that the national suicide rate stood at 12.4 per lakh in 2022.

"In comparison, the CISF has significantly reduced its suicide rate to 9.87 per lakh in 2024, a decline of over 40 per cent from 2022," he said.

It is for the first time in the

last five years that suicide rate in the CISF has fallen below the national rate, the spokesperson claimed.

The official said the CISF has taken a series of steps to address "mental health issues" on "proactive" basis, leading to a "substantial" reduction in suicides.

This includes personalised engagement by the officers with the troops on the theme of 'know your man and hear your men', stress management through yoga and games, online grievance redressal, tele-counselling on mental health issues for 4,200 personnel till last year and taking action on mental health issues as recommended by the AAIMS.

The CISF said its new

launched and posting policy transfer recently is also a step in ensuring better work-life balance for its non-gazetted rank officials, who constitute almost 98 per cent of its strength.

"CISF is committed to extend full support to its force members in ensuring their well-being and mental health," the spokesperson said.

The CISF, which works under the Union Home Ministry, guards 359 units across the country, including 68 civil airports, historical monuments like Taj Mahal and Red Fort, the Delhi Metro, Parliament House and many other government and private installations apart from securing a number of VIPs.

SC blames Punjab officials for false impression on breaking Dallewal's fast

New Delhi
The Supreme Court on Thursday pulled up the Punjab government and said its officials and some farmer leaders are creating a false impression in media that attempts are being made to break farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal's fast.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan said it needs to clarify that court has never directed to break Dallewal's protest but is only concerned with his health and wants medical aid to be provided to him urgently.

Justice Surya Kant said the court does not want to say much but it appears that Punjab government officials and some farmer leaders are making irresponsible statements in media to further complicate the situation on the ground.

"We need to check the bonafide of some farmer leaders towards Dallewal," the bench observed.

Punjab advocate general Gurinder Singh denied any such attempt to complicate the situation and said efforts are being made to persuade Dallewal to take medical aid without breaking his fast.

The bench said since the chief secretary and the Director General of Police (DGP) of Punjab are appearing virtually in the matter, hopefully the court's message will go down the line.

It asked both officials to file their affidavits indicating compliance with the December 20 order in which the court has directed the Punjab government to shift Dallewal to the nearby medical facilities created by the state.

Will implement recommendations of expert panel on NEET-UG exam: Centre to SC

New Delhi
The Centre on Thursday told the Supreme Court that it would be implementing all the corrective measures suggested by its seven-member expert panel on exam reforms after reviewing the National Testing Agency's functioning in holding NEET-UG last year.

The top court on August 2, last year refused to annul the controversially-ridden NEET-UG of 2024, saying there was no sufficient material on record at present to indicate a systemic leak or malpractice compromising the integrity of the examination.

It had also expanded the remit of the seven-member expert panel, headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Radhakrishnan, to review the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA) and recommend exam reforms to make the NEET-



UG (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test Undergraduate), transparent and free from malpractices.

On Thursday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, appeared a bench comprising justices PS Narasimha and Manoj Misra that the Centre-appointed committee has filed its report and the government will be implementing all the recommendations.

"We are going to imple-

ment all the recommendations and it (matter) can be listed after six months," the law officer said.

"The matter is adjourned for three months. List this special leave petition in the month of April," the bench said.

The entire report has not been placed on the records as it also contained some details regarding issues like printing of questions etc.

On October 21 last year, the top court had extended the time granted to the Centre-appointed seven-member expert panel to file its report on exam reforms.

The NEEET-UG is conducted by the NTA for admission in undergraduate medical programs. While expanding the scope of the expert panel, the top court had flagged multiple lapses on the part of NTA like the security breach at an examination centre in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh where the rear door of the strongroom was opened and unauthorised people were permitted to access question papers, transportation of question papers by rickshaws and distribution of wrong set of question papers among the candidates.

Besides Radhakrishnan, other members of the expert committee are Randeep Guleria, B J Rao, Ramamurthy K, Pankaj Bansal, Aditya Mittal and Govind Jaiswal.

Lack of tech transfer slowing climate action in India: Govt to UNFCCC

New Delhi
A concerning lack of technology transfer from developed countries has forced India to rely heavily on domestic resources and stretch national capacity, slowing its efforts to achieve critical climate objectives, the government has said in a biennial update report (BUR) to the UN climate change office.

In its fourth BUR submitted to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on December 30, India said that in the absence of promised technology and financial support, it is forced to divert resources from other essential needs to develop these solutions independently.

India had also raised the matter at the UN climate conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November last year and urged developed nations to eliminate intellectual property barriers to technology transfer that hinder climate action in developing countries.

"India's climate strategy emphasises integrating advanced technologies across key sectors, such as solar, wind, bioenergy, electric vehicles, climate-resilient agriculture, and carbon capture to foster low-carbon development and build resilience.

"Despite substantial national efforts and invest-

ments, barriers like slow international technology transfer and intellectual property rights (IPR) hinder the rapid adoption of these technologies," the BUR report said.

Biennial update reports are submitted by developing countries to the UNFCCC every two years, providing updates on emissions, climate action progress, and needs for support in mitigation and adaptation.

India's previous BURs have outlined essential technologies required to cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the warming world.

However, none of the required technologies have been effectively transferred, facilitated, or made available under the current climate change regime, the report said.

"This lack of technology transfer has forced India to rely heavily on domestic resources and stretch national capacity, slowing its efforts to achieve critical climate objectives," it said. Technology transfer is a critical component of climate change mitigation and adaptation that faces both demand and supply-side challenges which must be addressed within the framework of the 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities' (CBDR-RC) principles.

Empty gas cylinder found near rail track in Kanpur probe on

Kanpur/Saharanpur: An empty five kilogram gas cylinder was found placed on the railway tracks near the Barrajpur railway station here, Government Railway Police (GRP) said on Thursday.

In a separate incident, a major accident was averted when a large fragment of a metal was found lying on the railway track near Tapri on the Haridwar railway line in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur district on Tuesday, officials said.

A safety team found the cylinder on the loopline tracks in Shivrajpur on Wednesday during patrolling. It was kept in a sack, the officials said, as a probe was launched into the matter.

"Upon receiving information GRP officials along with the forensic teams from Kanpur and its neighbouring districts reached the spot and inspected the area as well as the cylinder and found it empty," Superintendent of Police (GRP) Abhishek Verma said.

Preliminary information suggested that the cylinder was deliberately put on the tracks with an intent to trigger panic, he added.

He said a special team has been formed to investigate the matter thoroughly and ensure the early arrests of those responsible behind it.

Meanwhile, the railways has also started a detailed probe into the matter that took place in the early hours of Tuesday, the officials said.

State govt to allocate 22 new hydropower projects of 828 MW capacity: CM Sukhu

Shimla: Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Thursday said the state government is set to allocate 22 new hydropower projects with a total capacity of 828 MW.

The projects, ranging from 6.5 MW to 400 MW, are located across the districts of Kullu, Chamba, Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti, and Shimla.

He said the largest allocation comprising nine projects with a total capacity of 595 MW is planned for the Chenab river basin. Additionally, eight projects totalling 159 MW are earmarked for the Sutlej river basin, four projects with a combined capacity of 55 MW for the Ravi basin and one project with a capacity of 9 MW for the Beas basin.

He said for the first time, the state government would allot these projects to other states, union territories and central and state undertakings.

"The projects would be assigned on a 40-year lease with an upfront premium of Rs 10 lakh per megawatt," said the CM.

He said that a letter has already been issued by the Energy Directorate to secretaries of states and central undertakings in this regard.

CM further said that these projects would secure power supply, increase revenue through free electricity and boost employment for local residents.

"It will also foster development in the surrounding areas and pave the way for Himachal Pradesh to become one of the most prosperous states in India" he added.

Retired IAS IPS officers VCs to be part of UP TB eradication campaign

Lucknow: In alignment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a 'TB-Free India', Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has launched an innovative initiative to accelerate progress towards this goal.

The Chief Minister has entrusted retired IAS and IPS officers, former Vice Chancellors, educationists, and other senior citizens with the pivotal role of 'Nikshay Mitra.'

As 'Nikshay Mitras,' they will actively contribute to raising public awareness and supporting efforts to eradicate TB.

On Thursday, the Chief Minister convened a meeting with these senior citizens, emphasizing the importance of their cooperation in ensuring the success of the 'TB-Free Uttar Pradesh' campaign.

Welcoming retired IAS and IPS officers, former Vice Chancellors, and senior citizens to a special meeting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath highlighted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a 'TB-Free India.' He stated, "A strong

India can only emerge from a healthy India, and India will gain true power when it becomes strong."

The Chief Minister underscored the urgency of eliminating TB, noting that while the World Health Organization has set 2030 as the global target for a TB-free world, Prime Minister Modi has ambitiously advanced India's goal to 2025.

He pointed out that India has the highest number of TB patients



globally, and as Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state, its contribution is critical to achieving this national goal.

The Chief Minister detailed the significant strides made in Uttar Pradesh towards TB elimination and said, "TB testing rates in the state have quadrupled in recent years, a substantial increase in Nat and X-ray machines has improved diagnostic capabilities, and the success rate of TB treatment has risen from 79% to 92%

over the past four years."

He added, "Under the Nikshay Poshan Yojana, Rs 772 crore has been disbursed via DBT to the accounts of 27 lakh TB patients to support their nutritional needs and preventive treatment is being provided to individuals living with TB patients to curb the spread of the disease."

Emphasizing the importance of public participation, the Chief Minister highlighted that over 45,000 Nikshay Mitras have

adopted TB patients and 1,372 Gram Panchayats in the state have already been declared TB-free.

He called upon the assembled retired officers and educationists to leverage their vast experience and commitment to society by contributing to this national mission. He stressed that every TB patient must receive immediate, accurate, and sustained medical care, along with proper nutrition and family screening, to prevent the disease from spreading further.

"TB patients are integral members of society, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure they are treated with respect and dignity. As Nikshay Mitras, you can provide them with guidance, support, and motivation," the Chief Minister said.

Rahul Gandhi defamation case Plaintiff cross-examined in Sultanpur court

Sultanpur (UP): A special MP-MLA court in Sultanpur conducted a hearing on Thursday in a defamation case against Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and further proceedings including cross-examination will continue on January 10, a lawyer said.

The case pertains to an alleged objectionable remark made by Rae Bareilly Congress MP about Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the 2018 Karnataka assembly elections, prompting a local BJP politician to file a complaint.

"Today, cross-examination of the complainant, Vijay Mishra, took place. As the questioning could not be completed, the next hearing has been scheduled for January 10," Gandhi's lawyer Kashi Prasad Shukla said.

Mishra's lawyer, Santosh Kumar Pandey, said, "Rahul Gandhi's counsel cross-examined my client today regarding the defamation case. The next steps will proceed on January 10."

The case was filed in 2018 by Mishra, a



BJP politician and resident of Hanumanjanji in Sultanpur's Kotwali Dehat area. Mishra alleged that Gandhi's remark on Shah during the Karnataka elections was offensive and had deeply hurt him.

Over the past five years, the case underwent multiple proceedings, but Gandhi reportedly failed to appear in court. Consequently, in December 2023, a warrant was issued, compelling Gandhi to appear in the court. In February 2024, the Congress leader complied with the summons and the special magistrate granted him bail on two

sureties of Rs 25,000 each.

Following this, the court instructed him to record his statement, which was finally completed on July 26, 2024, though after multiple postponements.

In his statement, Gandhi pleaded not guilty and claimed the case was a part of a political conspiracy against him. Subsequently, the court directed the complainant to present evidence.

Although a hearing was initially scheduled for December 16, it was postponed due to the judge's leave and was rescheduled for January 2.

Inter-community clash at team shop in Bahraich leaves 3 injured two held

Bahraich (UP): A dispute at a tea shop here escalated into a clash between two groups from different communities, leaving three people injured including two women, police said on Thursday.

The incident occurred on Wednesday at Sadhuapur village in Hardi area. A case has been registered under relevant sections and two people have been arrested, the police said.

Police have been deployed in the area to maintain law and order though officials have dismissed claims of a communal angle calling it a private dispute between two parties involved.

"The incident occurred at a tea shop in Sadhuapur village while locals Gulshan Bajpai and Sarvesh Bajpai attacked his 23-year-old son, daughter Ibram were having snacks. An argument turned into a physical fight," Mehsi Circle Officer (CO) DK Srivastava said.

Ibram's father, Sipahi, filed a written complaint at the Hardi police station, alleging that Gulshan Bajpai and Sarvesh Bajpai attacked his 23-year-old son, daughter



breach of peace), and 351(3) (criminal intimidation), Srivastava said.

The duo has been arrested and the injured are undergoing treatment with their condition stable, he added.

The CO further said that the incident stemmed from an old altercation between the two families who reside nearby.

A thorough investigation is being conducted, and appropriate legal action will follow. There is no communal tension at the site and police is deployed to ensure peace and order, the officer said.

Sadhuapur village, where the incident occurred, is located about three kilometers from Maharajganj town in the

Hardi area, which had also witnessed communal violence on October 13 during a Durga idol immersion procession.

Disputes over playing of music at the procession led to a clash, during which Ramgopal Mishra (21) from Rehua Mansoor village was killed.

The violence subsequently spread to Mahsi, Maharajganj, Sadhuapur, and parts of Bahraich city, leading to widespread arson, vandalism, and property damage worth crores.

Several individuals were injured in the riots, drawing significant attention across the state and nation. In the aftermath, many police officials, including station-in-charges and senior officers, were transferred.

1372 cases settled in revenue courts in just 2 days: Apoorv Devgan



Rajan PUNCHHI
Mandi:

At least 1372 revenue cases have been settled in Mandi district through revenue courts in just two days. Giving information, DC Mandi Apoorv Devgan said that the public is getting full benefit from the timely settlement of revenue cases in the revenue courts being organized every month in Mandi district.

The organization of revenue courts has ensured settlement of revenue cases at the doorstep. 1372 revenue cases were settled through the revenue courts organized on 30th and 31st December last month. This includes settlement of 63 cases of partition, 111 of demarcation, 16 of correction with revenue entries and 1182 cases of transfer. Deputy Commissioner Aspur Devgan said that as per the instructions of the state government, revenue courts are being organized every month in Mandi district for quick and timely settlement of revenue matters, so that people's revenue matters can be settled at their doorstep.

The Deputy Commissioner said that instructions have been given to all revenue officers for timely settlement of revenue related matters. He said that in addition to 1372 cases settled in revenue courts in the month of December, 2203 cases of transfer, 231 of partition, 637 of demarcation and 66 cases of correction in revenue entries were settled in tehsil and sub-tehsil offices.

The Deputy Commissioner said that in the month of December, the maximum 75 cases of transfer were settled by Naib Tehsildar Sundarnagar, while 12 cases of partition were settled by Sub-Tehsildar Pangna.

UP on top spot in domestic tourist arrivals for 3rd year in a row

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh continues to lead the nation in domestic tourist arrivals, retaining its number one position for the third consecutive year. The achievement also reflects the transformative impact of tourism on the state's economy.

Every tourist contributes to local employment through expenditures on accommodation, food, transportation, and shopping, thereby enhancing the standard of living for residents. Over time, this influx directly bolsters both the state and national economies.

To ensure UP remains a top destination for travelers, the Yogi Adityanath government is steadfast in its efforts to guarantee the safety, convenience, and seamless transportation of tourists. Boasting the highest number of operational expressways and three international airports, with the fourth-Asia's largest international airport at Jewar—set to open soon after a successful trial landing, the state is



continually improving the travel experience for visitors. It now has 15 functional airports, with six more currently under construction.

On the infrastructure front, six expressways are operational, and construction is underway on seven more. The expansion of metro services across major cities further enhances the tourist experience, ensuring pleasant, safe, and enjoyable journeys. Guided by the ethos of Aitihi Devo Bhava (Guest is God), the UP government is committed to providing world-class facilities and ensuring that every tourist leaves with lasting

memories of the state. To achieve this, the government has introduced initiatives such as training tourist guides and deploying specially trained tourism police in select locations.

Recognizing tourism's growing importance, educational institutions are launching new programmes. IGNOU, for example, has introduced a tourism degree focused on Kashi and its surroundings, with similar initiatives expected to follow, boosting the sector's development. Tourism Department officials here on Thursday said that the state has witnessed exponential growth in tourist

numbers over the past five years, with 8.70 crore visitors in 2020, rising to 10.97 crore in 2021, 32.18 crore in 2022, and 48.01 crore in 2023.

By June last, the state had already recorded 32.98 crore visitors. Over the last seven years, UP has hosted a total of 198.08 crore domestic and international tourists, official claimed. With the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj scheduled for 2025, this figure is projected to rise to an average of 35-40 crore visitors annually, further establishing Uttar Pradesh as a leading tourism hub in the country.

Himachal CM flags-off educational tour for orphaned kids under welfare

Shimla: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Thursday flagged off a 13-day educational and recreational tour for orphaned children, officially referred to as "children of the state", under its Sukh Aashray scheme.

This is the first batch of children for the tour, comprising 16 girls and six boys. The CM wished them an enriching and memorable journey as they departed in a volvo bus.

On this occasion, Sukhu said that the state government enacted a law for orphaned children and had adopted 6,000 of them under this legislation.

"The government launched the Sukh Aashray Yojana to ensure their welfare and provide for their educational needs. This scheme aims to empower these children and

support them in becoming self-reliant. As part of this initiative, the children will visit places such as Chandigarh, Delhi, and Goa for exposure and learning," he said.

"The group will visit Chandigarh from January 2 to 4 and stay at the Himalaya Bhawan, Chandigarh. They will then travel to Delhi on January 5 via the Shatabdi Express and explore various historical landmarks until January 8. On January 9, the children will fly to Goa, where they will stay in a three-star hotel and visit a tourist and historic attractions," he said.

"They are scheduled to return to Chandigarh on January 14," he added. Sukhu reiterated that the government acts as parents for these children and is committed to ensuring their rightful access to state resources.

Gunman who killed at least 12 people in shooting, dies by suicide

Podgorica (Montenegro). A gunman who fatally shot at least 12 people, including two children, in Montenegro has killed himself while surrounded by police, officials said Thursday.

At least four others were wounded in the shooting rampage in the western town of Cetinje on Wednesday that followed a bar brawl, officials said.

The shooter, identified as 45-year-old Aco Martinovic, killed the owner of the bar, the bar owner's children and his own family members, Interior Minister Danilo Saranovic said.

The attacker, who fled after the rampage, was later located and surrounded by police. He died after shooting himself in the head, Saranovic said.

Police had dispatched a special unit to search for the attacker in the town, which is located about 30 kilometres northwest of the capital, Podgorica. All the roads in and out of the city have been blocked as police swarmed the streets.

Saranovic said that Martinovic had died while being taken to a hospital in the capital and succumbed from the "severity of his injuries."

The government has declared three days of national mourning starting on Thursday, with Prime Minister Milojko Spasic describing the shooting as a "terrible tragedy."

Agency

US Army veteran who killed 15 in New Orleans attack was inspired by Islamic State

New Orleans (US). A US Army veteran who drove a pickup truck into a crowd of New Year's revelers in New Orleans, killing 15 people, had posted videos to social media hours before the carnage saying he was inspired by the Islamic State group and expressing a desire to kill, the president said.

The FBI said it was investigating early Wednesday's attack in which the driver steered around a police blockade and slammed into revelers before being shot dead by police as a terrorist act and did not believe he acted alone.

Investigators found guns and what appeared to be an improvised explosive device in the vehicle — which bore the flag of the Islamic State group — along with other explosive devices elsewhere in the city's famed French Quarter.

President Joe Biden said Wednesday evening that the FBI found the



Zion Parsons, 18, of Gulfport, Mississippi, said he saw the truck "barreling through, throwing people like in a movie scene, throwing people into the air."

"Bodies, bodies all up and down the street, everybody screaming and hollering," said Parsons, whose friend Nikyra Dedeaux was among the people killed. "This is not just an act of terrorism. This is evil," New Orleans



Police Superintendent Anne Kirkpatrick said. The attack is the latest example of a vehicle being used as a weapon to carry out mass violence and the deadliest IS-inspired assault on US soil in years.

The driver "defeated" safety measures in place to protect pedestrians, Kirkpatrick said, and was "hell-bent on creating the carnage and the damage that he did."

The FBI identified the driver as Shamsud-Din

Jabbar, 42, a US citizen from Texas, and said it was working to determine any potential associations with terrorist organisations.

"We do not believe that Jabbar was solely responsible," FBI Assistant Special Agent in charge Akeeba Dandekar said at a news conference.

Investigators found multiple improvised explosives, including two pipe bombs that were concealed within coolers and wired for remote detonation, according to a Louisiana State Police intelligence bulletin obtained by The Associated Press.

The bulletin, relying on preliminary information gathered soon after the attack, also cited surveillance footage that it said showed three men and a woman placing one of the devices, but federal officials did not immediately confirm that detail and it wasn't clear who they were or what connection they had to the attack, if any.

Indian grant to rehab develop Sri Lanka's north boatyard

Colombo. India will provide Sri Lankan Rupees 290 million to develop the Karainagar Boatyard in the Northern Province of the island nation, the Indian High Commission said here on Thursday.

The project envisages rehabilitation of Karainagar Boatyard of the Cey-Nor Foundation Ltd, incorporated under the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and operating under the Ministry of Fisheries, Aquatic and Ocean Resources.

"An MoU was signed and exchanged by High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka Santosh Jha and the then High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India Kshenuka Dhireni Seweraratne on December 16," the High Commission said in a release.

The project will cover civil works and procurement, including installation of plant, machinery, equipment, material, services etc. Once fully

operational, the rehabilitated boatyard will augment livelihood opportunities of local fishermen, create more job opportunities in the area, including through small establishments around the boatyard, and help enhance the supply of quality fisheries products, the release said.

With a development cooperation portfolio with Sri Lanka of over USD 5 billion, India has people-centric development assistance initiatives in virtually all major sectors in Sri Lanka, the High Commission said.

"Notable past projects in the Northern Province include construction and renovation of over 41,000 houses; a state-of-the-art Cultural Centre at Jaffna as a reconstruction project; removal of wrecks and dredging at Kankesanthurai Port; and construction and repairs at numerous schools and hospitals across Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya.

Pakistan military accepts mercy petitions of 19 convicts involved in May 9 violence

Islamabad. Pakistan military on Thursday said that it has accepted the mercy petitions of 19 convicts involved in attacks on the army facilities on May 9, 2023.

On May 9, 2023, former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party supporters allegedly attacked several military installations, including the army headquarters in Rawalpindi and the ISI building in Faisal-

abad, to vent their anger against the arrest of their party founder in a corruption case.

Hundreds of suspects were arrested in the countrywide swoop. Cases of more than 100 civilians were sent to the military court for trial because they were involved in the attack on military installations.

In December, military courts sentenced 85 civilians to prison terms ranging from two to ten years for their roles in



the violence. According to a statement issued by the army on Thursday, the sequel

to the promulgation of punishments to the May 9 tragedy convicts, they have exercised their right to appeal and have asked for mercy and remission in their punishments.

It said that 67 convicts had given their mercy petitions, adding that "48 petitions have been processed to Courts of Appeal, while petitions of 19 convicts have been accepted purely on humanitarian grounds in accordance with law".

It further stated that the mercy petitions of the remaining convicts will be decided in due course of time, following the legal process.

"The remission of punishments is a testament to the strength of the due process and fairness, which ensures that justice is served while also taking into account the principles of compassion and mercy," it said.

The army said that all those whose mercy appeals had been accepted

would be released after the completion of procedural formalities.

It also said that all those convicted retain the right of appeal and other legal remedies as per the law and the constitution.

It is the second batch of those involved in the attacks being released. Earlier in April 2024, the release of 20 convicts was also carried out on humanitarian grounds in accordance with the law.

BUSINESS

EV players to meet Goyal on Friday discuss infra-related issues

New Delhi. Stakeholders from the electric vehicle (EV) sector will hold a meeting with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal here on January 3 on issues, including infrastructure related to charging and battery swapping, sources said.

They said that officials from the Department of Heavy Industries are expected to attend the meeting.

Representatives from Tata, Mahindra, Mercedes-Benz India, Hero MotoCorp, and other companies have been invited to the deliberations, they added.

Earlier in March last year, the government rolled out an electric-vehicle policy, under which duty concessions will be given to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum investment of USD 500 million.

The companies setting up manufacturing facilities for e-vehicles are allowed to import a limited number of cars at lower customs duty.

The policy seeks to promote India as a manufacturing destination for EVs and attract investment from reputed

global EV manufacturers. However, no company has availed the benefit of the policy so far.

The fast-growing EV market in India is catching the eyes of global players. India's electric vehicles market is expected to grow to one crore units in annual sales by 2030 and create five crore direct and indirect jobs, according to the Economic Survey 2022-23.

As per industry estimates, the total EV sales in India stood at around 10 lakh units in 2022. In India, Tata Motors is the leading player in passenger electric vehicles. The company's current EV portfolio comprises Nexon EV range, Tiago EV and Tigor EV.

India will ensure sufficient charging infrastructure to support the massive adoption of electric vehicles across the country, according to HD Kumaraswamy, Union Minister for Heavy Industries.

The government has plans to install 10,763 public charging stations across the country under the FAME-II scheme.

Agency

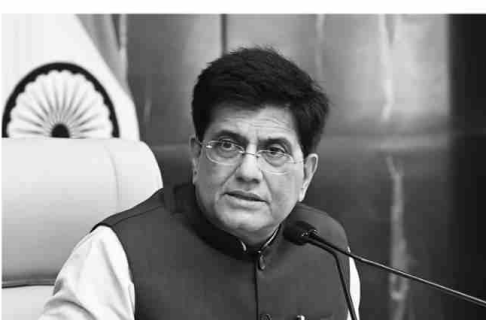
India-EFTA trade pact likely to be implemented before end of 2025: Goyal

New Delhi. The implementation process of free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the four-nation European bloc EFTA is progressing fast and is expected to come into force before the end of this year, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said.

The two sides signed the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) on March 10, 2024. Under the pact, India has received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products such as Swiss watches, chocolates and cut and polished diamonds at lower or zero duties.

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. "Yes, EFTA is progressing very fast," Goyal told PTI when asked if the agreement would come into effect this year.

The minister said the Swiss Council of States has approved the agree-



ment and now will go to their National Council for approval.

"So this overwhelming support in political circles in Switzerland for the TEPA with EFTA is truly a sign of the times to come... and in their statement also, it shows that it has cleared an important hurdle and they are hoping to bring in entry to force by autumn of 2025, before the end of calendar year 2025," Goyal said.

The bloc committed an investment of USD 100 billion — USD 50 billion within 10 years after the

implementation of the agreement and another USD 50 billion in the next five years — which would facilitate the creation of 1 million direct jobs in India. This is a first-of-its-kind pledge agreed upon in any of the trade deals signed by India so far.

The commitment is the key substance of the TEPA (Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement), which took almost 16 years to conclude, for India in return for opening its markets for several products coming from the EFTA nations.

There is a provision in the agreement that if the proposed investments would not come because of some reasons, India can suspend duty concessions to the four countries.

Domestic customers will get access to high-quality Swiss products such as watches, chocolates, biscuits, and clocks at lower prices as India will phase out customs duties under the trade pact on these goods over 10 years. It is taking time to implement the agree-

The two sides signed the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) on March 10, 2024. Under the pact, India has received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products such as Swiss watches, chocolates and cut and polished diamonds at lower or zero duties.

ment due to an elaborate ratification process of these pacts in different countries. In India, such agreements are approved by the union Cabinet, in EFTA countries, they need approval from their parliament.

On the progress of FTA negotiations with other countries, Goyal said he has held meetings with the new UK trade minister on the proposed pact.

India and the UK are expected to hold the next round of talks for a proposed FTA later this month to resolve the pending issues and close the negotiations.

Govt clears PLI incentive of Rs 246 cr sought by M&M, TaMo

New Delhi. Ministry of Heavy Industries has approved incentive claims of Rs 246 crore submitted by Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors under the Rs 25,938 crore PLI scheme for the automobile and auto components industry, officials said.

Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H D Kumaraswamy has expressed satisfaction with the progress made by

auto original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) toward achieving localised manufacturing through initiatives like PLI scheme.

He also congratulated Tata Motors and M&M for developing this capability and exuded confidence that more applicants would take advantage of the PLI scheme.

According to sources, Tata Motors submitted

an incentive claim of approximately Rs 142.13 crore based on determined incremental sales of AAT products totalling Rs 800.59 crore for FY 2023-24.

The eligible sales of Advanced Automotive Technology (AAT) products from Tata Motors include the Tiago EV (electric four-wheeler), Starbus EV (electric bus), and Ace EV (electric cargo vehicle), totalling Rs 1,380.24 crore.

Mahindra & Mahindra

submitted an incentive claim of Rs 104.08 crore based on determined incremental sales of AAT products totalling Rs 800.59 crore for FY 2023-24, with a cumulative investment of Rs 978.30 crore, officials said.

The eligible sales from their e3W models, including Treo, Treo Zor, and Zor Grand amount to Rs 836.02 crore, supported by a certificate of

domestic value addition (DVA) issued by the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI).

"The total claims from these two applicants amount to approximately Rs 246 crore, which have been examined and recommended by the Project Management Agency (PMA) and subsequently approved by Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI), an official said.

The scheme aims to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities in AAT products, address cost disabilities, and establish a robust supply chain.

Approved on September 15, 2021, the PLI scheme is designed to operate from FY 2023-24 to FY 2027-28, with incentive disbursements scheduled from FY 2024-25 to FY 2028-29. Under this scheme,

incentives of 13-18 per cent are offered for components related to electric vehicles and hydrogen fuel cells, while other AAT components receive incentives of 8 per cent and 13 per cent.

As of September, 2024, the scheme has already facilitated an investment of Rs 20,715 crore, leading to incremental sales of Rs 10,472 crore, said an official. Agency

India's textile exports grow 7 pc to USD 21.35 bn

New Delhi. India's textiles and apparel exports, including handicrafts, grew 7 per cent during the April-October period to USD 21.35 billion, the government said on Thursday.

The outbound shipments from the sector stood at USD 20 billion in the same period of the previous financial year, FY 2023-24.

"The Ready Made Garments (RMG) category with exports of USD 8,733 million has the largest share (41 per cent) in the total exports (USD 21,358 million) during the period of April-October of FY 2024-25, followed by Cotton Textiles (33 per cent, USD 7,082 million), Man-Made Textiles (15 per cent, USD 3,105 million)," the Textiles Ministry said.

Growth of exports was observed in all principal commodities during April-October of FY 2024-25, as compared to corresponding period of FY 2023-24, except wool and handloom, which declined by 19 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively, the Ministry said.

Meanwhile, the overall import of textiles and apparel including handicrafts declined 1 per cent during the April-October period of FY 2024-25 (USD 5,425 million), compared to the same period of FY 2023-24 (USD 5,464 million). The man-made textiles category with import of USD 1,859 million has the largest share (34 per cent) in the total imports (USD 5,425 million) during the period of April-October of FY 2024-25, as there is a demand-supply gap in this sector, the Ministry said.

Cricket

Split Wide Open Gautam Gambhir Rohit ignore each other on match eve

Sydney
It was around half past one when Gautam Gambhir walked towards the centre strip at the Sydney Cricket Ground with Jasprit Bumrah in tow.

A few minutes later, Rohit Sharma also joined the duo in the middle but there was hardly any communication between the head coach and the designated captain.

Then Gambhir showed up at the pre-match press conference (usually the captain attends it) and chose not to confirm Rohit's place in the playing eleven for the fifth and final Test.

"We will look at the pitch and decide," Gambhir said when asked about Rohit's place in the team.

In the media interaction, Gambhir also spoke about "honesty" and "performance being only criteria to be in Indian dressing room" and soon after that, he was engaged in a conversation with Bumrah while the rest of his teammates were warming up with a round of foot volleys.

All present at the SCG witnessed a complete communication breakdown between skipper and the head coach.

There were already enough indications but the developments on Thursday made one thing as clear as daylight. Rohit Sharma is no longer in coach Gautam Gambhir's scheme of things after scoring just one second innings half-century in the eight Tests that he has played this season.

It is learnt that an influential cricket administrator, who commands a lot of respect in the BCCI, had a word with the head coach to explore if the skipper can be allowed to play the Sydney game and bow out from the Test arena. However, the head coach's priority is to



ensure India wins in Sydney and remains in hunt for a place in the WTC final.

Such is the state of affairs that Rohit was more comfortable speaking to his deputy Bumrah and chairman of selectors Ajit Agarwal than Gambhir.

After a game of foot volleys in which Rohit and Rishabh Pant were on one side and Virat Kohli on the other, suddenly the penny dropped with a different looking slip cordon.

While Pant was behind the stumps for the slip catching session, the formation behind the batter had Virat Kohli at first slip, KL Rahul at second, Nitish Kumar Reddy at third with Yashasvi Jaiswal manning the gully.

There were no signs of Rohit yet as one headed to the net practice area outside the main stadium.

Ravindra Jadeja was the first one in the nets to receive throwdowns but then Kohli entered followed by Jaiswal and

KL Rahul. When Shubman Gill joined the fourth net, the batting sequence of the top-order became somewhat clear. All this while, Rohit and Bumrah were in the dressing room.

The one who looked the most edgy was Kohli, who was in fact bowled twice during the session — once by Nitish Reddy and other time by Washington Sundar.

In one of the throwdown nets, Pant was facing Dnyanand Garani.

Once Pant finished his nets, rather than walking back to the dressing room, he walked towards the small wooden gallery where a middle-aged couple were sitting. They happened to be Gill's parents, the only ones allowed in the gallery area.

After nearly 35 minutes, Rohit quietly walked into the net arena and without his kit.

While Gambhir stood at the farthest net, talking to Bumrah, Rohit was at the

other end conversing with video analyst Hari Prasad. They stood in their respective places and there was not even minimal interaction between the two.

After the top-order had almost finished their session, Rohit entered the nets. It was just like MCG where he had come to bat after all recognised batters had finished their stint even though he was set to open the innings.

How did Rohit look during his 30-odd minutes of practice? To be honest, he looked a shadow of his old self. He was bowled after missing the line of T Dilip's throwdown. His reaction to deliveries were late.

The most interesting aspect was when Rohit was batting, at the adjacent nets, it was Reddy who was looking in fine touch as he milled most deliveries. The head coach was standing at the umpire's position in the youngster's nets as the captain went about his routines.

Once Rohit was done with his training, he along with Bumrah and Agarwal left the nets but Gambhir stayed back.

It is learnt that during this meeting after training it was decided that Rohit Sharma would be "rested", which in Indian cricket parlance means "dropped by intimidation".

Nearly 45 minutes to an hour later when the team dispersed, most players came out of the exit door leading to the net area before heading towards the team bus.

Rohit didn't come out with the team and boarded the bus after coming out from the other gate.

As the Indian team were leaving, the SCG operations team was practising its pre-match drill.

"The Indian team led by captain Rohit Sharma," blared the SCG loudspeaker. It sounded different.

Pat Cummins likely to miss tour of Sri Lanka



Sydney
Australia captain Pat Cummins hinted that he may skip the tour of Sri Lanka later this month to be present for the birth of his second child.

Australia are scheduled to play two Tests in Sri Lanka on January 29 and February 6, around the same time his wife -- Becky -- is due to give birth.

"It's pretty hard to plan exactly the day, but definitely I might miss the Sri Lanka tour," Cummins told 'The Daily Telegraph' at the launch of the Pink Test, starting here on Friday.

In Cummins' absence, Steve Smith or Travis Head will lead Australia.

Cummins revealed that his mother's death last year had a profound impact on reshaping his priorities in life. The pacer had returned midway through the tour of India to be with his mother when she passed away.

"In some ways, it really makes you focus in on what I think is important. It's family, it's enjoyment, it's trying to find joy in life and I think that's been a slight shift in the way I've approached playing and touring and it's just given me that real decluttering

mindset. "When you go out, you just want to play well, and of course, there's going to be pressure, but you don't want to forget what mum and dad used to say to us every time we went out to play as kids: 'Go and enjoy it. Try your best, but make sure you enjoy it.' I try to remind myself of that every time I go on a tour or play."

"Whatever you choose to do, there's always an opportunity cost," Cummins reflected.

"In the last few years, that's really rung true. When you go away on tour, you're missing out on family time or moments. That's a deliberate choice, so you have to make sure you're making the most of that tour or that game, if that makes sense."

Cummins has previously admitted that he regretted missing the early weeks of his son Albie's life due to his commitment to the World Cup. "I missed a big chunk (of Albie's early days) last time and I want to work out how we can spend a bit more time at home for that initial period this time," he had said.

Marsh dropped Starc declared fit for BGT finale

Sydney
All-rounder Beau Webster will replace an out-of-form Mitchell Marsh in Australia's squad for the fifth and final Test against India, home skipper Pat Cummins said here on Thursday.

The 33-year-old Marsh scored only 73 runs in seven innings across four Tests and Cummins cited this as the reason for his axing. He has bowled merely 33 overs in the series so far, claiming just three wickets.

"We have one change in our side. Beau Webster comes in place of Mitch Marsh. Mitch knows that he hasn't scored enough runs," Cummins said at the pre-match press conference.

"Mitchie obviously hasn't quite got to runs or perhaps wickets said he would have liked this series. So, it felt like it was time for a fresh up and Beau's been with the squad. He's been great. But I feel like now is a good week for Beau to get a chance."

The 31-year-old Webster, who played against India A in November, has scored 52.47 runs and taken 148 wickets in first-class cricket. Webster has been in good form in the Sheffield Shield as well and averaged over 55 last season.

"He's just been one of those star performers for Tasmania with the bat or ball, or in the field. He always seems to have a big impact, quite aggressive. (He) can change the game, like we've seen Mitch Marsh or Travis Head or Alex Carey do in that middle order."

Cummins admitted that Webster's crafty bowling played a role in the decision. That was definitely a factor. It's always nice to have a fifth bowler that bowls quite a lot for Tasmania. So if we need to call on that, we can.

"Firstly, if you're going to bat six, you picked for your batting, which he's shown in Shield over the last couple years when he takes the game on, and he's really changed some games for Tasmania. That pace bowling of Beau's going to be handy," said Cummins.

However, Cummins asserted that the Boxing Day match will not be Marsh's last Test for Australia.

"Particularly here in Australia, when a batter misses out or gets dropped, it's always seen as a big thing, but it's not the case. We love pulling a squad of players together who we can call on at different times, and we thought the time was right for Mitchy to have a fresh-up and miss this one.

"But doesn't mean that he won't be back in the team at some point," the skipper said.

We will meet when you get better Kapil Dev tells an emotional Vinod Kambli



Mumbai
Legendary all-rounder Kapil Dev has promised former India batter Vinod Kambli, who walked out of a Thane hospital here, to visit him at the earliest.

Kambli was admitted in ICU on December 21 due to health complications which included urinary infection and cramps but doctors later said the 52-year-old also had clots in his brain.

On Wednesday, Kambli moved out of the hospital appearing physically frail but high in spirits, and posed for photographs with the hospital staff, besides playing a short game of cricket.

Shailesh Thakur, director of Akruiti Hospital, said during Kambli's hospitalisation, he had also made a video call to former India captain Kapil Dev whose batch of 1983 World Cup winners have also extended their offer to help the Mumbai cricketer.

"Hi Kapil paaji how are you," replied an emotional Kambli to

Kapil's greeting through the call. The World Cup-winning captain then spoke to his one-time teammate for a brief while.

"I will come and see you. You are looking good, you have coloured your beard. Don't rush. If you need to stay (in the hospital) for a few more days, please don't rush. Tell the doctors it is fine if there is a need to stay on for two more days," Kapil said.

"Take care. When you will better and come out, I will come to meet you. Look after yourself, love you," Kapil added.

Kapil also thanked Thakur. "Thank you Shailesh, (for) you are looking after him. He is looking good, look after him."

Thakur said the hospital will extend all possible help to Kambli.

"I have been a fan of Kambli sir all my life and it was tough to see him struggling because of his health issues. We brought him to our hospital and we will also take care of his medical expenses and hospitalisation in the future," Thakur said.

Cummins says no let up in intensity as Australia eye win in Sydney Test

Sydney
Australia captain Pat Cummins asserted that there would be no let up in intensity despite the hosts grabbing a 2-1 lead heading into the fifth and final Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India, beginning here on Friday.

A commanding 184-run victory in the Boxing Day Test has placed Australia in pole position to reclaim the Trophy for the first time since 2014-15.

"I mean, it's always the preferred position. But you know, you go into every Test match trying to win. So, it's no different this week," Cummins said.

"But I'm really happy with how the boys have played in the last three Tests. We've shown that we've been the front-runners, and the aim again this week is to keep it up," he added.

The skipper, however, conceded there are some issues with the Aussies' batting.

"I think, no doubt, there are times when we would have liked to score more runs. In that last game in Melbourne, we would have liked to push that lead out to 400-500, given we were in such a good position. But that's the cricket."

Cummins said the pitch at the Sydney Cricket Ground could be a little different from the traditional surfaces where spinners often enjoyed their outings, while offering copious help to batters as well.

"It's a tough one to call exactly. It's a little bit different from the traditional SCG wicket. I think the two Sheffield wickets this year seemed to play really well. The teams were happy with the wicket, which felt like there was a bit on



offer for the bowlers, but also runs to be scored.

"It looks pretty good. No doubt there'll be stages where it's good for batting, but potentially it will break up and spin towards the end. You never really know whether weather plays a part here as well. I've played a few Test matches here, but outside of that, only one-days and stuff, so I'm no expert."

Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has been a thorn in Australia's flesh all series. The right-arm quick was responsible for India's only win in the series at Perth, and has swung the momentum in favour of the visitors several times.

"No doubt he's bowling well at the moment. He's tough (to face).

"Hopefully, by the time I come in, it's late in the day and he's bowled a fair bit, so it's easier for me. I've faced him quite a bit across the world in different formats, but he always poses a challenge," Cummins said on his plans to tackle Bumrah.

"Last game, it helped that I was at the non-striker's end," he said on a lighter note.

Unfortunate that India aren't travelling to Pakistan for CT: Shane Watson

Sydney
Former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson termed India's inability to travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy as "unfortunate" but said the ICC showpiece will offer star batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma a chance to liberate themselves from a prolonged form slump.

The global governing body has adopted the 'Hybrid' model for this edition of the CT with India scheduled to play its matches at a neutral venue in Dubai.

"It's unfortunate that things have worked out that way for sure. But there's no doubt that what everyone loves seeing — the India-Pakistan games. Whenever they come together,



or, whether it's an ICC event, it is a really special time because we've got a sense of what's on the line," Watson

told the media here during the Champions Trophy Tour.

"It's unfortunate that India aren't travelling to Pakistan for this Champions Trophy. But, unfortunately, that's just the way it is right now," he added.

Watson said the CT offers cricket a fresh context, breaking the long lull of four years between two ODI World Cups.

"The CT is a critically important tournament in world cricket because the One Day World Cup is only once in every four years. It is great because it breaks up those four years," he noted.

The 43-year-old also said the CT keeps the ODI format alive amidst the

rightful prominence Test cricket receives and the upsurge of T20s.

"You keep giving one-day cricket the energy that it needs because it is a great game. It's a great format. It provides that balance between Test cricket and T20 cricket."

"We never want to lose the format of one-day cricket, but there needs to be context as often as possible. And the CT certainly provides that."

"When you play a CT where there's only eight teams, there is something riding on every ball. And as a team, you have to hit the ground spinning. Otherwise, you'll be out like it was for the Australian team in 2013."

Then defending champions Australia had finished at the bottom of

Group A with a solitary win and crashed out of the tournament, which India won eventually under MS Dhoni.

Current form no worry for Rohit, Kohli both Rohit and Kohli were part of that victory in England 12 years back, but now these two superstars are finding it tough to make big runs as they did in the past.

But Watson was not worried over the Indians' patchy form for talks surrounding their retirement.

"I don't think it (current poor form) will really play a part at all with Rohit Sharma and Virat's impact in one-day cricket. It's going to be different conditions where they're playing in Dubai. One-day cricket does really free them both as well," said Watson.

“Look its tough and there is always going to be hype when you have a 19-year-old making debut because he is in rare company at his age.” — Simon Katich





Liverpool vs. Man United is a rivalry for the ages but looks like a mismatch now

Manchester
Liverpool vs. Manchester United used to be English soccer's fiercest rivalry. Sunday's showdown at Anfield pits two teams going in opposite directions.

Liverpool, top of the Premier League and the Champions League, has its sights on equalling United's record 20 Premier League titles and more. Liverpool has lost to United just once in seven years in the Premier League, and most recently won 3-0 at Old Trafford in September.

United is closer to the relegation zone than the top in another calamitous campaign which has seen the departure of a manager, a sporting director and the exile of one of its leading players.

The gap between Liverpool and United is widening to the point where one is in contention for a quadruple of trophies and the other is talking about top flight survival.

How have English soccer's two most successful teams ended up on such differing paths?

Managerial mistakes
United has been in alarming decline since winning a record 20th title in Alex Ferguson's final season as manager in 2013. It hasn't come close to winning another since his retirement. Ruben Amorim is the sixth permanent manager hired in the last 11-plus years.

David Moyes, Louis van Gaal, Jose Mourinho, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Erik ten Hag all failed to deliver consistent success and the upheaval from so much managerial change has repeatedly set back United as the club has lurched from one direction to another.



Amorim has quickly realized the size of the job after six defeats in his last eight games. This week he admitted he could be in a relegation fight.

"It is a possibility," he said. "We have to be clear with our fans."

Succession planning
While United has made a mess of trying to replace a managerial great, Liverpool has made it look easy.

Arne Slot took on the unenviable task of filling the void left by Jurgen Klopp at the end of last season and has driven the team to new levels.

Klopp won a full set of trophies at Anfield and was denied much more success in the Premier League than just the 2020 title by Pep Guardiola's Manchester City.

Slot has Liverpool leading the Premier League by six points with a game in

hand, the Champions League by three points, and through to the semifinals of the English League Cup.

Perhaps he has been fortunate to take over when City has gone into freefall but Liverpool's 14 wins from 18 games in the league would be title-challenging form in any season.

Transfers
Billions have been spent at United yet there have been more costly errors than transfer successes.

Superstar signings such as Angel di Maria, Alexis Sanchez, Paul Pogba, Casemiro and Jadon Sancho have proved to be big disappointments. From the last transfer window, signings such as Joshua Zirkzee, Matthijs de Ligt have struggled.

Amorim is likely to have to sell in January if he wants to bring more players

in and Marcus Rashford, recently dropped from the team, could be his best chance of raising funds.

Conversely, Liverpool has been one of the savviest operators in the transfer market over the past decade. When it has spent big, it has generally spent well, with the likes of Virgil van Dijk and Alison proving pillars of its trophy haul. Mohamed Salah and Andy Robertson were relative bargains.

Savvy ownership
Under Fenway Sports Group (FSG), the American conglomerate that also owns the Boston Red Sox, Liverpool became a major force in England and Europe again and ended a 29-year title drought in the Premier League.

The hiring of Klopp was pivotal to that but so was Michael Edwards, the sporting director who was integral to so many transfer successes. He left in 2022 but is back as FSG chief executive of football and helped to guide the transition to Slot.

United's American owner, the Glazer family, has faced regular fan protests since its leveraged buyout of the club in 2005.

The minority investment by British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe last year sparked optimism. He assumed control of the club's soccer operations but that hasn't gone to plan so far.

Ten Hag was fired months after signing a contract extension and sporting director Dan Ashworth departed after less than six months. The signings in Ratcliffe's first summer transfer window also look questionable with United 14th in the standings and just seven points above the relegation zone.

Narendra Yadav urges Govt to promote mountaineering in India

New Delhi

India's youngest male mountaineer to conquer the Seven Summits, Narendra Singh Yadav, has called on the government to do more to promote mountaineering in the country and to value climbers for their contributions beyond natural disasters.

Yadav scaled Antarctica's highest peak, Mount Vinson Massif, on December 25, braving temperatures as low as -52°C, to complete his conquest of the highest peaks on all seven continents.

"The value of mountaineers is often understood by the government only when natural disasters like earthquakes or floods strike. At the district level, a dedicated rescue force needs to be created," Yadav who is Antarctica, said through a video call.

"If we talk about the rescue course, very few have completed it. It's not easy, but those trained in rescue operations are the ones needed the most during natural calamities," he said.

The 30-year-old stressed that India's culture of risk aversion is a major barrier to the growth of mountaineering and other adventure sports. "We train our children to be risk-averse from the start. We always stress on striving for those things that can be easily available. Mountaineering should be promoted not just as a sport, but as a way to connect with nature, appreciate it, and learn how to preserve and protect it," he said.

Yadav took up mountaineering after being inspired by his cousin, Santosh Yadav, the first woman in the world to summit Mount Everest twice. He was also guided by his father, an Indian Army veteran and an instructor



tor at the High Altitude Warfare School (HAWS) in Gulmarg.

When asked about the most challenging peak he's conquered, Yadav named Mount Denali in Alaska.

"Every mountain presents its own challenges — height, atmosphere and terrain. While there are many peaks tougher than Everest at altitudes of 5000-6000 meters, the toughest one for me was Mount Denali, both technically and physically."

"After that, Mount Vinson in Antarctica was the next most difficult. Though at 4800 meters, it's not as high as Everest, Antarctica's extreme conditions make it incredibly tough," he explained.

Yadav also warned aspiring mountaineers to ensure they are technically astute and physically and mentally fit before attempting high-altitude climbs.

"Everest has many dead bodies of those who went there unprepared. They hire private companies and often end up staying there permanently. The real ascent starts at the point where the oxygen runs out, and that requires technical skills, physical strength, and mental toughness."

Chosen for Khel Ratna honour Gukesh promises best moves in future as well



New Delhi

Chess world champion D Gukesh on Thursday promised his "best moves on 64 squares and outside" in future as well after being chosen for the prestigious 'Khel Ratna' award by the government.

Gukesh recently became the youngest-ever world champion when he defeated China's Ding Liren. He is only the second Indian after Viswanathan Anand to claim the title.

"Honourable Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji, I am truly grateful and feel humbled to receive the prestigious Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award. Your words and guidance have always inspired me to strive for excellence and make

the nation proud," Gukesh wrote on X.

"I promise to continue delivering my best moves on 64 squares and outside of it. Thank you Hon. Sports Minister @mansukhmandviya Ji for your constant support."

Gukesh was chosen for the highest sporting honour in the country along with shooter Manu Bhaker, hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh and para-athlete Praveen Kumar.

He had become the challenger for the world title after winning the Candidates Tournament earlier in 2023 when he was 17.

The Chennai-based Gukesh had also become the top-ranked player from India last year to end Anand's 37-year run.

Manu Bhaker Gukesh among four athletes to get Khel Ratna award

New Delhi

The quartet of shooter Manu Bhaker, chess world champion D Gukesh, men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh and para-athlete Praveen Kumar were on Thursday named recipients of this year's Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award — the country's highest sporting honour.

The 22-year-old Bhaker became independent India's first athlete to win two medals in a single edition of the Olympics with her bronze-winning show in the 10m air pistol individual and 10m air pistol mixed team events in August.

In the same Games, Harmanpreet led the Indian hockey team to its second consecutive bronze medal.

The 18-year-old Gukesh, on the other hand, became the youngest ever World champion while also helping the Indian team win a historic gold in the Chess Olympiad last year.

The fourth recipient will be para high-jumper Praveen, who was crowned the T64 champion in the Paris Paralympics.

The T64 classification is for athletes who have one or both legs missing below the knee and rely on a prosthetic leg for running.

The awardees will receive their awards from the President of India at a specially organised function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 17th January, 2025 (Friday) at 11:00 hours," the sports ministry said in a press release.

Youngest world chess champion D Gukesh meets Gautam Adani

New Delhi

Billionaire Gautam Adani called teenager Gukesh Dommaraju — who became the youngest world chess champion by beating defending champion Ding Liren of China — a testament of India's unstoppable youth.

The chess champion, along with his parents, met Adani in Ahmedabad.

"It was an absolute privilege to meet and hear the victory story of reigning World Chess Champion @DGukesh," Adani, chairman of ports-to-energy Adani Group, said in a post on X.

Posting pictures with the teenager and his parents, Adani said, "Equally inspiring was meeting his incredible parents, Dr Rajnikanth and Dr Padmanavathi, whose quiet sacrifices laid the foundation for his success." At just 18, Gukesh's poise and brilliance are a testament to India's unstoppable youth. Prodigies like him are inspiring a new generation, building an army of champions ready to dominate global chess for



decades. This is the confident, resurgent and rising India. Jai Hind!" he said.

Gukesh became the 18th world champion after defeating Ding in a 14-game match in Singapore last month.

He is four years younger than Garry Kasparov, who had been the youngest world champion since 1985 when he beat Anatoly Karpov.

On Thursday, Gukesh was among four athletes who the government decided to award the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award — the country's high-

est sporting honour.

Besides becoming the youngest-ever world champion, Gukesh had also helped the Indian team win a historic gold in the Chess Olympiad last year.

"The awardees will receive their awards from the President of India at a specially organised function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 17th January, 2025 (Friday) at 11:00 hours," the sports ministry said in a press release on Thursday.

After the Singapore match, Adani had called his victory "stunning".

"At just 18, @DGukesh has made history! What an achievement - the youngest-ever undisputed classical chess world champion, beating the great Ding Liren! This isn't just a victory - it is a defining moment for India's chess revolution, where an entire bold generation of champions dares to dream and inspires an entire nation to rise! Congratulations Gukesh!" he had said in a post on X on December 12.

Golf goes indoors on prime time with high-tech TGL league

Palm Beach Gardens (US)

Xander Schauffele is making his season debut twice in the span of seven days at venues separated by a lot more than some 5,000 miles.

One is at The Sentry, the season opener on the PGA Tour that starts Thursday on hilly terrain in Maui with endless views of the Pacific Ocean. Schauffele knows what to expect at Kapalua having won the tournament six years ago with a 62 in the final round.

The other starts next Tuesday inside a 250,000-square-foot building on the campus of Palm Beach State College, a technological wonder when it comes to golf and a game that will only look familiar because of the players involved.

This one makes Schauffele curiously excited.

It's the debut of the TMRW Golf League, a six-team league featuring Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy among 24 players — 13 of them major champions — in fast-paced, two-hour matches to be televised in prime time on ESPN platforms.

"I've been in there twice and played a mock match, and there was still a wow factor — even the second time around with lights and the stadium and really big screens," said Schauffele, who plays for New York Golf Club.

"It's different from what they'll see from a conventional standpoint."

It's team golf played indoors in the SoFi Center, a combination of simulator golf and actual shots to a huge putting surface that can rotate 360 degrees to change angles and slopes for different shots.

New York takes on The Bay Golf Club (San Francisco) in the opener Tuesday at 9 p.m. EST. Three players from the four-man teams compete in 15-hole matches — nine holes of alternate shot and six holes of singles, with each player going two holes.

Woods and his Jupiter Links face Los Angeles on Jan. 14. The schedule was created to mesh with players' tour schedule. The top four teams advance to the playoffs, and the best-of-3 championship series is two weeks before the Masters.

The team winning the SoFi Cup gets \$9 million.

TGL is a product of TMRW Sports, the entertainment group of which Woods and McIlroy are co-founders. It hopes to appeal to a new audience, and even traditionalists, in an arena that can hold 1,500 fans.

Players hit on real grass (or sand,



the same used in bunkers at Augusta-National) from 35 yards away into a screen 64 feet wide and 53 feet high. Architects have pitched in to design 30 holes that will be used at given times during the competition. For shots 50 yards or closer, players hit actual shots into the green.

The TV window is two hours, and the competition includes a 40-second shot clock. This should move quickly, another element that sets it apart from traditional golf.

"It's nothing like we've ever seen before, especially in golf," McIlroy said.

"I see this as being complementary to everything else that is going on in the world of golf," he said. "I'm still a traditionalist in a lot of ways... But I think there are certain things that we can do to innovate and try to appeal to a different and younger demographic, especially trying to condense it into a time frame that is a little bit more digestible and putting it on at a time where we're maybe going to get a few more eyeballs."

TGL is a year behind schedule. It was supposed to debut at the start of 2024 until a power outage caused damage to the inflatable dome structure. With another year to plan, organizers went with a permanent arena that features locker rooms, dazzling lights and the massive screen. Electronic boards on both sides of the screen show the score, shot clock and yardages. The entire playing area is nearly the size of a football field.

Simulator golf? Billy Horschel (Atlanta Drive GC) says that makes it sound like a gimmick, and he says TGL is more than that.

"We're hitting off real grass, we're hitting real shots. We're playing on some artificial surface, but there's a lot of technology that's gone into

this," Horschel said. "We want to make it different than what people are seeing on the golf course. This is supposed to be different. It's supposed to be new, it's supposed to be fast, engaging, in a two-hour window when you're going to be able to see every golf shot."

"You're going to be able to see guys more engaging than they would be on a PGA Tour event."

Players will wear microphones. They will be presented with yardage and wind conditions before each shot. Winning a hole is worth one point (no carryovers for a halve).

The six teams are Atlanta Drive, New York, Los Angeles, The Bay (San Francisco), Boston Common and Jupiter Links.

Team ownership has power brokers that include Atlanta Falcons owner Arthur Blank (Atlanta Drive), Fenway Sports Group (Boston), Stephen Curry and former Milwaukee Bucks owner Marc Lasry (Bay) and New York Mets owner Steve Cohen (New York). Serena and Venus Williams are part owners of Los Angeles.

It's night golf, sandwiched between college basketball on Monday and Tuesday nights. It's team golf. And it's indoor golf, the most unusual aspect of all.

"It's a brand new concept, a brand new presentation of golf. There's something exciting about seeing what that's going to be like and being on the ground floor," said Patrick Cantlay, part of the Atlanta Drive team.

"It gives a chance for a different perspective on people watching PGA Tour players," he said. "I think it will be more personable, more action-packed. And I think the stadium they built is extremely impressive — impressive in person, and an impressive feat of engineering."

Arjun Kapoor Bhumi Pednekar's 'Mere Husband Ki Biwi' to release on February 21



New Delhi
"Mere Husband Ki Biwi", a comedy film starring Arjun Kapoor, Rakul Preet



Singh, and Bhumi Pednekar, will be released in theatres on February 21, the makers said on Thursday.
Mudassar Aziz, known for

'Hidden Love' star Zhao Lusi breaks silence on depression

New Delhi
Chinese actor Zhao Lusi, best



known for her globally popular romance series "Hidden Love", has opened up about battling depression as well as facing mental and physical abuse in a social media post following her recent hospitalisation.

The 26-year-old actor became a subject of headlines and speculation after pictures surfaced on internet, showing Lusi being taken to a hospital in a wheelchair.

Over the past few days, several other video clips began circulating online showing her walking unsteadily and failing to hold a spoon, leaving many fans concerned about her health condition.

On Wednesday, Lusi posted a statement on her official Weibo account and apologised to her fans for "taking up public attention". She said the post is her first and last comment on the stories and rumours surrounding her health.

"Before all this, I never allowed my illness to affect my work or those around me. I also acknowledge my own shortcomings. I've always thought of myself as patient, but over the past half month, I've realized that deep down, I'm not as magnanimous as I believed. So, I do hold some responsibility for the situation," she said.

The actor revealed that she has been battling depression since 2019 when she first noticed the symptoms but was told by people to not make a big deal out of it and think positively.

"I thought I was being overly sensitive and didn't take my mental health seriously. In 2021, I started feeling as if bugs were crawling on me, accompanied by nee-

movies such as "Happy Bhag Jayegi", "Pati Patni Aur Woh" and "Khel Khel Mein", has directed the

"Mere Husband Ki Biwi" is produced by Vasu Bhagnani, Jacky Bhagnani, and Deepshikha

Deshmukh through the banner Pooja Entertainment.

The company shared a poster of the movie on Instagram and captioned it, "Yahaan pyaar ki geometry thodi twisted hai—kyunki ye love triangle nahi, pura circle hai! #MereHusbandKiBiwi In Cinemas 21st February, 2025."

As a filmmaker, Aziz said he believes in telling stories that entertain, and leave audiences of all ages smiling.

"Mere Husband Ki Biwi" is a film that celebrates the quirks and complexities of romantic relationships. I've always been one for wholesome entertainers—movies that bring friends & families together, make them laugh, and give them something to talk about. That's exactly what we've aimed for with this film.

"It's lighthearted, relatable, and full of moments that will stay with you long after you leave the theatre. I was eager to cast it exactly this way and when the audience meets their characters, they will know just why," the director said.



Singer Armaan Malik ties knot with girlfriend Aashna Shroff

New Delhi

Popular singer Armaan Malik and his longtime girlfriend Aashna Shroff are now married, the couple announced on Thursday.

Malik, 29, and Shroff tied the knot in a private ceremony and shared the news in a joint post on Instagram.

"Tu hi mera ghar," they wrote in the post, alongside pictures from the wedding, showing Malik in a peach-coloured attire and Shroff in an orange lehenga.

Malik and Shroff, a fashion influencer, started dating in 2017 and became engaged in August 2023. At the time, the singer had released a music video for Shroff, titled "Kasam Se: The Proposal".

The couple officially became engaged in a ceremony almost two months later.

'Manjummel Boys' dir Chidambaram joins hands with Jithu Madhavan



New Delhi

Manjummel Boys' director Chidambaram and Jithu Madhavan, the writer of "Avesham", are teaming up for an upcoming Malayalam film.

The untitled project, which promises to be a "spectacle", comes from KVN Productions and Theopian Films, a press release said.

KVN Productions announced the project on Instagram on Thursday.

"We are thrilled to work with a team that shares the passion for storytelling. This collaboration is something we were looking forward to, can't wait to bring this vision to life...", the studio posted.

The details of the project, including its genre, have been kept under wraps.

Chidambaram's "Manjummel Boys" and "Avesham", which was written and directed by Madhavan, were two of the most

successful titles of the year 2024.

"I'm thrilled to work with a team that shares my passion for storytelling. This collaboration is something I am looking forward to, I can't wait to bring this vision to life," Chidambaram said in a statement.

Madhavan added, "This script is close to my heart, and with the support of such a stellar team, I am sure we will make something good."

KVN Productions founder Venkat K. Narayana said the studio's aim is to redefine cinema across languages.

"This film marks our foray into Malayalam with the same grandeur and excellence that audiences expect from us. With such exceptional talent at the helm, we're confident about it." The banner's upcoming titles include Geetu Mohandas' "Toxic", starring Yash, and the 69th feature film of Tamil superstar Vijay's career.

Diljit Dosanjh meets PM Modi, marks a memorable start to 2025

New Delhi



Punjabi singer Diljit Dosanjh had a memorable meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 1, 2025. He described the meeting as a "fantastic start" to a new year, which took place in Delhi amidst warmth and mutual admiration.

Prime Minister Modi posted a short clip of their conversation on Instagram, describing it as a "very memorable interaction."

In his post on X, Modi praised Dosanjh for being "truly multifaceted," highlighting his ability to blend talent and tradition. The two discussed a range of topics, including music, culture, and more, with Modi even playfully remarking that the singer had been winning over people worldwide.

Dosanjh, who has gained international fame for his music and acting career, appreciated the Prime Minister's words, especially his respect for his mother and the Ganga river, which is considered sacred in Indian culture. The singer was inspired by Modi's words, which he described as very inspiring.

Bengali film director Arun Roy dies at age 56

Kolkata

Renowned Bengali director Arun Roy breathed his last at a state-run hospital here on Thursday. He was 56.

Roy, who had been battling cancer for one-and-a-half-years, was admitted to RG Kar Hospital last month due to a lung infection. His condition worsened over the last few days, hospital sources said.

Confirming the death, actor Dev, who had essayed the lead role in Roy's film "Bagha Jatin", portraying the life and sacrifice of Bengali revolutionary Jatindranath Mukherjee, posted on X, "You have gone too soon, friend. You were a person with a 24-carat gold heart."

In another post, Dev's production house, Dev Entertainment Ventures, said, "We are deeply saddened to share the news about the passing of our beloved director Arun Roy.