



Pat Cummins to undergo scan on sore ankle as Champions Trophy looms

Army airstrike on village in Myanmar has killed at least 40 people

Priyanka Chopra Jonas joins Oscar-shortlisted 'Anuja' as executive producer



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**MARKET**

SENSEX	NIIFTY
77620.21	23526.50
-528.28	-162.45
<b>GOLD</b>	<b>SILVER</b>
78,175.00	91,700.00
71.00	762.00

**WEATHER**

Sunrise	7:16 AM
Sunset	5:43 PM
Moonrise	3:01 PM
Moonset	5:52 AM
Today's Prediction	
Maximum	11°C
Minimum	17°C
Tomorrow's Prediction	
Maximum	18°C
Minimum	11°C

## SC rejects review petitions on same-sex marriage judgment

The SC bench said both the previous judgments were in accordance with the law and dismissed the petitions.

New Delhi  
The Supreme Court of India has dismissed the review petition seeking the legalisation of same-sex marriage. This decision comes after a five-judge Constitution Bench ruled in October 2023 that same-sex couples do not have a fundamental right to marry. A bench headed by Justice BR Gavai stated that there was no error in the judgment.



dividuals and ensure they do not face discrimination.

The review petition was considered by a bench comprising Justices BR Gavai, Suryakant, BV Nagarathna, PS Narasimha, and Dipankar Datta. After examining the judgments, the bench found no error apparent on the record and concluded that the views expressed were in accordance with the law.

The Supreme Court, in its original verdict, unanimously held that there is no unqualified right to marriage, and it is up to Parliament to decide on legalising same-sex marriage. The court also emphasised the need to protect the rights of LGBTQIA+ in-

cluding Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, S Ravindra Bhat, Hima Kohli, and PS Narasimha, delivered a split verdict of 3-2, refusing to legalise same-sex marriage in four separate judgments.

In the October 2023 verdict, the Supreme Court was split 3-2, with the majority ruling that it could not legalise same-sex marriages, stating that the power to enact such a law lies

with Parliament. The bench declined to grant legal recognition to same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act, stating that there was "no unqualified right" to marriage except those recognised by law.

It deferred the decision on whether to recognise same-sex marriages to Parliament and state legislatures, emphasising that it could not declare the Special

Marriage Act void or alter its provisions.

During the verdict, the CJI also called on the Centre, states, and Union Territories (UTs) to ensure the queer community faces no discrimination, recognising queerness as a natural phenomenon that has existed for ages and is not limited to urban or elitist circles.

The LGBTQIA++ rights activists, who had won a major legal battle in 2018 in the Supreme Court which decriminalised consensual gay sex, had moved the apex court seeking validation of same-sex marriage and consequential reliefs such as rights to adoption, enrolment as parents in schools, opening of bank accounts and availing succession and insurance benefits.

Some of the petitioners had urged the apex court to use its plenary power, "prestige and moral authority" to push the society to acknowledge such a union which would ensure LGBTQIA++ lead a "dignified" life like heterosexuals.

## Exclusion from reservation is legislature's call: SC



New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday said the executive and the legislature would decide whether persons, who had availed quota benefits and were in a position to compete with others, were to be excluded from reservation. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih made the observation on a plea referring to a seven-judge Constitution Bench judgment of the apex court in August last year. "We have given our view that taking into consideration the past 75 years, such persons who have already availed benefits and are in a position to compete with others, should be excluded from reservation. But it is a call to be taken by the executive and the legislature," said Justice Gavai.

The Constitution Bench, by a majority

**HIGHLIGHT**

Justice Gavai said the apex court's view was that the sub-classification was permissible. The petitioner's counsel said the Constitution Bench had directed states to formulate the policy and almost six months had passed since.

verdict, held states were constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the scheduled castes (SC), which form a socially heterogeneous class, for granting reservation for the upliftment of castes that were socially and educationally more backward among them. Justice Gavai, who was part of the Constitution Bench and penned a separate verdict, had said states must evolve a policy for identifying the "creamy layer" even among the SCs and schedule tribes and deny them the benefit of reservation. On Thursday, the counsel appearing for the petitioner referred to the apex court's verdict asking for the policy to identify such a "creamy layer".

CONTD ON PAGE-2



Fires in parts of Los Angeles destroyed 2,000 structures and burned through 27,000 acres, equivalent to nearly 20,000 football fields.

## SC frees man after 25 years, finds he was a juvenile

New Delhi  
The Supreme Court on Wednesday found a man, who spent 25 years imprisoned in a murder case, and had exhausted all his legal remedies including a Presidential pardon, to be a juvenile at the time of the crime and ordered his release.

A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Arvind Kumar said the convict Om Prakash alias Raju was incarcerated for the past 25 years despite raising a plea of juvenility at the trial court during the time of his sentence but faced rejection.

"We would only state that this is a case where the appellant has been suffering due to the error committed by the courts. We have been informed that his conduct

in the prison is normal, with no adverse report. He lost an opportunity to reintegrate into the society. The time which he has lost, for no fault of his, can never be restored," the top court said.

Allowing the appeal, the top court held, "The sentence imposed against the appellant in excess of the upper limit prescribed under the relevant Act, shall stand set aside, while making it clear that the conviction shall continue. The appellant shall be released forthwith, if not required in any other case."

The convict was first awarded the death penalty for the murder and the sentence was upheld all the way till the Supreme Court.

CONTD ON PAGE-2

## End INDIA alliance if...: Omar on AAP vs Cong in Delhi



Jammu  
Asserting that there was no time limit attached to the INDIA bloc, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday expressed dismay over the lack of clarity regarding its leadership and agenda, saying the alliance should be wound up if it was meant only for the parliamentary elections.

Abdullah said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Congress, and other political parties on the ground will decide how to effectively compete with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"After the Assembly elections in Delhi, they should call all the alliance members for a meeting. If this alliance was only for the parliamentary elections, it should be wound up, and we will work separately. But if it is meant for Assembly elections as well, we will have to sit together and work collectively," Abdullah told reporters here.

The National Conference leader was replying to a question about an RJD leader's statement that the INDIA bloc was meant only for Lok Sabha elections. "As far as I remember, no time limit was set for this. The issue is that no meeting of the INDIA bloc is being convened," he said. Agency

## Canadian court grants bail to all four Indians accused in Hardeep Nijjar's murder

New Delhi  
A Canadian court has granted bail to four Indian nationals accused of killing Khalistani separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June 2023. The killing of the 45-year-old Nijjar sparked diplomatic tensions between India and Canada, with Ottawa raising suspicions about India's involvement in the murder, while New Delhi dismissed the allegations as "absurd."



Nijjar murder investigation. They were charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

The accused will await trial in the Supreme Court of Canada, which is set to begin

next month. The Canadian government issued a "direct indictment," transferring the case from Surrey Provincial Court to the British Columbia Supreme Court. This move bypasses a preliminary inquiry, expediting the case to trial.

Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a wanted Khalistani terrorist in India, was shot dead outside a gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia, on June 18, 2023. In September of the same year, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau claimed there was credible evidence of the Indian government's involvement in Nijjar's killing—an allegation that India has consistently and vociferously dismissed. Agency

## India will fulfill world's demand for skilled talent, says PM Modi

Bhubaneswar  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that the future of the world lies in Buddha's teaching of peace and not in war. Inaugurating the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention here, the Prime Minister said that world should take to the path of peace and not war in the interest of the entire mankind.



The Prime Minister said when the world conquered each other with swords, Samrat Ashok chose the path of 'peace and righteousness' here in Odisha. It is because of this that India sends a message that the future is not in yuddha (war), but in 'Buddha', he added.

**HIGHLIGHT**

Modi said the world today listens to India, which not only presents its own views strongly but also those of the Global South.

Stating that the entire world is witnessing the development of India, the Prime Minister said the people of the country felt proud when Chandrayaan reached the Shiv Shakti point. "Every sector is break-

Exclusion from reservation is legislature's call: SC

CONT FROM PAGE-1

Justice Gauri said the apex court's view was that the sub-classification was permissible. The petitioner's counsel said the Constitution bench had directed states to formulate the policy and almost six months had passed since. "We are not inclined," the bench said. When the counsel requested to withdraw the plea to file a representation before the authority concerned, which could decide on the issue, the bench allowed it. He argued states would not frame the policy and eventually the top court would have to intervene, to which the court said, "The legislators are there. Legislators enact a law." On August 1 last year, the apex court's verdict was clear on the states making a sub-classification on the basis of "quantifiable and demonstrable data" of backwardness and representation in government jobs and not on "whims" and as a matter of "political expediency".

The seven-judge bench, by a majority of 6:1, set aside the apex court's five-judge bench verdict of 2004 in the E V Chinnaiah v. state of Andhra Pradesh case which held no sub-classification of SCs could be allowed as they were a homogeneous class in themselves.

SC frees man after 25 years, finds he was a juvenile

CONT FROM PAGE-1

He then moved for Presidential pardon and was granted a partial relief on May 8, 2012, as his capital punishment was commuted to life imprisonment with a bar on his release till he turned 60.

The trial court was said to have referred to the man opening a bank account on March 7, 2001, and giving his age as 29 years when he made the basis to hold him major and award the death sentence.

The high court upheld the trial court's decision and the Supreme Court dismissed his appeal later, despite his claim of juvenility.

"The facts as narrated above, speak for themselves. At every stage, injustice has been inflicted by the courts, either by ignoring the documents or by casting a furtive glance. The applicant, despite being illiterate, raised this plea one way or another, right from the trial court up to the conclusion of the curative petition before this court, the bench said.

The approach of the courts, it said, couldn't be sustained in the eye of law and the bank account was of no relevance under the Juvenile Justice Acts and relevant rules of juvenility.

The bench said Prakash's statements at the time of the hearing on his sentence were also pale into insignificance, as even then he was a minor at the time of the offence, under both the 2000 and the 2015 laws.

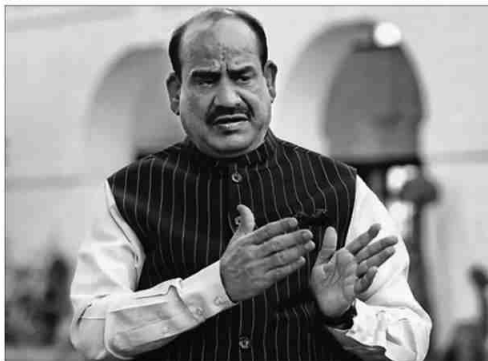
"It must be kept in mind that the entire judicial system is responsible for the discovery of the truth, it being the soul of a decision. For doing so, a presiding officer is expected to play an active role, rather than a passive one," Justice Sundaresht, who authored the verdict, said.

Agency

# UK has strong belief in India's democratic values, growth story: LS Speaker Om Birla

New Delhi/London

There is a strong belief in India's democratic values and growth story here, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said in London during his ongoing visit to the UK. Addressing a community gathering at the High Commission of India in London on Wednesday evening, Birla shared insights from his dialogues with his UK counterpart - House of Commons Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle and other members of Parliament. He noted that his interactions highlighted the strength of the India-UK parliamentary cooperation and the multifaceted nature of the bilateral partnership across multiple sectors. "I had a good dialogue with leading UK parliamentarians and they displayed a strong belief in India's democratic values and growth story," Birla said. "Our electoral process is transparent, which has helped reinforce a belief in democracy around the world. We take pride as the largest democracy of the world, dubbed the 'mother of democracy', and I extend an invitation to come visit India's new Parliament as we mark 75 years of our Constitution," he said. "The scale of our coun-



The BJP member of Parliament from Kota, who was greeted by a large contingent from the British Rajasthani community, also highlighted the important role of the Indian diaspora in promoting the Viskit Bharat mission of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government.

try's progress is outpacing many other nations and in the coming years, India will make its mark as the topmost country to attract investments. The coming decades of the 21st century belong to India," he added. The BJP member of Parliament from Kota, who was greeted by a large contingent from the British Rajasthani community, also highlighted the important role of the Indian diaspora in promoting the Viskit Bharat mission of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government. "Indians based

in different countries around the world have an important contribution to make towards a Viskit Bharat. The efforts and love of the diaspora will play an important role towards this goal set by Prime Minister Modi," Birla said. The Lok Sabha speaker is on an official UK visit covering England, Scotland and the island of Guernsey and began by honouring the principal architect of the Indian Constitution at the Ambedkar Museum in north London on Tuesday. "This visit marks a very special start of the year for

us because for the first time in 17 years, we have the speaker of the Lok Sabha of India visiting the UK, a long overdue but very important visit," said Indian High Commissioner to the UK Vikram Doraiswami. He pointed out that both the Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, and the Speaker of the Lok Sabha are on their second term following general elections in the UK and India last year. "An unusual achievement in an era in which more often than not you have one term speakers in not

exchange, strong economic ties, information technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and creativity. "Our historic relations have evolved into a robust, multifaceted and mutually beneficial partnership covering multiple sectors including defence, health, education and climate change. "The resilience of our relations was evident in our cooperation during the Covid-19 pandemic including on development of vaccines. Hope that India-UK relations will receive a fresh impetus under the new government in the UK," Birla said, with reference to the India-UK bilateral ties. In Scotland, Birla is expected to meet the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, Alison Johnstone, and First Minister of the devolved government John Swinney, besides interacting with other cross-party Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). He will then go on to chair the meeting of the Standing Committee of Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPCO) on Friday in Guernsey in his capacity as the host of the 28th CSPCO, to be held in India in 2026.

Policybazaar For Business offers digital marine, transit insurance New Delhi Policybazaar For Business (PFB), the corporate arm of one of India's largest insurance marketplace, has introduced Enroute, a platform designed to simplify marine and transit insurance operations. "The issuance of certifications and declarations, a process that was traditionally time-consuming, can now be completed in just a few clicks. The platform empowers businesses to efficiently handle their domestic and international trade requirements," says an official release. "To avoid claim denials, companies and businesses must submit monthly declarations for domestic policies. They are also required to provide transit-specific insurance certificates for import and export shipments under annual marine and transit insurance policies. The manual execution of these formalities would often be cumbersome for the customer. PFB simplifies this process with an easy-to-use platform that reduces administrative workload, enhances accuracy and ensures smoother compliance." Sajja Praveen Chowdhry, Head, Policybazaar For Business says: "Marine and transit insurance customers often face operational hurdles due to fragmented platforms and complicated modes of declaration. The new platform is designed to benefit the customers by streamlining the entire process. They enjoy a seamless and hassle-free experience through the portal that provides clear, simplified and easily accessible information about their current policy. Businesses can now declare transits, generate insurance certificates and increase the sum insured seamlessly." The platform simplifies insurance certificate generation for shipments using customer-provided details, allowing them to easily declare monthly shipments or generate certificates via WhatsApp or the portal, the release added.

ACB grills KTR for 7 hours in Formula E race case

Hyderabad

The Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday interrogated BRS working president KT Rama Rao for seven hours in connection with the Formula E race case. After leaving the ACB office, the BRS cadre gave a rousing welcome to their colleagues at the party headquarters, carrying him on their shoulders. The former municipal administration and urban development (MAUD) minister has thrown the opportunity through up by his legal battles under the Congress government to charge up his party cadres. Meanwhile, special chief secretary Arvind Kumar appeared before the Enforcement Directorate.

After emerging from the ACB interrogation, Rao said that he was repeatedly asked the same set of questions that had been framed by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. He further said that he also asked ACB officials if they had made any attempt to recover money after the contract was cancelled by the present government.

## CRS Dy Chairman underlines need for commitment to peace & economic growth in J&K Assembly address

Jammu

Deputy Chairman Rajya Sabha, Harivansh, on Thursday addressed the orientation session for newly elected members of the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly. He elaborated on various avenues for members to represent the interests of their constituents to be effective legislators and their role in improving governance standards. Emphasising the importance of economic growth, the Deputy Chairman said that there needs to be greater consensus on commitment to peace and focusing on economic growth for inclusive development in Jammu & Kashmir.

"By now it is already well established that economic growth not only lifts millions out of poverty but it also provides for a sustainable livelihood. The youth of this country are ambitious and aspirational. Many of our young minds are seeking opportunities to grow," he added. "In the era of rapid technological advancement, all countries have realised that focusing on innovation and finding

new avenues for economic growth is the only path to being a superpower. When we talk of envisioning India as a developed nation, it is not possible for a select few regions of India to grow rapidly. The growth has to come from all parts and it must be inclusive. And in this journey, you as elected representatives have a key role to shape how the society progresses," he added.

In his address, Deputy Chairman Harivansh explained the importance of being well-informed and effectively intervening in various debates. He urged the members to regularly attend sessions, listen to different viewpoints, and understand the nuances of rules & procedures to develop good oratory skills. He shared various examples from Parliament where members were able to make a meaningful difference through their questions and debates on bills and budgets.

He added that understanding budgets better to bridge the gap between their work in the assembly and the developmental needs in their constituencies. He cautioned the members that they must not misuse their privileges to disrupt the House. "A legislator enjoys immunity from legal consequences for anything they speak in the House. This privilege enables one to express oneself freely without fear or hesitation. But this has often been used to disrupt legislative proceedings. Disruptions and sloganeering often negatively impact your opportunities to actually hold the government accountable through debates. When we talk of dos and don'ts in a legislature, I would emphasise that 'what not to do' is more important in today's times," he said.

Earlier, the Deputy Chairman, along with Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir Omar Abdullah, Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather, and Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, presided over the inaugural session of the three-day orientation programme being held in Jammu.



ered to collect tokens for the Vaikuntha Ekadashi festival, a ten-day event during which devotees prefer visiting in the first two days. While TTD initially announced the token distribution would begin at 5 am, it was advanced to midnight due to the swelling crowds. Devotees criticized the poor arrangements at the venue, citing the lack of water, food, and restrooms. Many had started gathering as early as Wednesday evening, anticipating heavy crowds. The incident occurred at the Ramanaidu Municipal School Grounds near the Bairagipattada Centre, where inadequate barricades and crowd management worsened the situation. The stampede was triggered when staff at

## CRS orders judicial probe into stampede at Tirupati token distribution centre

Hyderabad

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has ordered a judicial inquiry, suspended two officials, and transferred three others, including Superintendent of Police Subbarayudu and TTD Joint Executive Officer Gouthami, following the tragic stampede at Tirupati token distribution centre that claimed six lives.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Ramana Kumar and TTD Goshala Director Harinath Reddy, who were responsible for the area where the stampede occurred, were suspended after Naidu conducted another review meeting during his visit to Tirupati. Additionally, Chief Security Officer Sridhar of TTD was transferred alongside SP Subbarayudu and JEO Gouthami. Blaming the previous YSRCP government, Naidu remarked, "This incident is also a legacy problem. Never in my lifetime were tokens issued in Tirupati for darshan. This new practice was introduced during the past five years." The Chief Minister announced that families of the deceased would receive Rs 25 lakh in compensation, along with a job for one family member, while the injured would be given Rs 2 lakh. Chief Minister Naidu also publicly admonished officials of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) during the district administration, seeking explanations from his visit to the

centre attempted to open the gates to assist an ill person. Misinterpreting this as the opening of the gates, the crowd surged forward, causing the gates to collapse. The stampede killed five women and one man. Videos from the scene revealed untrained personnel attempting to perform CPR, and an ambulance delay of 20 minutes further hampered trauma care. Chief Minister Naidu visited the TTD-run SVIMS Hospital to meet with the injured and assured them of government support. At the stampede site, he questioned TTD Executive Officer Shyamala Rao, JEO Gouthami, District Collector S. Venkateshwar, and the SP in front of the media.

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### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is made public through this notice that I, Srinan DAJ Rajkumar RO (Cinn. Dhanneni, Dhanneni taluk, New Delhi-110025, 285291. Also At: 1439, Village Kapashera, Kapashera, South West Delhi, Delhi-110057, had executed and registered the (MUTUAL) CIM MUTUAL DIVORCE AGREEMENT on 04.01.2025 at District Courts Complex, Sec-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-110044 of my own free will consent and without any force, fear, coercion, threat, manipulation, intimidation, fear, duress, or undue influence and I shall be bound by the terms and conditions of the aforementioned (MUTUAL) CIM MUTUAL DIVORCE AGREEMENT and the terms and conditions of the said agreement are my true statements I shall always be bound by them.

TARUN SHARMA  
ADVOCATE  
CIN.No.699, DWARKA  
COURTS, NEW DELHI-110075  
M.No. 8527784353

### PUBLIC NOTICE

All members of General public are hereby informed that my client Mrs Reshmi Chandra and her husband Sri Rohanishwa Singh Tyagi S/O Sri Gauran Singh Tyagi both R/O House No H-21, West Jyoti Nagar, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi-110094, through this public notice has declared his son Piyush Tyagi and daughter-in-law Ishika Tyagi W/o Piyush Tyagi Do Not Mandy Tyagi from their entire movable and immovable properties on account of misbehaviour, disobedience and non maintenance of the said wife of Piyush Tyagi towards my above clients and my above clients have secured a divorce from them and my above clients shall not be responsible in any manner for any of their misdeed, act and conduct.

Ratneswari Kumar  
Advocate  
Chamber No.1503,  
Rajendra Place, Delhi-110085,  
Mob. 7508851573

NEWS IN BRIEF

**Private firm to set up R&D centre in Gr. Noida**

**Noida**  
Tractor manufacturer Sonalika Group will invest in the Integrated Industrial Township of Greater Noida. The company will set up a research and development centre here. The process of allocating 25 acres of land for this is underway.

Under the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC), a smart integrated industrial township is being set up by Integrated Industrial Township Greater Noida Limited (IITGNL) in Greater Noida on about 750 acre. Greater Noida Authority's ACEO Prerna Singh said that Sonalika Group has come forward to invest in the Integrated Industrial Township. 25 acres of land will be allotted for this.

According to the authority official concerned, so far land has been allotted to 17 big companies. The Sonalika International Limited will set up a research and development centre in the township. The company will explore the possibilities of other ultra-modern agricultural equipment including electric tractors.

Singapore companies are keen to invest in the township. A delegation from Singapore visited Greater Noida a few months ago. The entrepreneurs in the delegation liked the infrastructure of Greater Noida along with the township. The Singapore delegation included representatives of two international companies.

**Residential sports hostel to be built in Mahamaya Sports Stadium**



Chhazibad

A residential sports hostel will be built in Mahamaya Sports Stadium. The district sports department has sent a proposal to the government to build 100-bed residential sports hostel in the stadium, which has been approved.

District deputy sports officer Poonam Bishnoi said that a place has been identified for the residential sports hostel in the stadium premises. The work will start soon. All kinds of facilities will be provided to the players in the residential sports hostel.

Players of football, hockey, judo, boxing, badminton to name a few can stay in this residential hostel. There will be extensive arrangements for studies and training in the hostel so that the players can maintain a balance between their education and sports.

International level coaches will be appointed in this residential hostel so that the players practising here can get help in improving their game. After the construction of the hostel, many players from other districts and states will show their interest in taking training at Mahamaya Stadium.

Bishnoi informed that the international level judo hall being built in Mahamaya Stadium is going to start soon. There are many players from outside the district who come here to practise. After commencement of the international judo hall, many more athletes will show their interest in taking training at Mahamaya Stadium.

**Include Jats in Central OBC list, Kejriwal to PM**

**New Delhi**  
A ssembly elections draw closer in Delhi, AAP convener and former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday accused the BJP-led Central government of reneging on its promise to provide reservation to the Jat community in the national capital. Addressing a press conference, Kejriwal, who is contesting from New Delhi seat, said he wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demanding the inclusion of Delhi's Jat community in the Central OBC list.

BJP candidate from New Delhi and former MP Parvesh Verma alleged that Kejriwal has started dividing Delhi on caste lines. At the presser, the AAP chief said the Centre is miscalculating the community for the past decade, and failing to deliver on its promises.

"In 2015, the BJP invited Jat leaders to the prime minister's residence and

**Verma should be debarred from contesting polls: Kejriwal**

**New Delhi**  
AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday lambasted BJP leader and BJP opponent from the New Delhi assembly constituency Parvesh Verma, accusing him of doing things which fall under the corrupt practices as per the poll panel's rules and orders, and demanded that the BJP leader should not be allowed to contest the forthcoming assembly elections.

Speaking to the reporters after visiting the Election Commission of India (EC) on Thursday, he said that AAP delegation has apprised the poll panel that the BJP leader and candidate from the New Delhi assembly constituency is organising job fairs, distributing stuff, money and demanded that the panel should take appropriate action against the saffron party leader, alleging that he is acting as if he is not answerable to anyone.

He demanded that a raid must be conducted by the concerned agency, so that it is revealed how much cash is present and his premises. AAP chief also said that the



आम आदमी पार्टी

assured them that Delhi's Jat community would be included in the Central OBC list. Union Home Minister Amit Shah promised the same in 2019. However, nothing has been done to fulfil these promises," Kejriwal said.

"Drawing comparisons, he questioned why Jat students from Rajasthan ben-

efit from reservations in Delhi University (DU), while Jat students from Delhi are denied the same. "Thousands of children from the Jat community in Delhi are unable to secure admission in DU because they are not part of the Central OBC list," he said.

Kejriwal also alleged that

despite Delhi's Jats being recognised under the OBC category in the national capital, the Central government has refused to extend the benefits to them. "This is nothing but betrayal. The Centre must include Delhi's Jat community in the OBC list to ensure they receive reservations in Central govern-

ment institutions, including for jobs and college admissions," the AAP supremo said.

Central agencies like the MCD, DDA, and CPWD operate extensively in Delhi, and including Jats in the OBC list would open up significant opportunities for them, Kejriwal said, as he vowed to continue the fight until the community's demands are met.

Reacting to the allegations, BJP leader Verma claimed that as Kejriwal's political ground is slipping, the AAP leader has started dividing Delhi on caste lines.

Kejriwal never remembered the Jat community in the past 11 years, he said.

"Arvind Kejriwal, who once spoke of secularism, is now dividing Delhi on caste lines. If anyone has given constitutional recognition to the National OBC Commission, it is PM Modi. For Jats or any caste to be included in the OBC list, the state government must first

approve the proposal and send it to the OBC Commission.

"Kejriwal's government held special sessions but used them only to criticise the Centre and the LG, never passing the OBC inclusion for Jats," he stated.

Verma criticised Kejriwal for not convening a session despite two letters from Kailash Gahlot regarding OBC status for Jats.

He credited BJP-led governments in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and at the Centre with securing Jat reservations in the past.

"Rural Delhi lacks new colleges, schools, hospitals, flyovers, and roads, but with elections here, Kejriwal remembers the Jats.

It pains me that he accuses me of anti-nationalism for helping women through the 'Ladli' scheme," Verma added.

The 70-member Delhi Assembly will go to polls on February 5. The results will be out on February 8.

**Kejriwal alleges BJP manipulating electoral roll in New Delhi seat**

**New Delhi**  
AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday lodged a complaint with the Election Commission, alleging that the BJP has manipulated the electoral roll in the New Delhi assembly constituency from where he is contesting the upcoming elections.

Kejriwal alleged that people associated with the BJP applied to add 13,000 new voters in the electoral roll and they sought to cancel 5,500 voter entries to "influence" the voting in its favour.

The former Delhi chief minister visited the Election Commission (EC) on Thursday to lodge a complaint against these alleged malpractices.

Addressing the media after meeting EC officials, Kejriwal said, "In the past 22 days, 5,500 applications have been received for deletion of voter names in the New Delhi constituency. There are

about one lakh voters in this constituency, meaning applications to remove 5.5 per cent of the electorate have been filed in just 22 days."

"This raises serious concerns, as when the Election Commission contacted some of these people, they denied submitting such applications. All 89 individuals contacted stated they had not filed any requests. It clearly indicates a scam," he said.

Kejriwal further highlighted the sudden surge in voter registration applications.

"In the last 12 days, applications for adding 13,000 new voters have been received. If such large scale additions and deletions take place at the last minute, it will make a mockery of the election process," he said.

Kejriwal, the three-time MLA from New Delhi since 2013, is locked in an intense triangular contest

against the sons of two former chief ministers of Delhi.

While the BJP has fielded former chief minister Sahib Singh Verma's son Parvesh Verma, Congress has given ticket to Sandeep Dikshit whose mother Sheila Dikshit was a three-term chief minister of Delhi.

The AAP chief also demanded action against BJP leader Verma, accusing him of bribing voters and distributing money.

Kejriwal called for a raid on Verma's residence to check for the "presence of illicit funds".

He also alleged that local election officials had "surrendered" to the BJP and were facilitating its "wrongdoings", and sought their suspension.

"We have full faith in the Election Commission and hope it will take appropriate action against these illegal activities," Kejriwal added.

**GRAP 3 curbs back in Delhi-NCR amid rise in air pollution levels**

**New Delhi**  
The Centre's panel on Delhi-NCR's air quality on Thursday re-implemented stage 3 curbs under the Graded Response Action Plan amid a sharp rise in air pollution levels owing to unfavourable meteorological conditions, according to an official order.

Delhi's air pollution levels showed an increasing trend and the 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) stood at 357 at 4 pm, up from 297 on Wednesday, owing to "calm winds and foggy conditions".

The Commission for Air Quality Management, responsible for strategising air pollution mitigation in Delhi-NCR, directed authorities in the region to immediately implement curbs prescribed under stage 3 to prevent further worsening of the situation.

GRAP Stage 3, which was revoked on Sunday, entails a ban on non-essential construction work. Classes up to grade V are required to shift to hybrid mode under Stage 3. Parents and students have the option to choose online education wherever available. Under Stage 3, the use of BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel cars (4-wheelers) is restricted in Delhi and nearby NCR districts.

**People of rural Delhi outraged by Kejriwal's statements, decided to vote against AAP: BJP MP Verma**

**Kejriwal, who did not build a memorial for Sahib Singh Verma, the most renowned Jat leader of Delhi, is now talking about the welfare of Jats": Parvesh Sahib Singh**

**Staff Reporter**  
**New Delhi**  
BJP candidate from New Delhi Assembly and former MP Parvesh Sahib Singh said that Aam Aadmi party led by Arvind Kejriwal is going to lose election in Delhi rural areas as his political ground seems to be slipping. He has started dividing Delhi on caste lines, even though he never remembered the Jat community in the past 11 years."

Addressing a press at Delhi BJP state office, Parvesh Sahib Singh stated that the people of rural Delhi are outraged by Kejriwal's statements, and they have unanimously decided to vote against the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), be it farmers, Jats, or Gurbars.

He said, "This is the same Arvind Kejriwal who found the Jats repulsive, who refused to let them and the people of rural Delhi enter his house. But now, as elections approach, and rural Delhi - be it Jats, Gurbars, Yadavs, Tyagis, or Rajputs - stand united against him, Kejriwal suddenly remembers the Jats."

Parvesh Sahib Singh also mentioned that rural Delhi farmers had demanded the benefits of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme of



प्रेस वार्ता

₹6,000, but Kejriwal failed to provide the list to the central government.

"I wrote to Arvind Kejriwal, requesting the construction of a memorial for my father, Dr. Sahib Singh Verma, on land owned by the Delhi government, but Kejriwal has not responded yet. Today, 28 constituencies of Outer Delhi held meetings and decided not to vote for Kejriwal."

He further alleged that when farmers received high electricity bills during their farming activities, their bills were not waived off. On land acquisition, Parvesh Sahib Singh said, "Farmers' lands are forcibly acquired by Kejriwal's government at cheap rates, while market rates range from ₹10-15 lakhs. During

my father's tenure, farmers were given fair market rates."

The BJP candidate highlighted various developmental works done by the Modi government, including the ₹26,000 crore International Convention Centre and the ₹8,000 crore UER-II Road Project.

"Arvind Kejriwal, who once spoke of secularism, is now dividing Delhi on caste lines. If anyone has given constitutional recognition to the National OBC Commission, it is Prime Minister Narendra Modi. For Jats or any caste to be included in the OBC list, the state government must first approve the proposal and send it to the OBC Commission. Kejriwal's government held special ses-

sions but used them only to criticise the central government and the Lt. Governor, never passing the OBC inclusion for Jats."

Parvesh Sahib Singh criticized Kejriwal for not convening a session despite two letters from Kailash Gahlot regarding OBC status for Jats. He credited BJP-led governments in Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and at the central level with securing Jat reservations in the past.

He concluded, "Rural Delhi lacks new colleges, schools, hospitals, flyovers, or roads, but with elections here, Kejriwal remembers the Jats. It pains me that he accuses me of anti-nationalism for helping women through the Ladli Scheme."

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public in general is hereby informed that my clients Sh. Kalaram S/o Late Buh Singh & Smt. Maya Devi W/o Sh. Kalaram both R/O H.No.313, Gali No.2, Than Singh Nagar, Anand Parva, New Delhi-110005 have severed all their relations and social connections with their daughter Smt. Anita W/o Sh. Rajesh Kumar and Smt. Manju W/o Sh. Raveer and their family members, have become source of nuisance and misbehave my Clients and have debarred them from inheriting their moveable and Immoveable properties of my clients will not be responsible for their activities in any manner whatsoever.

**LALIT KUMAR**  
ADVOCATE  
OFF. CHAMBER NO. 364, 3rd FLOOR, WESTERN WING, TIS HAZARI COURTS, DELHI-110054

PUBLIC NOTICE

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT MY CLIENT (RENU MUNIAL, AGED ABOUT 52 W/O. HARISH MUNIAL, R/O FB-13, FIRST W/O. GURJAI, D/O SHRI PRADEEP ARORA, FROM ALL HER MOVEABLE AND IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES/ASSETS AND SEVERE HER RELATION FROM THEM, BECAUSE THEIR CONDUCT, DEEDS, DEALINGS, ATTITUDE AND ANTECEDENTS ARE ADVERSE AND PREJUDICE TO HER RIGHTS, TITLE AND INTEREST AND HURTING HER NATURAL FEELINGS AND SENTIMENTS. THAT MY CLIENT HEREBY DECLARE THAT ANYONE DEALING WITH MR. SAHIL MUNIAL AND MS. DISHA WOULD BE DOING SO AT HIS/HER/ THEIR OWN RISK, COSTS AND CONSEQUENCE AND SHE SHALL NOT BE LIABLE FOR THE SAME AT ALL. ANY PERSON DEALING WITH THEM IN ANY RESPECT WHATSOEVER SHALL DO SO AT HIS/HER/ THEIR OWN RISK. Rama Kant Kashyap Advocate  
Office: Chamber No. 605, Block-III, Delhi High Court, New Delhi - 110001

PUBLIC NOTICE

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT MY CLIENT (HARISH MUNIAL, AGED ABOUT 56 YRS. SON OF RAM NARAIN MUNIAL, R/O FB-13, FIRST FLOOR, SHIVAJI ENCLAVE, RAJOURI GARDEN, TAGORE GARDEN, WEST DELHI, DELHI-110027, HOLDER OF AADHAR CARD NO. 6672 1215 4841 DISOWNED AND DEBARRED HIS SON MR. SAHIL MUNIAL, AGED ABOUT 30 YRS. S/O. HARISH MUNIAL, [II] HIS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, SMT. DISHA, WIFE OF SHRI SAHIL MUNIAL, D/O SHRI PRADEEP ARORA, FROM ALL HIS MOVEABLE AND IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES/ASSETS AND SEVERE HER RELATION FROM THEM, BECAUSE THEIR CONDUCT, DEEDS, DEALINGS, ATTITUDE AND ANTECEDENTS ARE ADVERSE AND PREJUDICE TO HER RIGHTS, TITLE AND INTEREST AND HURTING HER NATURAL FEELINGS AND SENTIMENTS. THAT MY CLIENT HEREBY DECLARE THAT ANYONE DEALING WITH MR. SAHIL MUNIAL AND MS. DISHA WOULD BE DOING SO AT HIS/HER/ THEIR OWN RISK, COSTS AND CONSEQUENCE AND SHE SHALL NOT BE LIABLE FOR THE SAME AT ALL. ANY PERSON DEALING WITH THEM IN ANY RESPECT WHATSOEVER SHALL DO SO AT HIS/HER/ THEIR OWN RISK. Rama Kant Kashyap Advocate  
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**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
Open Tender No.: JHS/RCNK-M/TRO-24-25-11 Date: 07.01.2025  
E-tenders are invited by Chief Workshop Manager, Rail Coach Naveenikaran Kanhana, Jhansi from experienced and interested contractors on behalf of the Pakistan of India for the under mentioned work.  
**E-Tender Notice**  
Name of work: Supply and fitment of SS trough assembly for LHB AC Coaches along with stripping of FRP/RMPU tough at RCNK, Jhansi.  
Cost of work: Rs. 2,50,12,08,00/- (Including 18% GST)  
Bid Security: Rs. 2,75,10,00/-  
Time of completion: Twenty Four Months  
Online tender closing date and time: 30.01.2025 at 11:00 Hrs.  
Detailed information about tender and tender format is available at website www.nscrs.in  
North central railways | www.nccr.indianrailways.gov.in | @ CPNCRNC

# High-stakes battle unfolds in New Delhi constituency as assembly polls near

**New Delhi**  
**T**hree triumph from the New Delhi Assembly seat riding on an anti-corruption wave, AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal, who is out on bail in a money laundering case, faces tougher odds in this election with his image of a corruption crusader a little less impressive among residents.



Odds for Kejriwal become narrower considering his rivals — scions of former Delhi chief ministers — BJP's Parvesh Singh Verma and Congress' Sandeep Dikshit. The former MPs would be trying their best to dislodge the ex-Delhi chief minister from a seat, which has come to be seen as a matter of prestige to all three.

The constituency composed of some of the poshest areas of Delhi is also pockmarked by slums clustered that bears a resemblance to the rest of Delhi and demand a similar treatment.

Many residents of the constituency believe it would be an open fight this time with hardly any favourites. Some others claim the promised

development has failed to come by. "This time there is a fight between parties. These elections are not completely going in anyone's favour, as every party is trying to match the promises made by others," Monika, a resident and shop owner in Gole Market, said.

Kejriwal, who rose to prominence during the Anna Hazare-led India Against Corruption movement, has

represented the constituency for over a decade. His previous victories were marked by significant margins, including a 21,687-vote lead in the 2020 elections.

His core voter base, consisting of lower-middle-class workers, street vendors, auto-rickshaw drivers, etc, still seems largely intact. AAP's welfare schemes, such as free bus services for women, remain popular among voters. The promise

of monthly allowances, such as Rs 2,100 for women, has also drawn attention.

An auto driver, Brilal Pranjapati, showed his electricity bill, and said, "My bill is zero. I am paying nothing for electricity, so I am happy with him because he has done something for people like me. Of course, there are some shortcomings too. For instance, the Mohalla Clinics are not working as we expected — there are no med-

icines available. So yes, there are some gaps, but at least he is trying and working for us." The BJP candidate, a son of former Delhi chief minister Sahib Singh Verma, is banking on his party's broad appeal, while Dikshit, son of Sheila Dikshit, hopes to swing Congress' fortunes in the capital.

Satish, a resident of Sanjay Basti, suggested that all that's advertised as development may be just a Potemkin village. "There are many issues like roads. On the surface, things might seem fine, but once you enter the colonies, you get a reality check. It looks better from the outside, but nothing big or new has happened so far. Most of the development we see was done during Sheila Dikshit's tenure, and since then, things have remained the same," he said.

He added, "The BJP and Congress seem to be emerging as very strong competitors this time, and even if they don't win, they will significantly cut AAP's vote share." Many residents were unimpressed with all parties promising cash to women and other free welfare schemes and wished there was more focus on air pollution, law and order, and women's safety.

"This time, the election dynamics are entirely different," said Shashi Pal from Gole Market.

"In a way, it seems like all parties are trying to lure voters with promises of money, almost like a vote-purchasing strategy," he said.

Despite being a VIP seat, the issues plaguing the constituency — pollution, traffic congestion, bad roads, and law and order — are no different than those afflicting other parts of the capital.

For Gulshan Vermani, pollution is the biggest concern.

"We have all suffered as the air quality in Delhi has become dangerously toxic, putting public health at risk. The government must take concrete action rather than continuously playing the blame game," he said.

The total electorate in the seat stands at 1,09,022, with 58,950 male voters and 50,071 female voters.

# Man in MP police custody falls to death from Gurugram hotel



**Gurugram**  
 A 23-year-old man, apprehended in Sohna by the Madhya Pradesh Police in a cybercrime case allegedly linked to terror-funding, fell to death from the balcony of a third-floor hotel room in Gurugram while trying to escape, the Haryana Police said on Thursday.

Himanshu Kumar, who was from Bihar, was apprehended Tuesday by the Madhya Pradesh Police's anti-terror squad, the police said.

He was kept in the Gurugram hotel before he was to be produced in a court to seek his transit remand to take him to MP.

While in the hotel, Kumar

sought permission from the MP police personnel to go to the washroom but he tried to escape through the balcony using cables, the police said.

In the attempt, he fell from the balcony of the third-floor room, said the police, adding he was taken to a local hospital where he succumbed to injuries.

Sohna Assistant Commissioner of Police Abhilash Joshi said a magistrate inquiry has been ordered in the matter.

According to a Haryana police official, the Madhya Pradesh police did not initiate the local police before undertaking its action in Gurugram.

# "Kejriwal shamelessly taking credit for so-called Delhi model of health care"

**Staff Reporter**  
**New Delhi**  
 Former Delhi health minister and Congress leader Dr Narendra Nath here on Thursday alleged that the so-called Mohalla clinics were without medicines, doctors, staff and equipment, and yet, former CM Arvind Kejriwal shamelessly takes credit for the so-called "Delhi model" of health care.

Nath said that Delhi Congress' Rs 25 lakh "Jeevan Raksha Yojna" will provide free health insurance to 100 per cent residents of Delhi, under the party's 'right to health' scheme, which will not be like Kejriwal's false promises as he has not fulfilled his 70 promises till date, despite enjoying power for 11 years.

**Nath said that Delhi Congress' Rs 25 lakh "Jeevan Raksha Yojna" will provide free health insurance to 100 per cent residents of Delhi, under the party's 'right to health' scheme, which will not be like Kejriwal's false promises as he has not fulfilled his 70 promises till date, despite enjoying power for 11 years.**

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his 70 promises till date, despite enjoying power for 11 years.

He said that Congress will implement all its promises as soon as it comes to power. He said that the dilapidated state of government hospitals has forced the High Court to take cognizance and set up a committee to monitor the deteriorating condition of the government hospitals, which nails Kejriwal's lies. Addressing a press conference Nath further said that Congress' health insurance scheme was inevitable considering the fact that Delhi has become a 'gas chamber'. He said that the Congress govern-

ment had provided 48,000 hospital beds, established 16 medical colleges, seven big speciality hospitals, and there were a total of 95 major hospitals in the city.

But, he added, the Kejriwal government devastated the health sector to such an extent that during the Covid-19 pandemic, while BJP and AAP were in ICU, the common people were put on ventilators due to shortage of medical oxygen, beds, medicines, ambulances. He said that innocents died without getting timely medical care from the raging pandemic while Kejriwal stayed up in his 'Sheesh Mahal'.

# Meeting held regarding outline of developing land bank for New Noida

**Ajeet Kumar**  
**Noida**  
 A meeting was organized under the chairmanship of Chief Executive Officer Lokesh M regarding the outline of the developing land bank for New Noida.

The said meeting was attended by District Magistrate, Bulandshahr, Additional Chief Executive Officer Mr. Sanjay Kumar Khatri, Additional Chief Executive Officer Mrs. Vandana Tripathi, Special Executive Officer Mr. Mahendra Prasad, Additional Chief Executive Officer Mr. Satish Pal, Chief Legal Advisor Mr. Ravindra Prasad Gupta, Finance Controller Mr. Swatantra Kumar, Special Executive Officer, Mr. Kran-



ti Shekhar Singh, Special Executive Officer Mr. Arvind Kumar Singh, General Manager Mrs. Meena Bhargava and Mr. Ishiyak Ahmed.

In the said meeting, instructions were given to select notified villages in the first phase for the development of New Noida, to curb illegal and unauthorised construction in the notified

villages in New Noida without the permission of Noida and to install warning boards to alert the general public.

The process of determining compensation rates for land acquisition/purchase on the basis of mutual agreement for New Noida and carrying out development work was discussed.

# Canadian Man arrested for carrying crocodile skull at Delhi airport

**New Delhi**  
 A 32-year-old Canadian national was apprehended at the Indira Gandhi International Airport here for carrying a crocodile skull, the customs said on Thursday.

According to the tariffs collecting agency, a Canadian passenger scheduled to depart to Canada was intercepted at the Terminal-3 of the IGA and during the security check, a skull with sharp teeth, resembling the jaw of a baby crocodile, weighing approximately 777 grams, was discovered wrapped in a cream-colored cloth.

The skull was sent to the Department of Forests and Wildlife (GNCTD) for a diagnostic test and it was re-

ported that the texture, tooth pattern, well-developed bony palate, and nostrils confirmed the item as the skull of a baby crocodile, an official said.

Moreover, it was found that the skull belongs to a species protected under Schedule-I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. It has been sent to Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun for further scientific analysis, the customs official added.

Based on this the passenger was arrested for illegally possessing and attempting to export a Schedule-I protected wildlife item under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and violating sections 132, 133, 135, 135A, and 136 related to offenses of misde-

laration, illegal export, and smuggling items under Customs Act, 1962, he mentioned.

The seized skull was handed over to the Department of Forests and Wildlife (West Division, GNCTD), the official added.

In a separate case, a 47-year-old Indian passenger arriving from Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) was apprehended for smuggling gold in metal rods concealed inside a trolley bag.

The gold rods, a total of 12 such pieces, weigh around 419 grams valued at Rs 32,96 lakh. He was arrested under relevant sections of the Customs act and the gold was also seized, the Customs official elaborated.

# MCD removes 2.64 lakh posters, banners ahead of Delhi assembly polls

**New Delhi**

In its effort to implement the directives of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) in view of the coming assembly election, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Thursday stated that it has removed a total of 2.64 lakh posters, banners, boardings, and small boards across 12 zones. The Model Code of Conduct came into effect on Tuesday after the Election Commission unveiled the dates of the Delhi assembly polls. The national capital will vote for all 70 assembly seats on February 5 and the result will be declared on February 8.

As per the civic agency,



this includes a total of 33,319 boardings, 2,08,278 posters, banners, and wall paintings, 5,180 signage boards, and 17,470 flags. Stating zone-wise, the data from MCD showed that a total of 71,107 politi-

cal advertisements were removed from the Rohini zone, 7,171 from the City-SP zone, 19,491 from the Civil Lines zone, 6,178 from the Karol Bagh zone, 9,347 from the Narela zone, 9,237 from the Ke-

shavpuram zone, 14,612 from the South zone, 10,964 from the West zone, 10,114 from the Najafgarh zone, 6,885 from the Central zone, 20,884 from the Shahdara South zone, and 16,071 from the Shahdara North zone.

According to the EC order, any poster, boarding, or banner in a public place that promotes any political party or leader has to be removed within 24 hours of the announcement of the election schedule.

Earlier on Wednesday, the civic agency reported that it had removed 1.26 lakh posters, banners, boardings, and small boards across its 12 zones.

# 2 held for killing colleague who repeatedly insulted them at workplace

**New Delhi**  
 A 25-year-old man was killed allegedly by his colleagues for repeatedly insulting them at their workplace, police here said on Thursday.



Police received a PCR call on Tuesday night about some foul smell emanating from a locked room in the Rampura area. As the team reached the spot, they discovered a decomposed male body. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Bisham Singh said. The deceased was identified as Golu. A case was registered and an investigation was ini-

tiated. During the investigation, the police found that Golu frequently made social media reels with one of the suspects, Ranjeet (30), the DCP said. "Scrutiny of Ranjeet's social media account provided crucial leads. Police raided multiple locations and apprehended two suspects — Ranjeet and Neeraj Verma (23), both residents of Rampura," said the DCP.

The accused revealed that Golu had been their colleague at a tent house and later a footwear factory. He frequently reprimanded and humiliated them, both verbally and physically, police said.

On one occasion, Golu assaulted the accused, further fueling their resentment. Seeking revenge for their humiliation, Ranjeet and Neeraj lured Golu to a location, where they murdered him using a wooden stick, said the officer. Further investigation into the matter is underway.

# Auto lifter gang busted in Noida; 2 held with 9 bikes

**Amar Saini**  
**Noida**

City police led by Noida Sector-58 police station has busted an interstate auto lifter gang and arrested persons including an accountant by profession.

Police have recovered ten bikes from them, out of which 9 are stolen. On interrogation by the police, the accused revealed that they have chosen the path of crime for fun and drugs.

Noida Zone ADGP Manish Kumar Mishra said that the accused have been identi-



fied as Hemant alias Shanu alias Daksh Rawat resident of Hoshiarpur Noida and Ravindra Singh resident of Khoda Colony Ghaziabad. Five of the recovered bikes belong to different districts.

Two more motorcycles are yet to be traced, which these people have sold. ADGP said that these people are very clever, so far they have committed more than 20 thefts. The gang members were active in Delhi and NCR.

The accused Ravindra worked as an accountant in many companies. During the job, he got addicted to drugs, due to which he was admitted to a de-addiction center and lost his job. After this, he met Hemant, who runs a juice shop in the Sector-52 of Noida.

# AAP indulged in corruption worth crores in 10 years: LoP Gupta

**New Delhi**

Stepping up his attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta alleged on Thursday that the ruling dispensation indulged in "corruption" worth crores in the last 10 years.

Castigating the AAP government for indulging in corruption on such a large scale, he said, "Now, its ship is sinking."

Referring to the forthcoming Assembly elections in Delhi, Gupta asserted that this would be the last election of the AAP marking the party's exit from Delhi's political landscape forever.

Taking a jibe at former Delhi chief minister and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal for taking support of the parties, including Samajwadi Party (SP) and Trinamool Congress (TMC), for the upcoming polls, the leader of the Opposition said, "Kejriwal has no choice but to rely on parties with no footing in Delhi. He has been forced to seek support from the parties that lack any significant presence in Delhi."

"Kejriwal's desperation is evident from the fact that he did not decline the support of Akhilesh Yadav and Mamata Banerjee's parties. Instead, he quietly accepted their backing to conceal his fear," he said. On the prospects of the AAP chief in the assembly elections, Gupta said, "The reality is that Kejriwal fully understands now that winning the New Delhi Assembly seat is nearly impossible for him. On one side, he is challenged by BJP candidate Parvesh Verma, son of former chief minister Sahib Singh Verma. On the other, Sandeep Dikshit, son of former chief minister Sheila Dikshit, is contesting from Congress. In such a scenario, Kejriwal feels extremely demoralised."

The leader of the Opposition claimed that Kejriwal has already signed defeat in the New Delhi constituency and is planning to contest from another seat as a backup, so that he could retain his stature by winning elsewhere even if he loses his current seat.

Haryana retains 'Achievers' category in LEADS-2024

Chandigarh: Haryana has secured a prestigious position in the "Achievers" category for Landlocked States in the Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) Survey 2024, conducted by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

This marks the third consecutive year of Haryana's recognition, underscoring its outstanding efforts in enhancing logistics infrastructure and strengthening the logistics ecosystem through the state's logistics policy.

Principal Secretary of the Industries and Commerce Department, D Suresh, presented the prestigious award to state Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini. The award, recently conferred upon Haryana by Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal in New Delhi, recognizes the state's significant achievements.

The LEADS survey evaluates states and Union Territories on their Logistics infrastructure, Logistics services, Operating and Regulatory environment and Sustainability and Equitable logistics. Haryana's inclusion in the "Achievers" category underscores its commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment and establishing itself as a logistics hub in the country.

Haryana has emerged as a leader in the logistics sector, largely due to its world-class logistics infrastructure. It has made substantial investments in enhancing its road networks, rail connectivity, and inland container depots. Major projects, including the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway and the Integrated Multi-Modal Logistics Hub (IMLH) at Nangal Chaudhary, have significantly boosted connectivity, driving the growth of logistics across the region.

Infrastructure planning has also seen significant advancements through the PM Gati Shakti State Master Plan (SMP) Portal. Haryana has mandated that all infrastructure projects exceeding Rs 100 crore be planned through this portal, ensuring better coordination and timely execution of key initiatives.

# Centre ignoring Dallewala's indefinite fast, must hold talks with protesting farmers: SKM

Chandigarh: The Samyukta Kisan Morcha on Thursday slammed the Centre, accusing it of ignoring the ongoing fast-unto-death of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewala and asked it to hold talks with the protesting farmers.

In a 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' at Moga in Punjab, the SKM said the draft of the National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing (NPFAM) announced by the Union government is "a dangerous form of re-enforcing the now-repealed three farm laws."

It announced to burn the copies of the draft policy on January 13 and take out a tractor march on January 26.

The SKM held the second 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' within a week to express their anger against the NPFAM, alleging it will "destroy" the mandi system if it is implemented. The first 'mahapanchayat' was held at Tohana in Haryana on January 4.

The SKM leaders also lashed out at the AAP government in Punjab for not calling a session of the state Assembly for rejecting the draft policy on agricultural market-

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ing. It also passed a "unity resolution" and said that a six-member coordination committee of the SKM will visit the Khanauri and Shambhu borders on January 10 to appeal for unity among the farmer bodies.

The organisation announced that none of its leaders will give any statement against the ongoing protest at the two border points by the SKM (non-political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM).

The SKM, which had spearheaded the 2020 farmers' stir against the now-repealed farm laws, is not part of the ongoing protest of the SKM (non-political) and KMM.

Senior SKM leaders who addressed the ma-



hapanchayat included Balbir Singh Rajewal, Joginder Singh Ugrahar, Rakesh Tikait, Dr Darshan Patil and Raminder Patiala.

Addressing the gathering, Tikait pointed towards Dallewala whose fast-unto-death entered 45th day on Thursday and said the central government was not both-ered about him.

"Some of our people are on fast unto death and we are also sad that he was on indefinite fast for the past 44-45 days. But the government of India is not listening.

Tikait asserted that the

SKM is completely with them," said Tikait.

"Our committee will meet them tomorrow. We are ready to work unitedly," he asserted.

Dallewala, who is the convener of the SKM (non-political), has been on an indefinite hunger strike at the Khanauri border point between Punjab and Haryana since November 26 last year over farmers' various demands including seeking a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

SKM was always strong and would remain so. Referring to the ongoing protest, Tikait said, "At present, this fight is on the Punjab soil. It should cross the border of Punjab and reach states like Haryana and Uttar Pradesh which are ruled by the BJP."

"Over 700 new organisations have come up in the country and many of them speak the language of the government," he said. The farmer leaders also blamed the Centre for the deadlock and asked it to hold talks

with the protesting farmers to save the life of Dallewala.

They rejected the draft policy on agriculture marketing and demanded a legal guarantee to MSP and a debt waiver for farmers. The draft policy is a "dangerous version of the repealed three black farm laws", they said.

Rajewal alleged that the SKM is like a wall that stands against the implementation of corporate policies, referring to the draft policy on agriculture marketing.

"This is your fight and farmers stand united. Total corporatisation is taking place and people will not tolerate it," he asserted.

Referring to Dallewala's indefinite fast and ongoing protest, Rajewal said, "He is our own and the SKM is with him."

Another SKM leader Harinder Singh Lakhowar lashed out at the Centre over the issue of the draft policy, alleging the government was trying to "break" the mandi system with its implementation.

He also targeted the AAP government for not calling a session of the Vidhan Sabha for rejecting the draft policy.

Punjab Police bust Pakistan-based weapon smuggling racket

Chandigarh: Punjab Police on Thursday claimed to have busted a Pakistan-backed weapon smuggling racket allegedly operated by absconding smuggler Manjot Singh alias Mannu from Dubai, with the arrest of an operative.

Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav said the arrested operative had been identified as Gurpreet Singh alias Kaka, from Havellian village in Tarn Taran, currently residing at Saidpur village, Amritsar Rural. Police seized three sophisticated pistols -- two 9MM Glock and one .30 bore China-made pistol -- along with four cartridges, the officer said.

Based on a tip-off about Manjot, an Indian national based in Dubai, operating a weapon-smuggling network via Pakistan with the help of his associates in India, the counter-intelligence team in Amritsar launched an operation, he said.

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The team arrested Gurpreet Singh at Khurmanian village on link road from Ram Tirath village, when he was en route to deliver the weapon consignment, he added.

Preliminary investigation revealed that Manjot is the kingpin of the network and was using encrypted apps to contact his Pakistan-based weapon smugglers, the DGP said.

Gurpreet was tasked with retrieving a weapon consignment dropped

by drones from across the border and delivering them to gangsters in various cities of Punjab on the directions of Manjot, he said.

According to police, Manjot is wanted by the Punjab Police in a drugs case registered against him at Sarai Amanant Khan police station in Tarn Taran in 2022.

Gurpreet Singh has also been facing a criminal case at Sarai Amanant Khan police station, the police said.

## Punjab is best for business and Industrial excellence: Punjab Min Sond

Komal Ramola Chandigarh:

While addressing the audience at the International Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI)'s flagship food trade show, Indusfood, held in Noida, Punjab's Minister for Tourism, Cultural Affairs, Industry & Commerce, and Investment Promotion, Tarunpreet Singh Sond, extended an open invitation to CEOs and delegates from national and international companies to visit Punjab. He emphasized that Punjab offers an ideal environment for business and industry.

Highlighting the peaceful, prosperous, and inclusive atmosphere of Punjab, Minister Sond described the state as an unparalleled destination for businesses and industries to thrive. He stated that Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann and his team are working diligently and with utmost commitment to boost the state's indus-



trial growth. Indusfood witnessed participation from nearly 3,500 exhibitors from 105 countries, representing the global food industry. As the Chief Guest, Minister Sond honored the CEOs and delegates of renowned companies and expressed his satisfaction at the opportunity to showcase Punjab's industry-friendly policies to global business leaders under one roof.

While addressing the representatives of various

companies, Sond announced that the Punjab Government plans to organize an international Food Festival in Punjab this November. This event will invite international companies working in the food and allied sectors to participate and explore investment opportunities.

The minister also shared insights into Punjab's pro-business initiatives, including the single-window system facilitated by invest Punjab to ease in-

vestment processes. He assured complete support and assistance to investors, emphasizing the government's commitment to fostering industrial development.

Sond stressed that CM Bhagwant Singh Mann's vision is to elevate Punjab's food sector to a global level. To achieve this, the Punjab Government is making concerted efforts to establish state brands like Verka, Sohna, and Five Rivers on international platforms. He noted the growing global demand for Punjab's products, which reflects the success of these initiatives. Minister Sond held separate meetings with representatives of companies interested in investing in Punjab. He also congratulated TPCI Chairman Mohit Singla for organizing the international food trade show and suggested establishing a TPCI Punjab chapter to further strengthen trade ties.

## Govt working to ensure good income for farmers with small landholdings: CM Saini

Komal Ramola Chandigarh:

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said that the state's double-engine government is consistently working towards the welfare of farmers. Our goal is to enhance farmers' income and make them economically prosperous. He said that 70 percent of the state's farmers own less land, necessitating a special strategy for their upliftment. The Chief Minister further said that the upcoming budget must include provisions aimed at increasing farmers' profits to empower them economically.

The Chief Minister was addressing a pre-budget consultation meeting at Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University in Hisar today, where he took suggestions from progressive farmers regarding their upliftment. Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minis-



ter Shyam Singh Rana, Public Health Engineering Minister, Ranbir Gangwa, MLA Sh Vinod Bhanua, and Randhir Panihar were also present.

During the discussion, the Chief Minister engaged in one-on-one interactions with the farmers. In the first session, over 52 suggestions were shared by the farmers. Along with progressive farmers, agricultural experts also participated in the session. In the second session, discussions were held with farmers associated with Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and members of the FPO federation also

contributed their suggestions.

The Chief Minister said that the suggestions shared during today's discussions will be incorporated into the upcoming budget. He said that the state government is particularly focused on the welfare of farmers, with special attention being given to increasing their income and strengthening their position. He said that agriculture contributes 18 percent to Haryana's GDP and expressed the government's intention to implement measures that would ensure small landholding farmers can earn a good income.

For this, initiatives like e-mandi and other options are being developed.

The Chief Minister further remarked that, in the past, transporting produce to the market was a significant challenge. However, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country's road and rail connectivity network has been significantly strengthened, making it easier to transport crops across regions. He highlighted the progress made by the country over the last 10 years, particularly under the Prime Minister's leadership.

## Chief Judicial Magistrate DLSA visited Bal Niketan shelter home in Panchkula

Komal Ramola Panchkula:

Ajay Kumar Ghanghas, Chief Judicial Magistrate, District Legal Services Authority Panchkula visited a shelter home named Bal Niketan in Sector 2, Panchkula, to inspect the living conditions of the children living there and to raise their concerns, can be resolved.

During the visit, Mr Ghanghas personally interacted with the children to understand their well-being and identify any problems they were facing. The purpose of the talks was to ensure that children were receiving adequate care and that their rights were protected.

The superintendent of the shelter home told the CJM that a child was tested for tuberculosis (TB), but the report has not been received yet. Taking immediate cognizance of the matter, the CJM directed the DLSA office to



contact the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Panchkula, and ensure that the test report is received at the earliest. He also stressed the need to speed up the testing process.

The CJM highlighted that if the test result is positive, immediate measures should be taken to prevent the spread of the disease and ensure the safety and treat-

ment of the affected child. During inspection, Mr Ghanghas noticed the presence of a handicapped (deaf and dumb) child in the shelter home. In the best interest of the child, he issued directions to transfer the child to a specialized institution catering to the needs of persons with disabilities so as to ensure better care and support for his

growth and well-being. Furthermore, Mr Ghanghas interacted with the cook at the shelter home to check the quality and type of food being served to the children during lunch today. He also inspected the overall cleanliness of the premises and expressed satisfaction over the clean environment created in the shelter home.



By Priyanka Saurabh

# How right is it to create controversy over the national anthem?

Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi walked out of the Tamil Nadu Assembly without delivering his customary address. The governor's departure was in protest against the national anthem not being played before his scheduled address, which he considered necessary. Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi walked out of the House without delivering the inaugural address of the first session of the year in the Assembly. He said that the national anthem was not played before his speech. Last year too, he had refused to read out his address. The state anthem is played first in the Tamil Nadu Assembly. The session begins with the playing of the state anthem, Tamil Thai Vaazhathu, and finally the national anthem. The national anthem is played after the governor's address. This practice has been in place since July 1991, which was started during the Jayalalitha-led government. Earlier, the governor used to deliver his address without any national anthem. Governor R.N. Ravi walked out of the Assembly without delivering his address, saying that only the state anthem was played on his arrival and not the national anthem. He said it was an insult to both the Constitution and the national anthem. In Nagaland, the national anthem was not played in the assembly for decades, and it was introduced only in February 2021 during R.N. Ravi's tenure as governor. In Tripura, the national anthem was played in the assembly for the first time in March 2018. Assemblies



of other states do not follow strict protocols for playing the national anthem. Respecting the national anthem has been described as a fundamental duty of every citizen. However, this does not make it compulsory to sing or play it on special occasions.

During the President's address to Parliament, the national anthem is played when the President arrives on the dais. During the address, the President reads out the printed address, followed by a second version, if necessary, which is read out by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. After the address, the national anthem is played again before the president leaves the hall. The Constitution of India regarding respect for the national anthem Article 51(A)(a) under the Fundamental Duties mandates every citizen to abide by the Constitution and respect the national flag, the national anthem, and other national symbols. Home Ministry orders specify the occasions when the national anthem should be played,

such as during civil and military investitures, parades, the arrival/departure of the President or Governor, and ceremonial state ceremonies. What has been specified about playing the national anthem on special occasions? The national anthem should be played in full. During civil and military investitures. When the national salute is given to the President or Governor. During parades, hoisting of the national flag or regimental color presentations. When the President arrives or leaves from ceremonial state ceremonies. Before and after the President's address to the nation on All India Radio. Courts have observed that the national anthem deserves respect, but its singing or playing is not compulsory on all occasions unless explicitly specified. For example, during cinema screenings, the Supreme Court has ruled that playing the national anthem is not compulsory but should be encouraged.

Under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, in-

tempt of the national anthem is punishable with imprisonment of up to 3 years, a fine, or both. Not playing or singing the national anthem is not punishable unless it is a deliberate disrespect. In 2019, the Madras High Court dismissed a petition seeking punishment for not playing the national anthem at an official function, citing a lack of legal mandate to enforce its singing or playing on all occasions. Mass singing is required on occasions such as hoisting of the national flag. Any cultural or ceremonial function (other than a parade). Arrival and departure of the president at government or public functions. Isn't playing the national anthem mandatory at official functions? For example, during a function held in Madurai in 2019 attended by the Prime Minister, Tamil Nadu Governor, and Chief Minister, the national anthem was not played. The Madras High Court dismissed a petition seeking punishment for not playing the national anthem. The court said that the use of

the national anthem was customary and not mandated by law.

Playing the national anthem at important government events reinforces a sense of collective identity, unity, and patriotism among citizens. It is a symbolic reminder of shared national values and aspirations beyond regional, linguistic, and cultural differences.

Making the national anthem compulsory is in consonance with Article 51(A)(a) of the Constitution, which enshrines the fundamental duty of every citizen to respect the national anthem. Its inclusion in major events underlines the importance of respecting national symbols and promoting a culture of respect and accountability in public life. The government should issue clear and consistent guidelines for playing the national anthem at official events to avoid confusion and ensure uniformity across states and institutions. Promote awareness and respect, run awareness campaigns stressing the importance of the national anthem as a unifying symbol, and promote voluntary respect and participation without compulsion or controversy.

laying the national anthem at important government events reinforces a sense of collective identity, unity, and patriotism among citizens. It is a symbolic reminder of shared national values and aspirations beyond regional, linguistic, and cultural differences. Under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, deliberate insult or contempt of the national anthem is punishable by imprisonment of up to 3 years, a fine, or both.

## 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.

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

## Solution, Sudoku

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

## THE WISDOM TREE

BY SUVEEN KUMAR

### BEING HAPPY

Everyday we learn some tips to be happy and every day we generate some reasons to be sad. Every day we take some oath to improve and every day we fall into some new bad habits. Every day we explore some new ways and every day we lose some found ones. We may not be responsible how our life is, but we are certainly responsible how it is going to be. Business is a way to exchange and love is a way to give. When we exchange we are happy because this serves our purposes and we lose nothing. In love, giving gives us happiness because the one who gives becomes happy by giving and the one who receives gets things without expecting. So either we do business or we do love both make us happy. When we do business in love and love in business they make us sad. Help is not love, when you help is also not business. Help is help. Help has

no place in love nor in business because in Help, the subset of help is gratitude and gratitude neither serves in business nor in love. The beautiful difference between business and love is that in business we know the price of the things and can pay it off but in love nothing has a price tag, and even if you put a price tag in love, it can vary like anything. In love the price of things while you fall in love, while you are in love and while you are getting out of love are different in all the stages. Also, in business, the price is generic however, in love the price is individual. In business the products are examined with ISI mark to ensure their quality, in love quality is tested by being in it. In business you possess things 100% when you pay for it, in love things are never can never possess 100% of anything even when you have paid 100 times for it. In business a good probability works.



# Economic concerns for Modi Govt

Showing down of India's GDP in the second quarter of the current financial year during July-September 2024 to 5.4 per cent, which was a seven-quarter low, has raised a serious concern about maintaining growth momentum of the country in 2025. India's Chief Economist and Advisor, V Anantha Nageswaran has termed the latest GDP growth figures "disappointing". Union Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman, however, said the slowdown was not "systemic" and with better "public expenditure" the loss will be compensated in the third quarter.

Nevertheless, the concern about maintaining the growth momentum has started haunting even the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who met eminent economists and sectoral experts on December 24, as the preparation of the Union Budget 2025-26 is underway, that has just become challenging with special reference to better "public expenditure" on which Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has pinned her hope. She has already concluded her pre-budget consultations with key stakeholders, including economists and representatives of industry and trade unions.

The Prime Minister chaired the meeting with eminent economists and sectoral experts at NITI Aayog. The chief issues that figured during the interaction were job creation, improving farm productivity, and mobilizing public funds. Challenges posed by



global economic uncertainties and geopolitical tensions also figured in the meeting.

It is worth noting that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has lowered India's economic growth forecast to 6.5 per cent for the current financial year from its earlier estimate of 7 per cent due to lower-than-expected growth in private investment and housing demand. The Reserve Bank of India also significantly lowered the growth projection for the current fiscal year to 6.6 per cent from its earlier estimate of 7.2 per cent. IMF forecast for India's GDP growth in 2025 is 6.5 per cent.

All the economic data of 2024 and the global factors including trade war among nations and the threatened tariff increase by the president elect of USA Donald Trump, are indicative of the impending challenges and difficulties before the Indian economy in 2025.

Quarter second slowdown of GDP has confirmed the fears of India on the track of losing its growth momentum. Wages are falling, profits of the companies are declining, and the inflation has been stubbornly high. All these compelled the RBI to keep interest rates unchanged for nearly two years, since it felt that rate cut could be "very risky" as the former Governor Shaktikanta Das has reiterated.

Slump in GDP growth rate during July-September months was disappointing for various reasons, including a sharp fall in the manufacturing sector which came down from 7 per cent in the previous quarter to just 2.2 per cent. Service sector had also seen slower growth compared to earlier projections though still robust. Mining sector output also contracted marginally. Private consumption expenditure was down from 7.4 per cent to 6 per cent compared to the first quarter.

The problems do not end here. Apart from the weaker demand, growth in investment also lost its steam, primarily because the government's planned capital expenditure slowed down. Inflation, with elevated food prices, is hovering around 6 per cent impacting the household expenditure.

Union Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman has indicated about a "better public expenditure" for which funding will be a difficult task in the Union Budget 2025-26, which she is expected to table in the parliament on February 1. Experts have called for a significant increase in infrastructure spending, to the tune of 30 per cent more from the Rs1.1 lakh crore capex allocated for the current financial year.

It should be noted that the government was unable to use the capex allocation in the past, and hence it had raised the allocation for the current financial year

by merely 10 per cent. There has been overall deceleration of the government spending leading to slowdown of GDP growth rate.

All these indicate that the greatest challenge for the Indian economy at this time is to maintain its growth momentum, which will be dependent chiefly on such provisions in the Union Budget 2025-26, that can fund the economic growth through public funding, since there is not much hope from the private investments.

Good monsoon this year has generated some hope for the agriculture, but the government need to urgently address the agrarian sector crisis. It also needs to focus on the manufacturing sector which has performed very badly. Consumption and demand have been sluggish, but reversing this trend would need money to be placed in the hands of households, through various social sector schemes, providing tax reliefs, significantly increasing public expenditure, and creation of large number of jobs.

However, overcoming the economic challenges in 2025 would much depend on how the Union Budget 2025-26 tackles the current problems and takes pre-emptive steps against the expected global uncertainties and threats on Indian economy.

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# India and USA united in fight against terrorism, says US ambassador

Mumbai  
US ambassador to India Eric Garcetti on Thursday said India and America are united in the fight against terrorism, and expressed satisfaction over the "increased" intelligence sharing and cooperation between the two countries to bring perpetrators to justice.



The American Dream and the Indian Dream are flip sides of the same coin, he said, adding that the relationship between the two countries was "multiplicative" and that they have responsibility beyond their borders.

Addressing a gathering on 'Peace and the role of the US - India defence and security partnership' here, Garcetti said many innocent lives were being snuffed out due to terrorism.

"Both the countries face the threat from terror organisations like Lashkar, Jaish, ISIS. These terror outfits operate across borders and we must meet this threat together. Our collaboration extends beyond fighting terrorism but we must also see how we can de-radicalise communities," he said.

"We have to invest in opportunities in some of our poorest areas. We have to reach out to communities who feel they are on the brink and ensure those who

threaten peace and stability face accountability. Peace is linked to prosperity," he said.

India and the USA are united in the fight against terrorism. There is increased intelligence sharing and cooperation between the two countries to bring perpetrators to justice, he added.

Violence occurs if there is no prosperity and jobs, Garcetti said, stressing the need to build economic pathways.

History can be brought back to life again, like the Silk Route and the Spice Route, he said.

"The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) will link nations in Saudi, Mediterranean and go

all the way to Europe. The conflict in the Middle East has put a pause, but the planning continues. I would encourage the USA and India, our Gulf partners and others to see IMEC as one of the greatest things we can work on in our lifetime," he said.

The US ambassador described Mumbai as an "incredible industrial hub" that is rich with ideas and filled with people who are always looking at tomorrow differently from today.

He said the Taj Hotel in Mumbai was a sacred ground and an iconic hotel that was attacked by terrorists on November 26, 2008.

"We are commemorating the 16th anniversary of the

26/11 attacks. It was here where the bravery of the country was shown," he said.

According to Garcetti, discussion about Indo-US ties is not about sharing common goals, but how we get to those common goals which require principles that we articulate, partnerships that we build and practice of getting to know how we operate together.

"Our relationship is not additive but multiplicative...developing vaccines, international trade. We aren't countries that just think what is best for us and our people, but also about the world and how the impact of what we do, whether militarily, in terms of health,

climate and women's empowerment," he said.

"Peace is more than defence. It is about how we build a peaceful world," he said.

Diplomacy and people-to-people contact is so critical that without them all we have is war and weaponry, the US envoy said.

"To keep peace together, we have to tackle transnational threats - from trafficking to drugs. There is a need to build civil society and uplift the disempowered and minority communities. The two great nations have responsibility beyond our borders," he said.

Garcetti said the two countries are trusting each other more than ever before in defence partnership.

"We have advanced India's emergence as a maintenance and repair hub for forward deployed US navy assets. We are developing weapons together, (carrying out) research and development and co-producing more. US defence exports to India have grown from near zero in 2008 to over USD 25 billion in 2022. We aren't just selling systems to India but are making systems with India," he said.

"The United States is India's number one military exercise partner and we have expanded our joint military exercises in scale and scope from the mountains of Alas-

ka to the Indian Ocean," he said.

The American Dream and the Indian Dream are flip sides of the same coin and both countries must define technologies and emphasise people, Garcetti said.

The two countries are democracies based on the idea of dignity of every human being. Democracy thrives when everybody thrives within it, he said.

He said the G20 summit hosted by India last year was the most successful one ever held.

Paying homage to former US president Jimmy Carter, who passed away recently, Garcetti said that as the 90th president of the US, Carter came to India in 1978 and delivered a speech in Parliament.

"His mother came here to Maharashtra to work with leprosy patients at the age of 68 and became a role model to show that service doesn't stop when you enter your 7th decade," he said.

"Peace is not just something you accomplish. Peace is something you must build every single day. President Carter did that in public and private life...Whether it was achieving Middle East peace when few thought it was possible or whether it was housing for the poor through Habitat for Humanity. He lived his life breathing and living peace," he added.

## OTP feature in RTI portal meant to protect user privacy: Centre



New Delhi  
The recent introduction of a one-time password (OTP) feature for the RTI portal is meant to protect user privacy, the Centre said on Thursday.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has examined the concerns raised about the functioning of the Right to Information (RTI) portal - www.rtionline.gov.in - and clarified that the system is operational and effective after the introduction of a new OTP feature, an official statement said.

"The portal allows a user to file RTI applications, appeals and to know their status."

A comprehensive review by the DoPT has confirmed that the portal's newly-implemented features, including an enhanced security protocol, are operational and user-friendly, it said.

Responding to issues reported by some users, the DoPT said the OTP feature, introduced on January 2, 2025, has been implemented to authenticate users and protect sensitive personal information included in the RTI applications.

By ensuring only authorised access, the measure strengthens cybersecurity and aligns with best practices, the statement issued by the personnel ministry said.

"Concerns were raised about delays in receiving OTPs. The DoPT explained that while OTPs are promptly dispatched from the NIC email domain, delays may occasionally occur due to high traffic on either NIC server or external email services like Gmail or Yahoo," it said.

Importantly, OTPs do not expire until they are used, meaning users can access the status of their applications as soon as the OTP arrives, the state-

**A comprehensive review by the DoPT has confirmed that the portal's newly-implemented features, including an enhanced security protocol, are operational and user-friendly, it said.**

ment said.

As of January 9 at 10:55 am, 9,782 users have successfully accessed their RTI status using the new system, underscoring its reliability, the statement added.

As per the latest feature, an OTP is generated by the system to an applicant's email for accessing the status of RTI applications filed by him or her.

"Some users also criticised the additional step as complicating the process. The DoPT reiterated that the measure is vital for protecting user privacy and that the system has been tested thoroughly to ensure smooth functioning," the statement said.

On complaints of inaccessible helpline services, the department confirmed that users can reach out to the RTI help desk at 011-24622461 during regular office hours (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5:30 pm), except public holidays for prompt assistance.

"The DoPT reassured citizens that it remains committed to transparency, accessibility, and user satisfaction, with ongoing monitoring of the RTI portal to maintain its efficiency. The recent updates are part of the government's broader initiative to enhance digital services while safeguarding the rights of citizens under the RTI Act," it added.

## Govt busy looting people by imposing GST on essential items: Cong

New Delhi  
The Congress on Thursday accused the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre of looting people by imposing the Goods and Services Tax (GST) even on essential items.

Attacking the ruling dispensation, Congress general secretary in-charge of Communications, Jairam Ramesh said, "We are continuously raising the issue that the income of people in the country is not increasing and inflation is continuously skyrocketing."

"Retail inflation is already at a 14-month high. Now items used everyday like soap and shampoo are going to become more expensive," he wrote on X. Ramesh, who is the Congress MP in Rajya

Sabha, along with his post also shared a report which claimed that since the prices of soap and shampoo would become expensive.

He asserted the government should have taken steps to control inflation on a priority basis, but instead of giving relief, it is busy looting people by imposing GST on essential commodities.

"For how long will the people continue to struggle with the effects of inflation?," Ramesh questioned.

It may be mentioned that Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge earlier said the BJP government created "economic turmoil", leading to a mess in the lives of the common people.

## Parents can be legally compelled to offer education money to daughter: SC

New Delhi  
Daughter has an indefeasible, legally enforceable and legitimate right to secure educational expenses from her parents, who can be compelled to provide necessary funds within the limit of their financial resources," said the bench's January 2 order.

The remarks of a bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan came in a matrimonial dispute in which the daughter of the estranged couple, who was studying in Ireland, refused to accept Rs 43 lakh given by her father towards her studies as a part of the total alimony being paid to her mother.

"She, being the daughter, has an indefeasible, legally enforceable, lawful, and legitimate right to secure educational expenses from her

parents. All that we observe is that the daughter has a fundamental right to pursue her education, for which the parents can be compelled to provide necessary funds within the limit of their financial resources," said the bench's January 2 order.

The daughter of the parties, it said, to maintain her own dignity had declined to retain the amount and asked him to take the money back but he refused.

The daughter was legally entitled to the amount, the court said.

The father was said to have spent the money without any compelling reasons, indicating he was financially sound to provide her with the financial assistance towards her academic pursuits.

"Respondent number 2

(daughter) has, thus, got a right to retain that amount. She need not, therefore, return that amount either to the appellant (mother) or to respondent number 1 (father), and may suitably appropriate it as she may deem fit," said the court.

The bench referred to the settlement agreement entered into by the estranged couple on November 28, 2024, which was also signed by the daughter.

The court said the husband had agreed to pay a total sum of Rs 73 lakh to his estranged wife and daughter, of which Rs 43 lakh was meant for his daughter's academic goals, and the rest for his wife.

It observed since the wife had received her Rs 30 lakh share, and the parties were admittedly living separately

for the last 26 years, the bench saw no reason to not grant a decree of divorce by mutual consent. "Consequently, we invoke our powers under Article 142 of the Constitution and dissolve the marriage of the parties by granting a decree of divorce by mutual consent," it held.

The court further directed as a result of the settlement agreement, the parties should not pursue any court case against each other, and if there was a pending case before any forum, it should be disposed of in terms of the agreement.

"The parties shall have no claim against each other in future and shall abide by the terms and conditions of the settlement agreement, which shall form part of this order," it said.

## 10,000 special guests to attend Republic Day celebrations at Kartavya Path

New Delhi  
The Centre has extended invitations to approximately 10,000 special guests to attend the 76th Republic Day Parade on January 26 at Kartavya Path here.

These invitees represent a wide spectrum of backgrounds, including top performers in various fields and individuals who have made the best use of government schemes, a statement by the Ministry of Defence said on Thursday.

These guests are engaged in commendable efforts related to income generation, employment creation, and environmental protection through Self Help Groups (SHGs). These SHGs, which work on critical areas such as food, nutrition, health, water sanitation, hygiene, Panchayati Raj Institutions, and gender activities, have been selected. Special preference was given to SHG members who have not previously visited Delhi, it said.

## SC orders status quo on construction under PM Awas Yojana on Abbas Ansari's land

New Delhi  
The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered status quo on the construction of housing units under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana at a disputed site in Lucknow's Jiamau whose ownership is claimed by the sons of late gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari.

In 2020, the Lucknow Development Authority had bulldozed the bungalow that belonged to Ansari and his sons including Abbas Ansari. The government plans to build flats on the land under the PM Awas Yojana.



When the matter came up for hearing in the SC on Thursday, Sibal informed the bench that despite its order, the case has not been taken for hearing.

"Some High Courts, we don't know what will happen. Allahabad High Court is one of the high courts which one should be worrisome about," the bench said.

While granting the status quo on construction, the top court bench directed the high court to hear the matter expeditiously.

"Since we have not issued notice and have also not obtained any report from Reg-

istry of the High Court, we are not inclined to express any opinion as to what were the circumstances in which the petitioner's writ petition could not be taken up for hearing by the bench, though it was listed from time to time," the bench observed.

It said that the petitioners have specifically stated that the authorities have commenced construction at plot No 93 located in Village Jiamau, Lucknow, which they claim to be under their ownership.

If third party rights are created it is likely to cause ir-

reversible loss to the petitioners, the court observed. "We dispose of this application with a direction to the authorities as well as to the petitioners to maintain status quo at the site till the matter is heard by the High Court," it said.

According to Abbas Ansari, his grandfather purchased a share in a plot in Jiamau and the deed was registered on March 9, 2004. The said property was allegedly gifted by him to his wife Rabia Begum, who then bequeathed the same through a registered will dated June 28, 2017 to the petitioner and his brother.

The plea said that the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Allahabad, Lucknow allegedly passed an ex parte (in their absence) order on August 14, 2020 declaring the plot a government property.

Thereafter, the petitioner and his brother were dispossessed in August 2023. Abbas Ansari then filed a petition in 2023 before the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court.

## Chief of the Army Staff visits NCC Republic Day Camp 2025

Staff Reporter  
New Delhi

Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Upendra Dwivedi visited the NCC Republic Day Parade Camp at Delhi Cantt. on Thursday January 09, 2025.

In his address, he encouraged the cadets to continue striving for excellence and emphasised on the fact that serving the nation goes beyond the Armed Forces. He also stated that the foundation laid by NCC equips them for leadership roles in every field.

The COAS also commended the NCC's selfless efforts in the service and national building.

He lauded the cadets for their active participation in a number of community programmes, blood donation campaigns, environmental conservation initiatives and social awareness activities.

The Chief of the Army Staff while remembering his own cadet days, threw light upon the fact that the cadets of today will play a very cru-



cial role towards Viksit Bharat.

General Upendra Dwivedi concluded his address by wishing the cadets success in all their future endeavours, reinforcing the importance of their roles as the future leaders of a prosperous and strong India. In the end, he quoted Late General Bipin Rawat, the first Chief of Defence Staff, "silently carve out your identity, for the winds will sing your praise."

As part of the programme, the Chief of the Army Staff reviewed the Guard of Honour consisting of contingents of Army, Navy, Air Force and girl cadets. He

witnessed a band performance by the Government High School, Mizoram. General Upendra Dwivedi also appreciated the efforts made by the cadets in preparation of the theme based 'Flag Area' depicting social awareness programmes and community development campaigns. NCC cadets showcased their skill of model building in both static and functional ship models. The cadets also put up a small cultural program showcasing their culture and commitment to 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' through music, vocal & demonstrative art performance.

Too many power centres in Rajasthan govt causing confusion: Pilot

Jaipur:

Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Thursday said people of Rajasthan are suffering due to the confusion caused by too many power centres in the state's BJP government.

He claimed that the BJP ministers and the state government often give conflicting statements and there is no clear policy.

"People are suffering due to too many power centres in the BJP government of the state. Ministers in the government say something and the government says something else," Pilot told reporters here.

Highlighting the issue of the sub-inspector recruitment exam-2021, Pilot said the government is completely confused as its ministers say that they will get the exam cancelled whereas the government denies it.

"The people are suffering due to the deadlock within the government. There should be a clear policy. It has been so many months since this has been going on, he said.

"Whether it is the SI recruitment or the state's animations, the state of uncertainty and indecision in it creates confusion among the public," he said.

Pilot said there is resentment among the people of the state due to the decisions taken by the BJP government in the last year. He said that Congress will raise the issue related to the people in the Assembly and seek a reply from the government.

Gogoi flays Assam CM's wealth surge, calls for GST reforms

Guwahati:

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on Thursday accused Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of amassing wealth while the state's development remains stagnant.

Speaking at a press conference in Jorhat, he highlighted state's poor standing in the Human Development Index (HDI), ranked 31st in the country, juxtaposed against Sarma's position as the 9th richest Chief Minister in India.

"While Assam struggles at the bottom of the HDI rankings, our Chief Minister has managed to secure the 9th spot among India's wealthiest CMs. At this rate, he could break into the top five within a year," Gogoi remarked.

The Congress MP also criticized the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), describing the current regime as "draconian" and burdensome for the poor and middle class. "Rising prices and unemployment are causing immense hardship to the people of Assam," he said in a social media post, attributing these challenges to the "mismatching" of the BJP-led NDA government.

Gogoi highlighted his party's proposed solution—a simplified GST 2.0 system outlined in their Nyay Patra 2024. This revised framework, he claimed, would rectify the flaws in the current GST system and provide relief to the common people.

## CM Dhama says UCC to be implemented this month; vows action on 'land jihad', 'spit jihad'

Bareilly:

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama on Thursday highlighted the various initiatives undertaken in the state, reaffirming the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the 'Devbhoomi' this month.

Uttarakhand is the first state in the country to have UCC Act, which seeks to establish a uniform and an equal set of rules on marriage, divorce, succession and inheritance for all citizens in the state, except the Scheduled Tribes (STs), irrespective of religion.

It makes registration of all marriages and live-in relationships mandatory.

"We have formulated the Uniform Civil Code law in Devbhoomi Uttarakhand. This is the state's first honour and will be implemented within this month," Dhama said during the inauguration of the 29th Uttaravani Mela in Bareilly.

He compared the UCC to India's sacred rivers such as Sharda, Ganga, Saraswati and Kaveri, stating that just as they sustain life across the country, the UCC will work similarly.

Regarding the state's tourism and infrastructure initiatives, Dhama said, "In Haridwar and Rishikesh, we are planning to develop the Ganga Corridor. Work on a corridor along the Sharda River has also begun."

He added that Uttara-



khand continues to see an increasing influx of devotees and tourists which would be bolstered by the reconstruction efforts in Kedarnath and the master plan underway at Badrinath Dhama.

Dhama also announced beautification and restoration efforts for temples in the Kumaon region and development at Purnagiri. "It gives me immense joy that more devotees from Uttar Pradesh visit Purnagiri. We are creating the Sharda Corridor, which will enhance the ghats and beautify the area," he said.

The chief minister expressed hope for Uttarakhand becoming a hub for destination weddings and tourism, emphasising the state's growing reputation.

"Handicraft products from Uttarakhand are gaining recognition

among multinational companies and women in the state are doing excellent work. Over one lakh women in Uttarakhand are now earning a substantial income. We will provide them with interest-free loans," he said.

On governance and security, Dhama shared progress on several legal reforms, including the anti-conversion law, the introduction of anti-riot legislation and measures to counter exam malpractice.

"We have taken strong steps by enacting an anti-riot law. Any damages caused during riots will be recovered from the perpetrators."

"Similarly, with our anti-cheating law, over 100 individuals involved in exam malpractice have been jailed. This ensures fair opportunities for deserving candidates," he added.

Dhama likens UCC to sacred rivers, says it will sustain life like Sharda, Ganga, Saraswati, Kaveri.

manes by local artists and food stalls featuring traditional delicacies.

The UCC has been on the BJP's agenda nationally for many years.

But the party's government in Uttarakhand became the first to take a concrete step towards implementing it just before the Lok Sabha elections last year.

An expert committee formed by Dhama and headed by retired Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai submitted a comprehensive draft in four volumes to the state government in February 2024.

Acting on the draft, the state government presented the Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code Bill in the Assembly a few days later and it was passed on February 7.

The UCC Act received President Droupadi Murmu's approval on March 11, making the hill state the first in independent India to have a UCC Act.

A nine-member state government-appointed panel, chaired by former chief secretary Singh to lay down the rules for the UCC's implementation panel, submitted its final report. Dhama has previously said in no unclear terms that the UCC will be implemented in January.

Ayodhya gears up for Ram Lalla consecration anniversary



Ayodhya (UP):

Preparations are in full swing to celebrate the first anniversary of the consecration of the Ram Lalla idol at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya this weekend.

Scheduled from January 11 to 13, the celebrations are to include commoners, who were unable to attend the historic ceremony last year, alongside around 110 invited VIPs, according to the temple trust.

A German hangar tent has been installed at the Angad Teela site, capable of hosting up to 5,000 people. Common people will have the opportunity to witness the grand event, which includes classical cultural performances, rituals, and daily Ram Katha discourses at the pavilion and Yagnashala.

"The trust has decided to invite common people who could not attend the initial consecration ceremony last year. They will be allowed to join all three days of events at Angad Teela," said Champat Rai, the General Secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

The trust said that invitation letters have been distributed to guests, including the 110 VIPs, many of whom missed the original pratishta ceremony on January 22, 2024. "Those unable to attend last year will be included in this anniversary celebration," Rai added.

The daily schedule features Ram Katha sessions starting at 2 p.m., followed by discourses on the Ramcharitmanas (manas pravachan) and cultural performances. Prasad distribution is planned for each morning, ensuring that attendees enjoy a devotional and spiritual experience.

Decorations at the Yagna site and preparations for the festival are nearing completion, according to the temple trust's media office.

The pavilion and Yagnashala will serve as key venues for these festivities, providing a rare opportunity for the public to be part of the ongoing celebrations.

Earlier on January 5, a government press note stated that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will perform the Ram Lalla 'abhishek' at the temple here on January 11.

Digital centres to assist visitors with lost items and ghat details at Mahakumbh

Mahakumbh Nagar:

The Uttar Pradesh Police has established 10 state-of-the-art digital 'Khoya-Paya Kendra' across the Mahakumbh area to ensure the safety and convenience of millions of devotees.

These centres are equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, including waiting rooms and medical rooms for providing immediate assistance to devotees. To ensure the comfort of families, a separate refreshment area has been arranged for women and children.

Additionally, all centres have 55-inch LED screens connected to a public address system, which will display live updates on lost and found persons and items. The centres

will also provide essential information on ghat arrangements and routes related to Mahakumbh.

To manage the large influx of devotees, Additional Director General (ADG), Prayagraj Zone, Bhanu Bhaskar emphasised here on Thursday that every measure is being taken to ensure a smooth experience for pilgrims. He added that ten computerised 'Khoya-Paya Kendra' have been established across the Mahakumbh area.

The main model centre, situated at the western end of the Sangam Route, will be staffed with five employees on regular days and nine during peak bathing festivals to manage the crowd effectively and ensure smooth operations.

## Mahakumbh to showcase transformative Jal Jeevan Mission of Bundelkhand

Mahakumbh Nagar:

Over 40-45 crore devotees from across the globe attending Maha Kumbh 2025 will witness the remarkable transformation of Uttar Pradesh's villages through the concept of 'Swachh Sujal Gaon' (Clean and Water-Secure Villages).

Under the visionary guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Jal Jeevan Mission has revolutionized water accessibility, bringing tap water to every household in Bundelkhand. This narrative of progress showcases Bundelkhand's journey from despair before 2017 to its remarkable transformation thereafter.

Set across 40,000



square feet, the exhibition will present a vivid picture of a prosperous Uttar Pradesh, highlighting initiatives such as PM Awas, CM Awas, gram panchayat development, and village solar energy adoption. The government aims to emphasize the state's new and inspiring identity through the exhibition. A digital corner will also

give citizens real-time information about their villages' water, taps, and supply status. Under the Yogi government, the Rural Water Supply and Namami Gange Department has created this 'Swachh Sujal Gaon' to be showcased from January 10 to February 26, 2025.

Themed "Solution to Drinking Water: New

Identity of My Village," the initiative highlights how Bundelkhand, once synonymous with water scarcity, now stands as a symbol of success in resolving drinking water crisis.

The 47-day event will feature numerous programs, offering a platform for rural women of Bundelkhand to share their stories of change. These include life-altering experiences such as villages in Banda, Jhansi, and Chitrakoot now witnessing weddings, which were previously impossible due to water shortages.

Women from Lalitpur and Mahoba will recount how access to clean water has improved their lives, even addressing severe health impacts like hair loss caused by carrying heavy water loads.

## STF to combat drug trafficking in Himachal Pradesh

• H.P. Cabinet Decisions

Sushil Kumar Sharma Shimla:

The State Cabinet, in its meeting held here on Thursday under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu approved the establishment of a Special Task Force to combat drug abuse and dismantle drug trafficking and organized crime networks in the state through a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach.

Additionally, the Cabinet has decided to promulgate an ordinance to amend Schedule 1A of the Indian Stamp Act, 1899. This amendment will enable the levy of a uniform stamp duty rate of 12 per cent on transfer and lease transactions secured under Section 18(2)(H) of the Government of India to amend Schedule 1A of the Indian Stamp Act, 1899. This amendment will enable the levy of a uniform stamp duty rate of 12 per cent on transfer and lease transactions secured under Section 18(2)(H) of the Government of India to amend Schedule 1A of the Indian Stamp Act, 1899.



Government. The Himachal Pradesh Cabinet also approved the inclusion of families in BPL list, with no adult members between the ages of 18 and 59, families headed by women, families whose head has a disability of 50 percent or more, families that worked for at least 100 days under MNREGA in the previous financial year, and families whose earning members are suffering from chronic diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, muscular dystrophy, thalassaemia, or any other condition resulting in

permanent disability. It decided to approve the ban on felling of trees except Safeda, Poplar and Bamboo while felling of khair for sale in accordance with ten years programme.

The Cabinet approved the guidelines for 'Sarkar Gaon Ke Dwar' Programme to redress the grievances of common man residing in remote and hard areas of the State.

The Cabinet reiterated its request to the Government of India to adopt the 90-10 funding formula for the power component of the

Kishau Multipurpose Project, similar to the formula adopted for the water component. Alternatively, it proposed providing a 50-year interest-free loan for the entire amount payable by the State Government for the power component under the Inter-State Agreement.

In addition, the Cabinet has decided to delegate the mandate for the allotment and monitoring of hydro and solar power projects above 5 MW, as well as Green Hydrogen, Biomass, and Pumped Storage Projects, to the Department of Energy.

## HP Cabinet pays tributes to Dr Manmohan Singh

Shimla:

The HP Cabinet paid rich tributes to former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and observed two minutes of silence in his memory.

The cabinet acknowledged his significant contributions to the nation and to Himachal Pradesh's development. The Himachal Pradesh Cabinet gave its nod to rename Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration (HIPA) as Dr. Manmohan Singh Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration.

The Cabinet noted that several key projects in the state were realized due to Dr. Singh's vision and support. These include the Atal Tunnel, three medical colleges, the ESIC Hos-

pital at Ner Chowk, IIT Mandi, IIT Una, the Central University, and the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIIFT) in Kangra.

It was also mentioned that Dr. Manmohan Singh's tenure as Prime Minister and Union Finance Minister was transformative. His initiatives such as the Right to Information Act, Right to Education Act, MNREGA, the Food Security Act, introduction of Aardhaar, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and the historic loan waiver for 72 lakh farmers were highlighted as milestones.

The Indo-US Nuclear Deal during his Prime Ministership was hailed as a strategic achievement with lasting benefits for India.

Awareness camp organized to make women & adolescents aware during menstruation

Rajan Panchhi

Mandi:

With the aim of making women and adolescents aware during menstruation, a one-day awareness camp was organized under the 'Woh Din' scheme in Government Senior Secondary School Gwalpur, courtesy of Child Development Project Karsog. Child Development Project Officer Karsog Vipasha Bhatia attended the camp as the chief guest. School girls were made aware about menstrual hygiene in the camp.

Child Development Project Officer Vipasha Bhatia said that the aim of the 'Woh Din' scheme is to make women and adolescents aware about hygiene during menstruation.

She said that menstruation is a subject which is not talked about openly in our society even today, due to which women and adolescents have to face many problems during menstruation. While making the school girls present in the camp aware about this, she said that one should take bath every day during menstruation. Hands should be thoroughly cleaned with soap before and after using napkins and one napkin should be used only once.

She said that during menstruation women should take care of proper diet and eat nutritious food so that diseases like anaemia can be prevented. Apart from this, she also provided information about Bati Bachao, Bati Padhao Yojana.

Slogan writing, speech and painting competitions were also organized for the school students in the camp, in which children participated enthusiastically.

Sri Lanka jails firebrand monk for insulting Islam

**Colombo:**  
A Sri Lankan court jailed a politically influential, firebrand Buddhist monk on Thursday, putting him behind bars for a second time for insulting Islam and stoking religious hatred in the island nation.

Galgodaatte Gnanasara was sentenced on Thursday to nine months for his anti-Muslim remarks, which date to 2016.

He was previously jailed last year on a similar charge of disparaging Sri Lanka's minority Muslims, who account for just over about 10 percent of the 22 million population.

He was on bail while appealing that four-year sentence.

The monk is a close associate of former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who made him the head of a panel to reform Sri Lanka's legal system to ensure religious harmony in 2021.

At the time, opposition lawmaker Shanika Kumari Rasamanickam described Gnanasara's appointment as "the definition of irony".

In 2018, Gnanasara was also sentenced to six years for intimidating the wife of a missing cartoonist and contempt of court, but was freed nine months later after former president Maithripala Sirisena pardoned him.

His patron Rajapaksa was forced to step down following months of protests over the country's unprecedented economic crisis in 2022 and Gnanasara once again fell from grace and faced prosecution.

UK launches 'world's first' sanctions to crack down on illegal migration

**London:**  
The UK on Thursday announced the "world's first" new sanctions regime to combat people smuggling crime rings and block the illicit finance fuelling such operations as part of measures to crack down on illegal migration.

The government said the new standalone sanctions are dedicated to targeting irregular migration and organised immigration crime, which will allow the authorities to target individuals and entities enabling dangerous journeys.

The new sanctions regime is expected to come into force within the year as experts from across government work with law enforcement and operational Home Office colleagues to stem finance flows at their source and deter smugglers facilitating irregular migratory movements, including



dangerous sea crossings across Europe.

"We must dismantle the crime gangs facilitating breaches of our borders. By crippling illicit finance rings allowing smugglers to traffic vulnerable people across Europe, we will deliver on our Plan for Change and secure UK borders," said Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

"That means being bold and innovative

in our policy making to ensure we are leaving no stone unturned. My government will do everything in our power to save lives and protect our borders for years to come," he said.

The Labour government's Plan for Change is designed to reduce dangerous small boat crossings across the English Channel and end the routine use of asylum hotels as part of

measures to bring down soaring net migration.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy laid out the details in a speech as he noted that it was "completely unrealistic" to expect to reduce migration without a role for his department — the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). "It is an issue which ties together the foreign and the domestic most acutely. I'm proud

to announce that the UK is set to be the first country in the world to develop legislation for a new sanctions regime specifically targeting irregular migration and organised immigration crime.

"This will help to prevent, combat, deter and disrupt irregular migration and the smuggling of migrants into the UK," said Lammy.

The FCDO said it also expects to collaborate closely with international allies to combat people smugglers, including hosting the Calais Group which brings together ministers from France, Belgium and the Netherlands alongside European Union (EU) agencies.

UK Home Secretary Yvette Cooper added, "Since coming into power, we have taken swift and robust action to smash the gangs, working with international partners to track down and disrupt dangerous criminal networks.

37 killed in north Syria clashes between pro-Turkey

**Paris:**  
Battles between Turkish-backed groups, supported by air strikes, and Kurdish-led forces killed 37 people on Thursday in Syria's northern Manbij region, a war monitor said.

The latest reported fighting comes despite the United States saying Wednesday that it was working to address Turkey's concerns in Syria to dissuade the NATO ally from escalating an offensive against Kurdish fighters.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor reported "fierce battles in the Manbij countryside... in the past hours between the (Kurdish-led) Syrian Democratic Forces and the (Turkish-backed) National Army factions... with Turkish air cover".

"The attacks killed 37 people in a preliminary toll," mostly Turkish-backed combatants, but also six SDF fighters and five civilians, said the British-based Observatory with a network of sources inside Syria.

The monitor said at

least 322 people have been killed in fighting in the Manbij countryside since last month.

On Wednesday, Mazloum Abdi, who heads the US-backed SDF, said his group supported "the unity and integrity of Syrian territory". In a written statement to AFP, he called on Syria's new authorities "to intervene in order for there to be a ceasefire throughout Syria".

Abdi's comments followed what he called a "positive" meeting between Kurdish leaders and the Damascus authorities late last month.

Turkish-backed factions in northern Syria resumed their fight with the SDF at the same time as Islamist-led rebels were launching an offensive on November 27 that overthrew Syrian president Bashar al-Assad just 11 days later.

The pro-Ankara groups succeeded in capturing Kurdish-held Manbij and Tal Rifat in northern Aleppo province, despite US-led efforts to establish a trace in the Manbij area.

Army airstrike on village in Myanmar has killed at least 40 people

**Bangkok:**  
An airstrike by Myanmar's army on a village under the control of an armed ethnic minority group killed about 40 people and injured at least 20 others, officials of the group and a local charity said Thursday. They said hundreds of houses burned in a fire triggered by the bombing.

The attack occurred Wednesday in Kyauk Ni Maw village on Ramree island, an area con-

trolled by the ethnic Arakan Army in western Rakhine state, they said. The military has not announced any attack in the area.

The situation in the village could not be independently confirmed, with access to the internet and cellphone service in the area mostly cut off.

Myanmar is wracked by violence that began when the army ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in



February 2021. After the army used lethal force to suppress peaceful demonstrations, many opponents of military

rule took up arms and large parts of the country are now embroiled in conflict. Khaing Thukha, a spokesperson for the

Arakan Army, told The Associated Press that a jet fighter bombed the village on Wednesday afternoon, killing 40 civilians and injuring more than 20 others.

"All the dead were civilians. Among the dead and injured are women and children," Khaing Thukha said. A fire started by the airstrike spread through the village, destroying more than 500 houses, Khaing Thukha added.

It was unclear why the

village was targeted. The leader of a local charity group and independent media also reported the airstrike and casualties.

The military government has stepped up airstrikes over the past three years on armed pro-democracy groups collectively known as the People's Defense Force and on armed ethnic minority groups that have been fighting for decades for greater autonomy. The two groups sometimes carry out

joint operations against the army.

Ramree, 340 kilometers (210 miles) northwest of Yangon, the country's largest city, was captured by the Arakan Army in March last year.

The Arakan Army is the well-trained and well-armed military wing of the Rakhine ethnic minority movement, which seeks autonomy from Myanmar's central government.

BUSINESS

IDFC FIRST Bank goes live on Direct Tax Collection System of CBDT



**Mumbai:**  
IDFC FIRST Bank announced its integration with Income Tax Portal to collect Direct Tax on behalf of Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Government of India. The Bank's customers can now benefit from an intuitive, hassle-free payment experience for paying their Direct Taxes, with easy access to downloadable challans, easy payments and instant payment confirmations.

The Bank's customers can use the user-friendly Retail and Corporate Internet Banking platforms of IDFC FIRST Bank, or pay the taxes at any IDFC FIRST Bank branch using Cash, Cheque or Demand Draft.

Speaking on the development, Mr. Chinnay Dhole, Country Head -

Retail Liabilities at IDFC FIRST Bank said, "We are a Universal Bank and are building a complete suite of products and services to represent Universal Banking. Payment of Income Tax and GST were the only two significant services that were lacking in our proposition. We are delighted that with the approval of CBDT, Government of India and the RBI, we are now authorised to collect taxes on behalf of CBDT, GOI.

In line with our high-quality internet banking services, we have built customer friendly interfaces for ease of our customers. We encourage our customers to use this facility to easily pay their Direct Taxes through IDFC FIRST Bank's online and branch channels."

India's Organic Exports to Hit Rs 20,000 Cr in 3 Years: Goyal

**New Delhi:**  
India has the potential to increase exports of organic products up to Rs 20,000 crore in the next three years, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday.

He said this while releasing the eighth edition of National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) with new regulations aimed at enhancing clarity and transparency in organic product standards as well as aligning with global standards.

"Currently, our organic product exports are at Rs 5,000-6,000 crore. In the next three years, we can easily achieve Rs 20,000 crore exports, about 3-3.5 times increase from the current level," Goyal said at an event organised in partnership with industry body Fieci.

He said the global demand for these products is about Rs 1 lakh crore, which can grow up to Rs 10 lakh crore in the coming years, a unique opportunity India should not miss.



India already has one of the largest numbers of farmers in the world undertaking organic farming.

He also asked start-ups to come out with solutions that help in growth of the sector.

The NPOP has undergone several revisions since its inception in May 2001. The eighth edition marks a significant update to the regulatory framework governing organic products in India, with the last revision occurring

in 2014.

Key features of the eighth edition of NPOP include farmer-friendly regulations, streamlined certification, enhanced transparency and revamped traceability system.

The eighth edition aims to bolster India's organic export sector, with an ambitious target of reaching USD 2 billion in organic food exports by 2030.

Ministers of State for Cooperation Krishna Pal Gurjar and

Murlidhar Mohol, Minister of State for Commerce Jitin Prasada and Cooperation Secretary Ashish Kumar Bhutani were also present at the event.

NPOP plays a crucial role in enhancing the credibility of organic products in both national and international markets. It ensures that agricultural products labelled as "organic" meet stringent standards, thereby protecting consumer interests and promoting sustainable

**The NPOP has undergone several revisions since its inception in May 2001. The eighth edition marks a significant update to the regulatory framework governing organic products in India, with the last revision occurring in 2014.**

India's textile exports grew 7 pc t

**Dhar:**  
Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday highlighted the growth of the country's auto sector in the past few years, during which it became the third biggest player in the segment, and said the aim is to become number one.

"...our number was seventh in the world but we are third in the automobile sector... we surpassed Japan and now our number is third," Union Road Transport and Highways Minister said while addressing a function at National Automotive Test Tracks (NATRAX) here.

"The size of the USA automobile sector at the top of the table was Rs 75 lakh crore industry size, while that of China was Rs 47 lakh crore," Gadkari said.

"When I took charge of the minister. The size of the industry was Rs 7.5 lakh crore and today its size is Rs 22 lakh crore. And this is the industry, which has created 4.5 crore jobs till now -- the highest in the country.

"This is the automobile industry, which is giving maximum revenue as a part of GST to the state government and Bharat Sarkar," he added.

The industry has maximum exports, Gadkari said, adding that "our dream is to make the Indian automobile industry number one in the world".

Mahindra Democratizes Premium EV Technology, Announces Top Variant Prices of BE 6 and XEV 9e

**Noida/Ghaziabad:**  
Mahindra, at its Unlimt India Tech Day, today announced the prices for the top-end (Pack Three) variant of its flagship Electric Origin SUVs—BE 6 and XEV 9e. This announcement builds on the success of the Unlimt India event, which was held on November 26, 2024, in the first phase for both BE 6 and XEV 9e. To make Pack Three more accessible,

democratizing premium technology takes centre stage with Pack Three, which represents the high-end of luxury, cutting-edge features, and unmatched performance. Catering to the growing inclination of customers towards premium EVs, Mahindra will launch Pack Three exclusively in the first phase for both BE 6 and XEV 9e. To make Pack Three more accessible,



Mahindra introduces a unique program "Three for Me". This program, brought in by Mahindra Finance, ensures that Pack Three variants can be owned at the same monthly EMI as Pack One, with a balloon payment at the end of six years.

Veejay Nakra, President, Automotive Sector, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd., and Joint Managing Director,

Mahindra Electric Automobile Limited, said, "The response to our Electric Origin SUVs has been phenomenal, with customers showing a strong inclination towards high-end technology, and premium features. In response, we will initiate bookings only for the feature-loaded Pack Three in 79 kWh for both BE 6 and XEV 9e on February 14, 2025,

which is Valentine's Day. With its 79 kWh battery delivering over 500 km of real-world range, customers can be free from range anxiety. Our vision is to make premium EVs mainstream, and with our "Three for Me" finance program we ensure these vehicles remain accessible, aiming for a total monthly target of 5000 units in Phase 1."

**Advt Contact:**  
9818-799941

# Cricket

## I think he will be the next captain: Sunil Gavaskar on Jasprit Bumrah

**Sydney**  
The legendary Sunil Gavaskar is in awe of Jasprit Bumrah's leadership qualities and reckons the peerless fast bowler will succeed Rohit Sharma as the next captain of the Indian team following his extraordinary display in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Bumrah recently produced one of the best-ever bowling performances by an overseas pacer in Australia and picked 32 wickets over five Tests.

He was also captain during India's only victory in the series, helping the visitors to a convincing win at the Optus Stadium in Perth in the opener.

"He could be the next man. I think he will be the next man. Because he leads from the front, he has got a very good air about him, the air of a leader but not somebody who is going to pressure on you," Gavaskar aired his views on Channel 7.

The batting great added, "Sometimes, you have captains who put a lot of pressure on you. With Bumrah you



can see that, he expects the others to do what their job is, why they are in the national team, but it doesn't seem to pressurise anybody. Bumrah has been spearheading the Indian pace attack for some years now and his guidance has helped the likes of Mohammed Siraj to grow as a fast bowler.

"With the fast bowlers, he has been absolutely brilliant, standing at mid-off, mid-on and every time just being at hand to tell them. I think he was absolutely brilliant and I won't be surprised if he takes over very soon."

Bumrah took his wickets at an incredible average of 13.06 and an even

better strike rate of 28.37 before pulling up injured midway through Australia's first innings at the SCG in the final Test.

In Bumrah's absence, the home team chased down 162 on the third day to win the series 3-1.

The lead pacer was handed the captaincy in the final Test after the out-of-form Rohit Sharma "opted out" but a back spasm prevented Bumrah from bowling on the crucial third day.

Bumrah destroyed Australia in Perth with eight wickets, grabbed six wickets in the first innings at the Gabba, and nearly turned the Boxing Day Test on its head with his exploits on the fourth afternoon at MCG.

In the series decider at SCG, Bumrah sent back Usman Khawaja and Marnus Labuschagne early in Australia's first innings but could only bowl one over after lunch on the second day when the game was evenly poised.

The Indian pacer was named the Player of the Series for his unforgettable performance.

## Mandhana-led India eye continued dominance against Ireland



**Rajkot**  
Riding high on a dominant performance against the West Indies, India under Smriti Mandhana will look to carry forward their winning momentum when they take on Ireland in the first-ever women's bilateral series, with the opening ODI scheduled here on Friday.

India had swept the West Indies 3-0 in the ODI series, following a 2-1 triumph in the T20 series. Mandhana emerged as the top run-scorer across both formats, scoring 148 runs in the ODI series, including two half-centuries, and amassing 193 runs in the T20s, with three successive fifties.

Notably, she scored five consecutive half-centuries, only missing out in the final ODI and Mandhana will look to bring the same form as she leads the team in the absence of regular captain Harmanpreet Kaur, who has been rested alongside fast bowler Renuka Singh.

With Kaur and Renuka missing, the responsibility shifts to the rest of the batters, including Harleen Deol, Pratika Rawal, and Jemimah Rodrigues, to step up.

Deol was the top scorer in the ODI series with 160 runs, including a brilliant 115, while Rawal and Rodrigues also had solid outings, scoring 134 and 112 runs, respectively, with a fifty each in the ODIs.

In the bowling department, Renuka's absence will be felt as she was the leading wicket-taker with 10 wickets in the ODI series against the West Indies.

The onus will now fall on newcomers Titas Sadhu and Saima Thakor to make their mark.

Sadhu, 20, who has three wickets in ODIs and 13 wickets in T20Is, will be expected to provide early breakthroughs, having impressed with her pace and swing in domestic and recent international cricket. Saima, 28, will also look to continue her

"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

## Cummins to undergo scan on sore ankle as Champions Trophy looms



**Sydney**

An injury concern looms over Australian skipper Pat Cummins ahead of next month's Champions Trophy with the pacer set to undergo a scan on his "sore ankle", and chairman of selectors George Bailey refusing to confirm his availability for the marquee event.

Cummins has been troubled by the ankle issue throughout the Australian summer but managed to guide his team to a 3-1 victory over India in the marquee Border-Gavaskar Test series recently.

Bailey did not commit whether Cummins was a certainty for the Champions Trophy, starting on February 19.

"Not really sure yet, we'll have to wait and see where that scan comes back and where it's tracking," he told "nine.com.au".

Australia announced its squad for the two-Test away series against Sri Lanka with several stalwarts, including Cummins, missing from the list. The team, made up mostly of fresh faces, will be captained by top-order batter Steve Smith.

"Pat's obviously on paternity leave for the next little bit," Bailey was quoted as saying on Thursday.

"There's a little bit of work to do, he's got a little bit of a sore ankle as well so I think in the next week or so he's got a scan coming there and we'll get a bit more information around where that's at," he added.

Bailey though expressed confidence that pacer Josh Hazlewood, who was ruled out of the pink-ball Test at Adelaide due to a left side injury and missed the last two games as well due to a calf strain, would be fit for the Champions Trophy.

"He's working really hard, and all the news on how he's responding to the calf injury is coming along really well.

On Hazlewood not featuring in the Sri Lanka-bound squad, Bailey said, "It was just probably a little bit tight (for this squad) given the amount of time he would've missed and again looking how we potentially may structure up those loads those quicks may be put under."

"It just worked out that unfortunately for him he didn't quite get there in time (for Sri Lanka Tests) but really confident he should be fit and raring to go for the Champions Trophy," added Bailey.

## Had a lot more to give to NZ cricket, am a bit disappointed:Guptill after retirement

**Auckland**  
Just-retired Martin Guptill reckons he had a lot more to offer to New Zealand cricket and was "disappointed" with how his career ended.

One of the most accomplished white-ball players to emerge from New Zealand, Guptill, scored 7,346 runs from 198 ODI matches with 18 hundreds and 39 fifties. The 38-year-old also competed in 122 T20I for the Blackcaps, scoring 3,531 runs with two hundreds and 20 fifties.

Guptill last played for the Blackcaps in 2022. He gave back his contract to explore opportunities in the various T20 leagues around the world after it became clear that New Zealand Cricket (NZC) wanted to blood younger players.

He did not find place in the squad for the 2023 World Cup in India and went without international cricket for two years before announcing his retirement.

"It is what it is, and the decisions that have been made around it. Obviously I would have loved to have played a lot more. I feel like I had a lot more to give New Zealand Cricket and the Black Caps," Guptill was quoted as saying by The New Zealand Herald on Thursday.

"I'm a little bit disappointed with how it all ended, but I've got to move forward and move on," he added.

The first New Zealander to smash a century on his ODI debut, and also the first to hit a double-century in



**Guptill last played for the Blackcaps in 2022. He gave back his contract to explore opportunities in the various T20 leagues around the world after it became clear that New Zealand Cricket (NZC) wanted to blood younger players.**

the format during the 2015 World

Cup quarterfinal against the West Indies.

The cricketer, who ran out Maheendra Singh Dhoni at the 2019 World Cup, ending the Indian super star's international career, said he always prided his black cap.

"One of my proudest moments was to get a black cap, and that sits proudly at home."

The charismatic cricketer also added he always loved playing as an opener. "I had the opportunity to get batting at five, but I wanted to go back to the top. I've got no regrets, I gave it a good shot. I had so much fun doing it."

## Being a psychology student has helped me a lot in cricket: Pratika Rawal

**New Delhi**  
It's all in the mind, and young India cricketer Pratika Rawal recognised this early in life when she decided to take up psychology, a subject that is now helping her cement her place in the senior national women's team.

Pratika has emerged as a strong contender to partner the charismatic Smriti Mandhana at the top following her strong batting performances against the West Indies on debut in the recently-concluded three-match Women's ODI series.

Pratika scored 40 and 76 in the first two games at Vadodra as India, building on the opening partnership, crossed the 300-run mark twice to clinch the series 3-0.

Pratika, 24, says her strong connect with her subject and love for cricket have helped in her journey to the India team.

"I wanted to study about that (human mind) and when I started studying about it, I was very keen on understanding how we mentally process (things) on the field and off the field. And, it has helped me a lot in cricket as well," said the Delhi cricketer in a video titled 'Pratika Rawal: Psychology meets Cricket' posted by BCCI on X.

"When I'm on the field before a match there is a lot of positive self talk, what all I have to do in present and in



future. Like, when I'm batting then also I see myself if you know you are the best, you can do this. So, that affirmation needs to be there," added Pratika, who decided to pursue psychology in Class 9.

The young cricketer, who has been retained for the three-match ODI series against Ireland beginning in Rajkot on Friday, said she is committed to studies and dropped out of U19 when she was in Class 12.

"I went to Modern School, Barakhamba. I am a pass-out from there. My family has always pushed me to be excellent in academics, although I just couldn't deny my love and passion for cricket... so that's what I wanted to do my whole life. I actually dropped my U19 when I was in 12th standard.

## "Criticism should be based on facts not...": Nitish Rana support Gambhir

**New Delhi**  
India batter Nitish Rana has come out in support of Gautam Gambhir amid the criticism that the head coach is facing over the bashing that India got at the hands of Australia in the recently concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

After India failed to retain BGT for the first time in 10 years with a 3-1 series defeat, fans and former cricketers have been vocal while slamming players and management.

Gambhir has also been featuring headlines for India's woeful run in the Test format, which hasn't seen them succeed only once in the last eight Tests.

After facing fire from fans, former cricketer Manoj Tiwary became the latest player to criticise Gambhir as India continues to find its way out of the turmoil.

Nitish, who has been with Gautam Gambhir during their time with the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), backed his former team mentor. According to him, criticism should be based on facts, not personal insecurities.

"Criticism should be based on facts, not personal insecurities. Gauri Bhaiya is one of the most selfless players I've ever met. He shoulders responsibility in times of distress like no



other. Performance doesn't need any PR. The trophies speak for themselves," Nitish wrote on X.

Gambhir's tenure began with India's tour of Sri Lanka. While India was a force to be reckoned with in the T20I format, the ODI series was a different story.

After the first ODI ended in a nerve-racking draw, India lost the next two games, suffering its first bilateral series defeat in the format against Sri Lanka in a gap of 27 years.

The ODI series was followed by Bangladesh's tour of India, consisting of two Tests and three T20Is. The ODI series defeat became a distant memo-

ry, with India sweeping the entire series with a flawless performance.

The road to the World Test Championship final looked secured. New Zealand arrived in India to play three Tests, which were to determine the fate of the WTC final.

When India were the clear favourite on the paper, New Zealand came in with different plans. The Kiwi upped the ante, taking India by surprise and walking away with a historic 3-0 series win.

After facing the first whitewash at home in Test format, India tried to pose a comeback in Australia by trying to defend the BGT in Australia.

# Cases involving Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek make doping a top topic

Melbourne  
It is a topic that shadowed tennis in 2024 and is still a talking point as the 2025 Grand Slam season opens at the Australian Open on Sunday (Saturday EST): doping and the cases involving Jannik Sinner — which actually is still not fully resolved — and Iga Swiatek.

Both spent much of last year at No. 1, and Sinner still will hold that spot in the ATP rankings when he steps on court at Melbourne Park to begin the defense of his championship, one of two major trophies he won over the past 12 months.

Swiatek, a five-time Slam champion and the woman leading the WTA rankings most of the past three seasons, is currently No. 2 behind Aryna Sabalenka, who will be chasing her third consecutive title in Australia.

"Obviously, there are going to be some negative comments," Swiatek said. "You're not going to avoid that."

Most current players prefer to remain silent when asked about the cases. But there are those who have been happy to weigh in, including 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic, raising questions about whether Sinner and Swiatek were treated the same as other players facing similar circumstances and why their situations were kept under wraps for months.

"I sit and wonder, Why such a big difference in treatment and judgment?" was two-time major champion Simona Halep's reaction to Swiatek's punishment. "I can't find, and I don't think there can be, a logical answer."

Halep initially was banned for four years after testing positive for the banned drug Riodolast at the 2022 U.S. Open, then had that penalty reduced to nine months on appeal — al-



though she already had been off the tour longer than that. She was supposed to compete at Melbourne Park for the first time in three years, but withdrew from qualifying because of knee and shoulder pain.

No one has been louder about the subject lately than Nick Kyrgios, the 2022 Wimbledon runner-up who missed nearly all of the past two seasons because of injuries. He has been commenting regularly, in real life and online, even taking a job (that he said was in-jest) at Cruz Hewitt after the 16-year-old son of Australian Davis Cup captain Leyton posted a photo with Sinner from a practice session.

"It's been handled horrifically in our sport. Two world No. 1s, both getting done for doping, is disgusting for our sport," Kyrgios said at the Brisbane International, the first event of his comeback. "It's a horrible look."

Where do things stand with Jannik Sinner's positive drug tests? Swiatek was the dominant player in men's tennis last year, and there's little reason to think that won't contin-

ue. In 2024, he went 73-6 with eight titles, including at the U.S. Open, and led Italy to the Davis Cup. He heads into the Australian Open on a 14-match winning streak.

Hanging over it all is this: Two positive tests for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid in March were made public in August; the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) determined he shouldn't be suspended because the exposure to Clostebol was considered accidental — the result of a massage from a trainer who used the substance after cutting his own finger.

The World Anti-Doping Agency was not entirely convinced about the explanation and thinks a ban of one to two years would be appropriate. Its appeal, lodged in September, is still pending, and a final determination is expected after the Australian Open ends.

"I'm in (my) head a little bit," Sinner said, adding that he is confident everything will go his way.

What happened with Iga Swiatek's

failed doping test?

Swiatek accepted a one-month suspension in late November after testing positive for a banned heart medication known as TMZ. She failed an out-of-competition test in August, and the ITIA accepted her explanation that it was caused by the contamination of a nonprescription medication, melatonin, that Swiatek was taking for jet lag and sleeping issues.

She missed three tournaments — although the real reason wasn't revealed at the time — and finished serving her punishment after the season was done.

"This whole process was pretty abstract sometimes and hard to understand," Swiatek said, surely speaking for many observers.

Which is why, perhaps, Dutch captain Paul Haarhuis said what he did after his team lost to Sinner's Italy in the Davis Cup finals.

"Jannik, in my personal opinion, is an unbelievably nice guy (and) great player," Haarhuis said, "but we (might) never know what happened."

Are there other noteworthy cases in tennis? While Sinner and Swiatek will compete in Melbourne, another player involved in a recent ITIA case won't: Max Purcell, who won men's doubles titles at the U.S. Open in September and Wimbledon in 2022 and was a two-time runner-up at the Australian Open.

Purcell didn't test positive, though. Instead, he accepted a provisional suspension for, as he described it, having "unknowingly received an IV infusion of vitamins above the allowable limit."

"I have no good words for it," said Jordan Thompson, Purcell's doubles partner in New York last year. "It is a joke."

## De Zerbi is improving fortunes at Marseille two months



Paris  
Marseille coach Roberto De Zerbi was so confounded by his team's bad form that he considered quitting just months after arriving.

That was back in November when, following home defeats to Paris Saint-Germain and Auxerre, he said he was ready to leave. The 45-year-old Italian soon backtracked and affirmed his commitment to stay and turn things around.

Whatever he told the players at that time clearly worked, as did an arduous four-day camp. There were daily 5 a.m. wake-up calls for jogs on an empty stomach, followed by twice-daily training sessions.

Marseille is looking much sharper and fitter as a result.

The 1993 Champions League winner has won five of its six matches since the Auxerre loss and drawn the other against Lille — a decent result considering Lille is undefeated in all competitions since mid-September.

Marseille has rediscovered its touch, too, scoring 17 goals during that period, and has moved into second place in Ligue 1 behind leader Paris Saint-Germain, which is seven points ahead after 16 rounds.

Marseille travels to play Rennes on Saturday and PSG hosts lowly Saint-Etienne on Sunday.

De Zerbi has tightened things up tactically and is starting to work Marseille into a more streamlined side.

During his time with Brighton in the English Premier League, he earned a reputation as a shrewd tactician capable of beating bigger teams. He left Brighton after two seasons, having raised the team to its highest ever top-flight finish of sixth, and into the last 16 of the Europa League.

De Zerbi's decision to join Marseille, which has passionate but impatient fans, surprised many observers. Even before his time at Brighton, De Zerbi had earned good reviews in Italy with Benevento and Sassuolo. He was widely praised for guiding Sassuolo to back-to-back eighth-place finishes in Serie A and touted as one of the best young coaches in Europe.

He had bigger clubs than Marseille calling for him last summer, but perhaps he saw the depth of

"I was very surprised when I heard the term 'opting out'." Ponting says of Rohit's absence



## At the draw Thursday to set the brackets for the singles fields, defending champions Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka walked into the official ceremony holding their trophies.

Marseille's potential — which is the only French club to win the Champions League and has a 67,000-capacity stadium.

De Zerbi has instilled a healthy competition for places within his squad and strengthened it further on Tuesday by signing central defender Luiz Felipe, who made over 100 appearances for Lazio in Serie A from 2017-22.

Felipe's arrival comes after De Zerbi reproached his players for conceding too many goals — 19 in the league so far, compared with 14 for PSG and 16 for third-place Monaco and fourth-place Lille.

"We need to start thinking that 5-0 and 5-1 are not the same thing," he said after Sunday's 5-1 home rout of Le Havre at Stade Velodrome. "We need to make other teams understand that scoring a goal against us is difficult."

Felipe said the possibility of playing under De Zerbi was "fundamental" in his decision to join.

"I have known De Zerbi since he was Sassuolo, it was always difficult to play against him," Felipe said. Key players have emerged into leadership roles, such as Argentina goalkeeper Gerónimo Rulli and France midfielder Adrien Rabiot.

Playing in a role higher up the field allows Rabiot to make more dangerous use of his excellent passing range and eye for long-distance shooting.

Signing the 29-year-old Rabiot was seen as something of a coup of Marseille, considering that he is entering his prime years and his wealth of experience with Italian giant Juventus (212 matches overall) and France (5 caps).

"We need two, three, four or five Rabiotics," De Zerbi said recently.

"Then he added, jokingly: 'I asked him if he has any brothers, but unfortunately they don't play football.'"

## Shiva Sachin shine on day two of National Boxing C'ship

Bareilly  
Reigning champion Shiva Thapa began his title defence with a commanding win over Enayat Khan in welterweight (60-65kg) category at the 8th Elite Men's National Boxing Championship here on Thursday.

Representing Assam, Thapa, who made history as the youngest Indian boxer to qualify for the Olympics at 2012 London Games, defeated Enayat at 5-0 in his opening bout, setting a strong tone for his campaign.

Former world youth champion Sachin Siwach also opened his campaign with an emphatic 5-0 victory for the Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) against Akshay, displaying his readiness to compete for top honours.

The second day also witnessed a thrilling opening bout in the light middleweight, welterweight, cruiserweight, and heavyweight divisions, respectively.

Rajasthan also demonstrated impressive form, with Priyadarshi Singh Ashiya (light middleweight), Pushpendra Singh (cruiserweight), and Harsh Choudhary (heavyweight) all emerging victorious against their opponents.

Nearly 300 boxers, representing state units across India, are competing for supremacy in various weight categories.

Hitesh Gulia, Deepak, Jugnoo, and Vishal secured wins in the light middleweight, welterweight, cruiserweight, and heavyweight divisions, respectively.

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Nearly 300 boxers, representing state units across India, are competing for supremacy in various weight categories in the week-long event, organised by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) in association with the Uttar Pradesh Boxing Association.

## Jannik Sinner, Novak Djokovic in opposite halves at the Australian Open

Melbourne  
Defending champion Jannik Sinner and 10-time Australian Open winner Novak Djokovic have landed in opposite sides of the draw for the season's first major, ruling out a replay of last year's semifinal match.

Sinner upset Djokovic in the semifinals here last year before coming back to beat Daniil Medvedev in the final 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 for his first Grand Slam singles title.

Top-ranked Sinner has a first-round match against Nicolas Pietrangeli and also has Taylor Fritz, Ben Shelton and Medvedev in his quarter of the draw. Fritz will open against fellow American Jensen Brooks.

Djokovic and No. 3 Carlos Alcaraz could meet in the quarterfinals, with a possible semifinal against No. 2 Alexander Zverev.

At the draw Thursday to set the brackets for the singles fields, defending champions Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka walked into the official ceremony holding their trophies.

Sabalenka won her second consecu-



utive title at Melbourne Park in 2024 by defeating Zheng Qinwen 6-3, 6-2 in the final. Sabalenka will be attempting to win a third consecutive women's singles title at Melbourne Park, something last accomplished by Martina Hingis from 1997 to 1999.

Sabalenka drew a tough opening match against 2017 U.S. Open champion Sloane Stephens and has 17-year-old Mirra Andrea and Zheng in her section.

"I have a lot of great memories and to be back here ... as a two-time Australian Open champion, it's definitely something special," Sabalenka, who won the Brisbane International title last week, said at the draw ceremony. "I hope that I can keep doing what I'm do-

## Sony Open starts the race for fewer PGA Tour players to keep their jobs

Honolulu  
The royal palms on a Waialae course that runs along the Pacific Ocean give a peaceful ambience to the Sony Open, the ideal place for the full PGA Tour membership to start the year.

But a new season has brought a small degree of stress in paradise.

The Sony Open effectively starts the chase for a FedEx Cup card — only 100 from the PGA Tour this year, down from 125, marking the most significant change in eligibility in some 40 years.

Camilo Villegas described it as an important year for him, and it's only January.

"There is a sense of urgency," Villegas said Wednesday. "You've got to play when you get in (tournaments) and you have to perform. It's going to be a very compact. It's going to be a dogfight out there, which is cool."

Players warming up in the morning darkness — floodlights on the driving range but not the putting green — was another reminder of some of the changes. Along with a reduction in



cards, the field sizes will be shrinking starting in 2026 to make sure anyone with a card gets into a fair amount of tournaments and rounds have a better chance of finishing on time with a smaller number of players on the course.

Optimism, of course, is as great as ever. Villegas won in Bermuda toward

the end of 2023 to earn a two-year exemption, and last year was among his best. He knows he has to play well to keep his job, and he was unwilling to even address the possibility he won't finish in the top 100.

"I am going to keep my card," he said with a smile.

Hideki Matsuyama has no such is-

sureties as the No. 5 player in the world who is coming off a record scoring performance to win last week at Kapalua. Now the Japanese star tries to become the third player to sweep the Hawaii swing, joining Justin Thomas (2017) and Eric Els (2003).

For everyone else, veterans and rookies alike, it's only the beginning.

"I would say I'm more excited this year because I felt like I got a lot better last year at playing golf, and I felt like I improved last year," said Keith Mitchell, who is starting his eighth year. "And every year you have a card, you have a blank slate to prove your improvement."

Mitchell missed out on the FedEx Cup playoffs last year by an estimated three shots — had he been three shots better in the final round of the regular season, it would have been enough. He also can look back at 18 other tournaments where he could have picked up a shot or two. Every player can do that.

Even with a seven-month season to keep the card, Mitchell has been around long enough to realize that

getting off to a good start can ease the real pressure that comes later.

"Everybody is at zero," Mitchell said. "Each week doesn't feel as monumental as it does the last three or four weeks. The beginning of the season, people play a little more free or relaxed because it doesn't feel as urgent."

Mitchell said the putts he makes, the scores he posts, are just as valuable now as they are in the final regular-season tournaments in the summer.

"Theoretically it is," he said. "But emotionally it's not."

The Sony Open is the start of a three-tournament stretch in which the leading five players become eligible for \$20 million signature events in California. Getting in the big events can go a long way for someone trying to keep his job.

Ryder Cup captain Keegan Bradley has even more experience with the optimism and nerves that come with a new season. He made his debut as a PGA Tour member in the Sony Open in 2011.

# Rashmika Mandanna Sustains Gym Injury, Film Shoot Temporarily Halted

**Mumbai**  
India's No. 1 actress of this generation, Rashmika Mandanna, recently met with an unfortunate gym injury that has caused a temporary pause in the shooting schedules of her highly anticipated upcoming project. The actress, widely regarded as the biggest pan-Indian female star, has been advised to take a brief rest to ensure a complete recovery before returning to her packed schedule.



While Rashmika's injury has caused concern among her fans, updates reconfirm that she is on the path to recovery and will be back in action soon.

A source close to Rashmika Mandanna shared, "Rashmika recently sustained an injury in the gym and has been recovering

well by resting it. However, this has caused a temporary halt to the filming of her upcoming projects. Nevertheless, she's already feeling much better and will resume work on sets very soon!"

Rashmika, who has delivered a string of hits, including grossing 3096 crores at the box office with the cumulative collections of Animal and the Pushpa franchise's current numbers continues to inspire her followers with her resilience and positivity. While the shooting break may be temporary, fans can expect the actress to bounce back stronger than ever, bringing her signature charm and energy to the screen.

# Nora Fatehi flies out of Los Angeles amid California wildfires

**New Delhi**  
Known for her dance performance in songs such as "Manohari", "Dilbar", "Jehda Nasha", and "Naah" as well as "Madgaon Express" and "Bluu", Fatehi said she was headed to the airport.

"I have a flight today, I really hope I can catch it. I hope it doesn't get cancelled because this is scary. I have never experienced this before. I am going to keep you guys updated. Hopefully, I can get out on time. I hope people in LA are safe," she further said in the video.

Earlier, actor-producer Priyanka Chopra Jonas gave a shout-out to the "incredibly brave first responders". "Thank you for working tirelessly overnight and

continuing to help families affected. @lasdhq @losangelesfiredepartment @lapdq," she captioned her post.

Fatehi posted a video on her Instagram Story on Wednesday night, minutes before flying out of the city, home to several Hollywood stars.

"I'm in LA, and the wildfires are crazy. I've never seen anything like this. This is insane. We just got an evacuation order like five minutes ago, so I quickly packed all my stuff, and I'm evacuating out of here, out of this area," she said.



# Priyanka Chopra Jonas joins Oscar-shortlisted 'Anuja' as executive producer



**Los Angeles**  
Priyanka Chopra Jonas has come on board Anuja, a film shortlisted for the Oscars 2025. It is made by the husband-wife team Adam J. Graves (director) and

the 2025 Oscars. Priyanka Chopra has joined the team as an executive producer. Previously, she also served as an executive producer of the Oscar-nominated and award-winning feature documentary To Kill A Tiger, and Netflix's Oscar-nominated film The White Tiger.

The actress shared, "This beautiful film shines a spotlight on a subject that affects millions of children around the world, who are faced with the impossible decision between a future they cannot yet see and the immediate realities of their present. Anuja is a poignant, thought-provoking piece that makes us reflect deeply on the power of choices and how they shape the course of our lives. I am immensely proud to be associated with such a phenomenal and impactful project."

Anuja was produced in partnership with the Salaam Baalak Trust (SBT), a non-profit organisation that supports street and working children, SHINE GLOBAL, the production company behind Emmy and Academy Award-winning films such as War/Dance (2007) and Innocent (2012), and Krushan Naik Films.

# Global Business Awards 2024 concludes

**New Delhi**  
Recently in Delhi concluded was the Global Business Awards 2024 a grand success of the Sixth Edition of the this franchise was hosted by Sasha Media Solution Pvt Ltd.

Organised by Mrs Raina Kundra and Mr Khushal Kundra the directors of Sasha Media Solution. The Chief Guest was the kind hearted Bollywood Celebrity, Humanitarian and philanthropic Actor Sonu Sood.

While the actor had a grand entry with a band-baja promoting his upcoming movie Fateh he also patently stood by and Awarded more than 150+ awardee from all fields as Business entrepreneurs and that too from all across India.

The awardees belonged to all sectors of business from jewellery, overseas studies, construction, appliances, agencies, consultants, immigration, astrologers, Beauty and Makeup, beauticians and architects etc.

The grand function also had a live performance by the famous nizami brothers and Punjabi Singer Noddy Singh & some special guests like Mr Vishal Verma from Vishal



Chain and Jewellery, Karol Bagh and Dr Basant Goel from Goel Medicos who are famous for their special work for the society were also spotted at the event.

On the occasion the organiser Khushal Kumar Kundra looked delighted and said "I am happy how this event

has proceeded while we honoured all awardees who are achievers in their fields and industry, we have chosen businessman for the Global Business Awards from all states and all kinds of businesses, we are set to host the next grand event soon in the year 2025"



# MTV Roadies season 20 set to return on January 11

**New Delhi**  
Popular reality show "MTV Roadies" will be back with its landmark 20th season on January 11, the organisers announced on Thursday.

Titled "MTV Roadies Double Cross", the 20th season will air on MTV and stream on JoCinema every Saturday and Sunday after its premiere on January 11, a press release said.

Ranvijay Singh, the winner of the show's inaugural chapter in 2003, will return to host the 20th installment, touted to be its "boldest and most unpredictable season".

"MTV Roadies has always felt like home to me and being part of this milestone season is truly special. With

the Double Cross theme, fans are in for the most intense and unpredictable MTV Roadies journey yet," Singha said. The actor-host is joined by gang leaders Prince Narula, Neha Dhupia, Elisha Yadav, and Rhea Chakrabarty. Dhupia said, "The love from fans has been overwhelming and I'm happy to fulfill their wish. I'm back because always been about strength and power, and as a woman, I'm here to lead with courage and inspire my gang to break boundaries and shine."

"This journey has given me the strength to speak my mind under all circumstances and stand firmly by what I believe in—a lesson I will pass on to my gang as we strive for the best," she added.

# I thought Indira Gandhi was powerful but my research found her to be weak: Kangana

**Mumbai**  
Kangana Ranaut, who plays the role of Indira Gandhi in her new film "Emergency", said she did extensive research and now believes the former prime minister was not powerful as she had thought but "weak" and "unsure of herself".

"The first-time MP from Mandi, often in the headlines for her provocative comments, also said there is no director today who deserves her.

"I'm very proudly saying that today there is not a single director in the film industry that I want to work with because they don't have that kind of quality... that I feel that they deserve me," Ranaut said in a video interview ahead of the release of the much in the news "Emer-

gency". Ranaut, who has directed and produced the film that documents the 21 months of Emergency imposed in 1975 by the then prime minister, said she has empathy for Indira Gandhi and viewed as very powerful until she started working on the project. "But when I did my research, I understood it was quite the contrary. It also strengthened my belief that the weaker you are, the more control you would want. She was a very weak person and she was also very unsure of herself and really vulnerable."

"She had many crutches around and she was constantly seeking a kind of validation. She was also hugely dependent on many people, one of them was Sanjay Gandhi... I didn't have that kind of empathy for her be-

fore 'Emergency'," she said. The "Queen" star said she took "no liberties at all" in the portrayal of Indira Gandhi and the Emergency months.



# Oscar nominations delayed due to California wildfires

**Los Angeles**  
The nominations announcement of the 97th Academy Awards, originally scheduled for January 17, has been postponed to January 19 in the wake of the raging wildfires in the Southern California region.

According to Variety, the Academy sent an email from CEO Bill Kramer to members on Wednesday afternoon regarding the date changes.

"We want to offer our deepest condolences to those who have been impacted by the devastating fires across Southern California. So many of our members and industry colleagues live and work in the Los Angeles area, and we are thinking of you," the email read.

# Film personalities remember 'creative genius' and 'brilliant' Pritish Nandy

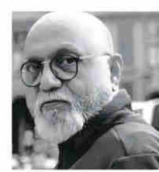
**New Delhi**  
Filmmakers Sudhir Mishra, Hansal Mehta, actors Kareena Kapoor Khan, Sayani Gupta, and Sanjay Dutt paid rich tributes to veteran journalist, poet and filmmaker Pritish Nandy, who died in Mumbai on Wednesday.

Nandy died after a cardiac arrest at his home in south Mumbai. He was 73.

As a film producer, Nandy backed films such as "Hazaron Khwahishen Aisi", "Kaante", "Jhankaar Beats", "Chameli", "Shabd", and "Pyaar Ke Side Effects".

Mishra expressed gratitude towards Nandy for producing his acclaimed 2005 film "Hazaron Khwahishen Aisi".

"Pritish Nandy changed my life. Only he could make Hazaron Khwahishen Aisi. He taught me so much. I am so sorry Pritish Da. I couldn't



come up with an idea for the sequel," he wrote on X.

Mehta said his most personal work, the 2017 movie "Omerta", had lost "one of its greatest patrons". He revealed that it was Nandy who encouraged him to make Rajuamar Rao-starrer which was based on the life of British-Pakistani terrorist Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh.

"I remember when I first met him in 2005 I had shared the idea for 'Omerta'. Let's make it he said. When nobody had belief in me or my ideas Mr Pritish Nandy gave me the strength to dare, to dream and to tell stories that

mattered to me - no matter what.

"He did not end up producing 'Omerta' eventually but I owe the film and a lot of my journey beginning from Shahid to him. We had the most delightful conversations, he was always candid with me and I always left his room very energized. So hard to believe that he is gone," he posted on X.

Kareena, who received critical acclaim for her performance in "Chameli", shared a picture from the set of the 2004 movie with an infinity symbol and a folded hands emoji as a caption.

Dutt said Nandy was "a true creative genius and a kind soul" who would be missed. The actor worked in "Kaante" and "Shabd". "Fierce. Fearless. Fine. Godepseed Pritish Uncle," director Meghna Gulzar wrote on Instagram.