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PM GETS INTO A HUDDLE WITH ECONOMISTS AHEAD OF BUDGET

Jobs, agriculture, funds for infra figure prominently in the meet

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Job creation, improving farm productivity, and mobilising public funds for infrastructure development were some of the issues that figured during the interaction between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and economists ahead of the 2025-26 Union Budget.

The Prime Minister on Tuesday met eminent economists and sectoral experts at NITI Aayog to hear their views and suggestions for the upcoming Budget.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Budget for 2025-26 in the Lok Sabha on February 1.

The meeting was held on the theme "Maintaining India's growth momentum at a time of Global uncertainty".

In his remarks, Prime Minister thanked the speakers for their insightful views. He emphasised that Viksit Bharat can be achieved through a fundamental change in mindset which is focused towards making India developed by 2047.

"Participants shared their views on several significant issues including navigating challenges posed by

global economic uncertainties and geopolitical tensions, strategies to enhance employment particularly among youth and create sustainable job opportunities across sectors, strategies to align education and training programs with the evolving needs of the job market, enhancing agricultural productivity and creating sustainable rural employment opportunities, attracting private investment and mobilizing public funds for infrastructure projects to boost economic growth and create jobs and promoting financial inclusion and boosting exports and attracting foreign investment," a PMO statement said.

Many renowned economists and analysts participated in the interaction, including Dr. Surjit S Bhalla, Dr. Ashok Gulati, Dr. Suddipto Mundle, Shri Dharmakirti Joshi, Shri Janmejaya Sinha, Shri Madan Sabnavis, Prof. Amita Batra, Shri Ridham Desai, Prof. Chetan Ghate, Prof. Bharat Ramaswami, Dr. Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Shri Siddhartha Sanyal, Dr. Laveesh Bhandari, Ms. Rajani Sinha, Prof. Keshab Das, Dr. Pritam Banerjee, Shri Rahul Bajoria, Shri Nikhil Gupta and Prof. Shashwat Alok.



PM interacts with economists at NITI Aayog on Tuesday. ANI

Number of jobs in unincorporated sector up 10% at 12 crore: Survey

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Unincorporated sector enterprises witnessed a 10.01 per cent increase in employment to over 12 crore during the year ended September 2024, while the number of establishments rose 12.28 per cent to 7.34 crore, according to a government survey.

The survey, which covers unincorporated non-agriculture sector enterprises, showed gross value added (GVA) grew 16.52 per cent

during the October 2023 - September 2024 period.

These findings form part of the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) for 2023-24 for the reference period -- October 2023 - September 2024, released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on Tuesday.

The sector employed more than 12 crore workers between October 2023 and September 2024, marking an increase of more than one crore workers from 2022-23

and reflecting robust labour market growth.

The total number of workers employed increased to 12,05,99,800 in ASUSE 2023-24 from 10,96,26,000 in ASUSE 2022-23.

Among the broad activities, the "Other Services" sector showed the highest annual growth of 17.86 per cent, followed by 10.03 per cent by the manufacturing sector.

The percentage of female-owned proprietary establishments has increased

P3

People reeling under rising prices, but govt sleeping: Rahul

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said the people are struggling with rising prices and are forced to compromise on small things of daily needs while the government is sleeping like 'Kumbhakaran'.

Gandhi shared a video on his social media handles on his recent visit to a vegetable market in Giri Nagar here and interaction with housewives who narrated their ordeal due to rising prices of food items.

"A few days ago, I went to a local vegetable market and while shopping with customers, I talked to the

P3

TRIBUTE

Atal Ji, the statesman who shaped India with his vision and resolve



NARENDRA MODI

Today, 25th December is a very special day for all of us. Our nation marks the 100th Jayanti of our beloved former Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ji. He stands tall as a statesman who continues to inspire countless people.

Our nation will always be grateful to Atal Ji for being the architect of India's transition into the 21st century. When he took oath as PM in 1998 our nation had passed through a period of political instability.

In about 9 years, we had seen 4 Lok Sabha elections. The people of India were getting impatient and also sceptical about governments being able to deliver. It was Atal Ji who turned this tide by providing stable and effective governance. Coming from humble roots, he realised the struggles of the common citizen and the transformative power of effective governance.

One can see the long-term impact of Atal Ji's leadership in so many sectors around us. His era marked a gigantic leap in the world of Information Technology, telecom and communications. This was particularly important for a nation like ours, which is also blessed with a very dynamic Yuva Shakti. The NDA Government under Atal Ji made the first serious attempt to make tech-

nology accessible to the common citizens. At the same time, there was foresight in connecting India. Even today, most people recall the Golden Quadrilateral Project, which connected the length and breadth of India. Equally notable were the Vajpayee Government's efforts to enhance local connectivity as well through initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. Similarly, his Government gave a push to metro connectivity by doing extensive work for the Delhi Metro, which stands out as a world-class infrastructure project. Thus, the Vajpayee Government not only boosted economic growth but also brought distant regions closer, fostering unity and integration.

When it comes to the social sector, an initiative

P3

Five soldiers killed as Army vehicle plunges into gorge

AJAY JANDYAL
SRINAGAR

In a heart-breaking incident near the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district, five Army soldiers lost their lives, and several others were injured when their vehicle skidded off the road and plunged into a deep gorge, officials confirmed on Sunday.

The accident occurred as the Army vehicle was traveling from Nilam Headquarters to Balnoi Ghora Post. The mishap happened near Ghora Post, prompting a swift response from a Quick Reaction Team that



Rescue operations are underway after an army vehicle met with an accident, in the Poonch sector on Tuesday.

launched an immediate rescue operation.

"Eighteen soldiers were on board the vehicle when it crashed. Ten sustained injuries, with five critically injured soldiers succumbing to their wounds later," an official stated.

A major rescue operation ensued, with efforts focused on retrieving the injured and providing urgent medical care.

The Army's White Knight Corps expressed profound grief over the tragic loss.

P3

Rain lashes Delhi, AQI improves slightly

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Parts of Delhi witnessed rain on Tuesday evening even as the day temperature remained slightly higher than normal for this time of the season. The city's air quality showed marginal improvement with the AQI at 7 pm recorded at 358, down from 398 in the morning. It remained under the "very poor" category, nevertheless.

Several areas in central, south, and east Delhi, witnessed rainfall towards the evening.

The maximum temperature was recorded at 20.8 degrees Celsius, which was warmer than usual for the time of the season. Cloudy skies prevailed during the day.

Out of the 37 monitoring stations that recorded data, two -- Mundka, Nehru Nagar recorded air quality

P3

Popcorn sold in cinemas may attract only 5% GST

NEW DELHI: Popcorn, in loose form, sold in movie theatres will continue to attract GST at a 5 per cent rate, same as in restaurants, government sources said. If the popcorn is clubbed and sold together with a movie ticket, the supply would be treated as a composite supply and taxed as per the applicable rate of the principal supply.

DETAILS P7



Flowing water of Niti Valley frozen as temperature dips, in Chamoli in Uttarakhand on Tuesday. ANI

Taslina Nasreen accuses Mamata of banning her play

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA

Exiled Bangladeshi author Taslina Nasreen has accused West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of banning her play Lajja in the state. The play was scheduled to be staged at theatre festivals in Gobordanga and Pandua, Hooghly. Nasreen has taken to

Facebook to claim that despite advertisements for the festivals running for two months, Mamata Banerjee's police suddenly intervened without prior notice, informing organizers that all plays would be allowed except Lajja.

"The play was scheduled to be staged at theatre festivals in Gobordanga and Pandua, Hooghly. Adver-

tisements for the festivals have been running for two months, and now, without any prior notice, Mamata Banerjee's police suddenly informed us that all plays will be staged except Lajja," wrote Nasreen. "The Nabapalli Natya Sanstha has staged this play three times in Delhi, with packed audiences each time."

Nasreen further elabo-

rated that the police had justified the ban by citing concerns over potential riots. "The police claim that staging Lajja will provoke Muslims to riot. Using the same excuse of potential Muslim riots, the State Government had previously stopped the airing of my mega serial Dusshahobas, which dealt with strained relationships, on Akash 8

TV channel," she said.

The author questioned the reasoning behind the ban, pointing out that Lajja depicts an incident from Bangladesh, making the fear of riots in West Bengal unfounded. "The incident depicted in Lajja is from Bangladesh. Why would Muslims in West Bengal riot over an inci-

P3

Cong releases 2nd list; it is Farhad vs Manish

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Congress Tuesday released its second list of 26 candidates for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls, fielding Farhad Suri against AAP's Manish Sisodia from Jangpura while also giving tickets ex-AAP MLAs Asim Khan and Devender

Sehrawat. With this list, the Congress has declared a total of 47 candidates for the elections for the 70-member Delhi Assembly.

While Khan has been fielded from Matia Mahal, Sehrawat has been given a ticket from Bijwasan. Both the former AAP MLAs joined the Congress on Monday.

Troubles mount for Allu Arjun as police grill the star

HYDERABAD: Actor Allu Arjun has returned to his residence after appearing at the Chikkadpally police station in Hyderabad in connection with the Sandhya theatre incident. The actor was summoned to the Chikkadpally Police Station today and asked to 'cooperate' with the investigation.

DETAILS P4

PM MODI TO LAY FOUNDATION STONE OF KEN-BETWA RIVER LINK PROJECT TODAY

To benefit 7.18 lakh farmer families of 2,000 villages

TDG NETWORK
BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Wednesday lay the foundation stone of the Ken-Betwa river linking project, the first such initiative under the national river interlinking policy, at Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh.

Nearly 44 lakh people in 10 districts of Madhya Pradesh and 21 lakh in Uttar Pradesh will get drinking water under the project, which is estimated to cost Rs 44,605 crore, MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said on Tuesday.

Nearly 7.18 lakh farmer families of 2,000 villages will be benefitted from the project, which will also generate 103 MW of hydro-power and 27 MW of solar energy, he said.

"Prime Minister Modi is coming to Khajuraho in Chhatarpur district on December 25 to lay the foundation of this project which will change the image and destiny of Bundelkhand in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh," Yadav said.

The Ken-Betwa Link Project is a unique example

NATIONAL RIVER INTERLINKING POLICY



- Nearly 44 lakh people in 10 districts of Madhya Pradesh and 21 lakh in Uttar Pradesh will get drinking water under the project, MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said on Tuesday.
- The Ken-Betwa Link Project is a unique example of cooperation and coordination between the central government, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, he said.
- Under the project, a 77-metre high and 2.13 kilometres long Daudhan dam and two tunnels (upper level 1.9 km and lower level 1.1 km) will be constructed on the Ken river in the Panna Tiger Reserve

of cooperation and coordination between the central government, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, he said.

Prime Minister Modi has taken the initiative to realise the dream of former PM late Atal Bihari Vajpayee of the river linking campaign, Yadav added.

Through this project, farmers will get ample water for irrigation and it will also provide sufficient water for drinking and industrial uses.

Along with the economic

and social development of the area, tourism will also be promoted and new employment opportunities will be created. The situation of groundwater in the drought-hit Bundelkhand region will also improve, the CM said.

Yadav said Ken-Betwa is the largest irrigation project in the country, adopting an underground pressurised pipe irrigation system.

Under the project, a 77-metre high and 2.13 kilometres long Daudhan dam and two tunnels (upper level

1.9 km and lower level 1.1 km) will be constructed on the Ken river in the Panna Tiger Reserve.

The dam will store 2,853 million cubic metres of water, the chief minister said.

The surplus Ken water will be transferred to the Betwa river through the 221-km-long link canal from Daudhan dam, providing irrigation and drinking water facilities in both the states, he said.

With the project, 8.11 lakh hectare area can be irrigated in 2,000 villages of 10 districts - Panna, Damoh,

Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Niwari, Sagar, Raisen, Vidisha, Shivpuri and Datia. Nearly seven lakh farmer families will be benefitted from this, the chief minister said.

The Ken-Betwa project will provide an annual irrigation facility in 59,000 hectare area in Uttar Pradesh and stabilisation of the existing irrigation in 1.92 lakh-hectare area, which will provide irrigation facilities in Mahoba, Jhansi, Lalitpur and Banda districts of UP, he said.

The project also includes the work of saving the historical Chandela era heritage ponds in Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh and Niwari districts of MP, where water can be stored during the rainy season. The Daudhan reservoir will provide drinking water to wild animals in the Panna Tiger Reserve throughout the year, improve the forest ecosystem and bring relief to UP's Banda district from the flood menace, Yadav said.

The water crisis prevalent in the Bundelkhand region will end and migration for employment will also be checked, he said.

MHA constitutes tribunal to review ULFA's status as unlawful association

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has constituted an Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal to determine whether there is sufficient cause to declare the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), including all its factions, wings, and front organisations, as an unlawful association. The tribunal will be headed by Justice Michael Zothankhuma of the Gauhati High Court, mentioning a gazette notification issued by the MHA. The MHA took the move to exercise the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 5 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967).

hind the growing dissidences in the party as 72 of the 89 candidates fielded in the assembly elections by the party were from the Hooda camp. This dominance continued even after the party's defeat in the assembly elections as the party failed to appoint Congress Legislative Party leader in the state more than two months after the formation of the BJP government in Haryana. The internal sources suggest that the neglect of the leaders of the Selja faction in the state organization has put the high command in worry. According to sources, 6 current MLAs, 12 former MLAs and 2 former ministers were included in the list of party In-Charges released by Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee President Udai Bhan. But ignoring the leaders of the Selja faction became a big reason due to which the list was stopped. Besides, Selja group Udai Bhan also ignored several close aides of senior party leaders like Randeep Surjewala, Birender Singh and Capt Ajay Singh Yadav. It is learnt that Birender Singh wanted to accommodate his son Brijendra Singh who faced defeat in assembly elections in Uchana Kalan. He had reportedly complained to the party leadership in this matter.

Babaria halts district heads' appointments amid internal rift in Haryana Congress

TDG NETWORK
CHANDIGARH

Factionalism in the Haryana Congress has once again come to the fore with the party's state in-charge Deepak Babaria has put the list of district in-charges issued by state president Chaudhary Udai Bhan on hold.

"All Haryana Congress leaders and workers are hereby informed that the list of district in-charges published by the Haryana Pradesh Congress Office on December 18, has been put on hold until further orders. Its implementation will remain suspended until the next directive", reads a letter

issued by Babaria. The internal reports revealed that the decision was taken after the leaders associated with the Sirsa MP Kumari Selja's faction were not given a place in this list due to which the party high command has taken serious cognizance.

Whereas, the leaders from former Chief Minister Bhupendra Singh Hooda's group has dominated the list which has been revised as the party replaced in-charges of six districts following humiliating defeat in the state assembly elections. Also the dominance of the Hooda camp in the distribution of the party tickets was a key factor be-

Create data-rich platform to benefit investigating officers: Shah to NCRB

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has instructed the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) to develop a data-rich platform aimed at assisting investigation officers and other stakeholders in the criminal justice system.

Shah's direction came while chairing a review meeting on

the implementation of three new criminal laws with the NCRB here in the national capital.

The meeting reviewed the implementation of integration of Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and System (CCTNS 2.0), National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS), Prisons, Courts, Prosecution and Forensics with Inter-Operable

Criminal Justice System (ICJS 2.0) at all India level.

Union Home Secretary, Director NCRB and several senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs, NCRB and NIC were present in the meeting.

During the discussion in the meeting, the Home Minister asked NCRB to facilitate the complete implementation of new criminal laws in the ICJS 2.0 and emphasized on use of

applications like eSakshya, Nyaya Shruiti, eSign and eSumons in every state as well as Union Territory.

While emphasizing the use of technology, Shah said that alerts should be generated for all criminal cases at pre-defined stages and timelines right from registration to disposal of the case to benefit victims and complainants.

"Alerts to investigation offi-

cers as per pre-defined timelines will help in expediting the process of investigation," MHA said in a statement, quoting Shah.

He further suggested that a team of officers of MHA and NCRB should visit the states and UTs to increase the adoption of technical projects and assist them in all possible ways.

'I am absolutely fine, we will either win or die': Dallewal

Farmer leader's fast enters 29th day as farmers prepare for long haul at Khanauri border

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

Giving a strong message to the authorities on the 29th day of his fast unto death, farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal said that he is completely fine and either the farmers will win or he will sacrifice his life.

Calling upon the agitators to remain united, he said, "I thank those who are cooperating in this front. Everyone has to fight the farmers' battle together, only then victory is possible." Dallewal made a special appeal to the farmers of Haryana and said, "In 2021, other states had expressed displeasure that Punjab ended the agitation early. But now we have decided that this time the agitation will continue till a law guaranteeing MSP is made. The elder brother of Punjab is in the field, now it is the responsibility of the younger brother Haryana to strengthen this fight."

He urged the farmers to strengthen the night vigil so that the police could not dare to take him away from the Kanauri border. "There is a need to take a resolution to continue the movement strongly. Now it is the responsibility of the farmers to par-



Dallewal writes to PM Modi again

CHANDIGARH: Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal on Tuesday wrote another letter to the Prime Minister, urging him to enact the MSP Guarantee Law based on the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture. In the letter he appealed to the prime minister to fulfill 13 pending demands of the farmers including the MSP guarantee law. Dallewal cited the report of the Standing Committee of Parliament and said that the committee has unanimously recommended the MSP guarantee law, which will strengthen the rural economy of the country. He also reminded the Prime Minister that while entering the Parliament House in 2014, he had saluted the Parliament as the supreme institution. He urged that the Prime Minister should implement this recommendation while respecting the sentiments of the Parliament and the farmers. Dallewal also clarified in his letter that his fast is not a formality. He wrote, "I will end my fast only when the MSP guarantee law is made."

Congress fact-finding panel blames BJP, EC of rigging in Haryana polls

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

The Congress Fact-Finding Committee has released its interim report on the BJP's victory and the Congress' unexpected defeat in the Haryana Assembly elections blaming the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), EVM and the Election Commission (EC) for electoral rigging.

The eight-member committee headed by former minister Karan Singh Dalal alleged that the BJP influenced the election results by hacking electronic voting machines (EVMs) in at least 27 urban assembly constituencies.

"BJP did not hack EVMs in entire Haryana, but it was done in urban areas. In rural areas, people often know who others are voting for, but in urban areas, political preferences are not clear", he alleged. He also alleged that non-availability of mandatory 17-A and 17-C forms by the ECI (Election Commission) raises questions over the transparency of the election process.

Dalal alleged that the Election Commission did not give the total number of

votes received by the candidates and published only percentage figures. "The Election Commission declared the polling percentage as 61.19 per cent on polling day, October 5 at 7 pm. At 11:45 pm, it became 65.65 per cent and at 8:46 am on October 7, it reached 67.90 per cent", he added.

Dalal also raised questions on BJP's vote share saying, "There are 2.03 crore registered voters in Haryana. According to the Election Commission, the total polling was 67.90 per cent, that is, 1.38 crore votes were cast. If BJP's vote share is 39.94 per cent, then they should have got 55.19 lakh votes. But according to the Commission's website, BJP got 55.48 lakh votes. This figure is wrong, and Congress' vote share was also affected."

Dalal said that of the 44 seats, where BJP won 37, their strike rate was 84.09 per cent, while of the remaining 46 seats, BJP won only 11, with a strike rate of 23.91 per cent.

"How can there be such huge differences?" After the election results, Congress had complained to the Election Commission alleging ir-

regularities in 20 assembly constituencies, of which BJP won 18, he asked. The commission dismissed these allegations as "smear of suspicion over the electoral process". Congress on Monday levelled allegations on the matter, including that "EVM batteries were showing 99 per cent charge at the end of polling".

Dalal said, "EVM is like a calculator and its use should discharge the battery. But the commission is saying that these batteries are special, which get charged during use. This is unbelievable." Congress has made it clear that it will raise these issues in Haryana and at the national level.

The party says that there should be an impartial investigation into these discrepancies so that the public's faith in the electoral process remains intact.

The fact finding committee of the Congress was formed by the party leadership after it faced humiliating defeat as the BJP won 48 out of 90 seats and Congress won 37 seats, while the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) won two and independent candidates won three seats

47 arrested in Sambhal violence: UP Police

TDG NETWORK
SAMBHAL

Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) in Sambhal, Shrish Chandra on Tuesday said that a total of 47 people have been arrested in connection with the violence near the Jama Masjid area in Sambhal district on November 24.

The ASP said that 7 more people were arrested in the case on Tuesday and that 91 people are yet to be arrested.

"A violent incident took place on 24th November near the Jama Masjid area. A total of 47 people have been arrested in connection with the incident. 91 people are yet to be arrested. Today seven more people have been arrested. Evidence is being collected in connec-

tion with the incident and other accused will also be arrested soon," ASP Sambhal Shrish Chandra told ANI.

The Sambhal violence raised concerns over public safety, prompting authorities to tighten security. Local police teams are working in coordination with other law enforcement agencies to trace the absconding suspects.

Earlier on Monday, Sambhal's Superintendent of Police, Krishan Kumar Bishnoi said that the violence which involved stone-pelting during a mosque survey, has been under scrutiny.

Bishnoi stated, "Violence that took place here on November 24, to investigate that - we wrote to Lucknow FSL and the team (FSL)

The Sambhal violence raised concerns over public safety, prompting authorities to tighten security.

came and recreated the crime scene." In connection with the investigation, a forensic team on Monday arrived in Sambhal to inspect the location where the stone-pelting incident took place. This visit was part of the ongoing efforts to gather evidence and further the probe into the matter.

As the excavation work continued in Sambhal on Monday after a stepwell was unearthed, Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav

said that they (BJP) will keep searching like this and one day will end up digging their government. "They will keep searching like this and one day, by digging and digging, they will end up digging their own government," Akhilesh said. This came after an excavation team from the Archaeological Survey of India unearthed a stepwell in the Chandausi area of Sambhal district on December 22.

District Magistrate Rajendra Pensiya on Sunday confirmed the discovery of a 'baoli' (stepwell) covering an area of 400 square metres. The structure, featuring around four chambers, includes floors made of marble. He explained, "The structure, which has around four chambers, in-

cludes floors made of marble and bricks. The second and third floors are made of marble, while the upper floors are built from bricks." He also added, "This baoli is said to have been built during the time of the grandfather of Bilari's king."

The discovery came after the reopening of a Shiv-Hanuman temple in the district, which had been closed for 46 years. The DM has further estimated that the structure could be over 150 years old.

Krishna Kumar Sonkar, the Executive Officer of the Municipal Corporation, shared, "As soon as we learned that there was a baoli here, we started the excavation work. We will continue the work as we learn more about it."



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh pays floral tribute to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the inauguration of 'Atal Yuva Maha Kumbh' during his birth centenary celebrations, at K.D. Singh Babu Stadium, in Lucknow on Tuesday. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was also present. ANI

DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON S. JAISHANKAR'S US VISIT

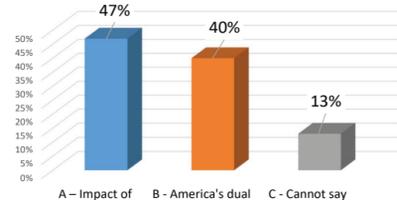
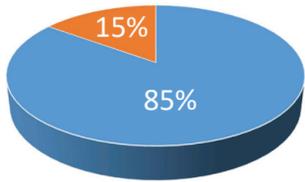
84% believe India-US relations will strengthen after Trump's charge.

A recent survey on S. Jaishankar's US visit reveals that 84% believe India-US relations will strengthen further. Additionally, 85% think Bangladesh's situation should be discussed with America, while 66% feel the Yunus government in Bangladesh may face challenges post-visit. The survey highlights optimism about joint actions against terrorism, viewed as the most likely major agreement.

Q1.

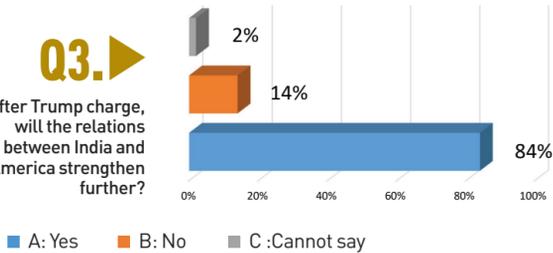
During S. Jaishankar's US visit, should the situation in Bangladesh also be discussed with America?

A: Yes B: No



Q2.

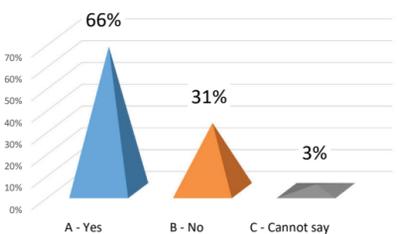
S. Jaishankar's visit to America, simultaneous calls from the UN, and remarks on Hindu violence—what does it signify?



Q3.

After Trump charge, will the relations between India and America strengthen further?

A: Yes B: No C: Cannot say



Q4.

After this visit, will the Bangladesh issue lead to the downfall of the Yunus government?

A: Yes B: No C: Cannot say

Atal Ji, the statesman who shaped India with his vision and resolve

CONTINUED FROM P1

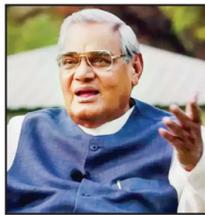
like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan highlights how Atal Ji dreamt of building an India where modern education is accessible to people across the nation, particularly for the poor and marginalised sections. At the same time, his government presided over many economic reforms which set the stage for India's economic surge after several decades of following an economic philosophy which encouraged cronyism and stagnation.

A wonderful example of Vajpayee Ji's leadership can be seen in the summer of 1998. His Government had just assumed office and on 11th May, India conducted the Pokhran tests,

known as Operation Shakti. These tests exemplified the prowess of India's scientific community. The world was stunned that India had done the tests and expressed their anger in no uncertain terms. Any ordinary leader would have buckled, but Atal Ji was made differently. And what happened? India stood firm and resolute with the government calling for another set of tests two days later, on 13th May! If the tests of the 11th showed scientific skill, the ones on 13th showed true leadership. It was a message to the world that gone were the days when India would buckle under threats or pressure. Despite facing international sanctions,

the then NDA government of Vajpayee Ji stood firm, articulating India's right to safeguard its sovereignty while simultaneously being the strongest proponent of world peace.

Atal Ji understood Indian democracy and also the need to make it stronger. Atal Ji presided over the creation of the NDA, which re-defined coalitions in Indian politics. He brought people together and made NDA a force for development, national progress and regional ambitions. His Parliamentary brilliance was seen throughout his political journey. He belonged to a party with a handful of MPs but his words were enough to rattle the might of the all-powerful



Congress Party that time. As Prime Minister, he blunted the criticisms of the Opposition with style and substance. His was a career spent largely in the Opposition benches but never carried any trace of bitterness against anyone, even though the Congress stooped to new lows by going to the extent of calling him a traitor!

He was also not one to cling on to power through

opportunistic means. He preferred to resign in 1996 instead of following the path of horse-trading and dirty politics. In 1999, his Government was defeated by 1 vote. A lot of people told him to challenge the immoral politics happening then but he preferred to go by the rules. Eventually, he came back with another resounding mandate from the people.

When it comes to commitment to protecting our Constitution too, Atal Ji stands tall. He was deeply impacted by the martyrdom of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee. Years later, he was a pillar of the anti-Emergency movement. In the run-up to the 1977 elections after the Emergency, he agreed

to merger of his own Party (Jan Sangh) into the Janata Party. **I am sure it would have been a painful decision for him and the others, but safeguarding the Constitution was all that mattered to him.**

It is also noteworthy how deeply rooted Atal Ji was in Indian culture. Upon becoming India's External Affairs Minister, he became the first Indian leader to speak in Hindi at the United Nations. This one gesture showcased his immense pride in India's heritage and identity, leaving an indelible mark on the global stage.

Atal Ji's persona was magnetic and his life was enriched by his love for literature and expression.

A prolific writer and poet, he used words to inspire, provoke thought, and even offer solace. His poetry, often reflective of his inner struggles and hopes for the nation, continues to resonate with people across age groups.

For so many Bharatiya Janata Party Karyakartas like me, it is our privilege that we were able to learn and interact with a person like Atal Ji. His contribution to the BJP was foundational. In those days to spearhead an alternative narrative to the dominant Congress showed his greatness. Alongside stalwarts like Shri L.K. Advani Ji and Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi Ji he nurtured the party from its formative

years, guiding it through challenges, setbacks and triumphs. Whenever the choice came between ideology and power, he always chose the former. He was able to convince the nation that an alternative world view from the Congress was possible and such a world view could deliver.

On his 100th Jayanti, let us rededicate ourselves to realising his ideals and fulfilling his vision for India. Let us strive to build an India that embodies his principles of good governance, unity, and progress. Atal Ji's unwavering belief in the potential of our nation continues to inspire us to aim higher and work harder. *The author is the Prime Minister of India.*

DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON SHEIKH HASINA ON BANGLADESH

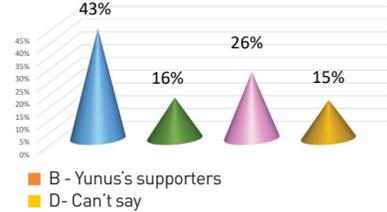
69% believe S. Jaishankar can resolve the Bangladesh issue with America.

A survey on the Bangladesh issue reveals that 69% believe S. Jaishankar can address the matter with the US. Opinions on Sheikh Hasina's extradition are divided, with 55% favoring her stay in India. Additionally, 68% feel regional instability in Myanmar and Bangladesh stems from US-China tensions, reflecting growing concerns over international influence in South Asia.

Q1.

Who raised the slogan "Hang Hasina" during Rahat Fateh Ali Khan concert in Bangladesh?

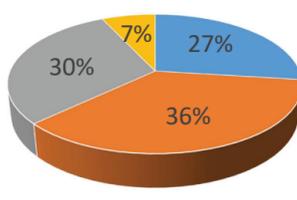
A - Jamaat supporters B - Yunus's supporters C - Student groups D - Can't say



Q2.

What is the intention behind the Yunus government's demand for Sheikh Hasina's extradition?

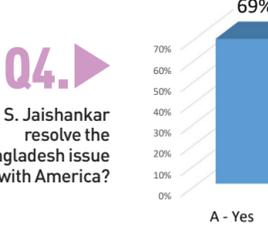
A - Send her to jail B - Get her hanged C - Home arrest D - Can't say



Q3.

What should be India's stance on Bangladesh's demand for Sheikh Hasina's extradition?

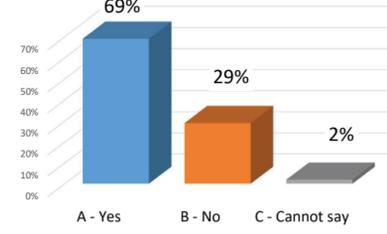
A - Extradite her to Bangladesh B - Allow her to stay in India C - Cannot say



Q4.

Can S. Jaishankar resolve the Bangladesh issue with America?

A - Yes B - No C - Cannot say



Number of jobs in unincorporated sector up 10% at 12 crore: Survey

CONTINUED FROM P1

from 22.9 per cent in 2022-23 to 26.2 per cent in ASUSE 2023-24.

This trend indicates a positive shift in the participation of women in business ownership, highlighting an increase in female entrepreneurship over the given period, it stated.

In ASUSE 2023-24, data were collected from a total of 4,98,024 establishments (2,73,085 in rural and 2,24,939 in urban) from 16,842 surveyed FSUs (8,523 in rural and 8,319 in urban).

ASUSE 2023-24 has been conducted based on area frame and establishments of both rural and urban sectors.

The percentage of establishments using the internet has also grown significantly from 21.1 per cent in 2022-23 to 26.7 per cent in ASUSE 2023-24.

This substantial growth reflects a strong trend toward digital adoption among establishments, highlighting the increasing reliance on the Internet for business operations.

The average emolument per hired worker also increased by 13 per cent in 2023-24 compared to the previous year 2022-23, signalling improvements in wage levels.

This wage growth serves as a catalyst, strengthening the labour market, enhancing productivity, and fuelling broader economic demand.

The highest increase in this metric was observed in the manufacturing sector with a growth of little more than 16 per cent.

The total number of establishments in the sector increased substantially from 6.50 crore in 2022-23 to 7.34 crore in 2023-24, representing a healthy 12.84 per cent growth.

Among the broad sectors covered, the number of establishments in the "Other Services" sector recorded a growth of 23.55 per cent, followed by a 13 per cent increase witnessed by the manufacturing sector.

Critical role in driving the overall growth of the unincorporated sec-

tor, the report stated.

During the same period, the Gross Value Added (GVA), a key indicator of economic performance, rose 16.52 per cent, driven by a 26.17 per cent growth in the other services sector.

Gross Value Added (GVA) per worker, a measure of labour productivity of the sector, increased to Rs 1,49,742 in 2023-24 from Rs 1,41,769 in 2022-23 in current prices, showing a 5.62 per cent increase.

During the same period, the Gross Value of Output (GVO) per establishment also increased from Rs 4,63,389 to Rs 4,91,862 in current prices.

The unincorporated non-agricultural sector plays an important role in the Indian economy, contributing significantly to employment, gross domestic product and the overall socio-economic landscape.

This sector not only sustains livelihoods for millions but also acts as a backbone for the incorporated sector by supplying goods and services reinforcing its role in the domestic value chain.

ASUSE is carried out with the primary objective of measuring various economic and operational characteristics of unincorporated non-agricultural establishments in manufacturing, trade and other service sectors (excluding construction).

The survey collects data on various economic characteristics of this sector, including the number of workers, GVA, emoluments paid, fixed assets owned, and outstanding loans, besides, different types of operational characteristics, such as type of ownership, nature of operation, registration status, use of ICT, etc.

The data serves as a key input for policy-making, supporting National Accounts Statistics, fulfilling the requirements of ministries, such as Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME), Textiles, Labour & Employment, and empowering stakeholders to make informed, data-driven decisions.

'People reeling under rising prices'

CONTINUED FROM P1

vendors to know how the budget of the common people is deteriorating and how inflation has troubled everyone," Gandhi said in his post accompanying the video.

"People are struggling with rising prices and are forced to compromise on small things of daily needs," the former Congress chief said in his post in Hindi.

"We discussed the prices of garlic, peas, mushrooms and other vegetables, and heard the real experiences of the people. How garlic at Rs 400 per kg and peas at Rs 120 per kg have shaken everyone's budget," he said.

What will people eat and what will they save, he wondered.

"While talking over tea, we closely understood the problems of the lives of housewives - how the income remained stagnant, inflation kept increasing uncontrollably. How saving

has become impossible and how it has become difficult to arrange even a rickshaw fare of Rs 10 due to just meeting the food expenses," Gandhi said.

He urged people to share their experiences with him if they are also feeling the effect of inflation.

"Tell us how you are struggling with this problem - you know the condition of the market, you too share your personal experiences with us," he said.

In a post on X, Gandhi said, "Garlic was once Rs 40, today it is Rs 400! Rising inflation has spoiled the budget of the common person's kitchen - the government is sleeping like Kumbhakaran!"

In the over five-minute video, Gandhi is seen accompanying some housewives as they buy vegetables and haggle with vendors.

The housewives tell Gandhi that they have to curtail their eating habits as they

are unable to afford the vegetables they used to earlier.

They also tell him that while wages have remained stagnant, prices have risen sharply.

The Congress on Monday took a swipe at the Modi government over "rising" prices of food items, saying the bullet train announced by it has not arrived but the inflation, which is spiralling upwards faster than the speed of a bullet train, has broken the back of the common person.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh had said the people want answers not more "jumlabaaazi (rhetoric)".

He had shared a media report on X which claimed that the rates of daily essential goods are increasing day by day and in the last one year, the prices of flour, oil, spices and dry fruits have increased by one and a half to two times.

Taslima accuses Mamata of banning her play

CONTINUED FROM P1

dent in Bangladesh? This is beyond my understanding. Citing the fear of riots, I was once forced to leave West Bengal as well," Nasreen added.

She also expressed her frustration over the censorship of art and literature, calling out the Government's actions. "Why is art and literature censored instead of taking action against those who want to incite riots? Why are the

voices of artists and writers suppressed? How much longer will I alone continue to ask this question? Does no one else feel responsible for standing up against injustice?" she concluded.

Reacting to Taslima Nasreen's claims, BJP's IT-Cell head Amit Malviya said: "In an unprecedented move, the West Bengal Police has banned the staging of Taslima Nasrin's Lajja at theater festivals in Gobordanga and Pandua, Hooghly, citing concerns

over a potential Muslim reprisal". He added, "If Mamata Banerjee is unable to manage law and order in Bengal and is so intimidated by Muslim veto that even art, culture and freedom of expression are being stifled, then she should consider stepping down."

Lajja is a Bengali novel by Taslima Nasreen, who has long been targeted by hardline Muslims in Bangladesh. Faced with death threats from Islamic groups, Nasreen was

forced to flee Bangladesh and seek asylum in India. The term "lajja" translates to "shame" in Bengali and several other Indo-Aryan languages. The novel depicts the violence, rape, looting, and murders of Bengali Hindus that occurred in December 1992.

First published in Bengali in 1993, the book was banned in Bangladesh. Despite the ban, it sold 50,000 copies within the first six months of its release.

Five soldiers killed in Poonch

CONTINUED FROM P1

"All ranks of #WhiteKnightCorps extend their deepest condolences on the tragic loss of five brave soldiers in a vehicle accident during operational duty in the #Poonch sector. Rescue operations are ongoing, and the injured personnel are receiving medical care," the Corps stated in a post on X.

Authorities have also ordered enquiry in this matter.

Rain lashes Delhi, AQI improves slightly

CONTINUED FROM P1

in the "severe" category, 32 in the "very poor" category and the remaining in the "poor" category. An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered 'good,' 51-100 'satisfactory,' 101-200 'moderate,' 201-300 'poor,' 301-400 'very poor,' and 401-500 'severe.'

The day began with a foggy morning with minimum temperature recorded at 9.9 degrees Celsius, two notches above the season's average.

Humidity remained between 100 per cent and 73 per cent during the day.

North India shivers as mercury drops

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

North India is reeling under cold weather with temperatures plummeting across several states. Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 7 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, with a thin layer of fog enveloping parts of the national capital. On Monday, the min-

imum temperature stood at 8 degrees Celsius, while the maximum reached 20 degrees Celsius. Residents of the national capital were seen gathering bonfires to combat the chill, while others took refuge in night shelter homes as temperatures continued to drop in Delhi.

In Rajasthan, the cold weather persisted, signifi-

cantly impacting daily life due to the falling temperatures. In Bikaner, the temperature was recorded at 9 degrees Celsius, according to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD).

Cold wave continues to affect the daily life of the people in Jammu and Kashmir, with temperatures dropping below zero in many areas.

'NAV SATYAGRAH BAITHAK': CONG NAMES CWC IN BELAGAVI

To decide 2025 action plan, take up Ambedkar 'insult' issue strongly

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday said that it is set to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Karnataka's Belgaum session, presided over by Mahatma Gandhi, with an extended session of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), which has been named as 'Nav Satyagrah Baithak' to finalise its action plan for the coming year.

Addressing a press conference here at the party headquarters, Congress General Secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal said, "This session is to commemorate the 100 years of Mahatma Gandhi elected as Congress president in Belagavi where extended CWC will take place."

Venugopal, who is also a Lok Sabha MP said that in December 1924, which was the 39th Congress Session was held in Belagavi, the only session which Mahatma Gandhi

BELGAUM SESSION 100TH ANNIVERSARY



■ The Congress leader asserted that the Belgaum session (Belgaum now known as Belgavi), became the bedrock of India's freedom and for socio economic reforms.

■ "All Congress delegation including the CWC members, secretaries, state unit chiefs among 200 leaders who will be attending the historic session," Venugopal then said.

■ "The meeting will discuss the action plan for Congress for next year and adopt two resolutions," he said, adding, "The meeting will deliberate challenges under BJP rule, erosion of democracy, attack on institutions and others," Congress said.

presided.

He said that Mahatma Gandhi addressed the session and talked about removal of untouchability, non violence and other issues.

The Congress leader asserted that the Belgaum session (Belgaum now known as Belgavi), became the bedrock of India's freedom and for socio economic reforms.

"To commemorate the 100 years of session by Mahatma Gandhi we have named this extended CWC as 'Nav Satyagrah Baithak'. The meeting will be held at the same venue where Mahatma Gandhi took over the presidency of Congress. Karnataka Congress has made all the arrangements and city has been decorated," Venugopal said, where he was also joined by Congress media department in-charge Jairam Ramesh and media and publicity department chairman Pawan Khara.

Meanwhile, Jairam Ramesh said that it was from Belgaum Session only when Mahatma Gandhi gave the call for Satyagrah in 1924.

"All Congress delegation including the CWC members, secretaries, state unit chiefs among 200 leaders who will be attending the historic session," Venugopal then said.

He also said that On December 26, 'Nav Satyagrah baithak' will start and on December 27, a massive

public meeting titled 'Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhaan' will be held there.

All AICC functionality with lakhs of workers will be participating in the rally, Venugopal added.

"The meeting will discuss the action plan for Congress for next year and adopt two resolutions," he said, adding, "The meeting will deliberate challenges under BJP rule, erosion of democracy, attack on institutions and others."

"This is a historic session for us. Two years ago, we had held Chintan Shivir in Udaipur and from there only Bharat Jodo Yatra was discussed and it started from Kanyakumari to Kashmir just three months later," he added.

Ramesh again said that Seva Dal was formed here in Belgaum only. Nehru was the first chairman of Seva Dal. When Mahatma Gandhi became the president of Congress, he had said that Nehru will remain as General Secretary. Nehru was made general secretary in 1923.

"Nehru has mentioned it in his autobiography that he became the semi permanent general secretary," he added.

To a question on insult of Dr BR Ambedkar by Union Home Minister and the BJP chief ministers will be holding press conferences across the country, Venugopal said, "BJP should seek resignation from Shah. They are only diverting the issue with the communal things... they will also continue with the same act of distracting. We asked for CCTV footage cameras, but a case was registered against Rahul Gandhi. BJP should answer this question raised by the country will Shah resign and tender apology."

Ramesh also said that the Congress has been marking Ambedkar Samman Saptah against the 'insult' of Ambedkar by Shah.

He emphasised, "There is only one solution—that the home minister be sacked and must apologise for his remarks."

Increase in voter turnout normal: EC clears Cong concerns

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has cleared misconceptions on voter turnout amidst concerns raised by the Congress party after the Maharashtra Assembly elections. In its detailed response to the Congress party, the apex poll body explained the process behind the aggregation of voter turnout data during the election.

In a letter to the Congress Party, the ECI also explained how an increase in voter turnout from 5 pm to 11:45 pm is normal being part of the process of aggregation of voter turnout and how there can be bonafide but inconsequential differences in votes polled and votes counted data.

The poll body categorically affirmed that it is impossible to change actual voter turnout as statutory Form 17C giving details of voter turnout is available with authorized agents of candidates at the time of close of poll at the polling station itself.

ECI said it informed each and every elementary part of voter



turnout released during election and issued a detailed note and FAQs.

ECI explained at length the step-by-step process of aggregation of voter turnout data for VTR App from every polling station on poll day.

ECI emphasised that while VTR App is merely a facilitative measure for updating voting trends at regular intervals on polling day, Form 17C is the immutable and only statutory source of total votes polled at any Polling Station and is made available to candidates before the polling booth is closed.

The Commission while responding to the complaints by the Congress in the recently concluded Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024, explained in detail the process involving preparation of Electoral Rolls and updation of voter turnout data during elections.

Maha farmers to lead second green revolution through green energy: CM

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

CM Devendra Fadnavis launched Solar Agriculture Feeder Project 2.0 to empower farmers' solar-powered villages being developed across the state to ensure that electricity is available to farmers during the daytime. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis expressed confidence that the adoption of green energy will pave the way for Maharashtra's farmers to lead the second green revolution in the near future.

At a programme held at Sahyadri Guest House in Mumbai, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis inaugurated the projects



at Umbratha in Washim district and Narangwadi in Dharashiv district under the Chief Minister's Solar Agriculture Feeder Project 2.0 via a video conferencing. Chief Secretary Sujata Saunik, Additional Chief Secretary of the Energy Department Abha Shukla, Additional Chief Secretary of the Water Resources Department

Deepak Kapoor, Additional Chief Secretary of the Housing Department Valsa Nair-Singh, Additional Chief Secretary of the Finance Department O.P. Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary of the Cooperation Department Rajgopal Deora, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Ashwini Bhide, Secretary to the Chief Minister Dr. Srikrishna Pardeshi, along with heads of various departments were present on this occasion.

On this occasion, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis stated that the Chief Minister's Solar Agriculture Feeder Scheme would provide farmers with sustainable and free electricity during the

Fadnavis launches Solar Agriculture Feeder Project 2.0 to ensure power to farmers during day

day. Currently, 16,000 MW of electricity is being supplied to farmers in the state. The initiative to shift all feeders to solar energy began two years ago and will be completed in phases. Farmers will have access to electricity even during the daytime. Farmers from Umbratha and Narangwadi villages participated in the program via a video conferencing system.

Two jwanas injured in Naxal attack in Sukma

TDG NETWORK
RAIPUR

Two CoBRA commandos of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were injured in the exchange of fire with Naxals on Monday as they were securing a forward base established in the forest area of Sukma district in Chhattisgarh, according to officials.

The incident took place at the Gomguda forward operating base (FOB) of the CRPF. According to the officials, the incident unfolded at around 7:30 AM as the CoBRA 206 battalion was securing the newly established base in a remote forested area.

among people on caste lines, he has been doing this work for the last many years, so I think his work of spreading hatred, he has completed it today in Parbhani," he said.

Fadnavis informed that the state government have announced a judicial inquiry into Parbhani violence assuring that no one will be spared and the strictest action will be taken against the guilty.

Allu Arjun grilled by police in Sandhya theatre incident case

TDG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

Actor Allu Arjun has returned to his residence after appearing at the Chikkadpally police station in Hyderabad in connection with the Sandhya theatre incident.

The actor was summoned to the Chikkadpally Police Station today and asked to 'cooperate' with the investigation.

"The case is under investigation, and your presence is essential before the undersigned officer to elicit answers about the incident. If necessary, you may also be required to visit the scene of the offence to ascertain the true facts," stated the notice from the Telangana Police.

Security has been increased outside the actor's residence following recent protests demanding justice for the deceased woman.

The tragic event occurred on December 4 when Allu Arjun attended the premiere of Pushpa 2: The Rule. A large crowd gathered to see him, and the situation escalated when he waved to fans from the sunroof of his car. A woman, Revathi, was killed, and her child, Sri Tej, was injured. Following the incident, Allu Arjun was



arrested and later released on bail after posting a Rs 50,000 bond.

Advocate Srinivas Reddy, impleader in Allu Arjun's quash petition, provided details about the case, confirming that they had filed a writ petition.

"We filed the writ petition challenging the 29 November memo that granted benefit shows and early morning screenings, such as 1 am and 4 am. Unfortunately, on the 4th, during such a benefit show, a lady lost her life because of the film star (Allu Arjun). He came with his crew, intending to hold a roadshow and create further hype, disregarding law and order. He did not obtain the necessary approval or permit from the local police station, yet he chose to break the law. He is now the prime accused in the death of a woman, and her son is critically ill," he

said.

He continued, "Allu Arjun went to the High Court seeking to quash the petition. As a concerned citizen, we have impleaded the petition, and somehow, he obtained interim bail. My demand to both the Central and state governments is that this is a fit case to cancel his bail. He should be sent to jail, and police custody and interrogation should follow."

Reddy expressed gratitude to Telangana CM Revanth Reddy, saying, "I thank Telangana CM Revanth Reddy for speaking the truth. Bouncers have created a ruckus in Telangana. The counter-press meet held by Allu Arjun was unwarranted and violated his bail conditions."

"I came to Chikkadpally police station to provide information, but the police said I needed permission. In the meantime, Allu Arjun's bouncers attempted to manhandle me. I will file a police complaint against Allu Arjun for daring to touch me and engage in manhandling," he added.

Meanwhile, Congress MLC Teenmar Mallanna filed a complaint at Medipally police station yesterday against Pushpa 2. He has requested

the police to take action against the director, producers, and actors for insulting the constitutional and police systems. He also called for the removal of certain scenes from the film, according to the Teenmar Mallanna team.

Earlier, Allu Arjun's father-in-law, Kancherla Chandrashekar Reddy, was seen visiting the actor's residence. Later, the actor was spotted stepping out of his home.

Security has been heightened outside the actor's residence following protests demanding justice for the deceased woman.

Earlier in the day, Allu Arjun's father-in-law, Kancherla Chandrashekar Reddy, was seen visiting the actor's residence. Later, the actor was spotted stepping out of his home.

On December 22, a group of people demanding justice for Revathi, who died in the Sandhya Theatre tragedy, attacked Allu Arjun's residence. According to DCP West Zone, Hyderabad, the group arrived at the residence holding placards and shouting slogans. One individual climbed the compound wall and started throwing stones, prompting security to intervene.

Stalin urges Jaishankar to ensure release of 17 fishermen held by Sri Lanka

TDG NETWORK
RAMESWARAM

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin urged External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to intervene and secure the release of 17 Tamil Nadu fishermen who were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy.

In a letter written to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday, Stalin said that two fishing boats along with 17 fishermen were apprehended by Sri Lankan Navy near Kakada Theevu for allegedly fishing across the border.

They were taken to Manar and Naval Camp and



investigations are still on.

"I want to bring to your immediate attention to the recent incident of apprehension of 17 fishermen from Rameswaram along with their two mechanised fishing boats by the Sri Lankan Navy on 24.12.2024," the letter read.

The letter added that two similar incidents

took place on December 20, which Stalin referred to as 'outrageous'.

"Further, I would also like to bring to your attention to two separate incidents of attack on our fishermen from Kodiyakkara Village, Nagapattinam District by six unidentified Sri Lankan nationals on 20.12.2024. In this outrageous incident, three out of six fishermen who sailed in two country crafts were injured and their belongings such as GPS equipment, VHF equipment, fishing net, mobile phone and their fish catch were robbed from their fishing boats by the attackers," Stalin said.

accordingly," Somaiya told the media.

On Monday, Maharashtra Chief Minister Fadnavis targeted Rahul Gandhi, calling his visit to Parbhani "a political meeting" and an "attempt to create hatred among people on caste lines."

"Rahul Gandhi has come here only for political purposes, this was just a political meeting, an attempt to create hatred

BJP's Somaiya slams Rahul's Parbhani visit

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Hitting out at the Congress MP and Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi over his visit to violence-hit Parbhani, BJP leader Kirit Somaiya on Tuesday said that sensationalisation and politicisation of such issues do not suit opposition parties.

Somaiya added that Ma-

harashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has already stated that an investigation is underway in the matter and action will be taken accordingly.

"The statement made by Rahul Gandhi in Parbhani yesterday. Sensationalisation and politicisation of such issues do not suit opposition parties. CM Fadnavis already said that an investigation is underway and action will be taken



TDG NETWORK
TDC NETWORK

Karnataka Minister G Parameshwara announced on Tuesday that a CID inquiry has been ordered into the recent incident involving BJP MLC CT Ravi.

Speaking on the matter, he stated that the investigation must be allowed to proceed without interference. "I have ordered a CID inquiry on it. When the inquiry is going on, we should not make any statement about it," Parameshwara said.

The state Minister also added that the police will carry out their duty, and the Speaker will do his part as well, urging patience as the process unfolds.

Parameshwara explained that there would be a delay in filing the FIR but stressed the importance of uncover-

ing the truth. "Truth has to be revealed. We have to verify witnesses, so the CID inquiry has been asked to handle this," the Karnataka Minister said.

On Monday, Karnataka Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti provided clarity on the incident involving BJP MLC Ravi. He stated that no proof was presented by the Legislative Council's media regarding

the issue. Horatti revealed that he personally reached out to both CT Ravi and Congress leader Lakshmi Hebbalkar to discuss the matter, underlining that both sides stood firm on their positions.

Horatti said, "We have not received any proof from our council media... So I first called CT Ravi and asked if he wanted to compromise, he said 'no,' and then

I called her (Lakshmi Hebbalkar), she said 'no, we are bent upon our statement.'" Horatti further explained that a thorough discussion was held with the council's secretary and other officials. "We discussed thoroughly with the secretary and other people, studied all the books, and gave our ruling," he said.

A case has been registered against individuals who allegedly attempted to attack Ravi on December 19 at Belagavi Suvarna Soudha. The complaint was filed at the Hirebagewadi police station in Belagavi, alleging that the BJP MLC's life was threatened and that the attackers intended to kill him. The complaint was registered under various sections of the law, including BNS 189(2), 191(2), 190, 126(2), 352, and 351(2).

'HAVE SOME SHAME': SISODIA VS TIWARI OVER KEJRIWAL VIDEO

BJP MP Manoj Tiwari posted an old video of Kejriwal, accusing him of mocking the Constitution's framers.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

BJP MP Manoj Tiwari on Tuesday courted controversy by sharing on X an old clip of former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, alleging that he said framers of the "constitution" were drunk when they made it.

Several users on X claimed the video was truncated and responded with a longer video, in which Kejriwal is purportedly seen referring to the "constitution" of the Congress and not the country's.

"I found this video of the smiling chief of Delhi's Aam Aadmi Party.. after listening everyone will be able to see the true colours of such an impersonator," Tiwari, the North East Delhi MP, said in a post with the hashtag Dalit Virodhi AAP.

Sisodia, a former deputy chief minister of Delhi, taking umbrage over Tiwari's post, also shared the longer version of the video on X and said, "Tiwari ji you are an MP, have at least some shame. You are tweeting a lie. Stop behaving like a cheap troll. Maintain the honour of at least the post of MP if not yourself." Tiwari responded to Sisodia with another post, advising

MANOJ TIWARI'S CONTROVERSIAL POST



Manish Sisodia and Manoj Tiwari's war of words broke out on X

- Users countered with a longer version, showing Kejriwal referring to Congress' constitution, not India's.
- AAP leaders, including Sisodia, accused Tiwari of misleading the public with a manipulated video.
- Tiwari defended his post, advising Sisodia to maintain dignity in debates.
- Tiwari urged action against Bangladeshi infiltrators and Rohingyas, linking them to Kejriwal's party.

him to maintain dignity in a debate.

He said, "...you can run away to avoid the questions of the people of Patparganj, but we will not let you run away from here." Sisodia who represented the Patparganj constituency thrice since 2013, is going to contest from the Jangpura constituency in the Assembly elections due in February next year.

In the video Tiwari shared, Kejriwal is heard saying that he read the constitutions of all parties and Congress' constitution said no party

worker will consume alcohol.

He follows it up by saying, "Somebody said 'whoever wrote the constitution would have written the constitution after drinking liquor.'"

Meanwhile, Bharatiya Janata Party MP Manoj Tiwari on Tuesday called for strong action against Bangladeshi Infiltrators and Rohingyas in Delhi and said that a case of 'treason' should be registered against them as they have snatched the rights of the people of the country.

BJP intensifies ticket buzz for assembly polls

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

With the wait for the BJP's candidate list for the Delhi assembly election likely to end this week, the buzz over ticket distribution has intensified within the party as former Union ministers, ex-MPs and top office bearers of Delhi unit are in the race. The central election committee of the BJP will take a



call on the final list of candidates for the 70 Assembly constituencies. A date for the meeting of the committee is yet to be fixed, said a

senior Delhi BJP leader.

Party leaders said that the list of shortlisted potential candidates, 3-4 per constituency, was readied by the state election committee and the final announcement of the candidates was likely to begin this week.

The top contenders among the ticket seekers include former Union ministers Harsh Vardhan from Krishna Nagar constituency in

East Delhi and Meenakshi Lekhi from Kasturba Nagar, party leaders claimed.

Former West Delhi MP Parvesh Verma has already claimed that the national leaders have asked him to make preparations from the New Delhi constituency. The seat has been held by AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal since 2013.

Another heavyweight, Ramesh Bidhuri, a former

South Delhi MP, is said to be the top contender for the ticket from the Kalkaji constituency represented in the outgoing Assembly by Chief Minister Atishi who has been fielded again from the seat by the Aam Aadmi Party.

In the race are also many prominent office bearers of the Delhi BJP as well as former state presidents and mayors.

CM Atishi, Kejriwal starts 24-hr watersupply in Rajinder Nagar

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party national convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday inaugurated the Booster Pumping Station in Rajinder Nagar assembly constituency in Delhi which aims to provide clean water in the local areas.

After the inauguration, Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi reached a local residence of DDA flats in Pandav Nagar, Rajinder Nagar assembly constituency and drank water straight from the tap to check the quality of the water.

Addressing the public gathering, Kejriwal said that it was AAP's dream to provide clean drinking water to every household in Delhi, 24 hours a day and today this big dream is being realised in Rajinder Nagar assembly constituency.

"Today, I want to congratulate all residents of Delhi. It's a big day today. It



AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal drinks water from a tap in the presence of CM Atishi at the start of the 24-hour water supply in a colony of Rajindra Nagar, in New Delhi. ANI

was our dream to provide clean drinking water to every household in Delhi 24 hours a day and today this big dream is being realised in Rajinder Nagar assembly constituency from DDA flats Pandav Nagar. I went to some houses and I myself drank water from a tap. It was a clean water," Kejriwal said.

Following the inauguration, Delhi CM Atishi said that a "water revolution" has begun in India, adding that there will be a 24x7 supply of clean and

fresh water in the houses of DDA flats in Pandav Nagar.

In a social media post on X, Atishi wrote, "Water revolution has begun in Delhi! After 24x7 electricity, now the promise of 24x7 water is also being fulfilled. Today, under the guidance of @ArvindKejriwal ji, the 24-hour clean water scheme was launched in DDA flats, Pandav Nagar. Under this, now there will be a 24x7 supply of clean and fresh water in the houses here.

Cong accuses ex-CM of false promises, water supply failures

TIKAM SHARMA
NEW DELHI

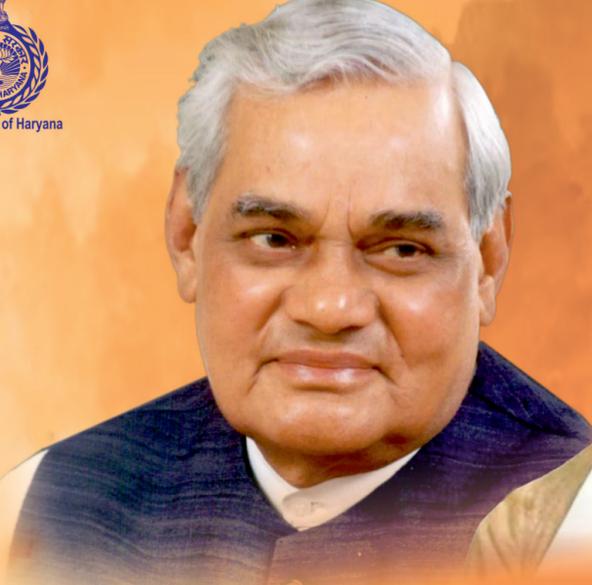
The Delhi Congress unit has strongly criticized the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for allegedly deceiving Delhiites by making false promises and manipulating their emotions. Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav accused Kejriwal of being on an announcement spree

ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, particularly following his release on bail. Yadav highlighted Kejriwal's latest promise of "round-the-clock" water supply at Pandav Nagar DDA flats in the Rajinder Nagar area, where he assured uninterrupted water flow even to residents on the third floor. However, Yadav pointed out the irony of this promise, noting that for the

majority of Delhi's population, potable water remains a luxury, forcing them to rely on the tanker mafia for their needs. He sarcastically remarked that the only time Delhiites experience uninterrupted water supply is during the monsoon, when the city faces severe waterlogging due to poorly maintained drains and sewers under Kejriwal's decade-long tenure.



Government of Haryana




Nation Remembers Former Prime Minister **Bharat Ratna Sh. Atal Bihari Vajpayee** and The Great Freedom Fighter **Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya** on their Birth Anniversary

On the occasion of

Good Governance Day

State Level Programme

Chief Guest
Sh. Nayab Singh Saini
Chief Minister, Haryana

December 25, 2024 | 11 am
Auditorium, Gurugram University, Gurugram

Scan the QR Code to join the programme






“सुशासन पर हम जितना बल देंगे, अंतिम छोर तक पहुंचने का हमारा लक्ष्य उतनी ही आसानी से पूरा होगा।”
- नरेन्द्र मोदी

Committed to a Transparent and Corruption-Free Governance

<p style="font-size: 8px;">To reduce corruption, 772 services and schemes of 59 departments/boards and corporations are available online through Saral portal</p>	<p style="font-size: 8px;">Auto Appeal System - Right to Service Act implemented in true sense, 14.90 lakh complaints resolved automatically</p>	
<p style="font-size: 8px;">C.M. Window Transparent redressal of 12.39 lakh public complaints</p>	<p style="font-size: 8px;">Since the Government already has pro-active data, now all types of social security pensions are directly transferred to the beneficiary's account</p>	<p style="font-size: 8px;">Highest MSP for 24 crops Farmers' Abiana worth ₹134 Crore waived-off</p>
<p style="font-size: 8px;">31 New Women Police Stations in the State</p>	<p style="font-size: 8px;">1.75 lakh youth got Government jobs Bina Kharchi, Bina Parchi</p>	<p style="font-size: 8px;">Free dialysis services for kidney patients in all Government hospitals</p>

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LIGHT RAIN LASHES PARTS OF DELHI, TRAFFIC SNAGS ON CHRISTMAS EVE

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi witnessed a sudden change in weather as light rain lashed several parts of the national capital, bringing a festive chill on Christmas Eve. Large crowds gathered at India Gate to soak in the holiday spirit, even as traffic slowed down in some areas due to wet roads. The national capital saw light rain on Tuesday. Visuals from Kasturba Gandhi Marg showed the drizzle adding a wintry touch to the festive evening. The light rains brought temporary relief from the city's persistent pollution woes. The showers helped settle dust particles and pollutants, leading to a slight improvement in air quality. The Air Quality Index (AQI) for the city at 10 pm was still

AQI IMPROVED

- Rain in parts of Delhi and improved wind speed contributed to the air quality improvement.
- Stage I, II, and III measures remain in force to prevent further deterioration.
- CAQM stressed the need for continued monitoring of air quality to avoid further issues.
- Citizens are urged to follow guidelines under Stage III to maintain air quality during winter.



Parts of Delhi witnessed rain on Tuesday. PTI

recorded at 356, which falls in the "very poor" category. The unexpected showers caused traffic disruptions in parts of the city, including slow vehicle movement reported on the Ring Road near South Extension. As the city embraces the Christmas spirit, the blend of festive lights, bustling mar-

kets, and a gentle drizzle creates a perfect backdrop for celebrations, making the occasion memorable for many. Meanwhile, the Central government's air quality monitoring panel on Tuesday revoked Stage IV ('Severe+') measures under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi

and the National Capital Region (NCR) following an improvement in air quality. However, actions under Stages I, II, and III will remain in force to prevent any further deterioration of air quality, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) announced on December 24.

The decision comes after Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) improved to 369 ('Very Poor') at 4 PM on December 24, down from a peak of 401 ('Severe') recorded on December 16. The improvement in air quality was attributed to favourable meteorological conditions, including improved wind speed, according to forecasts from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM). In line with the Supreme Court's directives, Stage IV measures were initially invoked when AQI levels breached the 400 mark on December 16. The measures were aimed at curbing severe pollution levels and included restrictions on industrial activities, construction, and entry of non-essential trucks into Delhi.

CAG reports: HC seeks govt, LG reply on BJP plea

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought responses from the Delhi Government, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and other respondents regarding a petition filed by BJP MLAs.

The petition requested a directive to convene a special session of the Delhi Assembly to present 14 CAG reports. During the hearing, the Delhi Government informed the Court that all 14 reports had been sent to the Speaker on Tuesday (i.e., today). BJP MLA Vijender Gupta and his counsel argued that, as a member of the House, it was his right to receive and debate the reports. They urged the Court to direct the Speaker to call a special session. However, the Court stated that it could not issue an immediate order to the



BJP MLA Vijender Gupta and his counsel argued that, as a member of the House, it was his right to receive and debate the reports.

Speaker and emphasised the need to hear both parties before making a decision. The Delhi Government opposed the petition, alleging political motivations, and announced it would file a counter affidavit. Gupta's counsel refuted these claims, stressing that the issue concerned government accountability and needed resolution before election dates were announced. The Court has adjourned the matter for further hearing in the second week of January. Several BJP MLAs from

Delhi have approached the Delhi High Court, seeking directions to the Delhi Government to forward 14 Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports to the Speaker of the Delhi Legislative Assembly in a time-bound manner.

The MLAs also sought a directive for the Speaker to take all necessary actions under Article 151(2) of the Constitution of India, 1950, to convene a special sitting of the Legislative Assembly and table the reports at the earliest.

LG directs for weekly meeting of police with elderly, help desks

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Tuesday directed Delhi Police for weekly interaction with senior citizens and requested divisional commissioner for setting up dedicated help desks for them at district magistrate offices.

Saxena interacted with over 600 senior citizens at the Raj Niwas during 'Samvaad@Raj Niwas' series of dialogues.

In a post on X, the LG said he has directed the Delhi Police to hold weekly interactions with the senior citizens. Police have been instructed to increase patrolling in vulnerable areas, he said.

Saxena also requested the divisional commissioner



In a post on X, the LG said he has directed the Delhi Police to hold weekly interactions with the senior citizens. Police have been instructed to increase patrolling in vulnerable areas, he said.

for dedicated help desks at DM offices for settlement

of disputes concerning senior citizens.

During the interaction, the elderly people raised issues like waterlogging, dark spots, harassment and red tape at government offices, encroachment on footpaths, traffic congestion and road safety, and cyber and street crime, Saxena said.

Meanwhile, the LG also launched 'Smart Delhi Ideathon 2025' platform initiated by the Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIU), in collaboration with the AICTE. In another post on X, he said that the platform provides students an opportunity to actively contribute to the city's progress by finding solutions to the problems faced by the city.

Illegal Bangladesh immigration racket busted, 11 arrested

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

With the arrest of 11 people, Delhi Police on Tuesday claimed to have unearthed a gang involved in illegal immigration of Bangladeshi nationals.

Among those arrested, four are Bangladeshi citizens and the rest were allegedly involved in making forged documents, an official said. "The gang was busted when our team tracked down four people involved in a murder case in Sangam Vihar on October 21," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Ankit Chauhan. The Bangladeshi nationals - Midul Miyan alias Akshay Ahmed and Fardeen Ahmed alias Abhi Ahmed along with their wives - were arrested and interrogated in connection with the murder of Sentu Seikh alias Raja.



Delhi police arrests 11 people in connection with illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and fake documents racket, at Media Centre, PHQ in New Delhi on Tuesday. ANI

"During interrogation, the accused revealed that Sentu, who lived in their neighbourhood, used to bully them over minor issues. Further investigations showed that the accused had entered India illegally and had been residing in Sangam Vihar for several years," the officer said. They were found in possession of Bangladeshi ID cards (chip-based NID cards) and birth certificates. Around 21 Aadhar cards, four voter ID

cards, and eight PAN cards were also recovered from the victim's residence. A team led by Inspectors Umesh Yadav and Umesh Sharma, under the supervision of ACPs Abhinendra Jain and Niraj Tokas, was formed to conduct a thorough probe into the illegal immigration issue. Chauhan said. Further questioning of the accused led to the arrest of Sahil Sehgal, 26, who ran a "Poonam Online Computer

Centre" in Rohini Sector 5. It was found that the centre was involved in preparing Aadhar cards and other documents using fake IDs. Sehgal revealed that he was approached by illegal Bangladeshi immigrants through the deceased Sentu Seikh alias Raja, according to the police.

"Sahil used the fake website 'Jantaprints.site' to generate fraudulent birth certificates and sent them to his associate Ranjit for Aadhar card processing," the officer said. Ranjit, a resident of Sector 7 in Rohini, worked with Afroz, 25, an authorised Aadhar operator at Karnataka Bank in Rohini Sector 5. Using fake birth certificates, Afroz facilitated the creation of Aadhar cards. Ranjit and Afroz were arrested, and investigations revealed that the "Jantaprints.site" offered fake

documents, including birth certificates, matriculation certificates, caste certificates, and income certificates, at nominal prices starting from Rs 7, the officer said.

Payments for these documents were made via Paytm QR codes linked to a number registered under Mohammad Chand. Based on technical surveillance, Mohammad Chand, 28, from Uttam Nagar, was arrested from Vikas Nagar, Delhi. He confessed to retaining a 2 per cent commission and transferring the remaining amount to Saddam Hussain. Saddam Hussain, 33, from Uttam Nagar, was arrested, leading to the discovery that the "Jantaprints.site" was operated by his associate, Deepak Mishra. Saddam transferred the payments to Deepak Mishra, retaining a 2 per cent share for himself.

Saurabh Bharadwaj inaugurates Shahpur Jat Festival

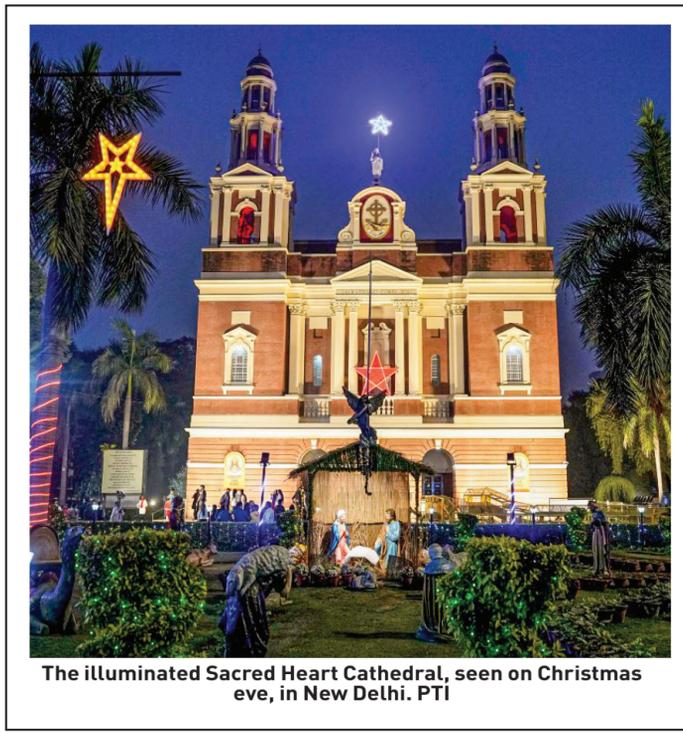
TIKAM SHARMA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government's Tourism Department organized the annual two-day Shahpur Jat Festival in the Greater Kailash constituency, inaugurated by Tourism Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj. Held on December 24 and 25 from 2:00 PM to 7:00 PM, the festival features an array of cultural events, including Haryana folk dances, Ragini performances, stand-up comedy, magic shows, puppet plays, and a traditional ramp walk showcasing Haryana's cultural attire. The highlight of the event is live performances by renowned singers Ajay Hooda and Ruchika Jangid. As the name suggests, Shahpur Jat is a village predominantly inhabited by the Jat community, and the festival



reflects their cultural preferences. The Delhi Tourism Department has curated performances celebrating Haryana's rich heritage, including Haryana music and folk traditions. Additionally, the event features food stalls offering Haryana delicacies and other traditional Indian dishes, providing visitors with a chance to enjoy a diverse culinary experience alongside the cultural showcase. Shahpur Jat has also gained recognition as a hub for fashion, particularly bridal and wedding attire. The vil-

lage is home to numerous showrooms of renowned clothing brands from Delhi and across India. Reflecting this reputation, the festival includes stalls displaying exquisite garments, offering visitors an opportunity to explore and purchase wedding and festive attire, further enhancing the festive atmosphere. Speaking at the event, Tourism Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj emphasized the importance of cultural preservation. He stated, "Events like these allow our younger generation to connect with our age-old traditions and heritage. Such programmes ensure that the customs and values passed down by our ancestors remain alive in the hearts of future generations, enabling them to carry forward this rich legacy."



The illuminated Sacred Heart Cathedral, seen on Christmas eve, in New Delhi. PTI

Kejriwal accuses opposition of vote-buying in New Delhi constituency

ARZU SETH
NEW DELHI

The political atmosphere in Delhi is heating up even before the official announcement of assembly election dates, with political parties engaging in a war of words. AAP convener and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has made a significant allegation, accusing the opposition of attempting to buy votes in his constituency. In a tweet posted in Hindi on the social media platform X, Kejriwal stated, "These people have already started the work of buying votes in my assembly. They are openly giving cash of Rs 1000 per vote." This is not the first time AAP has accused the BJP of engaging in unethical electoral practices. Senior leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party



have previously alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party is deleting voters' names from electoral rolls ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections to undermine Kejriwal's chances of victory. The New Delhi assembly constituency is gearing up for a high-stakes electoral battle. AAP convener and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is vying for a third term in the seat. Meanwhile, the Congress has fielded senior party leader and former CM Sheila Dikshit's son, Sandeep Dikshit.

Police busts fake visa racket, four held

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police busted a fake visa racket arresting four members. The accused were involved in preparing counterfeit visa stickers and temporary residence cards for various countries, said the police.

The accused were involved in preparing fake visa stickers and temporary residence cards for various countries. The police recovered 25

passports, 50 fake visa stickers, 5 temporary residence cards, 14 rubber stamps/seals, 4 mobile phones, and 2 pen drives. Equipment used to produce these fraudulent documents, including UV light machines, blank sticker papers, rubber stamps, and seals, were also seized. The police's action came after a person named Lakhveer Singh filed a complaint at Chanakya Puri Police Station, alleging that he and his friends were duped



by an individual named Paramjeet Singh, who promised to secure German visas for them at a cost of Rs. 8 lakhs per person.

Paramjeet Singh was arrested near the Kuwait Embassy in Chanakya Puri, and further investigation led to the arrest of three more

gang members: Tajinder Singh, Sunil Kumar Sood, and Uday Pal Singh.

The police found that the gang had a sophisticated setup for producing fake visas, with a laptop, printer, UV light machine, and other materials seized from Uday Pal Singh's residence. Analysis of the laptop and pen drive revealed 8.5 GB of data related to fake visa stickers, suggesting the gang may have defrauded numerous individuals nationwide.

Brazilian arrested at IGI Airport for smuggling Rs 21 crore cocaine

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Customs department at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport has recovered 1.383 kg of cocaine worth approximately Rs 21 crore from a Brazilian national. In a post on X, Delhi Customs said that on December 11, Customs officers at IGI Airport, Terminal-3, New Delhi,

intercepted a Brazilian national, Lucas Henrique De Oliveira Brito, who arrived from Guarulhos via Paris on Flight AF-214. "The passenger's unusual gait and behaviour during arrival raised suspicion. Customs officers closely monitored him and intercepted him after he crossed the Green Channel. Upon questioning, he admit-

ted to ingesting capsules containing narcotic substances and voluntarily submitted himself for further action," they said. "The passenger was taken to Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi, for medical procedures under expert supervision. Over the course of several days, 127 capsules were extracted from his stomach," the Customs department added.

ECONOMY ON RECOVERY PATH AFTER Q2 SLOWDOWN: RBI

GDP growth slowed to 5.4%, the lowest in seven quarters

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Indian economy is recovering from the slowdown in momentum witnessed in the September quarter, driven by strong festival activity and a sustained upswing in rural demand, according to a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bulletin released on Tuesday. An article on the 'State of the Economy' in the December Bulletin noted that the global economy continues to exhibit resilience with steady growth and moderating inflation.

"High frequency indicators (HFIs) for the third quarter of 2024-25 indicate that the Indian economy is recovering from the slowdown in momentum witnessed in Q2, driven by strong festi-

- Recovery attributed to strong festival activity and rising rural demand.
- HFIs for Q3 (October-December) of 2024-25 suggest positive economic momentum.
- Brisk expansion in rabi sowing improves agricultural prospects and rural consumption.
- Global economy exhibits resilience with steady growth and moderating inflation.

val activity and a sustained upswing in rural demand," it said.

The prospects for agriculture and hence rural consumption are looking up with the brisk expansion of



rabi sowing, said the article authored by a team led by RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra. India's GDP growth slowed to a seven-quarter low of 5.4 per cent during the July-Sep-

tember period of the current fiscal year. The RBI said the views expressed in the bulletin are of the authors and do not represent the views of the central bank.

Food and Consumer Affairs minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday launched several initiatives to strengthen consumer protection, including artificial intelligence-enabled helpline and tools to detect deceptive marketing practices, while major e-commerce players pledged to enhance online shopping safety. Leading platforms, including Reliance Retail, Tata Sons and Zomato adopted a safety pledge as the government rolled out new consumer protection measures like the AI-enabled National Consumer Helpline, e-maap portal and Jago Grahak Jago mobile application. "Significant progress has been made in expediting resolutions of consumer disputes," Joshi said at the National Consumer Day event.

Govt launches AI-enabled helpline

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Food and Consumer Affairs minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday launched several initiatives to strengthen consumer protection, including artificial intelligence-enabled helpline and tools to detect deceptive marketing practices, while major e-commerce players pledged to enhance online shopping safety. Leading platforms, including Reliance Retail, Tata Sons and Zomato adopted a safety pledge as the government rolled out new consumer protection measures like the AI-enabled National Consumer Helpline, e-maap portal and Jago Grahak Jago mobile application. "Significant progress has been made in expediting resolutions of consumer disputes," Joshi said at the National Consumer Day event.

Sensex pares gains to end the day in red

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The stock markets ended in red territory after a volatile session on Tuesday, failing to hold the opening gains.

At the close of the session, Nifty 50 ended at 23,727.65, declining 25.80 points, or 0.11 per cent, while Sensex closed at 78,472.87, down 67.30 points, or 0.09 per cent.

The major players who gained in today's session at the National Stock Exchange (NSE) were Tata Motors, Adani Enterprises, Eicher Motors, BPCL, and ITC. The major losers were Power Grid Corp, JSW Steel, SBI Life Insurance, IndusInd Bank, and Grasim Industries in the trading session.

The stock market on Tuesday's session saw enhanced buying in auto, FMCG, oil and gas, pharma, and realty, while the selling was wit-



RUPEE FALLS NINE PAISE	GOLD DELICNES RS 100
MUMBAI: The rupee extended the slide for the second straight session and depreciated 9 paise to settle at a fresh all-time low of 85.20 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, dragged by a strong greenback against major crosses overseas and subdued domestic equities.	NEW DELHI: Gold price slipped Rs 100 to Rs 78,600 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The metal had closed at Rs 78,700 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. However, silver jumped Rs 500 to Rs 90,500 per kg against its previous close.

nessed in IT, media, metal, and PSU Bank. Other sectors saw losses, with declines up to 0.83 per cent.

The BSE midcap index ended on a flat note, while the smallcap index was up 0.3 per cent.

Akasa Air slapped Rs 10 lakh fine by DGCA for denying boarding



TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Tuesday imposed a Rs 10 lakh fine on Akasa Air for refusing boarding to seven passengers and for not offering the required compensation. The said incident occurred on September 6 when the passengers were stopped from boarding a Bengaluru-Pune flight.

An Akasa Air spokesperson said, "We acknowledge receipt of an order by the DGCA dated December 24, 2024. We continue to work closely with the DGCA to address this matter and enhance our protocols as required by the regulator."

The flight was delayed after the aircraft was grounded due to foreign object damage, and a replacement plane with nine inoperable seats was provided. As a result, seven passengers could not board. Though an alternative flight was arranged, the airline did not offer compensation to the affected passengers, which the DGCA found a breach of the Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) Section-3, Series M, Part IV.

This incident adds to mounting scrutiny faced by Akasa from the aviation regulator. Just the previous week, the airline received a notice for lapses in aircraft maintenance and certification and was also issued a

show cause notice for failing to update its operations manual in a timely manner.

Akasa Air AME gets show cause notice

On December 9, the DGCA issued a show cause notice to Akasa's Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (AME). This came after an inspection on August 30 at Bangalore International Airport revealed improper reinstallation of a right-hand nose wheel tire pressure indicator sensor on aircraft VT-YAY. The sensor system had not been securely locked by the certifying staff.

"During the spot check by this office on August 30 at KIAL airport, Bangalore it was observed that the right-hand nose wheel tire pressure indicator system sensor on aircraft VT-YAY was re-installed by certifying staff... He had failed to do the positive locking of the system's sensor..." the DGCA had said.

The DGCA said that the Akasa AME failed to adhere to specific provisions of Civil Aviation Requirement 145, attributing the violations to inadequate maintenance standards and certification practices by the AME.

Akasa Air fined Rs 30 lakh for training lapses

In October this year, the airline was penalised with a Rs 30 lakh fine for deficiencies in pilot training.

NFRA slaps Rs 8 lakh penalty on 2 auditors in DB case

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) has slapped penalties totalling Rs 8 lakh on two auditors and barred them for up to five years for professional misconduct in connection with the audit of DB Realty for FY16.

The order came after NFRA received information from Sebi in October 2022, regarding misstatements in the financial statement of DB Realty Ltd (now known as Valor Estate Ltd).

Thereafter, the regulator suo moto initiated an examination into the professional conduct of the statutory auditors of DB Realty Ltd (DBRL) under the Companies Act, 2013.

Separately, NFRA imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh on Chetan Desai and Rs 3 lakh on Rakesh Rathi. Both were partners of the audit firm Haribhakti & Co LLP, which was the statutory auditor of DBRL for the financial year 2015-16.

In addition, Desai and Rathi were debarred for a period of five years, and three years, respectively,



The regulator suo moto initiated an examination into the professional conduct of the statutory auditors of DB Realty Ltd (DBRL) under the Companies Act, 2013.

from being appointed as an auditor or internal auditor or from undertaking any audit in respect of financial statements or internal audit of the functions and activities of any company or body corporate, NFRA said in a 32-page order on Monday.

The audit regulator found that Chetan Desai failed to exercise professional scepticism and judgement, perform appropriate audit procedures, and obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence during an audit of

Rs 3,894.43 crore of guarantees given and securities provided by DBRL to its related parties.

Further, Desai also failed to perform appropriate audit procedures, and obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence during an audit of loans and advances of Rs 1,326.92 crore given by DBRL, out of which Rs 1,079 crore was given to related parties, many of which had negative net worth, NFRA said in the order.

2024 is 9th consecutive year of positive returns for domestic markets, says report

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Despite the recent fall, Indian equity markets are on track to close 2024 with positive returns for the ninth consecutive year, marking the longest streak of annual gains on record, according to a report by Standard Chartered bank.

This achievement reflects the resilience of the Indian economy and the performance of its financial markets.

The report highlighted that 2024 was a year of two distinct halves for Indian equities and bonds. The first half (H1) saw strong growth, supported by robust economic activity and corporate earnings.

However, the second half (H2) was marked by heightened volatility due to slowing economic growth and earnings. This slowdown came against backdrop of higher-than-usual interest rates as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) prioritised curbing inflation and managing credit risks.

It said "2024 was a year of two halves with H1 seeing strong performance of Indian equities and bonds on strong economic growth and corpo-



rate earnings delivery. However, H2 witnessed a surge in volatility"

The report also noted that these factors led to record foreign investor outflows from Indian equities, dampening market sentiments.

Despite these challenges, the Nifty 50 index has gained 9.21 per cent so far this year, while the Sensex index has risen by 8.62 per cent, showcasing the resilience of Indian markets.

Looking ahead, the report expressed optimism about 2025, expecting economic growth to improve.

This recovery is likely to be driven by higher domestic demand, boosted by increased government spending and better private consumption.

Rural incomes are expect-

ed to see an uptick, further supporting this recovery.

However, the report flagged uncertainties surrounding US President-elect Donald Trump's proposed policies, particularly increased tariffs, as a significant risk for emerging markets like India. An intensified trade war could adversely affect India's growth outlook.

Nevertheless, the report suggested that India's large, domestically focused economy and its relatively small contribution to US imports (around 3 per cent) might shield it from the worst impacts of global trade tensions. This resilience, combined with improving domestic conditions, is expected to support India's economic and market performance in the coming year.

Popcorn sold in movie theatres to attract 5% GST

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Popcorn, in loose form, sold in movie theatres will continue to attract GST at a 5 per cent rate, same as in restaurants, government sources said.

However, if the popcorn is clubbed and sold together with a movie ticket, the supply would be treated as a composite supply and taxed as per the applicable rate of the principal supply, which is the ticket.



The 55th meeting of the GST Council clarified the GST applicability in popcorn after it received a re-

quest from Uttar Pradesh to clarify the classification and GST rate applicable to popcorn mixed with salt

and spices.

There has been no increase in the GST rate on popcorn. Popcorn is served to customers in theatres in loose form and hence will continue to attract a rate of 5 per cent as applicable to 'restaurant service' as long as supplied independently of the cinema exhibition service, according to the sources.

Under GST, popcorn mixed with salt and spices is classified as namkeen and attracts a 5 per cent tax.

When it is pre-packed and labelled, the rate is 12 per cent. All sugar confectionery, other than a few specified items, attract 18 per cent GST, and hence, caramelised popcorn attracts an 18 per cent rate.

The council recommended the issuance of clarification to facilitate the resolution of classification disputes in the field on ready-to-eat popcorn that is mixed with salt and spices, the government sources noted.

All goods, including food

items, are classified under GST as per the Harmonised System (HS) classification, which is a multipurpose international goods nomenclature developed by the World Customs Organisation (WCO).

This system is used by over 200 countries, covering over 98 per cent of the international trade. The varying GST rates are only consequential to the classification of the commodity under different chapters of the HS system.

Swiggy plans to onboard 1 lakh women delivery partners by 2030

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Food delivery platform Swiggy on Tuesday said it is planning to onboard at least 1 lakh women delivery partners by 2030 and signed an initial pact with the NSE for rolling out a financial literacy programme for delivery partners, with special focus on women workforce.

The company signed the MoU at an event, attended by Swiggy MD and Group CEO Sriharsha Majety, NSE

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Ashish Kumar Chauhan, and Amruta Fadnavis, banker and wife of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

Ten women delivery executives, who completed the highest number of orders in 2024, were felicitated during the event, with each recipient receiving a cheque of Rs 11,000.

"Earlier this year, when we launched 'She the Change' programme, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman ji, made a very pertinent observation



when she said in areas where women are visibly seen to be running more enterprises

such as food and beverage businesses, crime and anarchy will gradually reduce. I

158 ORDERS PER MINUTE ON SWIGGY

As per a report by Swiggy, Dosa stood out with 23 million orders, cementing its place as a culinary favourite. In 2024, a single consumer in Bengaluru spent Rs 49,900 on pasta, indulging in nearly 55 Alfredo dishes, 40 Mac & Cheese plates, and 30 servings of Spaghetti, the report revealed. Dinner proved to be the "Bahubali" of mealtimes in 2024, with 215 million orders—nearly 29% higher than lunch orders on Swiggy. In 2024, Bengaluru remained loyal to its culinary heritage, with 2.5 million Masala Dosas consumed. Meanwhile, Delhi, Chandigarh, and Kolkata continued to favour their iconic dishes: Chole, Aloo Paranatha, and Kachoris, respectively, as per the report.

believe that the presence of women delivery partners on the road is an equally positive

signal.

"We will do our utmost in this direction; and commit to

take the number of women delivery partners to at least 1 lakh by 2030. We will continue to come out with policies and programmes to support this positive change, and our MoU with NSE is a step in this direction," said Majety.

The comprehensive financial literacy programme for delivery partners will feature interactive training sessions led by Sebi-certified trainers, covering topics such as budgeting, investments, debt management, and understanding capital markets.

The modules will include audio visual content and will also be available on the platform's partner app — the DE app. "This partnership with Swiggy reflects our commitment to equipping delivery partners, especially female partners, with the knowledge and awareness of tools needed for financial independence and long-term security. By focusing on financial literacy, we aim to empower gig workers to manage their finances more effectively for their financial well-being," said Chauhan.

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: ARCHITECT OF MODERN BHARAT AND STATESMAN OF PEACE

OPINION

SIDDHARTH DAVE



As Bharat gears up to commemorate the 100th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on December 25, 2024, we reflect upon the life and legacy of one of the most respected statesmen in Indian history. A leader of unparalleled vision, Vajpayee's contributions spanned decades, encompassing his early days in the Jan Sangh, his pivotal role during the Emergency, his diplomatic finesse on the global stage, and his transformative tenure as Prime Minister. Known for his poetry, oratory skills, and political sagacity, Vajpayee left an indelible mark on Bharat's political and developmental journey.

Born on December 25, 1924, in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, Atal Bihari Vajpayee hailed from a humble background. His father, Krishna Bihari Vajpayee, was a schoolteacher and a keen student of literature, a trait that Atal inherited. Vajpayee's early exposure to nationalist ideas and the influence of stalwarts like Veer Savarkar and Dr. Syama Prasad Mukherjee led him to join the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) at a young age.

Even as a student, Vajpayee exhibited exceptional oratory and writing skills, participating in debates and contributing to various publications. His intellectual prowess earned him recognition within the RSS,

which shaped his ideological foundation and commitment to nation-building. These formative years instilled in him a deep sense of duty and a lifelong commitment to serving Bharat.

His entry into active politics began with the formation of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS) in 1951, under the mentorship of Dr. Mukherjee. As a founding member, Vajpayee's eloquence and leadership qualities quickly earned him recognition. His speeches in Parliament, replete with wit and wisdom, showcased his ability to bridge ideological divides while steadfastly advocating for a strong and self-reliant Bharat. Dr. Mukherjee's untimely death in 1953 left a void, but Vajpayee's determination ensured that the Jan Sangh continued to grow, laying the groundwork for what would later become the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

One of the defining moments of Vajpayee's political career was his opposition to the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi in 1975. During this period, democratic freedoms were curtailed, and opposition leaders were jailed. Vajpayee, despite facing incarceration, emerged as a voice of resilience and a symbol of democratic ideals. His speeches during and after the Emergency emphasized the sanctity of the Constitution and the need to safeguard democratic institutions.

Interestingly, despite their ideological differences, Vajpayee shared a nuanced relationship with Indira Gandhi. A testament to his diplomatic prowess and recognition of his capabilities was his appointment by Mrs. Gandhi to represent India at the United Nations in 1977. His eloquent speech in Hindi at the UN, a first for any Indian leader, marked a moment of national pride

and showcased his ability to put Bharat on the global stage. This episode highlighted his statesmanship and his commitment to Bharat's cultural identity.

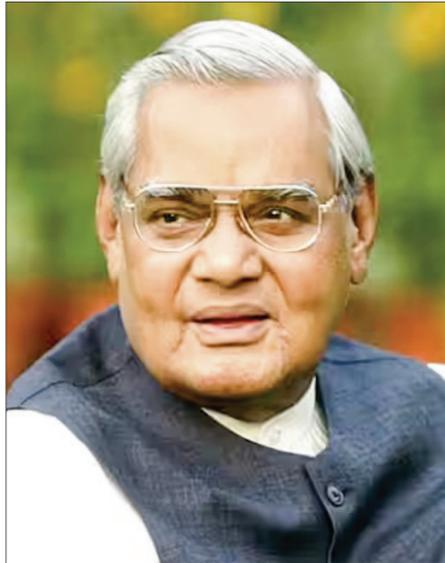
Following the dissolution of the Janata Party government, Vajpayee played a central role in the creation of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980. Alongside his trusted colleague L.K. Advani, Vajpayee envisioned the BJP as a party rooted in the cultural ethos of Bharat while being forward-looking and inclusive. His leadership established the BJP as a significant political force, culminating in its rise to power in the late 1990s.

Vajpayee's charisma and moderation complemented Advani's organizational skills, creating a dynamic leadership duo. Under his guidance, the BJP grew from a marginal political entity to a national party that resonated with millions of Indians. Vajpayee's emphasis on "Sarva Dharma Sambhava" (equal respect for all religions) and his ability to appeal to diverse sections of society were instrumental in shaping the BJP's identity. Vajpayee's tenure as Prime Minister (1996, 1998-2004) was marked by transformative initiatives, bold decisions, and a commitment to inclusive development. His governance blended economic reforms with social welfare, laying the foundation for Bharat's modern infrastructure and technological advancements.

OPERATION SHAKTI: BHARAT'S NUCLEAR VISION

One of Vajpayee's most defining moments was the successful execution of Operation Shakti in 1998, which made Bharat a declared nuclear weapons state. The nuclear tests in Pokhran were conducted under utmost secrecy and were a demonstration of Bharat's scientific prowess and strategic autonomy.

Addressing the nation after the tests, Vajpayee remarked, "We have a weaponized nuclear program, but it is not for aggression. It is for self-defense and ensuring peace." The tests earned Bharat global recognition but also invited sanctions.



Vajpayee's diplomatic acumen ensured that Bharat emerged from the crisis with strengthened international ties, particularly with the United States, through the subsequent India-U.S. nuclear agreement.

Vajpayee's government spearheaded landmark initiatives such as the Golden Quadrilateral highway project, which revolutionized Bharat's connectivity and logistics. His economic policies, including the promotion of privatization, foreign direct investment, and IT development, positioned Bharat as a global economic player. He championed reforms that prioritized fiscal responsibility while addressing the needs of marginalized communities.

Vajpayee's statesmanship extended to his efforts to foster peace with neighboring Pakistan. Despite setbacks like the Kargil War in 1999, he took bold steps, including the Lahore Bus Diplomacy, to normalize relations. His famous words, "You can change friends but not neighbors," reflected his pragmatic yet optimistic approach to diplomacy. He demonstrated remarkable restraint and maturity in handling sensitive issues, ensuring that Bharat's interests were safeguarded while striving for regional stability.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee was

not just a politician; he was a poet, thinker, and humanitarian who deeply understood the pulse of the people. His ability to connect with individuals across the political spectrum earned him admiration and respect, even from his ideological adversaries.

His empathy extended beyond politics. During natural calamities or national crises, Vajpayee's words and actions provided solace and direction to the nation. For instance, during the devastating Gujarat earthquake in 2001, his leadership and heartfelt outreach reassured the affected communities, showcasing his compassion as a leader. Similarly, his efforts to provide relief during droughts and floods demonstrated his commitment to ensuring that no Indian felt abandoned in times of need.

Vajpayee's humor was legendary and often disarmed critics. During a parliamentary session, when a fellow member accused him of "not doing enough," Vajpayee replied with his characteristic wit, "Some people wake up only to criticize. But I'm glad they at least woke up." Such moments exemplified his ability to navigate intense political debates with grace and good humor.

His colleagues often remarked on his unique ability to listen to divergent views patiently, ensuring that every voice was heard before ar-

iving at a decision. Former President Pranab Mukherjee once said, "Vajpayee ji had an exceptional ability to build consensus. He could bring people together even in the most polarized environments."

His poetry, rich in emotion and reflective of his philosophy, further highlighted his humane side. Lines like "Haar nahi manunga, raar nahi thanunga, kaal ke kapaal par likhta mitata boon" not only inspired the nation but also revealed the resilience and optimism that defined his character. His poetry served as a bridge between his personal reflections and his public philosophy, offering insights into the man behind the leader.

LEGACY AND INSPIRATION

Atal Bihari Vajpayee's legacy is one of resilience, vision, and unwavering dedication to Bharat. He transformed the BJP from a fledgling political entity into a ruling party and set a benchmark for governance that combined pragmatism with idealism. His life exemplified the values of humility, perseverance, and national pride.

As we celebrate his centenary, Vajpayee's contributions remind us of the importance of principled leadership in navigating the challenges of a complex and diverse nation. His vision of a strong, self-reliant Bharat continues to inspire generations. His ability to balance economic growth with social welfare, and his emphasis on diplomacy without compromising Bharat's sovereignty, remain guiding principles for future leaders.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee was more than a leader; he was a statesman whose life and work embodied the soul of Bharat. His journey from the streets of Gwalior to the highest echelons of power is a testament to his indomitable spirit and love for the nation. As we pay tribute to this extraordinary son of the soil, let us carry forward his vision of a united, prosperous, and self-reliant Bharat.

"Chhoti si umar mein bada sapna dekha tha, Sapna poora ho gaya hai, lekin yeh safar abhi adhoora hai." — Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

PERSPECTIVE

BRAND MODI STILL DOMINANT POLITICAL FORCE

The tumultuous 2024 is drawing to a close and what an year it's been. Politically speaking this was the year of the Lok Sabha polls that threw up a rather surprising result, with the Modi government failing to reach an outright majority and the Opposition doing better than expected. However a few months later, the year threw up another surprise when the BJP snatched a win from the jaws of defeat and held onto the trophy state of Haryana. That win had a far reaching impact for it restored the BJP's morale and dent the opposition's campaign that the Modi government was losing steam. The BJP held on to its winning streak in the Maharashtra polls that followed.

So then what are the takeaways here - as 2024 draws to a close it is safe to say that Brand Modi is still holding strong and remains the country's dominant political force. Yes, it has been dented in the Lok Sabha, and despite the Haryana and Maharashtra wins, not all the sheen has been restored. But given that the Opposition could not hold on to their Lok Sabha narrative there is still no other political leader in sight who can match the Modi juggernaut.



Which brings us to Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha who is leading the opposition charge against the BJP. He had entered 2024 on strong note, fresh from the goodwill of his Bharat Jodo yatra and his political trajectory was on an upswing. This held good for him in the 2024 election as well, when he nearly notched up a 3 figure mark for the Congress (it got 99 seats). However since then there seems to be a bit of a downswing, post Maharashtra and Haryana. The INDIA bloc is ending the year on a note of recalibration. Should it go ahead with Rahul as its face or should another leader with a more consistent electoral track record take charge. The West Bengal Chief Minister who managed to hold her own in the Lok Sabha polls against the Modi-Shah onslaught has thrown her hat in the ring.

Given that Delhi elections are slated to be held in the first few weeks of the new year (the dates are yet to be announced) it would be interesting to see if the political calculations of 2024 hold good for 2025 as well. In fact, 2025 is a year that the RSS will be celebrating its 100 years, so its important for the Hindutva narrative to hold on to its electoral strongholds. And given the way 2024 is ending that does seem to be the way 2025 is headed.

PRIYA SAHGAL

ONOE: Challenging yet beneficial!

After Independence, four Lok Sabha and Assembly polls were held simultaneously, so why not now?

OPINION

DR VIJAY DARDA



This might sound strange, but it's a fact that we journalists are almost always occupied with election coverage. As one state's Assembly elections conclude, another state's polls begin. After that, local body elections start.

Statistically, from the first election to 2023, India has seen an average of six elections annually. Let us exclude the first four elections -- 1951-52, 1957, 1962 and 1967 -- as Lok Sabha and Assembly elections were held simultaneously at the time.

You are aware that with every election, the model code of conduct comes into force, which brings implementation of key administrative decisions to a halt. However, have you ever taken into account the significant economic and developmental costs that this recurrent disruption imposes on the

nation? As someone who has experience both as a journalist and a politician, I have had the opportunity to closely analyse the electoral process and its impact on governance. Based on this observation, I firmly believe that it is high time for all political parties, regardless of their ideological leanings, to engage in serious deliberation and reach a consensus on the concept of 'One Nation, One Election' (ONOE). While regional parties may have their own perspectives and challenges over this proposal, we must agree that the country's welfare is far more critical than political interests.

The financial burden of conducting elections in India is escalating at an alarming rate, demanding serious attention and effective cost-control measures. And here, I am not even referring to the expenditure of Rs 50 to Rs 100 crore incurred by the



candidates per seat. I am only talking about the official government expenditure. Implementing cost-saving measures would help us use this money for crucial developmental works. Experts believe that holding even Lok Sabha and Assembly elections simultaneously could potentially boost India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by an estimated 1 per cent to 1.5 per cent.

In the 1951-52 elections, there were around 17 crore voters and the expenditure was Rs 10.5 crore -- an average of 60 paise per voter. In 1957, the expenditure per voter dropped to 30 paise! However, the 2024 Lok Sabha elections saw this figure rise to around Rs 1,400 per voter. Let me tell you that the

Centre bears the cost of Lok Sabha elections while Assembly elections are funded by the respective state governments. If the elections are held simultaneously, all of them could be conducted within the same expenditure or with a small percentage of additional cost. I fail to understand why there is opposition when the maths is so simple. Yes, I agree that extensive groundwork would be required, which is not an impossible task. Currently, Lok Sabha elections are held simultaneously across the country in various phases, so what is the harm in adding state Assembly and local body elections to that process? To those who argue that this would confuse voters, I would like to remind them of elections when Indian voters completely upended established political thinking. Our voters are both aware and alert.

Regional political parties

apprehend that a wave in favour of any major political party would adversely affect their prospects in case the state Assembly elections are held simultaneously. I, however, do not share this apprehension as the Indian electorate has demonstrated a clear ability to differentiate between national and state politics. If people trust you then you should have faith that they will not abandon you too.

Moreover, the concept of 'One Nation, One Election' (ONOE) is not unprecedented in India. The first four elections were conducted simultaneously. However, subsequent political upheavals and the frequent defections of legislators, popularly known as Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram phenomenon, resulted in the collapse of governments in several states, thereby necessitating separate state Assembly elections at different junctures. Since

political parties themselves were the primary contributors to this instability, it is incumbent upon them to find a lasting solution. I can cite numerous examples of countries where simultaneous elections are held. Take the United States, for instance, where elections for the President, Congress and Senate are not only held simultaneously but the polling too is held on the first Tuesday of November every four years. In France, elections for the President and the National Assembly are held together every five years. In Sweden, elections for Parliament, municipalities and even county councils are held simultaneously. The list of other countries holding simultaneous elections includes Canada, Germany, South Africa, the Philippines and Indonesia.

The issue of simultaneous elections in India has now reached the Joint Par-

liamentary Committee and I am optimistic about it, for this is the need of the hour. Today, we possess various technological tools that can help us make this a reality. While the initial phase may be challenging, it will become easier later and is highly beneficial too! Some people have concerns about potential tampering with EVMs, to which I say, tampering was done with ballot papers too! Is even democracy completely foolproof? I would also like to add that if a good suggestion comes from any party, others should be willing to accept it. Our approach should be one of welcoming new ideas, not opposing them. The denser the fog of mistrust over the political atmosphere, the more detrimental it will be for democracy.

The author is the chairman, Editorial Board of Lokmat Media and former member of Rajya Sabha.

RAGAS AND RAFI

Before Mohammad Rafi, singing style in Indian Cinema was typically straightforward and lacked dramatic modulations. Post-Rafi, playback singers were expected to exhibit versatility. His influence inspired legends like Kishore Kumar and Mukesh. On his 100th birth anniversary, let us look back at his rendering.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Mohammad Rafi, often regarded as one of the greatest playback singers in Indian cinema, holds an irreplaceable place in the hearts of music lovers worldwide.

As we commemorate his 100th birth anniversary, it is essential to reflect on his legacy, the golden voice that brought countless songs to life, and his immense contribution to Indian music. Born on December 24, 1924, in Kotla Sultan Singh, Punjab (then British India), Rafi's journey from a small village to becoming the voice of the nation is both inspiring and legendary.

EARLY LIFE AND MUSICAL JOURNEY

Mohammad Rafi discovered his love for music at an early age. Encouraged by his family, he trained under eminent classical musicians, including Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan and Pandit Jiwan Lal Mattoo. His big break came when music director Shyam Sunder noticed his talent and gave him his first opportunity to sing in the Punjabi film *Gul Baloch* (1944). Soon after, Rafi moved to Mumbai, then Bombay, and made his debut in Hindi cinema with the song "Aji Dil Ho Kaabu Mein" from the film *Gaon Ki Gori* (1945).

It was in the 1940s and 1950s that Rafi's career truly blossomed. He collaborated with legendary composers such as Naushad, Shankar-Jaikishan, S.D. Burman, and O.P. Nayyar, delivering songs that would become timeless classics. Rafi's versatility allowed him to adapt his voice to a variety of genres, moods, and characters, making him the go-to playback singer for actors across generations.

THE GOLDEN VOICE OF BOLLYWOOD

Rafi's voice was unique in its ability to convey a spectrum of emotions, from romance and joy to sorrow and patriotism. His collaborations with music directors and lyricists resulted in songs that remain evergreen. Below are some of his most iconic songs:



Mohammad Rafi



ROMANTIC MELODIES:

1. "Chaudhvin Ka Chand Ho" (Chaudhvin Ka Chand, 1960)

Composed by Ravi, this soulful ballad epitomized romance and won Rafi a

Filmfare Award for Best Male Playback Singer. It beautifully expressed the emotions of admiration and love.

2. "Tere Mere Sapne Ab Ek Rang Hain" (Guide, 1965) Composed by S.D. Bur-

man, this duet with Lata Mangeshkar remains one of the most poignant expressions of love in Indian cinema.

3. "Baharon Phool Barsao" (Suraj, 1966)

This melodious tune, composed by Shankar-Jaikishan, became an anthem of love and won Rafi another Filmfare Award.

PATRIOTIC SONGS:

1. "Kar Chale Hum Fida" (Haqeeqat, 1964)

Composed by Madan Mohan and written by Kaifi Azmi, this song captured the sacrifices of Indian soldiers and remains a stirring tribute to patriotism.

2. "Jahan Daal Daal Par" (Sikandar-E-Azam, 1965)

This patriotic anthem, composed by Hansraj Behl, highlighted India's rich heritage and culture.

PLAYFUL NUMBERS:

1. "Sar Jo Tera Chakraye" (Pyaasa, 1957)

Composed by S.D. Burman, this playful and quirky number became an iconic part of Indian film music.

2. "Aaja Aaja Main Hoon Pyar Tera" (Teesri Manzil, 1966)

This peppy duet with Asha Bhosle, composed by R.D. Burman, showcased Rafi's ability to adapt to modern and upbeat tunes.

HEARTBREAKING SONGS:

1. "Kya Hua Tera Wada" (Hum Kisise Kum Naheen, 1977)

This poignant song, composed by R.D. Burman, won Rafi the National Film Award for Best Male Playback Singer.

2. "Din Dhal Jaye" (Guide, 1965)

Another masterpiece from Guide, this melancholic number captured the pain of separation and longing.

LEGACY AND INFLUENCE

Mohammad Rafi's contributions to Indian music were unparalleled. He recorded over 7,400 songs in various languages, including Hindi, Punjabi, Marathi, Bengali,



Mohammad Rafi



Mohammad Rafi with contemporary playback singer Kishore Kumar

and even English. Rafi's ability to adapt his voice to suit the personality and style of the actors he sang for—be it Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand, Shamma Kapoor, or Rajesh Khanna—made him indispensable to Indian cinema.

Rafi was known not only for his voice but also for his humility and generosity. Despite his towering success, he remained grounded and often helped struggling artists without seeking credit. His deep spiritual beliefs and love for humanity reflected in his personality and music.

HONOURS AND AWARDS

Over his illustrious career, Mohammad Rafi received numerous accolades, including:

● **Filmfare Awards:** He won six Filmfare Awards for Best Male Playback Singer.

● **National Film Award:** For "Kya Hua Tera Wada."

● **Padma Shri:** In 1967, he was honored with the Padma Shri by the Government of India for his contributions to music.

IMPACT ON MODERN MUSIC

Even decades after his passing on July 31, 1980, Rafi's music continues to inspire generations of singers and music lovers. His ability to transcend boundaries of language and genre made him a global icon. Contemporary singers like Sonu Nigam, Arjit Singh, and Shreya Ghoshal have often cited Rafi as a major influence on their craft.

Rafi's songs are frequently remixed or reimagined in modern music, but his original renditions remain unmatched. His centenary is a testament to the timelessness of his work and the universal appeal of his voice.

As we celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of Mohammad Rafi, we are reminded of the sheer magic he brought to Indian music. His songs continue to evoke a range of emotions and serve as a treasure trove for music lovers across the world.

His music is a gift that transcends time, and his legacy will live on for centuries to come. Whether it's the romantic allure of "Chaudhvin Ka Chand



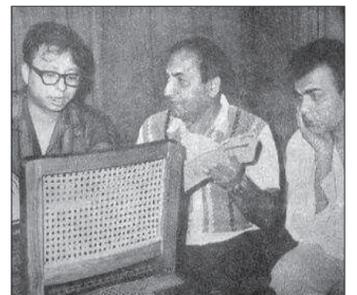
Famous music director RD Burman with Mohammad Rafi



Mohammad Rafi (extreme left) at the wedding reception of Rafi's son, Khalid Rafi. Pictured with Music Director Madan Mohan (extreme right) and playback singer Lata Mangeshkar. File Photo



Mohammad Rafi with family in Windsor UK. File Photo



Pancham Da, Mohammad Rafi and Mahmud (From left to right)

To understand his transformative impact, let's explore the state of the music industry before and after his emergence.

BEFORE MOHAMMED RAFI

- **Dominance of Traditional and Classical Styles:** In the 1940s, Bollywood singing was heavily influenced by classical Indian music. Playback singers like K.L. Saigal, Pankaj Mullick, and others brought a heavily emotional and semi-classical flavor to their songs.
- **Limited Versatility:** Songs were often limited to melodious and somber themes, reflecting the narrative and style of early Indian cinema.
- **Restrained Vocal Expression:** The singing style was typically straightforward and lacked dramatic modulations, as the focus was more on the purity of the classical tone.

THE RISE OF MOHAMMED RAFI

Rafi's career spanned from the 1940s to the 1980s, during which he became a cornerstone of Bollywood playback singing. His rise coincided with the evolution of the Hindi film industry, and his contributions were instrumental in reshaping its musical landscape.

RAFI'S UNIQUE STYLE

1. Versatility Across Genres:

- Rafi could adapt to a wide variety of genres, from romantic ballads ("Chaudhvin Ka Chand") to lively dance numbers ("Aaja Aaja Main Hoon Pyar Tera"), devotional songs, patriotic tracks, and even qawwalis ("Parda Hai Parda").
- He could match the on-screen persona of any actor, whether it was the intensity of Dilip Kumar, the flamboyance of Shamma Kapoor, or the humor of Johnny Walker.

● Expressive Modulation:

- Rafi's ability to modulate his voice to suit the mood of the song and the character was unmatched. For example, his soft and romantic tone in "Yeh Reshmi Zulfein" contrasts sharply with the boisterous energy of "Yahoo! Chaha Koi Mujhe Jungle Kahe."

3. Introduction of Playfulness and Experimentation:

- With composers like O.P. Nayyar and Shankar-Jaikishan, Rafi brought a playful and experimental vibe to songs, adding whistles, yodeling, and other creative vocal techniques.

4. Effortless High Notes:

- Rafi had exceptional control over his voice, allowing him to hit high notes with clarity and emotion. This became a hallmark of many of his songs.

AFTER MOHAMMED RAFI

- **Diversification of Singing Styles:** Post-Rafi, playback singers were expected to exhibit versatility. His influence inspired subsequent legends like Kishore Kumar, Mukesh, and later, singers such as Sonu Nigam and Udit Narayan.

- **Enhanced Role of Playback Singers:** Rafi elevated the status of playback singers, making their contribution as important as the actors'. His songs became cultural landmarks, transcending the films they were part of.

- **Melody with Emotion:** Rafi's ability to blend melody with deep emotion set a benchmark for all singers who followed. His songs like "Kya Hua Tera Wada" and "Tum Jo Mil Gaye Ho" continue to inspire singers to focus on emotive delivery.

- **The Bollywood Hero's Voice:** Rafi became synonymous with the hero's voice in Bollywood. His ability to match the distinct personalities of actors like Shamma Kapoor and Rajendra Kumar redefined the integration of music with storytelling.

LEGACY

Even after his passing in 1980, Rafi's legacy remains deeply ingrained in Bollywood. His songs are timeless classics, his influence on playback singing remains unmatched, and his style continues to inspire generations of singers and composers. The Bollywood music industry evolved into a richer and more expressive medium, largely due to his transformative contributions.

Ho," the playful charm of "Sar Jo Tera Chakraye," or the patriotic fervor of "Kar Chale Hum Fida,"

Rafi's songs are immortal. On this special occasion, let us revisit his timeless melodies and celebrate

the extraordinary life of a musical legend who will forever remain in our hearts.

Rafi was not just a singer; he was an institution, a phenomenon, and a voice that defined an era
His music is a gift that transcends time, and his legacy will live on for centuries to come. Whether it's the romantic allure of "Chaudhvin Ka Chand Ho," the playful charm of "Sar Jo Tera Chakraye," or the patriotic fervor of "Kar Chale Hum Fida," Rafi's songs are immortal. On this special occasion, let us revisit his timeless melodies and celebrate the extraordinary life of a musical legend who will forever remain in our hearts.
Mohammad Rafi, one of the most celebrated playback singers in Bollywood, transformed the style of singing in Indian cinema with his unmatched versatility, emotional depth, and ability to adapt to evolving musical trends. His contributions redefined the very essence of playback singing, elevating it from a functional element in films to an art form that became central to storytelling.
Versatility Across Genres
Rafi's voice could seamlessly adapt to any genre, making him a favorite among music directors. Whether it was classical compositions like "Madhuban Mein Radhika Nache Re" (Kohinoor, 1960), romantic melodies like "Chaudhvin Ka Chand Ho" (Chaudhvin Ka Chand, 1960), peppy rock-and-roll hits such as "Aaja Aaja Main Hoon Pyar Tera" (Teesri Manzil, 1966), or patriotic anthems like "Kar Chale Hum Fida" (Haqeeqat, 1964), Rafi's ability to effortlessly transition between styles expanded the scope of playback singing in Bollywood.
Emotional Depth and Actor Adaptation
Rafi was a master at conveying emotions, infusing his songs with a depth that made them resonate deeply with audiences. He also had a unique talent for tailoring his voice to match the personality of actors. Whether it was the playful exuberance of Shamma Kapoor, the intense romanticism of Dilip Kumar, or the suave elegance of Dev Anand, Rafi's singing enhanced the on-screen performances and brought characters to life.
Innovation in Singing Styles
Collaborating with legendary composers like Naushad, O.P. Nayyar, and R.D. Burman, Rafi embraced experimentation, incorporating Western musical influences, folk traditions, and classical elements. This adaptability allowed Bollywood music to modernize while maintaining its Indian roots.
Legacy
Rafi's influence was profound—he set a benchmark for technical precision and emotional connection, inspiring generations of playback singers. By transforming singing into a nuanced and versatile art, Rafi revolutionized Bollywood music, leaving behind a legacy of timeless songs that continue to inspire and captivate audiences worldwide.

DELHI RIOTS: DELHI HIGH COURT ISSUES NOTICE ON TAHIR HUSSAIN'S BAIL PETITION IN IB STAFFER ANKIT SHARMA'S MURDER CASE

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case Tahir Hussain v. State observed wherein the former Aam Aadmi Party Councillor Tahir Hussain moved the court on December 24, 2024 seeking bail in the murder case of Intelligence Bureau, IB staffer Ankit Sharma during the 2020 North-East Delhi riots.

The bench headed by Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta in the case observed and has issued notice on bail petition of Hussain wherein seeking the response of the Delhi Police.

On December 03, the Trial Court rejected the Hussain's regular bail petition for want of material change in circumstances.

It has been argued by Hus-

sain before the court that the Trial Court has completely disregarded the principle of grant of bail is rule especially in light of the fact that he has suffered long period of incarceration and that it is unlikely that the trial will conclude anytime soon.

Further, Tahir submitted that as on date, he has completed 4 years and 9 months in custody.

It being the case of him that out of 20 prosecution witnesses examined so far before the trial court, most of the alleged public eye-witnesses have either not supported the prosecution case or their testimony fails to inspire confidence of the court.

It has also been contended by him before the court that co-accused persons allegedly were involved in the ri-



otous mob and committing the offence of murder have already been granted bail by the High Court.

Before the court, Tahir submitted that the trial court has failed to consider the fact that the allegation against him is remote as compared to other co-accused persons in the FIR.

The counsel, Advocates Tara Narula, Sonal Sarada, Shivangi Sharma and Noyonika moved the bail petition.

The FIR 65 of 2020 was registered at Dayalpur police station which being on the basis of the complaint made by deceased's father.

He also lodged a missing

report when his son went missing during the riots.

Later, Ankit's body was recovered from a drain and he was declared as brought dead by GTB hospital.

The son of complainant, an officer who is working with the Intelligence Bureau, left his house at around 5 pm on the said date for buying

The FIR 65 of 2020 was registered at Dayalpur police station which being on the basis of the complaint made by deceased's father. He also lodged a missing report when his son went missing during the riots. Later, Ankit's body was recovered from a drain and he was declared as brought dead by GTB hospital.

groceries and general household items.

However, he did not return home even after several hours.

The court found his dead body lying in a drain near Chand Bagh Pulia. He had sustained sharp injuries on

his head, face, chest, back and on his waist.

In the present matter, an First Information Report, FIR was registered by the complainant wherein it is stated that he had strong suspicion that his son was killed by the main accused

and his associates. Further, the post-mortem report of the deceased Ankit Sharma revealed that there were 51 injuries caused due to sharp edged weapons and blunt force.

Tahir Hussain and his associates.

Further, the post-mortem report of the deceased Ankit Sharma revealed that there were 51 injuries caused due to sharp edged weapons and blunt force.

Last Year, In March, the Trial Court framed charges against Tahir Hussain, Hasen, Nazim, Kasim, Sameer Khan, Anas, Firoz, Javed, Gulfam, Shoaib Alam and Muntajim.

The charges are framed under section 147, section 148, section 153A, section 302, section 365, section 120B, section 149, section 188 and section 153A of Indian Penal Code, IPC 1860.

Hussain was additionally charged under section 505, section 109 and section 114 of Indian Penal Code, IPC 1860.

Delhi High Court: Prima facie no error in single judge ruling to revise CLAT UG 2025 marks

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case observed and has stated that prima facie, there being no error in a single judge order directing revision in the results of Common Law Admission Test, CLAT UG 2025 examination after the court found errors were found in the marking of two questions.

The Division bench comprising of Acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela was hearing the present matter.

The court in the case was hearing an appeal filed by Consortium of National Law Universities, NLUs challenging the single judge order passed on December 20.

The bench stated that, "This court found no error in the decision of the single judge in finding two of the answers to the questions demonstrably



wrong.

The court in the case observed that the single judge examined the two questions carefully and was right in coming to a finding that a different view was not a plausible one. It has also been clarified by the said court that the Consortium can go ahead with the results of the examination as per the decision of the single judge. The court stated that, "This court clarify that there being no stay

order passed and the pendency of this petition will not be construed as placing a cloud on the results that may be declared by the respondent in terms of the single judge order as well as further process.

The single judge bench ordered revision in the results of two questions-14 and 100.

The court held that the law does not commend a total 'hands off' approach for Courts where the answer key is demonstrably

The single judge bench ordered revision in the results of two questions- 14 and 100.

The court held that the law does not commend a total 'hands off' approach for Courts where the answer key is demonstrably wrong, underscoring that injustice caused to a candidate must be undone.

wrong, underscoring that injustice caused to a candidate must be undone.

The petition before the single judge was moved by a candidate who appeared in the examination and specifically challenged answers to five questions.

The single judge bench in the case found no errors in two questions to be demonstrably clear and said that shutting

a blind eye to the same would be injustice to the petitioner and that it may impact the result of other candidates.

The petition filed was opposed by Consortium of NLUs, wherein it is stated that an expert committee was constituted by the Consortium which has duly considered all objections received from various candidates before finalising the answer key.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case M/S Indure Pvt Ltd Versus Aneja Construction (India) Ltd observed and has affirmed that in absence of any positive affirmation on affidavit from the petitioner as to when the award was received, thus, the court cannot accept the mere ipse dixit of the petitioner that as soon as the award was received it was filed by the petitioner.

The Delhi High Court bench of Justice Subramonium Prasad was hearing the present matter.

FACTS OF THE CASE

The petitioner has approached the court under Section 34 of the Arbitration & Conciliation Act, 1996 wherein it challenged an award passed by the arbitrator allowing the claims of the respondent.

The Arbitrator by the impugned award has rejected the counter claims of the petitioner.

The present petition is filed by the petitioner without the supporting affidavit, vakalatnama and the award. So, the file was returned under objections, and re-filing was done beyond the period of three months and the additional period of 30 days as provided under Section 34(3) of the Act.

The Court in its order dated February 02, 2028 allowed an application filed seeking condonation of delay of 45 days in re-filing the petition and the delay in re-filing was condoned.

The respondent contended before the court that the filing was a non est filing inasmuch as it was without the supporting affidavit, vakalatnama and the impugned award and the next filing was made beyond the time prescribed and therefore the petition challenging the award is not maintainable.

The petitioner in the plea argued that the copy of the award has not been served on the petitioner and the time limit under Section



The counsel, Advocates Mr. Prashant Mehta, Mr. Varun Gupta, Ms. Simran wason, Mr. Akhil G. Kurup appeared for the Petitioner. The counsel, Advocates Mr. Sidhant Goel, Mr. Shubham Shanker Saxena, Mr. Karmanya Dev Sharma represented the Defendant.

34(3) of the Act would start running after receipt of the award by the petitioner.

It has been stated by him before the court that the award was filed as soon as it was received by the petitioner.

The instant petition has been filed within the time prescribed.

Observations Made by Court:

The court in the case observed and has held that there being no quarrel with the proposition that the time limit as stated under Section 34(3) of the Arbitration & Conciliation Act would start running from the date on which the party receives the award.

The court also observed that there being specific instruction for the Administrative Assistant to the Tribunal to serve a copy of the award. Other than the self-serving statements made across the bar that the copy of the award was not received on August 23, 2017 the Petitioner has not shown any document as to whether it has received the award.

The contention made by the petitioner is that the Tribunal has to show as to when did it served the copy of the award on the petitioner cannot be accepted. In the absence of any positive affirmation on affidavit from the petitioner as to when the award was received, the Court cannot accept the mere ipse dixit of the petitioner that as soon as the award was received it was filed by the petitioner.

Further, the court held that without there being any material from the petitioner as to when the petitioner receives the award.

The petition has been filed beyond the time prescribed as stated under Section 34(3) of the Act and is time barred. Accordingly, the court dismissed the petition.

The counsel, Advocates Mr. Prashant Mehta, Mr. Varun Gupta, Ms. Simran wason, Mr. Akhil G. Kurup appeared for the Petitioner.

The counsel, Advocates Mr. Sidhant Goel, Mr. Shubham Shanker Saxena, Mr. Karmanya Dev Sharma represented the Defendant.

Centre notifies appointments of four additional judges of Karnataka High Court as permanent

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Central Government has notified the appointment of four additional

judges as permanent judges of the Karnataka High Court.

The name of the four additional judges are:

1. Justice Ramachandra

Dattatray Huddar,

2. Justice Venkatesh Naik Thavaryanaik,

3. Vijaykumar Adagouda Patil, and

4. Justice Rajesh Rai

Kallangala.

The notification issued states that, Justice Kallangala's appointment as Permanent Judge of Karnataka High Court

would be effective from the date on or after February 01, 2025, when Justice Kallangala's assumes charge of his office.

RG Kar rape-murder case: Calcutta High Court allows sit-in protest by doctors' forum, says every citizen has right to protest peacefully

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Calcutta High Court in the case The State of West Bengal And Ors. Vs. Joint Platform of Doctors And Ors observed and has upheld a single judge order, wherein the court allowed a peaceful sit-in demonstration by the joint forum for doctors, against the brutal rape and murder of a trainee doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar medical college and Hospital.

The Division bench comprising of Justice Harish

Tandon and Hiranmay The bench in the case ob-

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that, 'Every citizen of a country has a right to make a peaceful protest provided a sufficient safeguard is taken in this regard which does not encroach upon the rights of the people at large.'

Bhattacharya was hearing the present matter.

served and has modified the single judge order to the

extent of reducing the total attendance at the protest to 100 doctors from the earlier sanctioned 250, due to the state's appeal that major roads would be blocked, wherein it caused difficulties to commuters during the busy Christmas period.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that, 'Every citizen of a country has a right to make a peaceful protest provided a sufficient safeguard is taken in this regard which does not encroach upon the rights of the people at large.'

Thus, there has been a nationwide protest in relation to such unprecedented incident and the Doctors forum being a responsible citizen of the country are aware that any protest which would cause inconvenience or encroach upon the rights of the parties are not acceptable and every citizen of the country has a right to make a peaceful protest and, therefore, while refusing to grant such permission, the authorities must also bear in mind the other past incidents where the permission was granted.'

Centre notifies appointment of Chief Justices of Himachal Pradesh High Court and Uttarakhand High Court

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Central Government has notified the appointment of Chief Justices of

Himachal Pradesh High Court and Uttarakhand High Court.

Justice G. Narendar has been appointed as the Chief Justice of the Uttara-

khand High Court.

Justice GS Sandhawalia has been appointed as the Chief Justice of Himachal Pradesh High Court.

The Supreme Court Collegium recommended the appointment of Justice Narendar G, the judge of Andhra Pradesh High

Court as the Chief Justice of Uttarakhand High Court upon the retirement of present CJ Ms Justice Ritu Bahri on October 10, 2024.

NCLAT sets aside petition filed against NCLT order approving sale of Reliance Broadcast Network

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The NCLAT in the case dismissed appeals against the NCLT's approval of

Sapphire Media's bid for Reliance Broadcast Network Ltd. the decision was challenged on grounds of irregularities, but NCLAT found the

resolution professional's process complaint with the CIRP regulations, confirming Sapphire Media's eligibility and bid approval.

TOP OF THE DAY

ECONOMY MIDDLE EAST SUMMIT TO CONVENE IN MAY 2025

ABU DHABI: Economy Middle East and ADGM have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to announce their partnership for the second edition of the Economy Middle East Summit, set to take place on May 15, 2025. Building on the success of the inaugural summit, this partnership aims to reinforce the UAE's position as a global economic and innovation hub. The theme for the 2025 edition, "Bridging Sectors, Building Economic Growth," will guide the summit's agenda and focus on advancing cross-sector collaboration to address emerging challenges and unlock new opportunities for sustainable growth.

TAIWAN REPORTS 8 CHINESE AIRCRAFT AROUND ITS TERRITORY

Taipei: Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) on Tuesday reported the operation of eight Chinese military aircraft and five naval vessels. The aircraft and vessels were detected operating around Taiwan until 6 am (local time) on Tuesday. Of the eight People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, six of them crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). Sharing a post on X, MND wrote, "8 PLA aircraft and 5 PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today."

B'DESH LAUNCHES GRAFT PROBE AGAINST SHEIKH HASINA

DHAKA: An anti-graft panel in Bangladesh has launched an investigation against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her family in connection with the allegations of embezzling USD 5 billion in the Rooppur nuclear power plant, according to a media report. Indian companies are participating in constructing the Rooppur nuclear power plant which is being built by Rosatom, Russia's state-run corporation, in Bangladesh. The first Bangladeshi nuclear power plant, the Russian-designed Rooppur, is being built 160 km west of the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka.

PUT PAK GOVT IN JAIL IF IMRAN IS RELEASED: PML-N

Islamabad: Pakistan Muslim League (N) leader Javed Latif has said that if former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan is to be released from prison, then put the federal government in jail, ARY News reported. Speaking at the ARY News programme "KHABAR Muhammad Malik Kay Saath," Latif noted that the negotiations between Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and federal government will either be successful or end in failure.

'WE WILL STRIKE HOUTHIS... JUST AS WE DID TO HANIYEH': ISRAEL

Hamas leader Haniyeh's killing came hours after top Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr was killed in an Israeli air attack on the southern suburbs of Beirut, on July 31.

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

In the first acknowledgement of Israel's involvement in the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, Israel Defence Minister Israel Katz on Monday, issued a stern warning to the Houthi rebels from Yemen of destroying their infrastructure and 'decapitating' its leaders.

Hamas leader Haniyeh's killing came hours after top Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr was killed in an Israeli air attack on the southern suburbs of Lebanon's capital, Beirut, on July 31.

Yahya Sinwar replaced Haniyeh as the group's military chief. Sinwar was also killed in an Israeli military operation in southern Gaza on October 16. In another major killing, Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah chief was also killed by Israel. At a commemoration event for local security officers,



A poster of assassinated Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh at the Hamas office in Sanaa, Yemen, on August 19, 2024. File Photo

- Israel Defence Minister Israel Katz acknowledged Israel's involvement in the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.
- Katz warned Houthi rebels from Yemen, threatening to destroy their infrastructure and decapitate their leaders, citing past attacks on Hamas and Hezbollah leaders.
- Haniyeh's death followed the killing of Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr in a July 31 Israeli airstrike in Beirut.

Katz said, "We will strike [the Houthis'] strategic infrastructure and decapitate its leaders. Just as we did to Haniyeh, Sinwar, and Nasrallah, in Tehran, Gaza and Lebanon -- we will do in Ho-deidah and Sanaa."

Netanyahu thanks Christian communities for support

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued holiday wishes to Israel's Christian communities, as well as those around the world, ahead of the Christmas holiday on Wednesday, thanking them for supporting the country over more than a year of war.

"My dear Christian friends, as you gather with your family and friends this Christmas, I wish the Christian community in Israel and around the world blessings for a Merry Christmas from the Holy Land," he said.

"At a time when Israel is fighting on seven fronts, we deeply appreciate the steadfast support of our Christian friends around



the world," added Netanyahu. "You've stood by our side, you've stood by our side resiliently, consistently, forcefully as Israel defends our civilization against barbarism." "The people of Israel are united in defending our nation against those bent on our destruction. We seek peace with all those who wish peace with us, but we will do whatever is necessary to defend the one and only Jewish state, the repository and the source of our common heritage." "Israel leads the world in fighting the forces of evil and tyranny, but our battle is not yet over. With your support, and with God's help, I assure you, we shall prevail," declared Netanyahu. "From Jerusalem, city of peace, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year," he concluded.

S. Korea's opposition party to impeach acting President Han

AGENCIES
SEOUL

The main opposition Democratic Party (DP) has announced it will introduce an impeachment motion against acting President Han Duck-soo on Tuesday over his refusal to promulgate two special council bills targeting President Yoon Suk Yeol and first lady Kim Keon Hee, Yonhap News Agency reported.

DP spokesperson, Rep. Yun Jong-kun, said that the party's



South Korea's Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, second from right, who became the country's acting leader after President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment, in Seoul, South Korea, on Dec. 24, 2024. File Photo

Court grants transit bail to Pak's ex-President Arif Alvi

AGENCIES
PESHAWAR

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Tuesday approved transit bail of Pakistan's former President Arif Alvi and ordered him to appear before the respective trial courts, ARY News reported.

The PHC bench comprising Justice Arshad Ali and Justice Fazal Subhan approved transit bail of Arif Alvi's son Awab Alvi in several cases filed against them. The judges granted 40-day bail to Arif Ali while his son was given 30-day transit bail.

During the hearing, the defence lawyer said that many cases have been registered against Arif Alvi and Awab Alvi in various police stations of Pakistan, suspecting their arrest. The lawyer requested the court to restrain the police from arresting Pakistan's former President and his son in any of the cases. Speaking to reporters outside the court, Arif Alvi called for the reversal of actions taken against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). He said, "It is still time to reverse what has been done to the PTI," according to ARY



Pakistan's former President Arif Alvi.

News report. He slammed the current state of democracy and the constitution in Pakistan, stressing that they have been

Millions allocated for environment in Israel

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

The management of the Fund for the Preservation of Open Spaces, headed by the Director of the Israel Land Authority, Yankee Quint, confirmed Monday at its meeting that the Fund will allocate approximately 400 million Shekels (USD 109 million) to approximately 165 environmental projects and the accessibility of nature sites to the public, of which approximately 150 million Shekels (\$41 million) is designated for the rehabilitation of areas damaged in the war.

A total of 432 applications were submitted to the fund, totaling approximately 1.2 billion Shekels (USD 326 million). Approximately 70 per cent - 294 applications - were submitted by local authorities, of which 60 were submitted by minority authorities and 12 applications were submitted by city associations.

The Israel Land Authority's Open Spaces Preservation Fund has



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been working for about a decade to promote the preservation, environmental development and cultivation of open spaces outside built-up urban areas, including open spaces important for preserving biodiversity and ecosystems in Israel, parks and recreation and leisure areas, as well as assisting entities working to fulfill the fund's goals. The fund works with government ministries, statutory authorities, municipal bodies, government companies and other bodies to support projects in open spaces and their preservation.

Dissanayake's Presidency opens new chapter in India-Lanka ties

AGENCIES
COLOMBO

When India invited left-wing leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake for a visit in February, no one anticipated that the political landscape of Sri Lanka would experience a significant transformation, culminating in his surprising rise to the presidency by the end of the year.

The development has brought renewed attention to the dynamics between the two neighbouring countries.

Dissanayake, 56, popularly known as AKD, was declared the winner of the presidential election in September, marking a complete revolution from his party-led coalition's vote share of three per cent in 2019 to over 60 per cent.



Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

India and Sri Lanka share deep historical, cultural, and economic ties, which have evolved significantly over the years. Geographically, Sri Lanka is India's closest neighbor, and their bilateral relationship spans centuries of shared history, with cultural exchanges, trade, and people-to-people contacts forming the core of their interactions. However, the relationship has been

marked by ups and downs, shaped by regional dynamics, security concerns, and internal political developments.

In recent years, India has been a key partner in Sri Lanka's economic growth, providing assistance in areas like infrastructure development, trade, and investment. India is Sri Lanka's largest trading partner and a major source of for-

eign direct investment. The two countries have collaborated in sectors like energy, agriculture, and tourism, with India also offering substantial financial support to Sri Lanka during times of economic crisis.

On the security front, India and Sri Lanka share concerns over regional stability, particularly in the context of maritime security in the Indian Ocean. The relationship has sometimes been strained, particularly with issues surrounding the Tamil ethnic minority in Sri Lanka, which has led to diplomatic tensions in the past. Despite this, India has consistently advocated for a political solution to address the grievances of the Tamil population while maintaining strong diplomatic and economic relations with Sri Lanka.

China firmly opposes US probe into its semiconductor sector

AGENCIES
BEIJING

China expressed strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to the US' Section 301 investigation into its semiconductor industry policies, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce said in a statement on Monday, Xinhua reported.

According to Xinhua, the ministry stated that



this investigation would lead to disruptions and distortions in global semiconductor industrial and supply chains, negatively affecting both

US businesses and consumers.

The US had provided considerable subsidies to its domestic chip industry through legislative measures such as the CHIPS and Science Act, and additionally, the ministry pointed out that US semiconductor companies control around 50 per cent of the global market share, Xinhua reported.

Speaking to reporters outside the court, Arif Alvi called for the reversal of actions taken against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). He said, "It is still time to reverse what has been done to the PTI," according to ARY News report.

He said, "I will advise not to detain the Imran Khan," and stressed that the situation would be resolved within a month and a half. Alvi said, "It's not a long story, within a month and a half, the PTI founder will be free," ARY

News reported. Arif Alvi challenged the current government, saying that he would disclose all the truth if he is given the opportunity to govern for just four hours. He said, "Give us the government for four hours,

and we will bring everything to light. The question should be asked from the one who is committing injustice, not the oppressed."

Alvi, PTI founder Imran Khan and others have been booked in a case pertaining to the protests on November 24. The names of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and other PTI leaders, including Shehryar Riaz, Hammad Azhar, and Asad Qaiser have been mentioned in a case lodged at the Taxila police station in Rawalpindi under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

CHRISTMAS EVE SWIM



Laura Hawkins takes part in the annual Christmas Eve swim in aid of local charities at Helen's Bay, Northern Ireland in County Down, UK. Source: Liam McBurney

UK PM HOPES FOR PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST IN CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

'This Christmas, I will be hoping for peace, particularly in the Middle East as the birthplace of the Christmas story,' said Starmer.

AGENCIES
LONDON

Keir Starmer has said he will be hoping for peace in the Middle East, the birthplace of the Christmas story, and a brighter future for all in his first festive message since being elected British Prime Minister.

In a video message released by Downing Street ahead of Christmas Day on Wednesday, Starmer attempts to strike an optimistic tone and encourages people to "look after those around us". He extended his special gratitude to the armed forces and frontline workers who will be helping people up and down the country.

"This Christmas, I will be hoping for peace, particularly in the Middle East as the birthplace of the Christmas story," said Starmer.

The Middle East crisis in 2024 continues to be a multifaceted and deeply entrenched situation, driven by ongoing conflicts, regional rivalries, and complex geopolitical dynamics. One of the most prominent issues remains the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where tensions continue to flare, particularly in Gaza and the West Bank. Despite periodic peace talks, the possibility of a lasting resolution seems elusive as violence escalates between Israel and Hamas, with the in-

THE INSTABILITY



UK PM Keir Starmer

- Starmer emphasized the importance of looking after one another and extended special gratitude to the armed forces and frontline workers.
- The Middle East crisis in 2024 remains marked by ongoing conflicts, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and regional rivalries.
- Iran continues to exert significant influence, supporting groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Assad regime in Syria.
- The Yemen civil war persists, with no resolution in sight, and the humanitarian crisis in Syria and Yemen worsens.
- The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, along with Turkey's regional ambitions, continues to fuel tensions, particularly in Iraq and Syria.
- Economic challenges, oil price fluctuations, and the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic contribute to the region's instability.

ternational community divided over how to address the crisis. The situation is exacerbated by the broader regional implications of the conflict, particularly the involvement of Iran, which supports groups like Hamas and Hezbollah.

Iran's influence in the region remains significant, particularly through its proxies in Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. In 2024, Iran's nuclear ambitions and its support for armed factions continue to create tensions with Western powers, including the United States, which has maintained sanctions and military pressure on Tehran. Iran's involvement in Syria, where it backs the Assad regime, has also contributed to the country's fragmentation and ongoing

instability.

Meanwhile, the civil war in Yemen drags on, with no end in sight. The Saudi-led coalition and Houthi rebels remain locked in a brutal conflict, causing widespread famine and suffering. Syria, after more than a decade of civil war, remains fractured, with President Bashar al-Assad retaining control over most of the country, but the opposition still holds some key areas. The humanitarian crisis in both Syria and Yemen continues to worsen, with millions displaced and in need of aid.

The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, coupled with Turkey's regional ambitions, continues to fuel tensions, particularly in Iraq and Syria. Despite diplomatic efforts, including the restoration of ties

between Riyadh and Tehran in 2023, mistrust and competition for regional influence remain high. Economic struggles, oil price fluctuations, and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic have added to the region's instability, causing unrest in several countries.

In 2024, the Middle East remains one of the most volatile and conflict-ridden regions in the world. The crisis is fueled by deep-seated political, religious, and sectarian divides, compounded by the involvement of global powers with competing interests. The path to peace and stability remains unclear, with efforts for reconciliation overshadowed by entrenched rivalries and the challenges posed by militant groups and authoritarian regimes.

American Airlines resumes operations after technical issue grounds flights

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Following a "technical issue" that grounded all American Airlines flights during one of the busiest travel periods of the year on Tuesday (local time), the airline stated that it had resumed operations, with service being restored by 8 am ET today (6:30 pm IST), as reported by CNN.

According to CNN, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) had lifted its nationwide ground stop order for all American flights after the airline requested the halt on Christmas Eve and further directed all enquiries to American Air-



According to CNN, travellers were informed of the issue early Tuesday morning and expressed frustration at the lack of updates at the gate.

lines for further details.

American Airlines issued an apology for the disruption, acknowledging the

inconvenience caused to customers.

"We apologise to our customers for the inconve-

nience," American Airlines said in a statement, as quoted by CNN.

According to CNN, travellers were informed of the issue early Tuesday morning and expressed frustration at the lack of updates at the gate.

Some passengers took to social media to complain about delays and flights returning to the gate, citing a software issue preventing weight and balance calculations, CNN reported.

Initially, American Airlines' stock dropped nearly 3 per cent in premarket trading but later rebounded, rising by 1 per cent after the issue was resolved.

Swiss plane makes emergency landing in Austria

AGENCIES
VIENNA

A Swiss International Air Lines flight had to make an emergency landing in Austria on Monday due to smoke in the cabin and cockpit, CNN reported, citing the airline.

According to the statement released by Swiss International Air Lines, the Flight LX1885 was heading from Romania's Bucharest to Zurich when the crew took the decision to abort the journey due to engine issues and smoke aboard the Airbus A220-300 aircraft.

The aircraft landed safely in Austria's Graz and all 74 passengers and five crew members were evacuated. One crew member was taken to hospital by helicopter



and their condition remains unclear, CNN reported.

The airline noted that the aircraft has been removed from the runway and it remains unclear what caused the smoke. The airline said, "SWISS sincerely apologizes to passengers for the inconvenience caused and thanks them for their patience during this challeng-

ing situation."

It further said, "Our thoughts are with the passengers and crew members who experienced this incident, especially those still under medical care," according to CNN report. The airline said that they are in contact with authorities and are working diligently to determine the cause of the incident.

UK expresses concern over China's human rights violations in Tibet

AGENCIES
LONDON

On the 40th anniversary of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, members of the UK House of Lords engaged in a heated debate about the government's stance on China, specifically focusing on human rights violations and security concerns arising from Chinese actions in Tibet, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the South China Sea, and East Turkestan, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) said in a statement.

During the session, a group of prominent MPs, led by Lord David Alton and including Lord Martin Callanan, Baroness Smith, Lord Bishop, and Baroness Bannett, voiced serious concerns about China's on-



Members of the UK House of Lords

going human rights abuses in these regions. They also expressed alarm over the increasing reach of Chinese transnational repression and espionage activities.

According to the statement released by Central Tibetan Administration, Lord Martin Callanan particularly emphasised China's systematic efforts to erase Tibet's historical and cultural identity from global consciousness.

Callanan described the Chinese Communist Party's decades-long campaign as a

"stain on the conscience of the international community," pointing out that Tibet, once an independent nation, has now been effectively absorbed into China, with its distinct culture, religion, and identity being gradually eradicated.

He further shared his personal experience of meeting Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama in exile in Dharamshala, lauding the Tibetan leader's continued commitment to non-violence despite the ongoing atrocities faced by his people.

Italy to prolong war supplies to Ukraine until the end of 2025

AGENCIES
ROME

Italy's cabinet on Monday passed a law decree that allows it to continue supplying until the end of 2025 "means, materials and equipment" to Ukraine to support its war effort against Russia, a government statement said.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Italy has approved 10 packages of military aid for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government, including two Franco-Italian air defence systems known as SAMP/T. Meloni has been a supporter of Kyiv since taking office in late 2022 and has



President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic Giorgia Meloni (left). File Photo

rested on December 19 and accused of "allegedly acting as an illegal agent of the People's Republic of China (PRC) while serving as the campaign manager for a political candidate" in the 2022 municipal elections.

He was also accused of "conspiring" with Chen Jun, who was sentenced to 20 months in prison last

month for acting as an unregistered Chinese agent and bribing an IRS agent in connection with a scheme to target US-based practitioners of the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement, Radio Free Asia reported.

Sun's arrest is just one example of a broader and ongoing Chinese influence campaign on US soil, referred to within Chinese government circles as "Project Termites." This covert operation, likened to termites slowly eroding a structure from within, has been described by pro-democracy activists and a former Chinese official in recent interviews with RFA Mandarin.

Through "Project Ter-

mitted to back Ukraine until the war ends, amid uncertainty over the future attitude of the United States once president-elect Donald Trump takes office in January.

On Tuesday, NATO chief Mark Rutte urged members of the military alliance to step up military aid for Ukraine to strengthen its

position should Kyiv enter into peace negotiations with Russia.

Under Italy's presidency this year, the Group of Seven (G7) major democracies have repeatedly pledged support for Ukraine, condemned Russia's war of aggression and pledged a \$50 billion loan for Kyiv backed by frozen Russian assets.

US reiterates support for democratic Bangladesh in talks with Yunus



US President Joe Biden met Chief Adviser of Bangladesh government Muhammad Yunus (L) in New York. (File Photo)

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

United States National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Monday held discussions with Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, reaffirming the United States' commitment to supporting a "prosperous, stable, and democratic" Bangladesh.

During a telephone conversation, both leaders em-

phasised the importance of protecting human rights for all individuals and discussed ways to address the challenges Bangladesh is facing. "National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, head of the Interim Government of Bangladesh. Mr Sullivan thanked Chief Adviser Yunus for his leadership of Bangladesh during a challenging period," the White House in a statement said.

Earlier on December 12, National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby in a White House press briefing

It added, "Both leaders expressed their commitment to respecting and protecting the human rights of all people, regardless of religion."

phasised the importance of protecting human rights for all individuals and discussed ways to address the challenges Bangladesh is facing. "National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, head of the Interim Government of Bangladesh. Mr Sullivan thanked Chief Adviser Yunus for his leadership of Bangladesh during a challenging period," the White House in a statement said.

It added, "Both leaders expressed their commitment to

had said that the country as well as President Joe Biden were closely following the events in Bangladesh

"We're watching this very, very, very closely, and the president is following events closely as well. The security situation in Bangladesh has been difficult following the ouster of the former prime minister, and we've been working closely with the interim government to enhance the capability of their law enforcement and security services to deal with the challenge," Kirby had said.

US investigators accuse man as illegal Chinese agent

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Amidst growing concerns about Chinese infiltration, US investigators have charged a man as an "illegal agent" of China while working as the campaign manager for a candidate in a municipal election in a California city.



Radio Free Asia has iden-

tified the 64-year-old man as Mike Sun, also known as Sun Yaoning. He was ar-

rested on December 19 and accused of "allegedly acting as an illegal agent of the People's Republic of China (PRC) while serving as the campaign manager for a political candidate" in the 2022 municipal elections.

He was also accused of "conspiring" with Chen Jun, who was sentenced to 20 months in prison last

month for acting as an unregistered Chinese agent and bribing an IRS agent in connection with a scheme to target US-based practitioners of the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement, Radio Free Asia reported.

Sun's arrest is just one example of a broader and ongoing Chinese influence campaign on US soil, referred to within Chinese government circles as "Project Termites." This covert operation, likened to termites slowly eroding a structure from within, has been described by pro-democracy activists and a former Chinese official in recent interviews with RFA Mandarin.

Through "Project Ter-

SHAAN SHARES UPDATE AFTER FIRE BREAKS OUT AT HIS RESIDENCE



TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Singer Shaan has reassured fans about his safety after a massive fire broke out at his Bandra residence on Tuesday.

Shaan on Tuesday took to his Instagram to share details on the incident and confirmed that everyone in his family is safe.

Taking to his Instagram Story, Shaan, whose real name is Shantanu Mukherjee, shared how he and his family escaped the dangerous situation and wrote, "Dear All, as the news spreads about the fire in our building, just to let you all

tion and were able to bring the fire under control.

Shaan is one of the most prominent and versatile playback singers in Bollywood, whose career spans over three decades. Known for his smooth voice and ability to effortlessly blend into various genres of music, Shaan has garnered widespread recognition and admiration in the Indian music industry. His significance in Bollywood is not just in the number of hit songs he has sung but also in his ability to appeal to a diverse audience, from young listeners to those who enjoy more classic melodies.

Shaan made his Bollywood

Shaan on Tuesday took to his Instagram to share details on the incident and confirmed that everyone in his family is safe.

know that we are safe. The fire was on the 7th floor; we live on higher floors. We managed to escape to the 15th floor and waited to be rescued. To cut a long horrible story short, we are absolutely fine, waiting to go back home once there is a clearer picture from the fire department."

The fire broke out in an apartment on the seventh floor of a multi-storey building in Mumbai during the early hours of Tuesday. Upon receiving the alert, fire tenders rushed to the loca-

debut in the early 1990s, but it was in the 2000s that he became a household name with a string of successful songs across multiple films. His range as a vocalist allowed him to sing romantic ballads, peppy dance tracks, and soulful numbers with equal ease. Songs like "Tanha Dil," "Chand Sifarish," and "Jab Se Tere Naina" are just a few examples of his versatility. His distinct voice, characterized by its warmth and clarity, has made him a favorite among music composers and directors.

JEFF BEZOS DENIES REPORTS OF \$600 MN MARRIAGE WITH FIANCEE



AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Jeff Bezos has denied the rumours about his marriage with Lauren Sanchez in a lavish ceremony close to Christmas.

Taking to the official handle of X, the founder of Amazon, responded to the reports that he is tying the knot and included the information mentioned in the recent The New York Post article, that claimed he and his fiancée were set to have a 600 million dollars wedding in Aspen, Colorado on Saturday, December 28, reported People.

CEO of Pershing Square Bill Ackman reposted the Post article with the caption, "This is not credible. Unless you are buying each of your guests a house, you can't spend this much money." Bezos replied, "Furthermore, this whole thing is completely false none of this is happening."

"The old adage 'don't believe everything you read' is even more true today than it ever has been. Now lies can get ALL the way around the world before the truth can get its pants on. So be care-

ful out there folks and don't be gullible," added Jeff.

Bezos then called out publications who posted the false news, "Will be interesting to see if all the outlets that 'covered' and re-reported on this issue a correction when it comes and goes and doesn't happen," as per the outlet.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk, responded to the post, saying, "That said, I hope you do hold an epic wedding. It's nice to know that epic events are happening somewhere in the world, even if one is not present. A world where there are amazing events somewhere is better than a world where they are happening nowhere.

Bezos and Sanchez were dating in January 2019, and the couple got engaged in May 2023. A source previously told that they were "on cloud nine -- so happy and madly in love" after their engagement news, reported People.

Bezos shares four kids, three sons and one daughter with ex-wife Mackenzie Scott, while Sanchez shares son Nikko with ex-Tony Gonzalez and kids Evan and Ella with ex-husband Patrick Whitesell, reported People.

PICTURE PERFECT

Bollywood actor Nana Patekar and his son Prasad Patekar along with Bollywood actor Aamir Khan during an event for the promotion of his film 'Vanvaas', in Mumbai on Saturday. (ANI)



SIDHARTH, JANHVI'S 'PARAM SUNDARI' FIRST LOOK OUT

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Actos Sidharth Malhotra and Janhvi Kapoor are teaming up for the first time in Dinesh Vijan's upcoming film 'Param Sundari'.

The film will be a cross-cultural love story set against the scenic backwaters of Kerala. Directed by Tushar Jalota, Param Sundari is set to release in theatres on July 25, 2025.

The makers on Tuesday, surprised fans as they shared the first look posters of Sidharth and Janhvi on Instagram.

In the motion poster, Sidharth is seen looking suave in casual attire, while Janhvi stuns in a colourful ethnic outfit. The duo later appears twinning in South Indian attire, with Sidharth carrying



Janhvi in his arms.

Along with the posters, Maddock Films added a caption that read, "North ka swag, South ki grace - two worlds collide and sparks fly. Dinesh Vijan presents #ParamSundari, a love story directed by

Tushar Jalota, coming to cinemas on 25th July 2025. Meet the suave Sidharth Malhotra as Param and the vivacious Janhvi Kapoor as Sundari."

The story of Param Sundari revolves around a love story where two very differ-

ent worlds collide--"North ka munda" meets "South ki Sundari".

Producer Dinesh Vijan has already had a successful year with his blockbuster 'Stree 2', starring Shraddha Kapoor, Rajkummar Rao, and Pankaj Tripathi.

Anil Kapoor announces his next film 'Subedaar'

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Anil Kapoor who never fails to prove that age is just a number shared the first look of his upcoming film 'Subedaar', on the occasion of his 68th birthday.

The actor who is also known for his evergreen energy to Instagram on Tuesday to share the first look at the film in collaboration with Prime Video.

The poster shows the intense look of the 'Animal' actor, giving fans a glimpse of his intriguing role.

Sharing the announcement on social media, the makers wrote, "A special day calls for a special announcement! #Subedaar, new movie, coming soon."

'Subedaar' features Radhika Madan as Shyama, the daughter of Anil Kapoor's character, Subedaar Arjun Maurya.

The film is directed by



Suresh Triveni, who previously directed T-Series comedy-drama 'Tumhari Sulu' (2017) and 'Jalsa', both headlined by Vidya Balan.

Vikram Malhotra, Suresh Triveni, and Anil Kapoor serve as producers for the film.

In this action drama, 'Subedaar' Arjun Singh grapples with civilian life, navigating a strained relationship with his daughter, and societal dysfunction.

The man who once fought for the nation must now fight enemies within to protect his home and family," read the official synopsis of the project.

'Subedaar' is a joint production by Opening Image Films and Anil Kapoor Film and Communication Network (AKFCN), with Vikram Malhotra, Anil Kapoor, and Suresh Triveni as producers.

Varun seeks blessings at Mahakaleshwar Temple

TDG NETWORK
UJJAIN

Actor Varun Dhawan, who is all set for the release of his upcoming film 'Baby John', visited the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain on Monday.

Accompanied by director Atlee and the film's cast, Dhawan attended the Aarti ceremony and sought blessings ahead of the much-anticipated release.

Speaking to the media after offering prayers, Varun said, "It was a very good feeling offering prayers here at the temple. God is bigger than the film. I just prayed that people go and watch the movie."

Talking about his upcoming film, 'Baby John', the makers unveiled the film's trailer in a grand style ear-



lier this month.

The three-minute-long trailer is all enough to create excitement among moviegoers as it is loaded with mass action.

Varun with his thriller performance stole everyone's attention like never before. From being a police officer to a doting father and to falling in love with Keer-

thy Suresh's character, Varun displayed a wide range of emotions in the trailer.

Jackie Shroff looked menacing as the antagonist in the film.

BRAIN PICKING



Just because my dad has been an actor, I will never say no to an opportunity to act. My dad has never been in a Dharma film, he never went on 'Koffee With Karan.' So it's not as easy as people say.

-ANANYA PANDAY
(Indian Actress)



CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S NEXT FILM AN ADAPTATION OF 'THE ODYSSEY'



AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

The wait is over for Christopher Nolan fans as Universal Studios on Monday announced that the acclaimed director will adapt Homer's epic poem 'The Odyssey' for his next film. The movie, described as a "mythic action epic," is set to release in theatres worldwide on July 17, 2026.

As per The Hollywood Reporter, Universal in a statement shared, "Christopher Nolan's next film The Odyssey is a mythic action epic shot across the world using brand-new IMAX film technology." This also marks the first time Homer's foundational tale will be brought to IMAX screens.

The star-studded cast includes Matt Damon, Tom Holland, Zendaya, Robert

Pattinson, Lupita Nyong'o, Anne Hathaway, and Charlize Theron.

While Nolan has earlier worked on historical and science fiction films like 'Oppenheimer', 'Inception' and 'Interstellar', this project signals a new direction. "The Odyssey" is rooted in ancient mythology, following the journey of Odysseus as he faces gods, monsters, and challenges while trying to return home after the Trojan War.

This isn't the first time the story has been adapted. Past versions include the 1954 film Ulysses, starring Kirk Douglas, and the Coen brothers' O Brother, Where Art Thou? (2000), which was loosely inspired by the epic. Nolan's take is expected to bring his signature mix of realism and visual storytelling to the ancient tale.

ALLU ARJUN REACHES HIS HOME AFTER MEETING POLICE



TDG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

Actor Allu Arjun has returned to his residence after appearing at the Chikkadpally police station in Hyderabad in connection with the Sandhya theatre incident.

The actor was summoned to the Chikkadpally Police Station today and asked to 'cooperate' with the investigation.

"The case is under investigation, and your presence is essential before the undersigned officer to elicit answers about the incident. If necessary, you may also be required to visit the scene of the offence to ascertain the true facts," stated the notice from the Telangana Police.

Security has been increased outside the actor's residence following recent protests demanding justice for the deceased woman.

The tragic event occurred on December 4 when Allu Arjun attended the premiere of Pushpa 2: The Rule. A large crowd gathered to see him, and the situation escalated

when he waved to fans from the sunroof of his car. A woman, Revathi, was killed, and her child, Sri Tej, was injured. Following the incident, Allu Arjun was arrested and later released on bail after posting a Rs 50,000 bond.

Advocate Srinivas Reddy, impleader in Allu Arjun's quash petition, provided details about the case, confirming that they had filed a writ petition.

In an interview with ANI, he said, "We filed the writ petition challenging the 29 November memo that granted benefit shows and early morning screenings, such as 1 am and 4 am. Unfortunately, on the 4th, during such a benefit show, a lady lost her life because of the film star (Allu Arjun). He came with his crew, intending to hold a roadshow and create further hype, disregarding law and order. He did not obtain the necessary approval or permit from the local police station, yet he chose to break the law. He is now the prime accused in the death of a woman, and her son is critically ill."

Celebrate Christmas with Festive Delights Across the City



TDG NETWORK



This Christmas, indulge in the festive spirit with an array of specially curated experiences at top venues across Delhi-NCR. L'Opéra invites you to savor holiday classics like Bûches de Noël, Panettone, Plum Cake, Gingerbread Houses, and Santa-shaped Chocolates. Pair these with their signature hot chocolate for a perfect holiday moment. Poiz, at AIPL Joy Street, Gurgaon, transforms into a winter wonderland with Christmas carols, live candy stations, roasted turkeys, and interactive activities for all ages. La Croûte Bistro, nestled in Sunder Nagar, presents an exquisite 4-course Christmas menu featuring delights like Honey Mustard Glazed Gammon and Roasted Leg of Lamb. Pair these with fine wines for a truly festive dining experience. Khubani, Begam, and Elina Vara, by Bel Cibo Hospitality, offer festive luncheons from December 17th to 25th. Indulge in US turkey and duck dishes paired with holiday sides, all in stunningly decorated venues with live acoustic tunes. Honey & Dough promises a merry celebration with Snowman Cakes, Chocolate Houses, and Volcano Pizzas amidst a Winter Wonderland-themed café. Enjoy surprise gifts from Santa and a Christmas-themed menu.

From luxurious luncheons to cozy café moments, this season's offerings promise to make your Christmas truly magical.



CELEBRATE THE FESTIVE SPIRIT WITH FLAVORABLE WINES

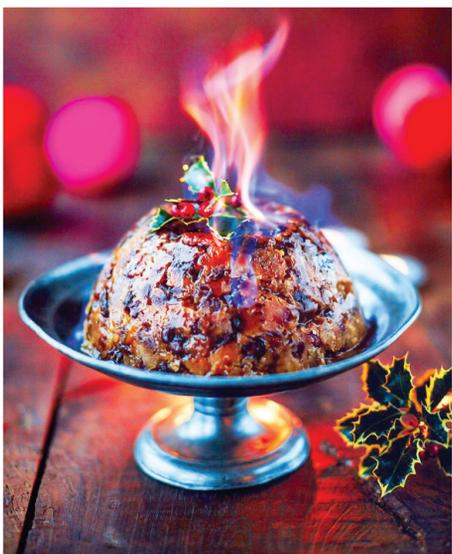
TDG NETWORK

Celebrate the festive season at Across in Kala Ghoda with its newly introduced 'Alps and Himalayas' wine menu, perfectly paired with modernist Himalayan cuisine. Conceptualized by renowned chefs Viraf and Prakriti Patel, the restaurant brings the essence of the Himalayan terrain to Mumbai's cosmopolitan dining scene.

The festive wine selection features globally celebrated varieties, from fruity Chardonnay from Australia and Akluj, India, to dry Sauvignon Blanc from Languedoc, France. Red wine lovers can savour the berry-rich Cabernet Sauvignon from Nashik or indulge in the spice-laden Merlot from Sicily, Italy.

Whether you prefer a quiet dinner or a lively celebration, each sip and bite captures the spirit of Christmas. Complementing the wines, Across also offers unique in-house cocktails with lingering festive infusions.

Walk into Across this holiday season and experience Christmassy cheer in every glass. Raise a toast to the flavours of the Alps and Himalayas!



CHRISTMAS PUDDING

TDG NETWORK

Indulge in the Magic of Christmas with Festive Bakery Delights

Celebrate Christmas with Exquisite Dining at Le Meridien New Delhi

TDG NETWORK

This Christmas, Le Meridien New Delhi invites you to indulge in festive celebrations at The One, with a delightful brunch and an elegant dinner, promising unforgettable moments.

CHRISTMAS BRUNCH

Gather your loved ones on Wednesday, December 25, 2024, from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm, for a lavish brunch priced at INR 6,000 AI per person. Enjoy a traditional Christmas buffet featuring a variety of festive delicacies paired with premium alcohol. The joyful ambience is elevated by a live crooner performance, creating the perfect backdrop for a relaxed and merry afternoon.

Christmas Dinner

End your Christmas Day with a grand dinner from 7:30 pm to 11:30 pm, also priced at INR 6,000 AI per person. Share the spirit of the season with a sumptuous festive buffet, fine beverages, and enchanting live music. The captivating crooner performance adds a magical touch, making your evening truly special.



Gather your loved ones on Wednesday, December 25, 2024, from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm, for a lavish brunch priced at INR 6,000 AI per person. Enjoy a traditional Christmas buffet featuring a variety of festive delicacies paired with premium alcohol. The joyful ambience is elevated by a live crooner performance, creating the perfect backdrop for a relaxed and merry afternoon.

Whether it's the cheerful

brunch or the elegant dinner, Le Meridien's festive offerings promise joy, indulgence, and Christmas magic. Book your table now and create cherished holiday memories with your loved ones.



GINGERBREAD HOUSES



GINGERBREAD MEN



PLUM CAKES

Indulge in Sweet and Savory Delights

TDG NETWORK

Experience the rich flavors of Tres Leches and the refreshing zest of a Tropical Salad, perfect for any occasion.

TRES LECHES CAKE

This moist, saffron-infused cake is a dessert lover's dream. Begin by preheating your oven to 350°F (175°C) and greasing a baking pan. Sift together 1½ cups of all-purpose flour and 1 teaspoon of baking powder. Cream ½ cup unsalted butter with 1 cup sugar until fluffy, then add 5 eggs and ½ teaspoon vanilla extract. Gradually mix in the flour blend. Bake for 30 minutes, pierce with a fork, and let cool. Boil 2 cups of whole milk with saffron, mix with sweetened condensed milk, and pour over the cooled



cake. Whip 1½ cups heavy cream with 1 cup sugar and vanilla, spread over the soaked cake, and refrigerate until ready to serve.

TROPICAL SALAD

This vibrant salad com-

bines fresh lettuce, cherry tomatoes, bell peppers, pineapple, cucumbers, and shallots. For the dressing, mix 1 tablespoon honey, 1 tablespoon mustard sauce, 2 tablespoons mayonnaise, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Toss

the chopped veggies in the dressing, adjust seasoning, and enjoy this light, tangy delight.

Whether you crave sweetness or a savory crunch, these recipes bring indulgence to your table.



HOW B-SCHOOLS ARE REDEFINING BUSINESS EDUCATION WITH ESG PRINCIPLES IN MANAGEMENT CURRICULUMS



DR. SAHIL GUPTA

REDEFINING BUSINESS EDUCATION

ESG has, therefore, emerged as a transforming force in business education, moving from a profit-centric model of value creation to a much more holistic model of long-term value creation, stakeholder engagement, and environmental stewardship. This shift reflects increasing industry and societal demand for leaders who can balance economic performance with social and environmental responsibilities.

INNOVATIVE COURSES AND PEDAGOGIES

The most recently launched courses in B-schools include "Sustainable Finance," "Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethics," and "Climate Change and Business Strat-



egy." All these courses are paired with learning methods that are experiential in nature, such as case studies, simulations, and live projects. In the case of experiential learning programs, it involves students working on solving actual ESG issues affecting a company, thereby strengthening the critical thinking and problem-solving

THE IMPORTANCE OF ESG IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS

It is not just about adding some new courses but embedding the principles of ESG into core management education. It helps in integrating sustainability and ethics into the very fabric



of every aspect of business—from marketing and operations to strategy and finance, to be analyzed through the lens of ESG. Students are thus prepared to comprehend the interconnections of the economic, social, and environmental systems.

COLLABORATION WITH INDUSTRY

B-schools are making partnerships with industries to bridge the gap between academic theory and practical application. Students get internships, research opportunities, and exposure to ESG implementation in diverse organizational contexts through collaborations with corporations, non-profits, and government agencies. In-

dustry leaders often come as guest lecturers and mentors, giving insights into emerging ESG trends and challenges.

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

It is important to evaluate ESG integration impact. In this regard, B-schools are using a wide variety of metrics, from alumni career trajec-

ries in sustainability roles to partnerships secured with like-minded organizations. Furthermore, many institutions are benchmarking their progress against global standards, including Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) by the United Nations.

With climate change, inequality, and corporate accountability as key issues facing the world, B-schools play an important role in creating responsible leaders. They are at the forefront of not only responding to the demands of the market but also shaping the future for ethical and sustainable business leadership in integrating ESG principles into curriculums.

The author is the Associate Professor at Jaipuria School of Business, Ghaziabad.

The integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into the management curriculums is changing the business education landscape. With the growing attention to sustainable and ethical business practices, B-schools are changing to ensure that their graduates are equipped with the knowledge and skills to lead responsibly in a complex global economy.

Upskilling for the digital economy: How students can stay ahead in a technology-driven world



DEEPAKK KUMAR

intelligence and blockchain.

For commerce and management students

1. Strengthen the basics: In a world of easily accessible technology, foundational knowledge should not be overlooked. Combining strong fundamentals with digital tools ensures students are well-prepared for complex challenges.

2. Use AI tools cautiously: AI tools, like ChatGPT, can provide quick solutions but are not always entirely accurate. Students must critically evaluate AI outputs and rely on their understanding to make informed decisions.

3. Pursue short-term certification courses: Platforms like Coursera and LinkedIn offer technology-focused courses that keep students updated on industry trends. Regularly upgrading skills has become a necessity for staying relevant.

4. Learn advanced excel skills: Excel, especially with VBA and Macros, is invaluable for data analysis. Mastering these tools can enhance efficiency and provide a significant edge in the workplace.



5. Gain basic programming knowledge: Learning a programming language such as C or Java improves understanding of technology fundamentals, which is essential even for non-technical roles.

6. Understand SQL: Structured Query Language (SQL) is crucial for working with large databases in industries like banking and management. Basic knowledge of SQL can empower students to extract and interpret critical data for decision-making.

7. Explore data visualisation tools: Skills in tools like Power

BI or Tableau are increasingly important for presenting data effectively. Marketing, finance, and HR professionals use these tools to gain insights and make data-driven decisions.

8. Dive into digital marketing: An introductory understanding of digital marketing can help students navigate and leverage online platforms for business growth and customer engagement.

FOR TECH STUDENTS

1. Build a strong academic foundation: The subjects

taught at university lay the groundwork for technical expertise. Students should focus on mastering core topics to prepare for advanced applications in their careers.

Practical strategies for all students

1. Cultivate lifelong learning: Adopting a mindset of continuous education ensures students remain adaptable to evolving technologies and industry demands.

2. Utilise online learning platforms: A plethora of online platforms provide flexible and industry-relevant learning opportunities.

3. Join professional networks: Connecting with professionals on platforms can provide valuable insights, mentorship, and opportunities for collaboration.

4. Focus on soft skills: Attributes like adaptability, teamwork, and communication are as important as technical expertise. Group projects and leadership activities can help hone these skills.

5. Stay informed on industry trends: Follow technological advancements, attend webinars, and participate in events to remain ahead of the curve.

6. Leverage university resources: Utilise career

counselling, mentorship programmes, and alumni networks to gain guidance and expand opportunities.

Break silos, build a 'skill stack'

As basic digital skills become commonplace, the future workforce will prioritise professionals with meta-skills. Hence, it is important for students to not think in silos and develop a versatile "skill stack". This will include learning agility, pattern recognition, and adapting to emerging trends and tools. The most important thing is to remember the concept of "AI generated and human augmented" -- as this will be the underlying principle of almost every business in the near future. Thus, students must understand how to leverage AI for productivity, creativity, and decision-making.

For this, students should embrace a creator mindset -- building a portfolio of digital creations can really propel them to success. Another important (but less talked-about) aspect is the need for emotional intelligence, mental resilience, and the ability to manage stress as automation

and AI disrupts traditional career paths. Besides, personal branding will also be crucial in the digital age. Therefore, upskilling isn't just about acquiring knowledge; it's also about showcasing it.

Turning these insights into actionable strategies or detailed initiatives will help students thrive in a technology-driven world.

Equip yourself for tomorrow

As the digital economy continues to grow, students must embrace change and proactively develop the skills required for success. By combining technical knowledge with soft skills, staying updated on industry trends, and leveraging technology wisely, they can position themselves as valuable contributors in a tech-driven world.

Digital transformation is not just a challenge but an opportunity to innovate, grow, and succeed. With the right mindset and tools, students can confidently navigate the future and make meaningful contributions to a rapidly evolving society.

The author is the Founder and Chairman of EIMR Business School.

As technology continues to reshape industries, students must prioritise upskilling to stay competitive in the workforce. With digital transformation revolutionising roles across sectors, acquiring the right skills has become essential for future success.

Before diving into how students can adapt and thrive in the digital economy, let's decode what exactly is 'Digital Upskilling'.

What is Digital Upskilling?

Digital upskilling involves learning new skills or enhancing existing ones to adapt to the rapidly changing digital landscape. This includes gaining expertise in areas such as data analytics, digital marketing, cybersecurity, and emerging technologies like artificial

BOARD EXAMS VS. COMPETITIVE EXAMS: TIME TO FIX THE DISCONNECT AND RETHINK INDIA'S EDUCATION MODEL

PRAVEEN PRAKASH

It's been over three decades since I sat in my tiny study room in my childhood home surrounded by stacks of textbooks and scattered notes. Each night, I found myself staring at a grueling balancing act: the pressure to prepare for my 12th board exam alongside my ambition to crack the IIT-JEE. The dichotomy was stark - one path promised academic validation while the other represented the promise of something greater.

Looking back, I remember an evening when I paused to assess the subjects I was juggling physics, chemistry, mathematics, two languages, and some concepts that had no bearing on the JEE syllabus. The disconnect was glaring. Why was I being stretched in so many directions? Why wasn't there a system that aligned school learning with the skills needed for entrance exams?

Now, years later, the same story continues to unfold across the country. The characters may have changed, but the plot hasn't: stressed students and fragmented curri-

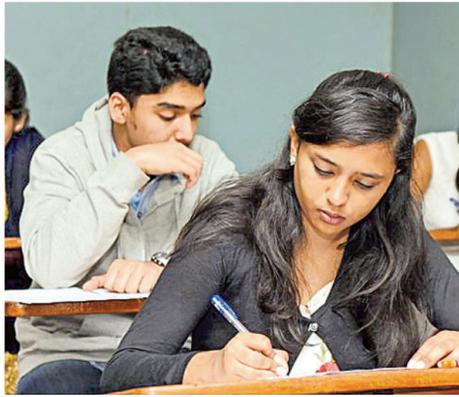
cula. It's time to rewrite this narrative.

UNDERSTANDING THE DISCONNECT

The core issue stems from the disconnect between school curricula and the demands of entrance exams. While board exams prioritize breadth—assessing a student's general understanding across subjects, entrance tests like JEE and NEET demand depth, evaluating a student's problem-solving skills and application-based knowledge.

This disparity leaves students with no choice but to divide their attention. They spend mornings tackling school syllabi and evenings cramming for coaching classes. The result is a Herculean effort, which often comes at the cost of their mental well-being.

In many states, for example, students are increasingly opting for Sanskrit as their second language, not because of cultural interest, but as a survival tactic. Sanskrit, considered an "easier" option, enables students to focus on entrance exam preparation. This underscores a deeper



issue: students are selecting subjects not out of interest, but as a strategy to manage an overwhelming workload.

LEARNING FROM GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

In many advanced education systems, high school students are offered specialized tracks that align with their career aspirations, allowing for a more focused and streamlined approach to learning. Rather than requiring students to juggle a broad range of unrelated subjects, these systems integrate tar-

getted coursework directly into the regular curriculum.

For instance, some systems provide technical tracks after Class 10 for students pursuing careers in engineering. These tracks combine academic learning with vocational training, enabling students to gain practical experience alongside their studies. Similarly, specialized streams in areas like Science, Arts, or Commerce allow students to focus on relevant subjects, reducing academic overload while preparing them for their future goals.

These approaches empha-



size depth over breadth, ensuring that students are not only better prepared for entrance exams but also equipped with the expertise and hands-on experience necessary for their chosen careers.

A VISION FOR INDIA

India's education system stands on the cusp of a transformational shift - one that can align academic learning with students' career aspirations, offering a more purposeful and focused educational journey. Imagine if students in grades 11

and 12 could choose specialized tracks such as pre-engineering or pre-medical tracks; this would replace the burden of redundant coursework with targeted knowledge that is essential for higher education and beyond.

Technology is already playing a role in bridging gaps in teaching resources. Platforms like Physics Wallah (PW) and many others have already demonstrated how digital learning can scale and democratize access to quality education. When coupled with policy reforms

that harmonize board curricula with entrance exams, this approach could reduce the heavy reliance on coaching institutes, saving families time and money while leveling the playing field. Moreover, these digital tools and platforms can become an even greater asset in the drive for educational equity.

By tailoring education to individual aspirations, India could pioneer a system that empowers its students to learn with purpose, confidence, and clarity, and perhaps set a new benchmark for the world.

ADDRESSING THE 'HOW' OF SPECIALIZED EDUCATION REFORM

Skeptics may question the feasibility of such reforms, pointing to resource constraints and the challenges of retraining teachers. But we need to remember that the foundations are already in place. Over the last few years, India has invested in digital infrastructure; Combined with the expertise of EdTech platforms, we are well-positioned to make this transition.

This reform is not merely about reducing stress; it is about fostering equity. By integrating specialized tracks into the mainstream education system, we can create a more level playing field offering students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds equal opportunities for growth.

The Time to Act is Now

As I reflect on my years of public service, I am continually inspired by the resilience and ingenuity of India's youth. They deserve an education system that nurtures their potential, not one that overwhelms them.

Introducing pre-engineering and pre-medical tracks is not merely an academic reform—it is a societal imperative. By shifting the focus from an outdated, one-size-fits-all approach to a more specialized, career-oriented model, we can create an environment where students can focus on meaningful, purposeful learning.

India's next generation is ready to lead. The question is, are we ready to guide them?

The author is an IAS Officer.

'WE WANT TO BREAK IT DOWN TO JUST MELBOURNE': ROHIT

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE

Ahead of the Boxing Day Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, India skipper Rohit Sharma on Tuesday said that they are currently focussing only on the upcoming Test match and are looking forward to displaying a strong performance at Melbourne.

The series is currently tied at 1-1 after India secured a draw in the third Test in Brisbane. The Boxing Day Test will kick off on December 26 at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground.

India started the series on a high note with a massive 295-run victory over Australia. However, the visitors conceded a 10-wicket defeat against Australia in the Adelaide Test after a disappointing performance. The Gabba Test ended in a draw after rain played a spoilsport in Brisbane, a game largely domi-



Rohit Sharma

Captain hails Bumrah

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE

Ahead of the Melbourne Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against Australia, India skipper Rohit Sharma heaped praise on talisman pacer Jasprit Bumrah for being confident with his skill set.

The series is currently tied at 1-1 after India secured a draw in the third Test in Brisbane. The Boxing Day Test

will kick off on December 26 at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Jasprit Bumrah is the only India pacer who has shined in the ongoing BGT series. Bumrah is currently the highest wicket-taker in the series with 21 wickets at an average of 10.90. He has two fifters and one four-wicket haul in this series after the conclusion of the first three matches.

nated by the hosts. Speaking at the pre-match press conference, Rohit said that India played "some really good cricket" at the Perth Test of the ongoing BGT series. "We played some really good cricket, we've been fortunate as well, when we won that test match, when you get bowled out for 150 runs, you feel that you are under pressure a little bit, and then the attitude from the boys, how they turned up and got Australia bowled out for 100 runs, shows that there is an attitude where nobody wants to give it up until the last day of the test match, or the last over of the test match is bowled, and that is the attitude we've been carrying for a long time now when you tour abroad, you know that you have to put in that extra effort, have that extra bit of attitude within the team, and that is something that we showed in that test match," Rohit said.

Kohli, Bumrah would elevate SA20 to another level, says Donald

AGENCIES
MUMBAI

SA20 Ambassador and South African fast-bowling legend Allan Donald has expressed excitement at the prospect of including Indian players in the SA20 league. When asked which Indian cricketers he would love to see in the competition, Donald unhesitatingly named two of India's biggest stars: Virat Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah.

"Oh my gosh, that's a--where do I start? Where do I start getting a player from there? My goodness me, jeez. If I'm a batter, I'm Virat Kohli all over there. If it's a bowler, 100 percent Bumrah. 100 percent," Donald said enthusiastically during a media interaction

organised by SA20.

He vividly described the transformative impact Indian players could have on the SA20 league. "My goodness me, can you imagine that? Can you actually imagine some Indian players--or if you're allowed to pick one? Oh my, that would be the most special thing. That'll just put it to another level. That'll add another level of how big this tournament can become if you're allowed to. Imagine two--oh, imagine two per team. But we'll keep it there at one. I'll have those two players for me--Kohli and Bumrah. If I have to pick from a batter or a bowler--100 percent sure," he said. Donald also shared his enthusiasm

for several young fast bowlers poised to make their mark. Among those, three South African talents have particularly caught his attention: Eathen Bosch, Codi Yusuf, and Kwena Maphaka. "There are about three bowlers--South African bowlers--that I'm really looking forward to seeing, and those three guys are Eathen Bosch, from--he's playing for the Pretoria Capitals; Codi Yusuf, who's playing for the Paarl Royals; and young Kwena Maphaka," Donald remarked. He detailed Bosch's journey, highlighting his perseverance and recent achievements. "Bosch, probably the more experienced--he's been around for a while. I'm really pleased for him that he's

finally got a South African call-up. He's been really on the fringes and has struggled to get in there because of other guys that have been punching the lights out," he said. Donald also expressed particular excitement about Kwena Maphaka, an 18-year-old whose talent and composure have already impressed many. "Young Kwena Maphaka, an 18-year-old--you know, I can't--I think the whole of Paarl is very excited that he's here. There's huge excitement about him being in this team.

I think we're going to see a lot of him this year," he added. He elaborated on Maphaka's potential and temperament, predicting a bright future for the young bowler.

Gill needs to back himself a bit more, says Ponting

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE

Former cricketer Ricky Ponting opened up on India batter Shubman Gill's poor form overseas and said that the 25-year-old needs to back himself a bit more to get results.

In 12 Tests this year, Gill has scored 866 runs in 21 innings at an average of 45.52, with three centuries and three fifties each. In the last Gabba Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy (BGT), the 25-year-old continued with his poor form and scored just one run from three balls in the first inning. In 12 Tests away from home, Gill has scored 616 runs in 22 innings at an average of 30.80, with one century and two fifties.

His best score is 110. However, in 10 Tests in SENA countries, he has scored



Shubman Gill

just 481 runs in 19 innings at a sub-par average of 26.72, with two fifties that came during his debut Test tour in Australia, including the iconic knock of 91 at Brisbane which helped India win the series. Since that knock, in the next 13 innings, he has failed to score even a fifty. Meanwhile, the youngster has a fine home record, with 1,177 runs in 17 matches and 31 innings at an average of 42.03, with four centuries and five fifties and

best score of 128. The fourth Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test in Melbourne will begin on Boxing Day, with India chasing a win to keep alive their hopes of qualifying for the ICC World Test Championship Final.

Speaking in the latest episode of The ICC Review, Ponting said that he loves watching Gill play. "I love watching him play. When you're watching him bat and bat well, he looks as good as anyone in world cricket.

Rohit sounds confident on Gill's form

AGENCIES
MELBOURNE

India skipper Rohit Sharma on Tuesday backed young batter Shubman Gill amid his poor form in Test cricket and said that they don't want to complicate too many things with the 25-year-old.

Speaking at the pre-match press conference, Rohit said that Shubman Gill looked pretty good in both the innings of the Adelaide Test. The skipper added that Gill couldn't go on to convert that start into a big score in the Adelaide Test.

At the Adelaide Test, Gill scored 59 runs including both the innings.

"If he gets going, we all know he can be very dangerous. Look, in both innings in Adelaide I thought he looked pretty good, he just didn't go on to convert that start into a big score.

India name squad for U19 Women's T20 World Cup

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday named their 15-member squad for the upcoming U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025, according to ICC.

Team India are the defending champions of the event, having won the inaugural edition under the leadership of Shafali Verma in 2023 in South Africa.

Niki Prasad leads the side, while Sanika Chalke is her deputy. Kamalini G, and Bhavika Ahire are the named wicket-keepers in the squad. Earlier in the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2025 auction, Mumbai Indians roped in 16-year-old G Kamalini for a whopping amount of Rs 1.6 crore.

Soon after Kamalini's name came under the hammer,



Mumbai Indians (MI) owner Nita Ambani raised the paddle at Rs 10 lakh. Delhi Capitals (DC) came into the bidding war along with MI. The 16-year-old's bid was zoomed to Rs 1.6 crore and confirmed her spot in the Mumbai-based franchise's squad. The uncapped youngster from Tamil Nadu played a crucial role for Tamil Nadu and helped them win the U-19 domestic tournament in October, hitting 311 runs in eight matches, according to ES-

PNERicinfo. In the Under-19 tri-series final between India B against South Africa A, she was the top scorer with 79 runs. Her stupendous form helped Kamalini confirm her place in India's squad for the Under-19 Asia Cup next week. Three standby players have also been selected.

Recently, India participated in the Women's U19 T20 Asia Cup, and won the tournament after defeating Bangladesh by 41 runs in the final. G Trisha (159 runs) and Aay-

ushi Shukla (10 wickets) were the respective leaders in the runs and wickets tally for the tournament. The duo are also a part of the U19 T20 World Cup squad. 16 teams will participate in the U19 T20 World Cup 2025 and will be divided into four groups. India are placed in Group A along with Malaysia, Sri Lanka and West Indies.

Bayuemas Oval in Kuala Lumpur will host India's group-stage matches. They begin their campaign on January 19 against West Indies.

India U19 Squad: Niki Prasad (C), Sanika Chalke (VC), G Trisha, Kamalini G (WK), Bhavika Ahire (WK), Ishwari Awasare, Mithila Vinod, Joshitha VJ, Sonam Yadav, Parunika Sisodiya, Kesari Drithi, Aayushi Shukla, Anandita Kishor, MD Shabnam, Vaishnavi S.

'I believe there has been a lapse': Manu on her Khel Ratna award nomination

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Double Olympic medalist Manu Bhaker believes there may have been a lapse on her part while filing the nomination for the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award, which is currently being "corrected." She also asserted that awards and recognition are not her goals, but they serve to keep her motivated.

The 2020 Arjuna Award-ee said that regardless of the award, she should remain motivated to win more medals for her country. She requested that people refrain from speculating about the ongoing matter regarding the Khel Ratna Award.

"Regarding the ongoing issue with my nomination for the prestigious Khel Ratna award, I would like to state that as an athlete, my role is to play and perform for my country. Awards and recognition keep me motivated but are not my goal," Manu wrote on X.

"I believe there has been a lapse, possibly on my part,



while filing for the nomination, which is being corrected. Irrespective of the award, I shall remain motivated to win more medals for my country. I kindly request everyone not to speculate on this matter," she concluded.

Meanwhile, sources from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) stated on Tuesday, "The list for the National Sports Awards has not been finalised yet, so there is no point in excluding any player's name at this stage."

Manu Bhaker made history by opening India's medal tally at the Olympics after

securing third place in the women's individual 10m air pistol event, becoming the first-ever woman shooter to win an Olympic medal for India. She further cemented her place in history during the Paris 2024 Olympics, winning two bronze medals in shooting events. Manu secured a bronze in the 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team event with Sarabjot Singh.

The duo defeated South Korea's Lee Wonho and Oh Ye Jin 16-10 in the bronze medal play-off. Both shooters delivered consistent 10s in the series against the South Koreans, claiming India's second medal.

Arshad Nadeem wishes Neeraj Chopra on his special day

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Paris Olympics gold medalist Arshad Nadeem took to social media to wish India's ace javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on his birthday on Thursday.

"Happy Birthday to my friend and fellow athlete @Neeraj_chopra1. Wishing



you a year filled with happiness, success, better health, and joy. May you have a wonderful life ahead!" Arshad Nadeem wrote on X.

Arshad bagged the historic gold for Pakistan with a throw of 92.97m, setting a new Olympic record and surpassing Denmark's Andreas Thorkildsen's mark from Beijing 2008. Grenada's Anderson Peters secured bronze with a throw

of 88.54m.

Tokyo medallist Neeraj fell short of retaining his title, finishing with a best throw of 89.45m in second place. Despite a strong performance on his second attempt, he struggled with four consecutive foul throws and settled for silver.

Neeraj has redefined the

landscape of athletics in India and on the global stage. He made history in Tokyo by becoming the first Indian to win an Olympic gold medal. He followed it up with a silver in Paris 2024, with a throw of 89.45m.

He missed out on defending his crown after his arch-rival Arshad Nadeem produced an Olympic record effort by sending his javelin to a distance of 92.97m.



Celebration

The First Century at Vadodara's BCA Stadium by Harleen Deol. IND-W beats WI-W by 115 runs(X).

'His brain's condition is not stable': Doctor gives update on Kamblī's health

AGENCIES
MUMBAI

Dr Vivek Dwivedi, treating former India cricketer Vinod Kamblī at Aakriti Hospital in Thane, said on Tuesday that the 52-year-old's brain condition is not stable.

Kamblī was admitted to the hospital on Saturday evening after experiencing muscle cramps and dizziness at home.

Earlier in December, Indian cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar met his childhood friend Vinod Kamblī and unveiled a memorial for renowned cricket coach Ramakant Vitthal Achrekar at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Park. In the video of their

meeting, Kamblī appeared frail, raising concerns about his physical and emotional well-being.

Speaking to ANI, Dr Vivek Dwivedi stated that Kamblī had a high-grade fever when admitted. The doctor noted that while the former cricketer's vitals are stable, his treatment and physiotherapy continue. We are planning to discharge him in 2-3 days. However, his brain condition is not stable, with degenerative changes observed. We are prioritising his rehabilitation," Dr Vivek told ANI.

After being hospitalised on Saturday, Vinod Kamblī said he is feeling better and expressed gratitude to Sachin Tendulkar for his blessings.

Pro Kabaddi legends Anup, Ajay to return for PKL Melbourne Raid

TDG NETWORK
PUNE

The Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) is set to create history by taking the electrifying sport of kabaddi to Australia with the highly anticipated PKL Melbourne Raid. The event will be held at the iconic John Cain Arena on Saturday, December 28, 2024, a day before the mega-final of PKL II.

According to a release

from PKL, this landmark event promises to be an exhilarating evening of top-tier Kabaddi action with four formidable squads taking part in the competition. PKL All-Star Mavericks, PKL All-Star Masters and Pro Kabaddi All-Stars will be the three teams comprising the best Indian Kabaddi talent from the PKL, alongside a star-studded Australian contingent named the Aus-

sie Raiders, as they battle for supremacy in this one-of-a-kind showcase event.

The PKL Melbourne Raid signifies the growing global appeal of Kabaddi, bringing the spirit and intensity of this traditional sport to the Australian audience. With the likes of Ajay Thakur, Pardeep Narwal, Anup Kumar, Rakesh Kumar, Maninder Singh, Sachin Tanwar and other legend-

ary players taking part, the fans can look forward to an electrifying encounter that transcends borders. PKL, League Commissioner, Anupam Goswami said that PKL Melbourne Raid signifies kabaddi's growing global appeal. "We are thrilled to be invited by Visit Victoria for a PKL demonstration in Melbourne, one of the world's foremost sporting destination cities. The PKL

Melbourne Raid signifies kabaddi's growing global appeal, bringing together legends as well as current stars. Coming at the apex phase of the ongoing PKL Season II, this is a great opportunity to showcase the capabilities of our League, as well as the energy of kabaddi as a truly world-class sport," Anupam was quoted in a release from PKL as saying.