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## PM MODI: YOUTH POWER WILL MAKE COUNTRY 'VIKSIT BHARAT'

Speaking at Young Leaders Dialogue on Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary, the PM urged youth to actively contribute to achieving Viksit Bharat goal

**TDG NETWORK**  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday expressed hope that the strength of India's youth will make it a 'Viksit Bharat' very soon.

Addressing the 'Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue' at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised the role of the country's youth in nation-building and expressed confidence in 'Yuva Shakti'.

"Mera vishwas kehta hai ki yuva shakti ka samarth, Bharat ko jald se jald viksit rashtra banayega. (My belief is that the power of youth will make India a developed nation as soon as possible)," the PM said.

"I have a lot of faith in you and this faith has inspired me to set up the 'MYBharat.com,' this faith has formed the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue," the PM added during his speech.

"Setting and achieving big goals is not just the work of the government machinery alone. Every citizen should contribute to these objectives. Lakhs of people have joined this mission. The ownership of the 'Viksit

**'Vivekananda continues to ignite passion in young minds'**

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid homage to Swami Vivekananda on his 163rd birth anniversary. He called Vivekananda "an eternal inspiration for youth" adding that he "continues to ignite passion and purpose in young minds."

"Paying homage to Swami Vivekananda on his Jayanti. An eternal inspiration for youth, he continues to ignite passion and purpose in young minds," PM Modi said in a post on X.

Bharat is not just mine but yours too. The Young Leaders Dialogue is a great example of youth-led efforts. My heart is filled with pride that my country's youth is so intelligent," Modi said.

Highlighting the role of young minds in shaping the nation's future, the Prime Minister assured them that



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2025 on the occasion of National Youth Day, commemorating the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Sunday.

### MANY FIRSTS AT THE YOUNG INDIA LEADERS DIALOGUE

- PM Modi spent around 6 hours from morning 10 AM till 4 PM with the young minds.
- The Prime Minister interacted with the Youth at the exhibition and witnessed innovative ideas.
- The Prime Minister then saw ten presentations by the young leaders on varied topics, presenting innovative ideas ranging from sustainable development to integrating technology with suggestions for making India a manufacturing and startup hub.
- PM Modi also shared his insights with the young leaders and gave various insightful suggestion and his own ideas, exhorting youth to work on those lines.
- Around 3000 young minds from across the country participated in these enriching discussions.
- In a unique initiative, the PM also had lunch with the young leaders and had insightful discussions on the lunch table. Young girls from North East also interacted with the PM during lunch.

## 'Eagerly awaiting my visit to Sonamarg,' PM Modi Tweets ahead of Z-Morh tunnel inauguration

**AJAY JANDYAL**  
SRINAGAR/SONAMARG.

Jan 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed his excitement about visiting Sonamarg on Monday for the inauguration of the strategically vital Z-Morh tunnel. Replying to a post by Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on microblogging site X, PM Modi wrote, "I am eagerly awaiting my visit to Sonamarg, Jammu and Kashmir, for the tunnel inauguration. You rightly point out the benefits for tourism and the

local economy. Also, loved the aerial pictures and videos!"

The Z-Morh tunnel, an engineering marvel constructed at a cost of Rs 2,716 crore, will provide year-round connectivity between Gagangir and Sonamarg, bypassing treacherous landslide-prone routes. The project is expected to boost tourism, transform Sonamarg into a winter destination, and improve defense logistics in the strategically critical Ladakh region.

Earlier, Chief Minister Omar

## AAP chief 'provoking' slum dwellers: BJP

**AGENCIES**  
NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief Virendra Sachdeva accused Aam Admi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal of "provoking" and "frightening" slum dwellers and assured them of a concrete house for the poor person of Delhi.

"The PM said that all public welfare schemes will continue and the poor will get permanent houses... Yesterday also the Home Minister said that slum dwellers will

get houses, and if someone will solve all their problems, it will be the double-engine government... Arvind Kejriwal only makes electoral promises and misleads people..." the BJP leader said. Attacking Kejriwal he said, "He provokes and frightens them. By saying (your) slum will be demolished. It is Modi's guarantee that every poor person will have a concrete house."

The BJP has sharply criticised the AAP-led government, alleging widespread

## BJP declares third list

**TDG NETWORK**  
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday released its third list for the upcoming Delhi assembly elections, scheduled for February 5.

The party has fielded Mohan Singh Bisht from Mustafabad, the only name on the list announced today. With this announcement, the BJP has declared candidates for 60 out of the 70 Assembly seats.

### DELHI POLLS

**AGENCIES**  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday promised to give Rs 8,500 every month to educated unemployed youths in Delhi for one year if it comes to power in Delhi.

This is the third scheme launched by the Congress ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls.

The financial assistance will be provided under the 'Yuva Udaan Yojana' and it is not free, AICC general secretary Sachin Pilot said at a press conference.

"We will provide financial assistance to youths who can show their skills in a company, factory or organisation. They will get money through these companies. This is not a scheme under which one



**BHAJAN LAL SHARMA**  
CHIEF MINISTER, RAJASTHAN

We all celebrate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda which is 12th January as Youth Day. The youth are the true leaders of a nation's progress, making today's day both sacred and inspiring. Swami Vivekananda has consistently motivated the youth to follow paths of righteousness and purpose. As a rare and invaluable guide, he instilled a sense of enthusiasm in the younger generation. Through his teachings in texts like Yoga, Rajyoga, and Gyan yoga, he paved a brighter future for the youth. By spreading the philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga, Swami Vivekananda illuminated minds and hearts. He firmly believed that the strength of a nation lies in the progress of its youth. This great visionary emphasized that, before in-

spiring a nation with political ideologies, it is essential to nurture its spiritual awakening.

Swami Vivekananda was close to Rajasthan. His childhood name was Narendranath Dutt, but he became known worldwide as Vivekananda. He got this name from Rajasthan. The then Maharaja of Khetri, Shri Ajit Singh, recognized the diamond in the young Narendranath and the King of Khetri inspired him to go to speak

*"Swami Vivekananda was close to Rajasthan. His childhood name was Narendranath Dutt, but he became known worldwide as Vivekananda"*

at the World Parliament of Religions. It was he who addressed Narendranath Dutt and Vividishananda as Vivekananda. Before going to speak at the World Parliament of Religions, the King of Khetri himself had gifted him Rajasthani saffron turban, choga and waistband.

Swami Vivekananda was a scholar of religion, philosophy, art and literature. Not only this, he also had deep knowledge of classical music. **P5**

## Cong promises Rs 8,500 to educated jobless youths if voted to power in Delhi

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NEW DELHI



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"We will provide financial assistance to youths who can show their skills in a company, factory or organisation. They will get money through these companies. This is not a scheme under which one

will get money while sitting at home," Pilot said.

"This help will not be just financial. We will try that people are absorbed in those fields where they have received training... so that they can... improve their skill set," he said.

During the press conference, AICC Delhi in-charge Qazi Nizamuddin, Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav and NSUI,

## HMPV case emerges in Assam after Gujarat

**TDG NETWORK**  
DIBRUGARH

A 10-month-old child in Assam has been diagnosed with the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) virus, marking the state's first recorded case, according to the officials.

Superintendent of Assam Medical College and Hospital, Dhruv Jyoti Bhuiyan confirmed the infection, stating that a test was conducted on the child, which returned positive results.

"This morning, we got the report of the child who had come here who had cough and symptoms and had been diagnosed with the HMPV virus. The test was part of the routine but the results came positive. There is nothing to worry about, the child is perfectly alright,"



Students dress up as Swami Vivekananda and other religious leaders during a rally on the occasion of Swami Vivekananda birth anniversary celebration, in Kolkata on Sunday. **ANI**

## GRAP III revoked as air improves in Delhi

**NEERAJ MOHAN**  
NEW DELHI

The Commission for Air Quality Management's (CAQM) Sub-Committee on the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) has revoked Stage-III restrictions across the National Capital Region (NCR) with immediate effect. The decision comes as Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) shows significant improvement, recording 278 at 4 PM on Sunday, well below the Stage-III threshold of 350.

Delhi's average AQI has been on a steady decline, attributed to favourable weather conditions, including rains caused by a West-

ern Disturbance on January 11-12. Further forecasts from the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) predict another Western Disturbance around January 14-15, signaling continued improvement in air quality. Stage-III measures, including construction bans and industrial restrictions, were implemented on January 9. While these have been lifted, actions under Stages II and I remain in effect. Authorities have been directed to intensify and monitor these measures to prevent a resurgence in pollution levels. Meanwhile, specific closure orders for Construction Demolition (C&D) sites and

## Jaishankar to attend Trump's inauguration

**TDG NETWORK**  
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will represent the Indian government at the swearing-in ceremony of US President-elect Donald Trump as the 47th US President.

He is set to attend the swearing-in ceremony at the invitation of the Trump-Vance Inaugural Committee, according to a Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) press release. During the visit, Jaishankar will also have meetings with representatives of the incoming administration, as well as some other dignitaries visiting the US on that occasion.

MEA said, "On the invitation of the Trump-Vance Inaugural Committee, External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr S Jaishankar will represent the Government of India at the Swearing-In Ceremony of President-Elect Donald J. Trump as the 47th President of the



## Dalit girl's sexual abuse: UDF demands SIT probe

**AGENCIES**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The opposition UDF on Sunday expressed shock over the sexual abuse of a Dalit girl in Pathanamthitta district allegedly involving over 62 individuals and urged the state government to form a Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by a woman IPS officer to probe the charges.

The girl, who is now 18 years old, has alleged in her recent complaint that she was sexually abused by 62

# PM TO INAUGURATE STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT TUNNEL IN J&K TODAY

A 6.5-km, Rs 2,400-crore project ensuring year-round connectivity between Gagangir and Sonamarg.

TDG NETWORK  
SRINAGAR

The security forces on Sunday intensified sanitization efforts and area domination exercise in Kashmir, a day ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the valley for inauguration of the strategically important Z-Morh tunnel in Ganderbal district, officials said.

The deployment of security personnel has been increased in the vulnerable areas and dozens of checkpoints have been set up at important intersections in various districts to ensure that anti-national elements are not able to move around freely, they said.

The officials said that random checking and frisking of people and vehicles, including two-wheelers, has been intensified while patrolling is also taking place. "Security has been tightened near the Z-Morh tunnel. Multi-layered security arrangements have been put in place and the PM's security team, comprising the

## TUNNEL MILESTONE

- Security tightened in Kashmir ahead of PM Modi's inauguration of the Z-Morh tunnel.
- Boosts defense logistics, economic growth, and tourism in Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh.
- Features advanced tech for safety and improved travel.
- Srinagar-Leh highway shut, linked to PM's visit.



SPG personnel, has taken over the venue," they said.

The prime minister is likely to address a public rally after the inauguration of the tunnel at Gagangir, the officials said, adding the venue is now off-limits for the public.

Jammu and Kashmir Police, paramilitary forces and the Army are part of the security apparatus for Monday's inauguration. Extensive area domination exercises, searches and patrols are being conducted for the smooth conduct of the event, the officials said.

The sharpshooters have been deployed at vulnerable points while aerial and technical surveillance, including through drones, is also being undertaken. The area is being monitored round-the-clock, they added.

Earlier on October 20 last year, seven people, including a local doctor, were killed in a terrorist attack near the tunnel site in the Gagangir area.

The authorities have closed the Srinagar-Leh national highway from Saturday to Monday "due to icy road conditions caused

by inclement weather and to facilitate maintenance work by road maintenance agencies".

However, it is widely perceived that the arterial road link between Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh has been shut for the prime minister's visit.

Built at a cost of Rs 2,400 crore on the Srinagar-Leh National Highway, the strategic 6.5-km Z-Morh tunnel will be a major step towards making the Ladakh region accessible by road throughout the year. The work on the project began in May

2015 and was completed last year.

The soft opening of the tunnel was done in February 2024.

The tunnel is vital in terms of the defence needs of the country in the Ladakh region and also connecting the youngest Union Territory to the rest of the country.

Situated at an altitude of 8,650 feet, the Z-Morh tunnel is a two-lane road tunnel equipped with a parallel 7.5-metre-wide escape passage for emergencies.

The tunnel ensures seamless connectivity between Gagangir and Sonamarg, and will ease summer travel to Ladakh.

Along with the under-construction Zojila tunnel, the Z-Morh tunnel will ensure uninterrupted connectivity to Baltal and Ladakh regions for civilian and military traffic.

The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), which oversees the project, has said the "engineering marvel" is a game changer for the region.

## SKM moves meeting to Patran; Dallewal's hunger strike hits 48 days

NEERAJ MOHAN  
CHANDIGARH

With a move to foster unity among farmer platforms, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) has decided to change the date and venue of its crucial meeting from Patiala to Patran.

As per a statement issued by the SKM leaders the meeting scheduled for January 15 at Patiala, will now be held on January 13 at Gurdwara Sahib in Patran. The decision comes after the SKM National Co-ordination Committee deliberated on a request from Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha Bharat to modify the meeting arrangements. The letter requesting the change was received on the evening of January 11, prompting swift discussions among SKM leaders.

The meeting is expected to chart out a roadmap for a united struggle among the three farmer platforms and



is being convened following the resolutions passed at the Moga Mahapanchayat.

"The decision to hold the meeting at Patran underscores our collective resolve to bring all factions together. The Gurdwara Sahib provides a symbolic and serene environment for discussions on such crucial issues", reads the statement. The agenda for the meeting includes detailed discussions on strategies to address pressing issues faced by farmers and coordinating joint efforts to amplify their demands.

The SKM leaders have urged all associated farmer organizations to attend the meeting at the revised loca-

tion and time.

Dallewal's Hunger Strike Continues on 48th Day

The indefinite hunger strike by prominent farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal entered its 48th day on Sunday with doctors have raised serious concerns about his deteriorating health. Farmers' leaders revealed that the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha has accepted a request from Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha to hold a coordination meeting. This significant meeting is scheduled for February 13 in Patran, Punjab, marking a step forward in bridging efforts among the groups.

Asserting that the draft regulations were tantamount to nationalising Indian universities, the SAD leader said "this seeks to usurp the powers of the States who founded these Universities out of their funds and are running them with their own resources".

Calling for the immediate withdrawal of the draft regulations, Mr Sukhbir Badal said "it seems the States - who are the main stakeholders, have not been consulted while framing the draft regulations. Instead of giving increased autonomy

## Badal slams UGC draft rules, calls them attack on federalism

TARUNI GANDHI  
CHANDIGARH

Senior Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Sukhbir Singh Badal on Sunday said the University Grants Commission (UGC) draft regulations on appointments of vice chancellors were against the spirit of federalism and were aimed at usurping the rights of the States and handing them over to the central government.

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Calling for the immediate withdrawal of the draft regulations, Mr Sukhbir Badal said "it seems the States - who are the main stakeholders, have not been consulted while framing the draft regulations. Instead of giving increased autonomy



to the States, the centre has chosen to take away control of the Universities and vest it with the UGC whose members are appointed by it".

Badal said there was already much opposition by States to the insistence of several State Governors to influence the appointment of vice chancellors by refusing to go with the constitutional norm of acting on the "aid and advice" of the State governments while making top appointments. He said now the entire process of appointment of vice chancellors had been handed over to the Governors who would select any name from a list submitted to them by a three member committee of the Chancellor, UGC and the apex management body of the varsity.

## 5 Maoists gunned down in gunfight in C'garh's Bijapur

TDG NETWORK  
BIJAPUR (CHHATTISGARH)

Five Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces on Sunday in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, said the Police.

According to the Superintendent of Police, Bijapur, Jitendra Yadav, "5 Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces. The bodies of 2 female naxals and 3 male naxals have been recovered. The identification of the deceased is yet to be done."

Additionally, the SP said that several automatic and other weapons and explosives were from the forests under the National Park area of the Bijapur district.

"1 SLR rifle, 12 bore rifle, single shot rifle, BGL launcher and other arms and ammunition have been recovered," said the official.

Sharing details from the encounter, SP Jitendra Yadav said, "Based on the intelligence about the presence of naxals in the Bandeparakorenged forests under Madded police station area of the national park area of Bijapur district on January 11, a security force team had gone on an anti-Maoist operation."

"During the operation, to-



Additionally, the SP said that several automatic and other weapons and explosives were from the forests under the National Park area of the Bijapur district.

day Sunday morning, an exchange of fire began between the security forces and the Naxalites in the Bandeparakorenged forest, which continued till 3-4 pm," said the SP. Following the encounter, the search operation led to the recovery of five bodies of the killed Naxals including two women, all in uniforms.

The recovered weapons included one SLR rifle, one 12-bore rifle, two single-shot rifles, one BGL launcher, and

one locally made Bharmar gun, along with explosives, Maoist literature, and other Naxal materials. The official said that detailed information will be released after the completion of the operation.

The search operation is still underway, further details are awaited.

Earlier on Saturday, a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawan was injured as an improvised explosive device (IED) laid down by the Naxalites exploded in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, officials said.

This happened after a team of CRPF from 196 Battalion Mahadev Ghat had left for the forest to carry out area domination in the morning. During the operations, one jawan was injured due to an IED blast.

The injured jawan was admitted to the District Hospital Bijapur for treatment.

## 800 Haryana conductors face scrutiny; Anil Vij orders certificate check

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

In a significant move, Haryana Transport Minister Anil Vij has directed the verification of certificates for 800 conductors appointed through the Haryana Kausal Rozgar Nigam (HKRN). The directive comes amid allegations of fake certificates being used for securing jobs in Haryana Roadways.

The issue surfaced after complaints alleged that over 800 candidates used forged experience letters to land conductor positions. Acting promptly, Vij instructed all General Managers (GMs) of Haryana Roadways depots to conduct a thorough verification of the documents and submit detailed reports.

To expedite the process, depot GMs have formed committees to scrutinize the certificates of the newly appointed conductors. The investigation has revealed that many of these candidates were employed temporarily during the 2018 Haryana Roadways employees' strike.

## 28 workers rescued from Kannauj building collapse, FIR filed

TDG NETWORK  
KANNAUJ/KANPUR

All 28 workers were pulled out safely by rescuers from the rubble of a collapsed under-construction building at Kannauj railway station fol-



lowing a 16-hour overnight operation, officials said on Sunday.

An FIR has been registered against the contractor and an engineer for various offences including negligence and endangering lives, officials said.

The rescue teams, including personnel from the national and state disaster response forces and the railways, worked through the cold winter night to clear the debris and pull out the trapped workers. No fatalities have been reported, the officials

said. Twenty-six workers have been admitted to various hospitals in Kannauj, while two with serious injuries were shifted to the Lala Lajpat Rai (LLR) Hospital in Kanpur, they said. The workers at the

LLR Hospital are out of danger, hospital sources said. One of them has a head injury while another sustained a leg injury, they said.

A complaint was filed by Vipul Mathur, Executive Engineer of the Railway Gati Shakti Directorate, at Farrukhabad Government Railway Police (GRP) station against the contractor and the engineer after the collapse of shuttering during the construction of a waiting room at the Kannauj railway station left the workers trapped.

## Maha Kumbh set for auspicious start on 'Paush Purnima' today

TDG NETWORK  
PRAYAGRAJ (UP)

Maha Kumbh 2025 — a 45-day event billed as the biggest gathering of humans in one place — is all set to begin Monday with the first major bathing ritual or 'Shahi Snan' on the auspicious occasion of 'Paush Purnima' at the Sangam, the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mystical Saraswati rivers here.

The present edition of the Kumbh is being held after 12 years, though seers claim the celestial permutations and combinations for the event are taking place after 144 years, making the occasion even more auspicious.

Perhaps that's why the Uttar Pradesh government is confident of 35 crore devotees visiting Prayagraj this time.

Already the numbers are telling, with a record 25 lakh people taking the holy dip on Saturday, two days ahead of the formal start of the event.



Seers take part in a 'Chhavani Praves' procession on the eve of Maha Kumbh 2025. ANI

"It will be a grand Maha Kumbh this time. Along with divinity and spirituality, it would also showcase modernity as this time it is going to be a 'Digi-Kumbh' of sorts with Artificial Intelligence (AI) being tapped in a big way," officials said.

On the ground, Prayagraj is all decked up for the grand occasion, ready to welcome saints, seers, pilgrims, and masses from across the globe, many of whom have

already arrived — all driven by the common goal of getting soaked in the spiritual fervour.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said during his one-of-the-many visits to Prayagraj that the Maha Kumbh, to be held from January 13 to February 26, will elevate India's ancient cultural and religious traditions to global prominence.

Calling the event a testament to India's rich spiritual



and cultural legacy, Adityanath said, "Maha Kumbh offers people from across the globe a chance to reconnect with their ancient traditions and cultural roots. The latest edition of the Maha Kumbh will be a grand, divine, and digitally advanced event." "Spanning 10,000 acres, the event will set an exemplary standard for cleanliness, security, and modernity. To enhance the convenience of devotees, a digital tourist map

will facilitate monitoring the cleanliness of toilets, while an AI-powered security system integrated with smartphones will ensure safety," the chief minister said. He also said the Maha Kumbh is not merely a religious event, but a symbol of social and spiritual unity. The event will transform (Mahakumbh Nagar) into the world's largest temporary city, accommodating 50 lakh to 1 crore devotees at any given time, Adityanath said.

## North Central Railways all set to run over 300 trains

TDG NETWORK  
PRAYAGRAJ

The North Central Railway (NCR) appears fully prepared to manage the massive influx of pilgrims for the Maha Kumbh, with plans to operate over 300 trains, including 80 special services, to ensure efficient transportation for devotees arriving in Prayagraj, an NCR official said.

Hours ahead of the commencement of the Maha Kumbh, the Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) of NCR, Shashi Kant Tripathi, told ANI that the railway authorities have completed all necessary preparations, including crowd management, ticket booking counters, train services, and security arrangements.

Providing details about train services, the CPRO said

that North Central Railways will also introduce unreserved short-distance regular trains starting tomorrow.

Shashi Kant Tripathi said, "We began our preparations for the Maha Kumbh two years ago.

Now, our preparations have reached a level where we can confidently welcome all our passengers. Our long-distance special trains commenced services on January 1, including 50 operations. Our ring rail services started on January 10, and unreserved short-distance regular trains will begin tomorrow, coinciding with the first day of the Maha Kumbh."

He added, "More than 80 Mela Special Trains will operate tomorrow, bringing the total number of trains in service to around 300.

## NDRF deploys water ambulance

TDG NETWORK  
PRAYAGRAJ

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has introduced a 'water ambulance' at the Sangam during the Maha Kumbh to ensure the safety of devotees.

The ambulance, equipped with medical facilities and staffed by doctors and senior NDRF officials, will operate 24/7 throughout the event.

NDRF Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Manoj Sharma described the water ambulance as a "roaming hospital" that will provide on-the-spot treatment during emergencies. "It is equipped with oxygen cylinders, emergency medicines, monitors, and other medical essentials.

# 'SHARAD PAWAR'S POLITICS OF BETRAYAL ENDED BY BJP'S VICTORY IN MAHA'

Shah stated that the 2024 results ended decades of political instability in Maharashtra, starting with Pawar's 1978 rebellion.

TDG NETWORK  
SHIRDI

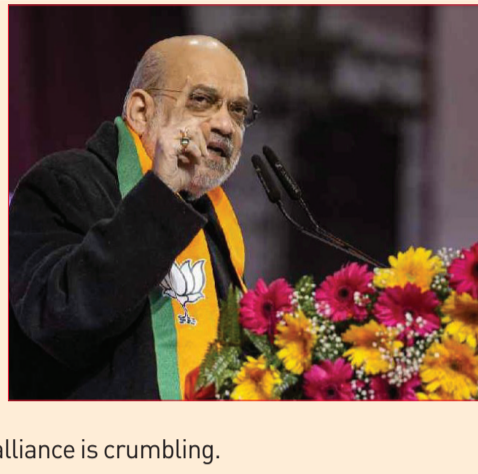
Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said veteran politician Sharad Pawar played politics of betrayal and treachery in Maharashtra from 1978, which was ended by BJP's massive victory in the assembly polls with its resolve to establish a stable government.

Addressing a state BJP convention in Shirdi, Shah said the people of Maharashtra showed Pawar, who heads NCP (SP), and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray their place by rejecting the politics of dynasty and betrayal in last year's elections.

In the 2024 assembly elections, the Mahayuti coalition of BJP, NCP and Shiv Sena won 230 of the 288 seats in the state. BJP led the pack with 132 seats. The opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) was

## BETRAYAL BROKEN

- Voters rejected Pawar's NCP and Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT), supporting BJP's stability.
- The BJP-led Mahayuti coalition won 230 of 288 seats, with BJP securing 132, while MVA got just 46.
- Shah criticized Pawar for failing to prevent farmer suicides, highlighting BJP's welfare initiatives for farmers.
- Shah expressed confidence in BJP's upcoming wins, including Delhi, and claimed the opposition alliance is crumbling.



reduced to 46 seats, with NCP (SP) and Sena (UBT) getting 10 and 20, respectively.

"Sharad Pawar started politics of 'daga-phatka' (betrayal and treachery) in Maharashtra in 1978, which was rejected by people in 2024 (elections). Similarly, the politics of the dynasty and the betrayal of Uddhav Thackeray was also rejected. Union Home

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kas Aghadi (MVA) was reduced to 46 seats, with NCP (SP) and Sena (UBT) getting 10 and 20, respectively.

Worry over new-age enemies: Amit Shah seeks states' support to curb drug trafficking

"Sharad Pawar started politics of 'daga-phatka' (betrayal and treachery) in Maharashtra in 1978, which was rejected by people in 2024 (elections). Similarly, the politics of the dynasty and the betrayal of Uddhav Thackeray was also rejected. "People showed Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray their place in the 2024 polls. They sent both home and made the real Shiv Sena and NCP victorious along with BJP," he said. Undivided NCP and Shiv Sena saw acrimonious splits in recent years.

The elections also ended the politics of instability in Maharashtra "which began in 1978", said Shah.

# Move on local polls doesn't mean MVA's end, says Raut

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday said his party wants to go solo in the local bodies polls to strengthen its base and has never called for dissolution of the opposition INDIA bloc or the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

Raut's remarks came a day after he cited the lack of opportunities for workers of respective parties in an alliance and the right to organisational growth as the major considerations for contesting solo, which raised a question mark over the opposition bloc's unity.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Raut said, "The MVA was formed for the assembly polls and INDIA bloc for the Lok Sabha elections. The local body elections are meant to empower party workers and strengthen the organisation at the grassroots level."

"I or my party have never said that the INDIA bloc or the MVA should be dissolved," the Rajya Sabha member added.

The INDIA bloc and MVA alliances include the Ud-



*"Peace cannot come by giving protection to the killers of sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh and Somnath Suryavanshi," he said.*

dhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress, and Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP).

Asked about the Congress leaders criticising him over comments regarding plans to go alone in the polls, Raut said the grand old party's members should listen to his full comments before reacting. "The Congress leaders should have the habit of listening to others," he said.

Raut said the Shiv Sena (UBT) wants to ensure its 'flaming torch' (poll) symbol reaches voters at the grassroots level. The MVA allies should now work at

the booth-level to strengthen its parties and their workers, he said.

"We have time as there are four-and-a-half years for the next Lok Sabha and Maharashtra assembly elections," the Sena (UBT) leader said.

Asked about NCP (SP) head Sharad Pawar's discussion with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis on bringing peace in Beed and Parbhani, Raut said Maharashtra is stunned after the assembly poll results.

"Peace cannot come by giving protection to the killers of sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh and Somnath Suryavanshi," he said.

The brutal murder of Santosh Deshmukh, the sarpanch of Massajog village in Beed district, on December 9 has triggered a slugfest between the ruling and opposition parties as one of the persons held in a related extortion case is a close associate of state minister Dhananjay Munde. The incident has led to widespread protests in the state and also given rise to fears of a caste conflict since Deshmukh was a Maratha and some of those held hail from the Vanjari community.

# 27 arrested in minor girl rape case in Kerala

TDG NETWORK  
PATHANAMTHITTA (KERALA)

As many as 23 people were arrested and four minors were apprehended in connection with the alleged sexual abuse of a Dalit girl in the district, police on Sunday said.

Ten more FIRs have been filed in the case in two police stations in Pathanamthitta district based on the statements of the girl, a release issued by Pathanamthitta District Police Chief said.

A total of 17 people were arrested, and four minors were apprehended in connection with seven cases registered by the Pathanamthitta police and six individuals have been nabbed by the Elavumthitta police, the release said.

Across both stations, a total of 27 accused have been arrested in the cases, it added.

A special investigation team has been formed to conduct a comprehensive probe into the incident, with



Pathanamthitta DYSP P S Nandakumar leading the team under the supervision of District Police Chief V G Vinod Kumar, the release said.

The team comprises 25 police officers from various ranks and stations.

The District Police Chief will review the investigation's progress daily, the release said.

The investigation revealed that several of the accused met the girl at the private bus stand in Pathanamthitta. She was then taken to various locations in vehicles and subjected to abuse, police said.

The probe also found that the girl while she was studying Plus-Two class last year

was taken by a youth who was acquainted with her through Instagram to a rubber plantation in Ranni and raped her along with three others.

Police said that the investigation found that she was gang raped at Pathanamthitta general hospital in January 2024.

Police are also focusing on gathering scientific evidence and examining mobile phones and other items as part of the probe.

A detailed investigation is ongoing, the District Police Chief stated.

The girl, who is now 18 years old, has alleged in her complaint that she was sexually abused by 62 individuals since the age of 13.

# NDA to boycott Feb 5 TN bypoll, says BJP leader Annamalai

TDG NETWORK  
CHENNAI

The BJP-led NDA has decided to boycott the Erode East bypoll scheduled for February 5 and would focus on dethroning the ruling DMK in the hustings next year, the saffron party's state unit said on Sunday.

BJP's announcement virtually makes the election a no-contest as main opposition AIADMK and the DMDK have already announced boycotting the by-election, necessitated by the death of Congress MLA EVKS Elangovan. DMK has nominated VC Chandrakumar on behalf of its-led bloc, which also has the Congress in the alliance.

BJP TN chief K Annamalai said the upcoming election was a "by-election for a by-election," following the bypoll held here in 2022.

He recalled there were accusations of the ruling DMK then "confining" people at designated places.



The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) faced the DMK violating poll rules due to the "arrogance" of being the ruling party.

"The coming 2026 Assembly polls is one meant to remove the DMK (from the ruling saddle) and the NDA is moving towards that target and does not want to allow the DMK to confine people like cattle once again," he said in a statement.

"All the leaders of NDA who desire people's welfare, after detailed consultation, have decided to boycott the Erode East bypoll. Our target is to remove the DMK in the 2026 elections and give the NDA's good governance to people," Annamalai said.

# Gadkari, Kangana Ranaut kick off 7th Khasdar Krida Mahotsav in Nagpur

TDG NETWORK  
NAGPUR

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari expressed his delight as he, along with BJP MP Kangana Ranaut, inaugurated the seventh edition of the Khasdar Krida Mahotsav, which began with a marathon featuring over a thousand participants, in Nagpur on Sunday.

The 20-day sporting event, which commenced today, will feature competitions across the city, with total prize money of Rs 1.5 crore. Approximately 80,000 athletes, aged between 4 and 85 years, are expected to participate. The event will include the distribution of 762 trophies and 12,317 medals to the winners.

Speaking at the event, Gadkari said, "I am very happy that we are starting the Krida Mahotsav in its seventh year today. Thousands of athletes participated in the marathon earlier this morning, marking



the beginning of this event on January 12. Over the next few days, we will all have the opportunity to enjoy various sports competitions in this arena. I am also delighted that this year, the program will run for 20 days.

"This year, 80,000 athletes will participate. From children as young as four years old to senior citizens aged 85, everyone will take part in these games. There are 762 trophies, 12,317 medals, and prize money totaling Rs 1.50 crore," he added.

BJP MP Kangana Ranaut, addressing the gathering,

highlighted concerns about adults' declining health and urged the organization of similar events in villages and smaller towns.

"In our country, surveys indicate that many adults are becoming unhealthy. The festivals and initiatives you are organizing are a great example. I encourage everyone to ensure that such festivals and programs are held in villages and smaller areas as well," Ranaut said.

She also praised Nagpur's enthusiasm for sports, saying, "There is a lot of enthusiasm about sports in Nagpur."

# Tension in B'loru as 3 cows attacked; CM orders inquiry

TDG NETWORK  
BENGALURU

Tension gripped Chamara-jpet area in the city after unidentified people attacked three cows, severing their udders.

According to police sources, the incident occurred at Vinayakanagar in Chamara-jpet. The cows belong to a local named Karna.

Residents woke up to the distressing sounds of the cattle and found the injured animals lying in a pool of blood, sparking outrage in the locality.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said he has directed Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda to investigate the case and take action.

Reacting to the incident, the BJP announced plans to observe 'Black Sankranti' if the government failed to take action.

"This heinous act reflects a Jihadi mindset. We will observe 'Black Sankranti' if



*Reacting to the incident, the BJP announced plans to observe 'Black Sankranti' if the government failed to take action.*

the government fails to take action against the accused persons," Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka told reporters.

He further stressed the cultural and religious significance of cows and bulls, which are decorated and worshipped during Sankranti festival.

"After this incident, how could we celebrate Sankranti?" Ashoka asked.

# Nation celebrates Vivekananda on Youth Day

TDG NETWORK  
AMARAVATI

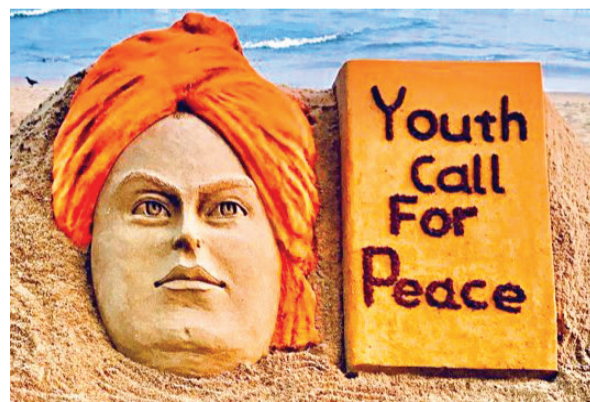
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday paid tribute to Swami Vivekananda on the occasion of Swami Vivekananda's 163rd birth anniversary in Amaravati.

India is celebrating National Youth Day, today in commemoration of the 'great spiritual leader, philosopher, and thinker Swami Vivekananda', whose unwavering belief in the potential of youth continues to resonate deeply with young citizens of the country.

Earlier in the day, the Andhra Pradesh CM also extended his greetings to the people on National Youth Day.

"Hard work is your weapon, but success is your slave," he said, giving a wonderful message. Greetings to all the youth who are celebrating the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda as National Youth Day," CM Naidu wrote on X.

Naidu highlighted the role



*Leader of Opposition and BJP leader Suvendu Adbikari urged everyone to move forward by following the values of Swami Vivekananda.*

of youths in the development of the state.

"Youth power should be a partner in the reconstruction of the state, in the eradication of poverty, and in the establishment of an equal society. Powerful technologies like social media, the internet, and AI should be used for your development without misusing them," his post reads.

Meanwhile, West Bengal BJP leader Suvendu Ad-

hikari, Sukanta Majumdar and TMC leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay on Sunday paid tribute to Swami Vivekananda at his residence in Kolkata on the occasion of his 163rd birth anniversary.

Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar speaking to ANI, highlighted that India is progressing under the ideals of Swami Vivekananda, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

"Today is the 163rd birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. We all have come here on this occasion. We will do a small marathon here... India is moving forward with the ideals of Swami Vivekananda under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. In the coming times, the youth of India will give a new shape not only to India but to the whole world. Our youth have the ability to shape the world," Majumdar said.

Leader of Opposition and BJP leader Suvendu Adbikari urged everyone to move forward by following the values of Swami Vivekananda.

"This day is being celebrated all over the country, especially in Bengal. Paying homage to Swami Vivekananda, everyone is saying that we should proudly say that we are Hindus. We have to move forward by following the values of Swami Vivekananda," Adbikari said.

TMC MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay also paid tribute to Swami Vivekananda at his residence in Kolkata.

# Rift within I.N.D.I.A bloc even during 2024 LS elections: Meghwal

TDG NETWORK  
HUBLI

Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal took a jibe at the I.N.D.I.A bloc and said that there was a rift within the alliance even during the 2024 general elections, adding that alliance parties were together only for political reasons.

This follows the Delhi Assembly Elections where allies of the I.N.D.I.A alliance - Congress and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) announced that they would fight the elections separately. However, these two parties have fought the Lok Sabha 2024 elections together.

Speaking to reporters, Meghwal said, "There was a rift within the alliance even during the 2024 general elections... They were together only for political reasons... Their ideology was never the same... It seems that the alliance has broken up..."



The Union Minister further hit out at the AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal over "Sheesh Mahal" stating that he has been exposed.

Exuding confidence in his party, Meghwal said that the BJP would win the upcoming Delhi elections with a huge majority and form its government.

"Arvind Kejriwal has been exposed. He doesn't do anything which he says. He came into politics after the movement by Anna Hazare. Kejriwal initially said he wouldn't take any governmental service, whether car or bungalow. Now, he has made a big bungalow, took 2 securities and a car... Kejriwal's popularity has been decreased."

# CM ANNOUNCES KEY INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ON SWAMI VIVEKANANDA JAYANTI

CM announced initiatives for youth empowerment, including sports, education, skills, and foreign language proficiency.

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday dedicated the 163rd birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda to the youth of the state and announced several initiatives for their upliftment. After inaugurating 250 gyms simultaneously for rural youth, he announced free equipment for eight notified sports and inclusion of Inter Youth Club Games in the annual sports calendar of the state. He also announced opening of at least one ITI in every block of the state.

Additionally, the Chief Minister announced a special policy to help youth gain proficiency in foreign languages, with the government covering the costs of certification from relevant agencies.

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini was addressing the youth at a state-level 'Yuva Diwas' function organised in Panchkula on

the occasion of Swami Vivekananda Jayanti.

Addressing the gathering, Saini launched a song sung by renowned artist Naveen Punia, designed to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse. He also distributed job offer letters to ITI trainees and honoured NSS volunteers for their contributions.

The Chief Minister, while paying obeisance to Swami Vivekananda, called upon the youth to eliminate the social evil of drugs from the state. He said Vivekananda had sounded the clarion call for renaissance in India. He ignited a flame of self-respect, pride and spiritual awakening among the countrymen.

Saini spoke in detail about Swami Vivekananda's life, his love for wrestling, his remarkable memory, and his speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions. The Chief Minister emphasised that the future of India's Constitution and institutions rests on the shoulders of the youth and urged them

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

- Haryana CM announced initiatives for youth empowerment, including free sports equipment and ITI expansion.
- He launched policy for foreign language proficiency and advanced skill centres in emerging technologies.
- He also highlighted efforts to provide jobs, training, and opportunities, ensuring youth's role in state and national development.



to lead the country in accordance with its fundamental principles.

Talking about the work done by the state government in the interest of the youth, he said this is the third term of the government.

The Chief Minister highlighted the state's efforts over the last 10 years to empower youth, including the implementation of the National Education Policy and the establishment of the Shri Vishwakarma Skill

Development University, the first of its kind in the country. He assured that the government has provided over 1.71 lakh government jobs to youth on merit and set a target of offering permanent government jobs to 2 lakh youth in the current term.

Saini also shared the success of the Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam, which not only provides employment but also job security for the youth. He mentioned several other schemes, includ-

ing 'Nal Jal Mitra,' which has trained 6,000 youth to assist in water supply in rural areas, and programs like 'Drone Didi Yojana,' 'Contractor Saksham Yuva Yojana,' and 'IT Saksham Yuva Yojana,' which have provided employment opportunities to around 25,000 youth. Saini expressed concern over sending youths abroad through Donkey route and appealed to parents to save their children from this wrong practice. He said a Foreign

Cooperation Department has been created to help the youths looking for employment abroad.

The Chief Minister said a portal 'Global Haryanvi' has been created for those Haryanvis who are settled in other countries, but their families are here. They can get help by sharing their problems related to land, property, any kind of dispute in the family or opportunities to invest in the state on the portal.

To enhance employment opportunities in the private sector, the government has partnered with 258 industries under the 'Dual System of Training,' providing youth with practical training. Looking toward 2030, Saini outlined plans to make every youth skilled and financially prosperous through initiatives like NSQF in schools, 'Pahal Yojana' in colleges, incubation centres at universities, and collaborations with industries to tailor training programs in technical institutes.

## Kumari Selja accuses AMRUT Scheme of corruption, demands white paper

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

The General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, former Union Minister, and Member of Parliament from Sirsa, Kumari Selja said that the AMRUT Scheme (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation), launched to improve the infrastructure of cities and towns, including provisions for water, sewerage, urban transport, and parks, has fallen prey to corruption. The scheme has failed wherever it was implemented. Kumari Selja said that the government release a white paper detailing the expenditure and works undertaken under the scheme.

In a statement issued to the media, Kumari Selja said that the AMRUT Scheme was launched on June 25, 2015, by the Ministry of Urban Development. The purpose of this scheme was to improve the infrastructure of cities and towns, providing facilities such as water, sewerage, urban transport, and parks. The goal was to enhance the quality of life for everyone, especially the poor and marginalised. The scheme aimed to establish infrastructure for urban renewal projects that could

ensure a strong sewerage network and sufficient water supply for urban transformation. The scheme is based on the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. It focuses on ensuring tap and sewerage connections for every household, creating well-maintained green spaces, and reducing pollution by promoting public transport and non-motorised transport options like walking and cycling.

Kumari Selja said that on June 25, 2015, the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation was launched in 500 selected cities and towns across the country. She claimed that the work under the scheme was primarily carried out for paperwork purposes, with funds being misappropriated. The situation worsened in the cities and towns where this scheme was implemented, instead of improving the infrastructure. The government turned a blind eye despite being aware of the issues. People grew tired of complaining, but no action was taken. In Sirsa, under this scheme, Rs 40 crore was spent on laying pipelines for rainwater drainage. Yet, the city still faces waterlogging issues, and the situation has worsened.

## Agriculture Minister transfers Rs 184 crore into farmers' accounts through DBT

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Shyam Singh Rana took a significant step in the interest of farmers and transferred an amount of Rs 184 crores directly into their bank accounts. This includes a subsidy of Rs 122 crores on 10,393 machines for crop residue management equipment and a bonus of Rs 62 crores.

On this occasion, Rana said the state government is fully committed to the welfare of farmers. This Direct



Benefit Transfer (DBT) will not only provide economic strength to the farmers but will also raise their standard of living. He announced that a bonus of Rs 2,000 per acre would be given for agricultural and horticultural crops affected by adverse weather conditions

*On this occasion, Rana said the state government is fully committed to the welfare of farmers. This Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) will not only provide economic strength to the farmers but will also raise their standard of living.*

during the Kharif season of 2024. Rs 62 crore was directly transferred to farmers' accounts as part of this initiative. To date, Rs 860 crore has been transferred through DBT to 8.18 lakh farmers.

Regarding the subsidy on crop residue management

equipment, the Agriculture Minister said an amount of Rs 122 crore has been released for 10,393 machines. He said this step of the state government would prove to be crucial for solving environmental concerns and promoting advanced agricultural practices.

## Haryana's teams shine at Junior National Kabaddi Championship

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

The 50th Junior National Kabaddi Championship held at Roshanabad Stadium in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, witnessed another stellar performance by Haryana's Kabaddi players, who brought glory to the state. In the championship, Haryana's men's Kabaddi team clinched the gold medal, while the women's team secured the silver medal. Shri Krishan Lal Panwar, Haryana's Development and Panchayat, and Mining and Geology Minister.

urged them to uphold ethical values, stating that advocacy should not only reflect professional ability but also ethical integrity. Lawyers, he said, should always stand for truth and justice and use their profession for the betterment of society and the nation.

The Chief Minister also praised the Bar Council for its achievements over the past 63 years. He noted that the council, one of the oldest in the country, has produced many distinguished lawyers who have gone on to hold high positions in various courts and government roles, including Supreme Court judges and law ministers. The council has produced many judges of the Supreme Court, Law and Railway Ministers of the country, Advocate Generals of Punjab and Haryana, Additional Solicitor Generals, and likewise. Currently, the council oversees 150 bar associations across Haryana, Punjab, and Chandigarh, with over 1.52 lakh members.

The event was also attended by Advocate General of Haryana Pravinindra Singh Chauhan, President of the Haryana and Punjab Bar Council Dr Vijender Singh Ahlawat, Vice-President Chetan Sharma, and other bar officials, along with the new lawyers.

## CM administers oath to 1,145 new lawyers of Bar Council

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said advocacy is not just a profession but a public service. Lawyers can bring positive change in society by contributing to the judicial system of the country and the field of advocacy is not limited to the knowledge of law, rather lawyers play their role in providing justice to the weaker and deprived sections of society.

Saini said this during the oath-taking ceremony of new lawyers, organised by the Punjab and Haryana Bar Council at Law Bhawan in Chandigarh. During the ceremony, the Chief Minister administered oath to 1,145 new lawyers and provided them licences.

Saini said it is the result of the nationalist vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that independent India has got freedom from three laws of slavery after seven decades. He requested all the new lawyers to contribute in making the public aware about the new laws. Apart from making three new criminal laws, Modi has abolished about 1,600 laws. A total of 175 unnecessary laws have also been identified in Haryana. Out of these, 28 have

been repealed. The Chief Minister highlighted the Haryana Government's ongoing efforts to train and equip legal professionals. He mentioned that more than 300 awareness programs had been organized to inform the public about the three new laws. Furthermore, over 43,000 officers and employees, including judicial officers, research officers, and public prosecutors, have been trained to effectively implement these new laws.

He said that the Haryana government is contributing in every possible way for lawyers and judiciary. The government is ensuring modern facilities, technical resources and training programmes for lawyers so that everyone can do their work more effectively. It is important to have coordination, transparency and ethics between lawyers and the judiciary. The rule of law is the foundation of any democratic country.

The Chief Minister said that in the digital age, changes are taking place in the field of law. The use of new technologies is opening new doors of opportunities for lawyers. All lawyers should adopt new technologies and contribute in making the process of justice fast and transparent. He

## Anil Vij reviews development projects, urges expedited completion

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

Haryana's Energy, Transport and Labor Minister, Anil Vij held a review meeting at his residence with municipal council officials and BJP leaders regarding various ongoing development projects in Ambala Cantonment. During the meeting, he instructed the officials to provide bicycles for the cycle track at Gandhi Ground to ensure its early inauguration.

During the meeting, Vij di-



rected the municipal council officials to expedite the completion of ongoing development works and reviewed other projects. He assessed the progress of sewer pipeline installations in various areas of the cantonment and instructed that road

repair work in areas where pipelines have already been installed be completed promptly. He also inquired about the construction of sewage treatment plants (STPs) at Babyal, Khudda Khurd, Machhonda, and 12 Cross Road. Officials reported that the STP at Babyal has been completed, while the remaining three will be completed soon.

The cabinet minister reviewed the installation of stormwater pipelines near Nigar Cinema and instructed the relocation of electric-

ity poles obstructing the road. Similarly, he directed the removal of overhead wires in front of the under-construction Bank Square. The minister directed the installation of a shed on the top floor of the multi-level car parking on Railway Road to accommodate more cars. He also instructed officials to expedite work on the car lift in the parking facility.

The minister reviewed the progress of stormwater pipeline installation in the Sadar area with municipal officials.

## Haryana prepares for municipal elections; legal amendments needed for vacant mayoral posts

DR RAVINDER MALIK  
CHANDIGARH

The Haryana State Election Commission is making preparations for the general elections to 33 municipal bodies in the state, including 8 municipal corporations, 21 municipal councils, and 21 municipal committees. These elections are expected to be announced by the end of January or in February 2025.

Last month, the Haryana State Election Commission released a detailed schedule for updating voter lists for the 9 municipal corporations, including Ambala, Panchkula, Gurugram, Faridabad, Manesar, Hisar, Rohtak, Karnal, and Yamunanagar. The voter list up-

date process for these areas is expected to be completed by the end of January 2025. However, the voter list update for Panipat Municipal Corporation is still pending.

Meanwhile, an expert in such matters, Hemant Kumar, said that as far as Faridabad and Gurugram Municipal Corporations are concerned, general elections in these two corporations are pending since 2022, whereas the first general elections of Manesar Municipal Corporation, formed four years ago in December 2020, have not been held till date, which, however, can be held legally for a maximum period of five and a half years from the date of formation, i.e.,

till June 2026. The general elections in Hisar, Karnal, Panipat, Rohtak, and Yamunanagar Municipal Corporations are pending since last year, 2024.

The tenures for the Ambala and Sonapat Municipal Corporations are set to last until January 2026. On 8 October 2024, Shakti Rani Sharma, the then Mayor of Ambala and BJP MLA from Kalka, and Nikhil Madan, the then Mayor of Sonapat and MLA from Sonapat, successfully contested elections. As per Section 8A of the Haryana Municipal Corporation Act, 1994, a person cannot hold the position of mayor or municipal corporation member while also serving as an

MLA or MP. Following their election to the Legislative Assembly, both mayors were de-notified from their positions by the State Election Commission on 2 December 2024. Regarding the bye-elections for the vacant mayoral posts in Ambala and Sonapat Municipal Corporations, Section 13 of the Haryana Municipal Corporation Act, 1994, which governs the filling of vacant mayoral seats, was amended in November 2020.

The amendment mistakenly specified that the provisions of this section would not apply to vacant mayoral posts, meaning that such positions could not be filled through bye-elections.

## Hooda calls for Girdawari, criticises govt on MSP, law and order issues

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

Former Haryana Chief Minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda has said that unseasonal rains and canal breakage have caused large-scale crop damage in the state. He called for immediate special Girdawari to be conducted so that farmers can receive timely compensation. Hooda mentioned that farmers from several villages, whose lands were affected, had approached him.

Responding to questions of journalists in Rohtak,



Hooda said the condition of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on a fast unto death with the demand of legal guarantee of MSP, is serious and his life is valuable for all of us.

"The government must

abandon its stubborn stance, initiate talks, and find a swift resolution to this critical issue," Hooda urged.

He also said that the demands of the farmers are legitimate and not new.

"The central government has already accepted the demands in principle and the government itself had promised them a legal guarantee of MSP," he stated.

Responding to the question of the poor law and order situation in the state, Hooda said it has completely collapsed.

"Until the law and order situation is not improved, the state cannot develop. Due to unemployment and poor law and order, the problem of drug addiction has spread throughout the state. The number of youth

dying from drug addiction in Haryana has surpassed that in Punjab," he pointed out.

On the question related to the statement of former Chief Minister and Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, he said Manohar Lal Khattar himself was an accidental CPM.

"The BJP government has no achievements of its own. Despite being in power for 10 years, Haryana is at the lowest level in terms of per capita income, per capita investment, employment under BJP rule," he stated.

## THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON 90-HOUR WORK CONTROVERSY

**53% BELIEVE THAT EMPLOYEES SHOULD GET AT LEAST TWO DAYS OFF WEEKLY.**

A recent survey on L&T Chairman S. N. Subrahmanyam's 90-hour workweek remark revealed divided opinions. While 39% found it im-

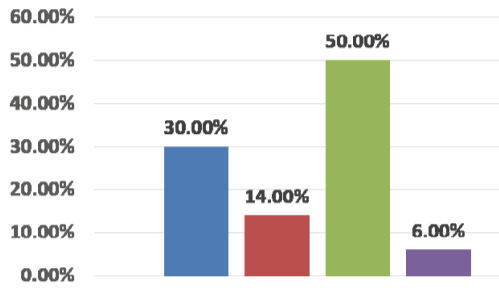
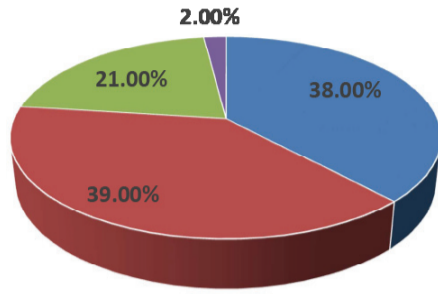
practical, 38% called it progressive. Half believed prioritizing work harms personal life, with 66% favoring a 48-hour workweek for

balance. On weekly offs, 53% supported two days. Regarding productivity, 36% felt long hours improve it, while 30% disagreed.

**Q1.**

What is your opinion on the statement made by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Chairman S. N. Subrahmanyam regarding working 90 hours a week?

- A progressive statement
- Not practical in today's times
- Such things should not happen
- No opinion



**Q2.**

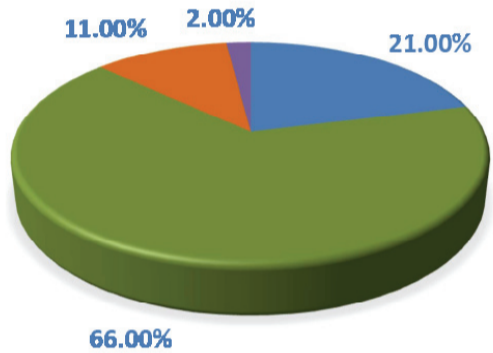
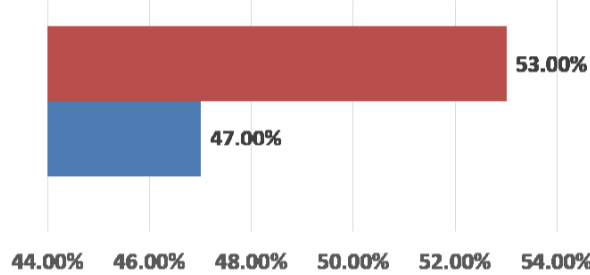
What does S. N. Subrahmanyam's comment about prioritizing work over spending more time at home and with family mean to you?

- A positive impact on professional life
- A negative impact on personal life
- It may lead to health issues
- No opinion

**Q3.**

If you work for a private company, how many days off do you think you should get in a week?

- At least 1 day off
- At least 2 days off



**Q4.**

How many hours a day do you think are reasonable for maintaining a work-life balance?

- 40 hours per week
- 48 hours per week
- 70 hours per week
- 90 hours per week

## THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON BANGLADESHI VS BSF FIGHT

**54% BELIEVE INFILTRATION IS CAUSE OF CONFLICT BETWEEN BSF AND BANGLADESH FORCES**

Following recent objections by Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) over Border Security Force's (BSF) fencing efforts along the India-Bangladesh border, a

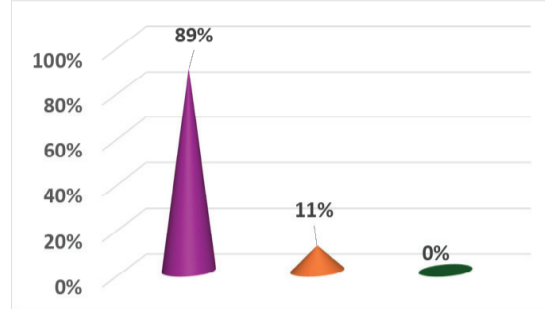
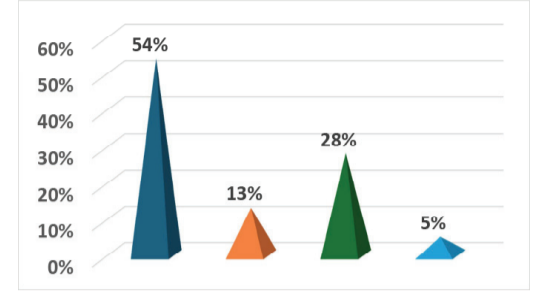
meeting was held at Petrapole in North 24 Parganas. BSF's inspector-general and BGB's brigadier-general discussed border management, preventing ille-

gal crossings, curbing cross-border crimes, and enhancing cooperation to maintain peace and security, according to a BSF statement.

**Q1.**

What is the main reason for the conflict between BSF and Border Guards Bangladesh on the border?

- Infiltration
- Dispute over fishing in the border area
- Lack of proper fencing
- Cannot say



**Q2.**

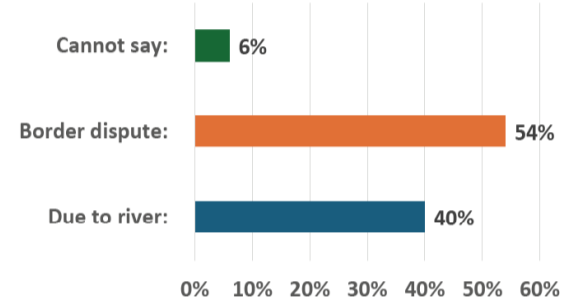
Has terrorism increased in areas like Malda and North 24 Parganas due to absence of security measures?

- A - Yes
- B - No
- C - Cannot say

**Q3.**

Why were security measures not implemented within 100 kilometers of the Indian border with Bangladesh?

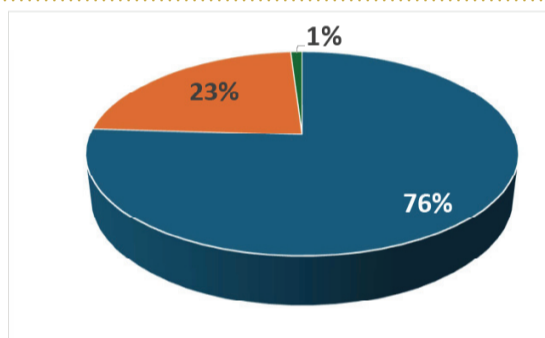
- Due to river
- Border dispute
- Cannot say



**Q4.**

Did Bangladesh react by deploying its military after India decided to install fencing on the border?

- A - Yes
- B - No
- C - Cannot say



## PM Modi: Youth power will...

CONTINUED FROM P1

their ideas would be integral to building a developed India.

"India's youth are not limited by closed AC rooms. Their vision soars higher than the sky. Their ideas will be incorporated into policies and will steer the country towards the vision of 'Viksit Bharat'," he said.

"Today, with the energy of the youth power of India, this Bharat Mandapam has also become filled with energy and has become energetic. Today, the whole country is remembering Swami Vivekananda and

paying tribute to him," he mentioned.

PM Modi also recalled the struggle of those who fought for India's independence. "The people of India took a pledge to get freedom. What was the strength of the British Empire, what did they not have...But the country stood up, started living the dream of independence and the people of India showed it by achieving independence."

Saying that the energy of the youth is palpable and felt across the venue, the PM paid tribute to Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda had a lot of faith in the young gen-

eration and said the youth will find solutions to all problems, Modi said.

PM Modi also highlighted the recent achievements of his government, including India's swift development and administration of the coronavirus vaccine, and achieving the Paris Agreement targets set at COP 21 meeting to control climate change.

Some people claimed that it would take years for India to administer the COVID-19 vaccine. However, we conducted the biggest vaccination programme and everyone was inoculated in record time.

## 'Vivekananda motivated youth'

CONTINUED FROM P1

There was no such area of life whose essence was untouched by Swami Vivekananda. He had a connection with the youth. He travelled all over India and found the divine path. He awakened the zeal of the youth. It has been said that 'Udyamen hi siddhanti karyani na manorathaih' means that work is accomplished only by working hard and not by just wishing.

The aspect of his life related to addressing the World Religious Conference is also inspiring. All the money he had was finished when he reached Chicago. Bitter cold, lack

of warm clothes and he did not have a proper identity card to enter the religious conference that brought him to the masses. Difficulties everywhere. If it had been someone else, he would have panicked and returned. Swamiji did not lose patience. Battling with the circumstances, he entered the religious conference and made India proud all over the world with his address. He also said in the religious parliament that no religion is a bondage but a path to liberation. One gets the destination according to the path he makes.

His statement in the religious parliament is still inspiring that "I belong

to that religion which has taught the world the lesson of tolerance and universal acceptance. We not only believe in universal tolerance, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud that I belong to a country that has given shelter to persecuted people of all religions and all countries. I am proud that we have preserved in our hearts the sacred memories of Israel, whose religious places were destroyed by Roman invaders and who then took refuge in South India.

The most important trait and determinant of our personality is character. Swamiji inspired the youth towards character building.

## 'Eagerly awaiting my visit to Sonamarg,' PM Modi Tweets ahead of Z-Morh tunnel inauguration

CONTINUED FROM P1

Abdullah visited Sonamarg to review preparations for the high-profile event. Sharing aerial views of the tunnel and its surroundings, he posted, "The inauguration of the Z-Morh tunnel will open Sonamarg to tourism all year round. Sonamarg will now be developed as a great ski resort. The local population will not have to leave in winter, and the travel time to Kargil and Leh from Srinagar will also reduce." Ahead of the Prime Minister's visit, security forces have intensified measures across Kashmir. Additional personnel have been deployed, and dozens of checkpoints have been set up to ensure the event proceeds smoothly. Officials said multi-layered security arrangements, including aerial surveillance and tech-

nical monitoring, have been implemented near the tunnel site. The Srinagar-Leh National Highway has been closed until Monday, with authorities citing icy conditions and maintenance work. However, many believe the closure is primarily a security measure for the Prime Minister's visit. Situated at an altitude of 8,650 feet, the Z-Morh tunnel comprises a two-lane main tunnel, an emergency escape tunnel, and approach roads. This vital infrastructure will not only enhance year-round travel to Ladakh but also significantly improve travel times. Along with the under-construction Zojila tunnel, set for completion in 2028, the Z-Morh tunnel will reduce the route length from 49 km to 43 km and allow vehicles to travel at speeds of up to 70 km/hr.

## AAP chief 'provoking'...

CONTINUED FROM P1

corruption, inefficiency in implementing welfare schemes, and a failure to address the growing pollution levels in the city.

The BJP has even gone as far as calling AAP's governance a threat to Delhi, drawing a parallel to "AAPda" -- a term they say reflects the disruptive impact on the

capital under the AAP rule. On the other hand, AAP has hit back at the BJP labelling it as the "Galli Galoch party" and accusing it of "dishonest tactics" and "electoral fraud".

The Delhi assembly polls will be held in a single phase on February 5 and the counting of votes will take place on February 8.

The last date for filing nominations is January 17. The date for scrutiny of nominations is January 18. While last date for withdrawal of candidature is January 20. The Congress, which was in power for 15 consecutive years in Delhi, has suffered setbacks in the last two assembly elections and has failed to win any seat.

## Cong promises Rs 8,500 in Delhi polls

CONTINUED FROM P1

Congress' student wing, president Varun Chaudhary were also present.

"We will encourage them to work in the companies or factories and we will help you. So we will try to give via companies. This is not a scheme to give allowance to people sitting at home.

"Yes, this is a guarantee that if there is a person who

is not able to be absorbed in any factory or company, then we are ready to bear. This is an encouragement for one year so that they can stand on their feet," Pilot said.

The leaders also launched the poster of the scheme during the press conference.

"I have full confidence that on February 5, people will give the Congress a chance to serve in the national cap-

ital with a good majority," he added.

On January 6, the Congress announced the 'Pyari Didi Yojana', promising a monthly financial assistance of Rs 2,500 for women if it is voted to power.

On January 8, the party announced the 'Jeevan Raksha Yojana', under which it promised to provide free health insurance of up to Rs 25 lakh.

## BJP declares third list

CONTINUED FROM P1

Bisht, who is BJP's sitting MLA from Karawal Nagar constituency, will be up against Aam Aadmi Party candidate Adil Ahmad Khan and Congress candidate Ali Mahndi from the seat.

Earlier, AIMIM announced the candidature of former MCD Councillor Tahir Hussain and AAP leader, Tahir Hussain from the Mustafabad constituency.

Hussain is currently in judicial custody for his alleged role in the 2020 North East

Delhi riots. AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi also met Tahir Hussain's family and extended his support to him and his family.

Notably, AAP had suspended Hussain after his name surfaced in the above-mentioned case.

## Jaishankar to attend inauguration

CONTINUED FROM P1

United States of America." The ceremonial event is set to take place on January 20, approximately two weeks after Trump's electoral college win was certified by the US Congress. Earlier on January 6, Trump's election victory was certified ahead of his inauguration with no objections from any lawmakers as the tally of states was announced on the House floor. Donald Trump won

312 electoral votes while Harris got 226 votes, a total that was confirmed during the certification on Monday, marking the final step in the election process before Trump returns back to the White House on January 20.

Republican lawmakers gave a standing ovation in the chamber when Harris announced Trump's victory was certified, The Hill reported. A bipartisan standing ovation broke out in the House Chamber after

Harris announced that the joint session of Congress was dissolved. The event lasted for around 30 minutes before Kamala Harris gavelled it out. US Vice President Kamala Harris presided over the process and the proceedings went off without a hitch. Several lawmakers helped in the counting, including Senator Amy Klobuchar, Senator Deb Fischer and Representatives - Bryan Steil and Joe Morelle.

## Dalit girl's sexual abuse...

CONTINUED FROM P1

people since the age of 13, which sparked outrage in the society. The Congress-led front said no criminal allegedly involved in the case should go scot-free and a foolproof investigation and comprehensive evidence col-

lection is required for the same. "For this, the government should immediately appoint a Special Investigation Team headed by a woman IPS officer," Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly V D Satheesan demanded.

Under these circumstances,

it is also necessary to ascertain whether there are crimes that are yet to come to light, he pointed out. The brutal harassment the Pathanamthitta girl suffered was also proof of the shortcomings and weakness of our systems, the LoP added.

# MHA TRANSFERS ADGP VIJAY KUMAR TO DELHI; SPECULATION GROWS

The move has sparked speculation that Kumar may soon take charge as a Special Commissioner in Delhi Police.

AJAY JANDYAL  
JAMMU

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has transferred Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) for Law and Order in Jammu and Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, an IPS officer from the 1997 batch, to the Delhi segment of the AGMUT cadre. The move has sparked speculation that Kumar may soon take charge as a Special Commissioner in Delhi Police.

An official order issued by the MHA stated, "With the approval of the competent authority, Vijay Kumar, IPS (AGMUT: 1997) is hereby transferred from Jammu and Kashmir to Delhi segment of AGMUT cadre with immediate effect or until further orders."

Kumar has earned a reputation as one of the most accomplished officers in tackling terrorism, having

## MORE INFORMATION ABOUT KUMAR

- Kumar has earned a reputation as one of the most accomplished officers in tackling terrorism, having played a pivotal role during his tenure as Inspector General (IG) and later ADGP in Kashmir.
- A native of Saharsa district in Bihar, Kumar holds a Master's degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. His distinguished career includes a rare blend of counter-terrorism, anti-Maoist, and law-and-order operations, both within and beyond Jammu and Kashmir.
- Kumar is the only IPS officer from the erstwhile J&K cadre to serve in the Special Operations Group (SOG), the anti-terror wing of J&K Police, in South Kashmir.



played a pivotal role during his tenure as Inspector General (IG) and later ADGP in Kashmir. His operational expertise has been instrumental in neutralizing terrorism in sensitive districts like Pulwama, Awantipora, Kulgam, and Anantnag, official sources said.

A native of Saharsa dis-

trict in Bihar, Kumar holds a Master's degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. His distinguished career includes a rare blend of counter-terrorism, anti-Maoist, and law-and-order operations, both within and beyond Jammu and Kashmir.

Notably, Kumar is the only

IPS officer from the erstwhile J&K cadre to serve in the Special Operations Group (SOG), the anti-terror wing of J&K Police, in South Kashmir.

His contributions have been widely recognized. Kumar was awarded the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service

in 2023 on Republic Day and has received three gallantry medals from the central government for his role in anti-terror operations. The J&K government has also honored him with a gallantry award.

Kumar's accomplishments extend beyond anti-terrorism. The Election Commission of India awarded him the National Award for his role as Chief Force Coordinator of CAPFs, ensuring secure environments during Assembly elections in nine states in 2018.

The seasoned officer has also played critical roles in handling anti-Maoist operations in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region and managing law-and-order challenges like the Jat agitation.

As he transitions to his new role, Kumar's legacy in Jammu and Kashmir underscores his unwavering commitment to national security and public safety.

# J&K Police freezes over 100 bank accounts linked to drug trafficking in Srinagar

AJAY JANDYAL  
SRINAGAR

In a major breakthrough in the fight against narcotics smuggling, Jammu and Kashmir Police have frozen over 100 bank accounts allegedly linked to drug trafficking networks in Srinagar, officials revealed.

The account holders, who have been arrested under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, are suspected of being deeply involved in narcotics and psychotropic substance trafficking, posing a grave threat to public safety, particularly to the youth.

"These accounts collectively hold deposits amounting to several lakhs of rupees," police officials said. "All associated transactions are under detailed scrutiny to trace the flow of illicit funds." The freezing of these accounts effectively blocks access to financial resources critical to the operations of

*The police have also appealed to the public for support in this mission, urging residents to report any information related to drug peddling or abuse. Citizens are encouraged to contact their nearest police station or dial 112 to report suspicious activities.*

drug trafficking networks.

Police investigations under the NDPS Act have also led to the attachment of movable and immovable properties valued at crores of rupees, suspected to have been acquired through illicit narcotics trade. This action has been carried out under Section 68F(2) of the NDPS Act.

Officials emphasized that the crackdown underscores the commitment to dismantling drug trafficking networks in the region. "Comprehensive investigations are ongoing to identify and disrupt the financial and lo-

gistical support structures of these networks," they added.

The police have also appealed to the public for support in this mission, urging residents to report any information related to drug peddling or abuse. Citizens are encouraged to contact their nearest police station or dial 112 to report suspicious activities.

This intensified action highlights the commitment of Jammu and Kashmir Police to safeguarding communities and eradicating the drug menace in the region.

# Search operation intensifies in Akhnoor to track terrorists near LoC

AJAY JANDYAL  
JAMMU

A search operation to track down terrorists, who were reported to have moved near the Search Operation Intensifies in Akhnoor Sector to Track Suspected Terrorists Near LoC. Officials said that the operation has intensified with the deployment of drones and advanced equipment.

The operation was initiated on Saturday by various units of the Army in the Bhattal area, following reports from villagers about suspicious movements near the Jogiwan forest. The villagers speculated that the movement might be linked to infiltrating terrorists.

Officials stated that while the operation is ongoing with additional troops mobilized to cover a larger area, no trace of the suspected individuals has been found so far. Security forces have also deployed drones, sniffer dogs, and



*This comes after a successful operation in the Akhnoor sector on October 28-29, when three heavily armed terrorists from the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) were eliminated in a two-day-long engagement.*

other advanced technology to assist in the search. Police teams have joined the operation to bolster the efforts.

This comes after a successful operation in the

Akhnoor sector on October 28-29, when three heavily armed terrorists from the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) were eliminated in a two-day-long engagement.

# Cold grip tightens in J&K as 'Chillai Kalan' continues

AJAY JANDYAL  
SRINAGAR

Intense cold continued to grip Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday as the temperature gap between the maximum and minimum remained narrow, with the Meteorological (MeT) office forecasting dry and cold weather for the next 24 hours.

On Saturday, the maximum temperature in Srinagar city was recorded at 5.8°C, while the minimum dropped to -3°C on Sunday. In Gulmarg, the maximum temperature was 2.4°C on Saturday, with the minimum plummeting to -5.6°C on Sunday. Similarly, Pahalgam saw a maximum temperature of 4.8°C, and the minimum recorded was -6.2°C. Jammu city experienced a minimum temperature of 10.5°C, Katra town had 8.4°C, Batote saw 4.6°C, Banihal recorded 0.7°C, and Bhandarwah's minimum was 2.5°C.

A statement from the MeT office predicted: "On January 12, expect generally cloudy weather in the morning, with improvement thereafter. January 13 will see mainly clear and dry conditions, while January 14 will remain dry with generally cloudy skies.

Light snow is expected at isolated higher reaches on January 15 and 16, with generally cloudy conditions continuing on January 17 and 18."

The harsh winter period known as the 'Chillai Kalan' began on December 21 and will continue until January 30. During this period, Kashmiris rely on the 'Pheran,' a loose tweed overgarment, and the 'Kangri,' a willow wicker firepot, to stay warm. These traditional items help locals endure the bitter cold and survive the Chillai Kalan.

Medical experts have warned, particularly advising caution for children and the elderly, about the dangers of prolonged exposure to extreme cold. Hypothermia, resulting from constricted blood vessels due to cold, can lead to serious health risks such as heart attacks and heart failure.

In the absence of 24/7 electricity in the region, the use of Pherans and Kangris has become essential, as Jammu and Kashmir struggles with a significant electricity supply gap. Factors like transmission losses, pilgrimages, and the low cost of electricity contribute to the ongoing power supply issues.

# Omar Abdullah criticises proposed train changes for Kashmir rail link

AJAY JANDYAL  
SRINAGAR

Ahead of the inauguration of the Kashmir rail link, National Conference (NC) leader Omar Abdullah's tweet has sparked a heated debate, as he raised concerns over proposed changes in the train operations. In a social media post, Abdullah argued that forcing passengers to change trains would undermine the purpose of the railway line and render the substantial investment in the project pointless.

"Just to remove any chance of misunderstanding, while we understand the need to secure the train and the passengers, making passengers change trains will defeat the very purpose of the line and render the thousands of crores of investment pointless," Abdullah wrote in his tweet. He further emphasized, "Check the train/passengers in Katra or Jammu, sure, but NO change of train will be supported by us. That said, there is no concrete proposal, and when there is, we will provide our inputs and suggestions."

This tweet followed hours after the former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister spoke to a local portal, reiterating the importance of ensuring the security of the train and its passengers, a sentiment he mentioned was shared by the people of the region.

In response to Abdullah's tweet, former Deputy Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Kavinder Gupta countered, stressing the re-



*This tweet followed hours after the former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister spoke to a local portal, reiterating the importance of ensuring the security of the train and its passengers, a sentiment he mentioned was shared by the people of the region.*

sponsibility of the security agencies. "Omar is sitting on a responsible chair, and he should not be under pressure. He must understand that the agencies operating the train and deployed for security have to ensure the safety of every life. Let them handle it," Gupta remarked, defending the security measures under consideration for the

train service. The controversy stems from ongoing discussions about the security arrangements for the train service, which aims to enhance connectivity in the region. While securing the train is paramount, the debate over operational procedures and their impact on passenger convenience remains a contentious issue.

# CM Sukhu lays foundation stone of Rajiv Gandhi

TDG NETWORK  
SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Sunday laid the foundation stone of Rajiv Gandhi Day-Boarding School to be built at a cost of Rs 25 crore on 125 kanal land in Amlahar of Nadaun Assembly Constituency. He directed the officers to pre-

pare the primary wing of this school within a year, which will also have modern sports facilities.

The Chief Minister said that the state government is going to make big changes in the field of education in the coming time. He said that the state government is considering creating three separate directorates of education. "These directorates would

be for pre-primary to class second, class third to twelfth and for undergraduate classes. The state government will take a decision on this matter in the coming time," he said.

He said that through Rajiv Gandhi Day-Boarding School, the present government has started an immense change in the field of education. Construction work of Rajiv Gandhi Day-Boarding

Schools has been started in 10 assembly constituencies in the state.

He said, "It is the vision of the state government to provide quality education to the children studying in government schools in rural areas. For this purpose, the state government is opening Rajiv Gandhi Day-Boarding Schools in a phased manner in every assembly constitu-

ency, where all the modern facilities will be available under one roof, so that students could face the challenges of life with confidence. I am personally looking after the construction of these schools."

The Chief Minister said that the previous BJP government opened 600 schools without making proper provision for staff.

# Five drug peddlers arrested in Baramulla, contraband recovered

AJAY JANDYAL  
SRINAGAR

In a continued effort to combat the drug menace in Jammu and Kashmir, police in Baramulla district have arrested five drug peddlers and recovered contraband substances from their possession, officials said on Sunday.

According to a police statement, the arrests were made during a series of checkpoints established in

different areas. "Continuing its efforts to eradicate the menace of drugs from society, police have arrested five drug peddlers and recovered contraband substances from their possession," the statement said.

At Thanda Kasi Chandoosa, a team from Police Station Chandoosa, led by the Station House Officer (SHO), intercepted an individual at a checkpoint. A search yielded 56 grams of a charas-like substance.



*Cases under relevant sections of the law have been registered at Police Stations Chandoosa, Boniyar, and Tangmarg, and investigations are underway.*

The person, identified as Mohammad Shaban Maray of Dudbugh, was arrested on the spot.

In a separate operation at Limber Boniyar, a team from Police Station Boniyar, also led by its SHO, in-

tercepted two individuals. A search of their belongings uncovered 88 grams of charas-like substances. The suspects were identified as Mehraj Ahmad of Limber and Shabir Ahmad Bakerwal of Babagail Limber, both

of whom were arrested. Similarly, a team from Police Post Babareshi intercepted two individuals at a checkpoint at Babareshi Crossing. During the search, 85 grams of charas-like substances were recovered. The accused were identified as Ishfaq Ahmad Magray and Dawood Ahmad Magray, sons of Ghulam Rasool Magray, both residents of Dudbugh. They were also arrested.

Cases under relevant sections of the law have been registered at Police Stations Chandoosa, Boniyar, and Tangmarg, and investigations are underway.

In its statement, the police urged the public to play an active role in eradicating the drug menace. "We urge the community to report drug peddling or any other criminal activity by contacting the nearest police station or dialing 112. Cooperation from the public is vital to curbing this societal threat.

TOP OF THE DAY

FOUR SOLDIERS KILLED IN GAZA

JERUSALEM : The names of four fallen soldiers whose families have been notified were cleared for publication. Sergeant Major (res.) Alexander Fedorenko, aged 37, from Bat Yam, a heavy truck driver in the 79th Battalion, 14th 'Machatz' Brigade, fell during combat in the northern Gaza Strip. Staff Sergeant Danila Diakov, aged 21, from Ma'ale Adumim, a soldier in the 931st Battalion, Nahal Brigade, also fell during the same combat. Sergeant Yahav Maayan, aged 19, from Modi'in, and Sergeant Eliav Astuker, aged 19, from Ashdod, both soldiers in the 931st Battalion, Nahal Brigade, were also killed in the incident. Additionally, a reservist officer in the Nahal Brigade and another soldier in the 931st Battalion, Nahal Brigade, were severely injured in the incident. They were evacuated to a hospital for medical treatment, and their families have been notified.

LEBANESE PM MEETS SYRIAN LEADER

Damascus : Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati met Syrian leader Ahmed al-Sharaa in Damascus to address the Syrian refugee crisis and foster bilateral cooperation. Mikati emphasized historical ties between Lebanon and Syria, urging swift action to repatriate over one million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Al-Sharaa, now leading Syria after the fall of Bashar al-Assad, discussed border security and unresolved issues but tempered expectations for rapid recovery in Syria. Mikati's visit follows Joseph Aoun's election as Lebanon's president, signalling renewed political activity. Separately, Ukraine's Foreign Minister expressed interest in strategic partnerships with Syria, highlighting shared challenges, marking significant diplomatic developments post-Assad era.

MAURITIUS PM TO VISIT INDIA

Chennai : Mauritius Deputy Foreign Minister Hambrayen Narsinghen, during his visit to Chennai for World Tamil Diaspora Day, announced that Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam will visit India within two to three months at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation. Narsinghen highlighted his meetings with PM Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, describing them as productive. He emphasized Mauritius' strategic Indian Ocean location, neutral international stance akin to Switzerland, and strong ties with India, particularly Tamil Nadu. Inviting Tamil Nadu's people to explore business opportunities, he described Mauritius as a cultural melting pot with African, Indian, and European influences, fostering economic collaboration.

PAKISTAN'S PROVINCIAL GOVT MULLING OVER HOLDING TALKS WITH ELON MUSK'S STARLINK

The internet crisis in Pakistan has persisted for months, with authorities frequently attributing the disruptions to faults in submarine cables.

AGENCIES  
KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

Amid ongoing internet disruptions across Pakistan, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government is considering reaching out to tech mogul Elon Musk to address the severe slowdown in internet speeds affecting the region, as reported by Geo News.

Shafqat Ayaz, the Special Assistant to the KP Chief Minister, revealed that the provincial government is also exploring other avenues to resolve the issue, particularly as the IT sector has been significantly impacted. "There is an internet issue in KP, but the reasons behind it remain unclear," Ayaz stated.

The internet crisis in Pakistan has persisted for months, with authorities frequently attributing the disruptions to faults in submarine cables. However, there are growing speculations that the government may be experimenting with an internet "firewall," contributing to the ongoing slowdowns.

Meanwhile, Elon Musk, the CEO of SpaceX and Tesla, confirmed that his satellite internet service,

KEY POINTS

- KP government considers seeking Elon Musk's help to resolve severe internet disruptions in Pakistan.
- Months-long connectivity issues blamed on submarine cable faults and suspected government "firewall."
- Elon Musk confirms Starlink awaits approval; activists urge expedited launch in Pakistan.
- Talks underway to bring Starlink's satellite internet, promising high-speed, reliable connectivity.



Elon Musk, the CEO of SpaceX and Tesla, confirmed that his satellite internet service, Starlink, is awaiting approval from the Pakistani government.

Starlink, is awaiting approval from the Pakistani government, according to Geo News. Musk made the announcement on his official X account, where he stated, "We are waiting for approval from the government." This came after a conversation with Pakistani social media activist Sanam Jamali, who urged Musk to expedite Starlink's launch in the coun-

try. Jamali emphasized that millions of people in Pakistan are eager for the connectivity, educational opportunities, and economic growth that Starlink could provide.

Pakistan's Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, also confirmed that the government has been in talks with Starlink to bring its services

to Pakistan. During a Senate Standing Committee meeting on IT and Telecommunication, Khawaja assured that discussions are ongoing to introduce Starlink's satellite-based internet services to the country.

As millions of Pakistanis continue to struggle with unreliable internet, Starlink's potential launch could offer a much-needed solution, providing stable, high-speed internet through satellite technology, bypassing the issues with terrestrial infrastructure, the report added.

Indonesia's Mount Ibu erupts, spews hot lava

AGENCIES  
JAKARTA

Mount Ibu in North Maluku in Indonesia erupted on Saturday, spewing hot lava and releasing a column of smoke and ash four kilometres, an official said.

The volcano, located on Halmahera Island, erupted at 7:45 pm Eastern Indonesia time, sending a tall flaming column soaring into the sky.

"The lava was spotted two kilometres away from the eruption centre," Geological Agency head Muhammad Wafid said in a statement.



The volcano is still at the second-highest alert level.

There has been no new evacuation order, but visitors and villagers have been told to vacate a zone four to 5.5 kilometres from the peak.

Ibu is one of Indonesia's most active volcanoes, erupting more than 2,000 times last year. More than 700,000 people lived on Halmahera island as of 2022, according to official figures.

Missing Taiwanese man confirmed in Chinese custody: Report

AGENCIES  
TAIPEI

The Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) has confirmed that a Taiwanese man from Changhua County, who had been missing for 10 months, is detained by Chinese public security authorities, as reported by Taipei Times.

The 19-year-old, identified as Huang, was reported missing in March 2024. According to SEF Secretary-General Luo Wen-jia, it has been verified through official channels that Huang is in Chinese custody, though details about the reasons for his detention remain confidential due to the personal nature of the case.

Huang's family initially doubted the authenticity of a recent notification from Chinese authorities regarding his situation, suspecting it could be a scam.

Luo stated that the SEF had reached out to Huang's family and obtained a general understanding of the situation. However, the reasons for his detention have not been disclosed. The case has raised concerns about China's adherence to the Cross-Strait Joint Crime-Fighting and Judicial Mutual Assistance Agreement, which stipulates that Chinese authorities should notify Taiwan's National Police Agency when a

Taiwanese citizen is detained on the mainland.

Luo emphasized that China's failure to follow this protocol had left both the government and Huang's family unaware of his whereabouts for an extended period, causing unnecessary confusion.

Huang's family initially doubted the authenticity of a recent notification from Chinese authorities regarding his situation, suspecting it could be a scam.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari accuses federal govt of treating Sindh unfairly

AGENCIES  
KARACHI

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari accused the federal government of treating Sindh unfairly, saying that the region was given "stepchild treatment." The Express Tribune reported.

In his remarks at the inauguration of Phase I of the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Expressway, formerly the Qayyumabad to Shah Faisal Malir Expressway, on Saturday, Bilawal said, "Federal government is treating Sindh like a stepchild. The federal government makes excuses and withholds resources of the province."

He said, "When rights are not granted properly it becomes extremely difficult to provide essential facilities." Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said his family has been contributing to Karachi's development for three generations.

Praising his grandfather and PPP founder Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Bilawal said that he revolutionised Karachi's infrastructure and laid the foundation for ma-

major projects, including the Pakistan Steel Mill (PSM) and Shahrah-e-Faisal. He also praised his mother and former Pakistan PM Benazir Bhutto for paying special attention to the region and working tirelessly to maintain peace and provide employment opportunities to people. He said that Benazir Bhutto fought against two military regimes.

He stated that the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Expressway project will not only link Karachi but the entire Sindh to the rest of Pakistan and provide employment opportunities to the residents of the metropolis.

He said, "My favourite project 'Shahrah-e-Bhutto' is being constructed under a public-private partnership. Numerous projects have been completed successfully through public-private partnerships," according to the report.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that PPP always wants to provide facilities to the people either free of cost or at the lowest possible price. He further said, "Thanks to the Sindh government,

the toll tax has been set at Rs100 and it is hoped that it will remain the same."

He stressed that Pakistan's development is closely related to progress of Karachi. He underlined that his father and PPP co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari allocated the highest funds for development of Karachi.

He underscored that the public-private partnership has been introduced to address the shortage of resources. He urged Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah to engage with business community of Karachi. "The business sector will not operate on goodwill alone. If they (business community) and the city's residents' benefit, only then will we achieve success," he added.

PPP chairperson called for the need to promote public-private partnerships to resolve the issues of the province, especially those of Karachi. He said that Karachi was facing water issue for a long time and called on his government to give the highest priority to resolve the problem.

Violent protests erupt in Shaanxi over teenager's death amid alleged cover-up

AGENCIES  
BEIJING

Violent protests have erupted in China's Shaanxi province following the death of a teenage boy, with accusations of a cover-up by authorities, CNN reported on Saturday.

According to the videos verified by CNN from the province, protesters clashed with riot police outside the Pucheng Vocational Technical School, with some protesters seen throwing batons and objects at police, while others broke a glass door with a fire extinguisher.

In response, law enforcement officers were seen aggressively confronting the protesters, with some being beaten and thrown to the ground.

According to CNN, the protests were triggered by the death of a third-year student, surnamed Dang, on January 2. While local authorities in Pucheng have claimed that Dang's death was an accident,



social media posts have raised suspicions of a cover-up.

In a statement released by state media, authorities said Dang had a physical and verbal altercation with a first-year student named Guo, which was resolved by a school official. Later that night, another student in Dang's dormitory found a wooden stool under the window and discovered Dang had fallen from the window to the ground below, as reported by CNN.

"The sliding window was open, and the metal mesh screen had been re-

moved. Dang had already fallen from the window to the ground below," the statement said as quoted by CNN.

However, Human Rights in China, a US-based activist group, reported "suspicious circumstances" surrounding Dang's death, citing witness accounts of signs of a struggle in his dormitory and claims that he may have been pushed from the roof. The protests, which began on Monday, may have continued throughout the week, but it remains unclear, CNN reported.

9 dead in truck collision in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

AGENCIES  
ISLAMABAD

Nine people were killed and 11 others were injured when a truck collided with pedestrians and other vehicles in the Karak region of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Saturday, the Dawn reported, citing rescue officials.

According to Dawn, citing a spokesperson from Pakistan's emergency service Department Rescue 1122, the incident took place at Amberi Kalay Chowk on the Karak Indus Highway. The truck, which was reportedly speeding, crashed into a crowd of pedestrians and other vehicles due to a brake failure.

The rescue team transported the casualties to the District Headquarters Hospital in Karak, where six individuals in critical condition were referred to hospitals in Peshawar. Among the deceased were a woman and a four-year-old child.

As per hospital administration, the injured were also receiving treatment at DHQ Hospital, with six individuals in critical condition being transferred to Peshawar for further care.

Nepal's ex-Home Minister appears in Kathmandu Court over cooperative fraud case

AGENCIES  
KATHMANDU

Nepal's former Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, Rabi Lamichhane, appeared before the Kathmandu District Court on Sunday for an investigation related to the alleged Swarnalaxmi Cooperative fraud case. Lamichhane, who was released on bail after 84 days in custody, arrived in his own vehicle, waved at the media, and entered the court without making any comments.

The founder of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), Lamichhane, was released on bail

by the Kaski District Court on Thursday in a separate fraud case involving the Suryadarshan Cooperative. He arrived in Kathmandu late on Friday evening after being granted bail in a case involving misappropriation of funds amounting to Nepalese Rupee 6.5 million.

The Kathmandu District Government Attorney's Office, based on police investigations, filed a case against Lamichhane and 38 others on January 5. The accused include former board members of Gorkha Media Pvt Ltd and key officials from Swarnalaxmi Cooperative. Among the

accused are former vice chair Chhabilal Joshi, chair Giten-dra Babu Rai, vice chair Devendra Babu Rai, treasurer Kumar Ramtel, and several others. The charges include misappropriating approximately Nepalese Rupee 1.199 billion.

Other individuals, including former treasurer Sabina Ale-magar and members Bhakta Bahadur Bholan, Sabita Lama, and others, have also been chargesheeted in connection with the case. The police investigation suggests that the funds were systematically diverted and mismanaged, leading to legal action against

the accused.

Lamichhane has been linked to multiple cases of embezzlement in various districts, including Kaski (Suryadarshan Cooperative), Butwal (Supreme Cooperative), Chitwan (Sahara Cooperative), Kathmandu (Swarnalaxmi Cooperative), and Parsa (Sano Paila Cooperative). Investigations have revealed that cooperative deposits were diverted to Gorkha Media Network, which ran the now-defunct Galaxy 4K Television.

Lamichhane was arrested on October 18, 2024, by the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) for charges of organized

crime and misappropriation of cooperative funds. He has denied the charges of money laundering, cooperative fraud, and organized crime, claiming he was unaware of the mismanagement.

A special parliamentary inquiry committee formed to investigate the cooperative scam indicted Lamichhane in September 2024, accusing him of embezzling millions of rupees as part of the scam. The committee's report, tabled in Parliament, revealed that millions of rupees from various cooperatives were funneled into Gorkha Media, based on forged documents.

At the time of the scam, Lamichhane served as the managing director of Gorkha Media. The committee's report emphasized that those in positions of responsibility, such as promoters, shareholders, and managing directors, must be held accountable for the mis-use of funds.

Lamichhane was questioned for over 10 hours by the committee, where he denied knowledge of the transfers from cooperatives to Gorkha Media. He also claimed to be unaware of the loans taken from the Suryadarshan and Supreme Cooperatives. The committee asked him 50 ques-

tions regarding his involvement in the scam.

Following the committee's report, House Speaker Devraj Ghimire directed the government to implement the findings and take legal action against those involved. The parliamentary committee was formed after Nepali Congress raised concerns about Lamichhane's involvement in the misappropriation of cooperative savings. The committee, led by CPN-UML lawmaker Thapa, was tasked with investigating the matter. The committee's tenure was extended by 15 days before its final report was submitted.

# SMUGGLING OF ILLEGAL LIQUOR INTO PUNJAB FROM CHANDIGARH: HARPAL SINGH CHEEMA

Says, 114 FIRs related to Chandigarh liquor smuggling registered till December end in current FY, 30,096 bottles recovered

TARUNI GANDHI  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Finance, Excise and Taxation Minister Advocate Harpal Singh Cheema announced today that the special operation group comprising the Mohali Excise team and Mohali Police intercepted a truck near Handesra, seizing 220 cases of liquor marked "For Sale in Chandigarh Only." He said that this operation was part of a special campaign launched across the state over the past few days to tackle the persistent menace of illegal liquor smuggling from Chandigarh (U.T.).

Detailing the operation, the Excise and Taxation Minister Harpal Singh Cheema revealed that this seizure is one of six major instances in recent times where liquor was being smuggled into Punjab from Chandigarh. He stated that

## DETAILS OF OPERATION

- Cheema revealed that this seizure is one of six major instances in recent times where liquor was being smuggled into Punjab from Chandigarh.
- FIR No. 01 dated 11.01.2025 has been registered under Sections 61(1)(14) and 78(2) of the Punjab Excise Act, 1914, at Police Station Handesra.
- Additionally, six more FIRs have been registered in different police stations of Mohali district in connection with other cases of liquor smuggling from Chandigarh, resulting in the seizure of 42 cases of various liquor brands.



FIR No. 01 dated 11.01.2025 has been registered under Sections 61(1)(14) and 78(2) of the Punjab Excise Act, 1914, at Police Station Handesra. Additionally, six more FIRs have been registered in different

police stations of Mohali district in connection with other cases of liquor smuggling from Chandigarh, resulting in the seizure of 42 cases of various liquor brands. Minister Cheema further

stated that, in the current financial year up to 31.12.2024, 114 FIRs related to Chandigarh liquor smuggling have been registered, with a recovery of 30,096 liquor bottles in these cases. He emphasized

that both the Excise Department and Punjab Police are adopting a zero-tolerance policy towards liquor smuggling. "The ongoing campaign will be further intensified with continued cooperation from Punjab Police, and strict legal action will be taken against anyone involved in liquor smuggling", he added.

Finance Minister Harpal Singh stressed that liquor smuggling is illegal, a punishable offence, and detrimental to the State's revenue under the Punjab Excise Act, 1914. He assured that no individual involved in such activities would be spared, and offenders would face severe consequences as per law. He also appealed to the people of Punjab to inform the department about any such activities to prevent any revenue loss to the state.

# Massive turnout: 3,300 compete for MRSAFPI training

TARUNI GANDHI  
CHANDIGARH

As many as 3329 candidates, on Sunday, appeared in the entrance exam for the 15th course to be commenced at the prestigious the Maharaja Ranjit Singh Armed Forces Preparatory Institute (MRSAFPI), SAS Nagar (Mohali). A record number of boys (4128) have registered themselves for the entrance test this year. This response has been largely due to the concerted efforts of the Chief Minister S. Bhagwant Singh Mann led Punjab Government and high success rate of the Institute.

Notably, the Institute is being run by the Department of Employment Generation, Skill Development and Training headed by Cabinet Minister Aman Arora. Director of MRSAFPI Major General (Retd.) Ajay H Chauhan, VSM, conducted surprise inspection at an examination centre set up at School of Eminence, Phase-3BI, Mohali.



*Notably, the Institute is being run by the Department of Employment Generation.*

Three examination centres were set up for the entrance test at School of Eminence, Phase-3BI, Mohali, Police DAV Public School, PAP Complex, Jalandhar and MSD Senior Secondary School, Bathinda. In spite of inclement weather young boys turned up in hordes to appear for the test.

Major General Ajay H Chauhan said that the top 150 successful candidates

will be called for the final selection process i.e interview and medical at the later date and 48 candidates will be chosen from across Punjab to undergo training for joining the Armed Forces through the National Defence Academy (NDA) and equivalent academies under the watchful eyes of experienced and highly qualified staff of the Institute.

He further informed that a total of 74 cadets of the Institute have been commissioned as officers in Defence Services since the CM Mann led-Punjab Government has come into power. As many as 64 cadets have joined training academies and 12 cadets are awaiting call up letters.

# Drug-free state: Punjab Governor holds dialogue with Dharm Gurus & other prominent personalities

TARUNI GANDHI  
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Raj Bhavan hosted a significant dialogue aimed at making Punjab drug-free, bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders, including Dharm Gurus, educationists, industrialists, agriculture experts, progressive farmers, scientists, former players, senior advocates, artists, folk singers, writers, doctors, and social activists.

The event, held at Punjab Raj Bhavan, Chandigarh, was presided over by Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria, who emphasized the need for a united and consistent fight against drug abuse to safeguard the state's future generations.

Sharing his views on the occasion, Governor Kataria expressed grave concern over the growing drug menace, particularly the proliferation of synthetic drugs, which are causing irreversible harm to the youth. He highlighted that drug addiction has evolved from the occasional use of natural substances, once considered socially unacceptable, to a thriving international trade driven by anti-social elements seeking monetary gain but leading the youth astray onto the path of destruction.

The Governor stressed that the drug problem is not limited to Punjab but has become a national crisis, with northern states



being disproportionately affected. He pointed to the role of Pakistan in waging a proxy war against India by flooding drugs into the country, thereby targeting its youth and weakening its social fabric.

Quoting the sacrifices of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who sacrificed his father, mother, and four sons for the greater good, the Governor urged everyone to draw inspiration from such noble examples and commit themselves wholeheartedly to root out the drug scourge. He emphasized the importance of collective action in a well coordinated manner and called for a multi-pronged strategy involving every section of society.

Governor Kataria made a special appeal to Dharm Gurus to take a leading role in the fight against drugs. Highlighting their immense influence over their followers, he urged them to launch ground-level campaigns, use their platforms during religious congregations, and incorporate anti-drug messages in their discourses. He emphasized that their active

involvement could bring about a transformative impact and radical change in society.

The Governor reiterated his full commitment to the cause and assured full support from Punjab Raj Bhavan in implementing actionable solutions discussed during the dialogue. He exhorted everyone to treat this fight as a war for the survival and prosperity of future generations. The Governor also announced plans to organize follow-up meetings and events to monitor progress and ensure accountability in the fight against drugs. He also gave a clarion call to the social activists and community leaders to organize neighborhood-level initiatives and engage families in the fight against drugs.

Presenting his views on the sensitive issue of drug abuse in Punjab, Rajya Sabha Member Satnam Singh Sandhu thanked everyone for their active participation and meaningful contributions to this vital discussion. He emphasized that the session provided valuable insights and di-

verse perspectives, deepening our understanding of the root causes of drug abuse and exploring actionable solutions to combat this menace.

Sandhu also shared his discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has shown great concern about the drug problem in Punjab. He remarked that the Prime Minister is deeply committed to eradicating this menace and is willing to implement any necessary measures to save Punjab from the clutches of drug addiction.

Former Takht Damdama Sahib Jathedar Giani Kewal Singh expressing his concern over the issue of drug abuse, said that Punjab faced many such crises in the past and has always come out stronger. He called upon all Punjabis to come forward unitedly on the ground to win this war against drugs.

Justice ret. KS Alhuwalia presenting his views on the occasion said that we need to sensitize our youth not to get carried away by the glorified picture that has been presented before by the market-oriented world. Instead, moral values should be strengthened.

During the dialogue, participants shared their views and proposed a detailed, multi-layered approach to tackle the drug crisis. Laying emphasis on the urgent need to dismantle the nexus between drug

mafias, corrupt officials, and politicians to curb the supply of drugs, they were of the view that

comprehensive awareness campaigns should be launched at schools, colleges, workplaces, and community centers to educate people about the devastating effects of drug abuse.

Besides, the Law enforcement agencies must be empowered with advanced tools and training to identify and crack down on drug trafficking networks. Setting up accessible diagnostic centers and rehabilitation facilities was also emphasized to ensure timely intervention and recovery for addicts. Incorporating moral and value-based education in school curriculums was suggested to instill a strong sense of ethics and discipline among students from a young age.

Encouraging youth participation in sports, arts, and cultural activities was highlighted as a means to channel their energy positively and wean them away from harmful substances was also stressed as a significant measure in the war against drugs.

The dialogue concluded with a strong consensus on the need for a united and sustained effort to combat the drug menace. Participants agreed that the problem cannot be solved by government efforts alone but requires active involvement from all sections of society.

# ADC cancels licences of two immigration companies for violations

TARUNI GANDHI  
CHANDIGARH

The Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) has canceled the licenses of two immigration companies, Procon Immigration Solutions and Future Developers, under Section 6(1)(e) of the Punjab Travel Professionals Regulation Act, 2012. Additional District Magistrate Viraj Shyamkaran Tidlke confirmed the action, citing multiple violations of licensing provisions.

According to officials, Procon Immigration Solutions, owned by Paraminder Singh of Sector 69, Mohali, failed to

renew its consultancy license, which expired on August 7. The firm also did not submit mandatory monthly reports, conduct advertisements, or respond to notices issued by authorities. These lapses led to the immediate cancellation of its license.

The ADC highlighted that the firm's actions were in direct violation of the Act's provisions. He warned that any future complaints against the firm or its partners would make the owner fully liable for damages.

Similarly, the license of Future Developers, owned by Malkit Singh Brar of Phase 5,

was revoked. The firm's travel agency license had expired on December 24, 2019. It failed to submit monthly reports, renew its license, or respond to official notices.

Both firms were penalized for non-compliance with the regulations. The ADC has sought explanations from the owners through notices, reiterating that such violations would not be tolerated.

The action serves as a warning to travel professionals to adhere strictly to the provisions of the Punjab Travel Professionals Regulation Act, 2012, to avoid similar consequences.

# SSF employee's family to receive Rs 2 crore aid after tragic road accident

TARUNI GANDHI  
CHANDIGARH

The family of Harshveer Singh, an employee of the road safety force (SSF) who tragically lost his life in a road accident near Bhawanigarh two days ago, will receive Rs 1 crore from the Punjab government. Additionally, Rs 1 crore will be provided by HDFC Bank under a life insurance policy. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann made the announcement through a post on his social media platform X (formerly Twitter).

The Chief Minister also extended his wishes for a speedy recovery to Mandeep Singh, who was injured in the same accident.

In his post, the Chief Minister wrote about the unfor-



*The Chief Minister also extended his wishes for a speedy recovery to Mandeep Singh, who was injured in the same accident.*

tunate incident near Bald Kainchiya in Bhawanigarh. "A tragic accident occurred involving an SSF vehicle on duty. Harshveer Singh succumbed to his injuries during treatment, and Mandeep Singh, who was also injured, is currently under medical care. We pray for his quick recovery."

Expressing heartfelt condolences to Harshveer Singh's family, CM Mann announced

that the government will provide Rs 1 crore as financial assistance to the family. An additional Rs 1 crore will be provided separately by HDFC Bank under its life insurance coverage.

The Chief Minister also urged people to exercise caution while traveling during heavy fog, emphasizing that "every life is precious" and advocating for careful driving to avoid such tragedies.

# UGC draft regulations on appointment of VCs against the spirit of federalism: Sukhbir S Badal

TARUNI GANDHI  
CHANDIGARH

Senior Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Sukhbir Singh Badal today said the University Grants Commission (UGC) draft regulations on appointments of vice chancellors were against the spirit of federalism and were aimed at usurping the rights of the States and handing them over to the central government.

Asserting that the draft regulations were tantamount to nationalising Indian universities, the SAD leader said "this seeks to usurp the powers of the States who founded these

Universities out of their funds and are running them with their own resources".

Calling for the immediate withdrawal of the draft regulations, Mr Sukhbir Badal said "it seems the States - who are the main stakeholders, have not been consulted while framing the draft regulations. Instead of giving increased autonomy to the States, the centre has chosen to take away control of the Universities and vest it with the UGC whose members are appointed by it".

Badal said there was already much opposition by States to the insistence of several State Governors to

influence the appointment of vice chancellors by refusing to go with the constitutional norm of acting on the "aid and advice" of the State governments while making top appointments.

He said now the entire process of appointment of vice chancellors had been handed over to the Governors who would select any name from a list submitted to them by a three member committee of the Chancellor, UGC and the apex management body of the varsity. "The State government has been left out of any say in the selection process", he added.

# Rs 1.8 crore rural development fund scam sparks demand for independent inquiry

TDS NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

Allegations of embezzlement in Punjab's rural development funds have surfaced, with Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa urging the Union Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture, Shiv Raj Singh Chouhan, to initiate an independent investigation. Bajwa highlighted that Rs 1.8 crore, meant for rural development, was fraudulently transferred, calling it "just the tip of the iceberg." Accord-

ing to Bajwa's letter, the state received Rs 4,534.34 crore under the 15th Finance Commission's recommendations for rural development, distributed among Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis, and Zila Parishads. However, an inquiry revealed that Rs 1,80,87,591 was transferred to M/s Ranjit Tile Industries, owned by Kandhara Singh, in 11 installments between July 16 and August 27, 2024.

The misappropriated amount was reportedly authorized using the

Digital Signature Certificates (DSC) of Jaswinder Kaur, Sarpanch of Basti Bhanewali, and an impersonator posing as the Sarpanch of Kamal Wala. The inquiry, conducted by senior officials, found that OTPs used for fund transfers were linked to fraudulent activities.

An FIR (No. O434, dated December 13, 2024) was registered by the department. However, Bajwa expressed concerns that key individuals involved, including Kandhara Singh and the impersonator Ki-

randeep Kaur, were not named in the complaint. He alleged that the omission was an attempt to shield those involved, with political interference from a local MLA.

Bajwa demanded a comprehensive probe into the utilization of rural development grants released from 2022 to 2024. He urged the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India to appoint a team to investigate the mismanagement of funds to ensure accountability and transparency.

The letter emphasized

that such misuse of public money impacts the lives of debt-ridden farmers struggling to improve their livelihoods. Bajwa also criticized the Aam Aadmi Party, accusing it of failing to uphold its commitment to integrity and accountability.

The Punjab government has yet to respond to the allegations or the demand for an independent inquiry. This case has sparked widespread concerns about financial mismanagement and the need for stricter oversight of public funds.



# METROPOLIS FOR SHIVA DEVOTEES IN PRAYAGRAJ

*Kumbh Mela is deeply rooted in the story of the churning of the ocean (Samudra Manthan) in Hindu mythology, which involves Lord Shiva consuming the deadly poison to protect the world.*



'Peshwai' procession of 'Udasin Akhara' for the Maha Kumbh 2025, in Prayagraj on Sunday. ANI



A devotee offers prayers to the rising Sun at Sangam ahead of Maha Kumbh 2025, in Prayagraj on Sunday. ANI

The Maha Kumbh Mela, often referred to as the "largest gathering of humanity on Earth," is set to commence on January 13, 2025, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. With an expected turnout of 40 crore devotees, this grand spiritual event transforms the city into a sprawling temporary metropolis, complete with extensive infrastructure and meticulous planning.

## MONUMENTAL SCALE OF THE MAHA KUMBH

To accommodate the staggering number of pilgrims, the Uttar Pradesh government has allocated a massive budget of Rs7,000 crore for the event. Over 10,000 hectares of land have been declared as a temporary district to host the Mela. This land will feature 1.5 lakh tents, 12 km of temporary bathing ghats along the Ganga, and 30 pontoon bridges for seamless movement across the river.

The preparations also include 400 km of temporary roads, illuminated by 69,000 solar hybrid streetlights, and 1.5 lakh prefabricated toilets, supported by 15,000 sanitation workers. An additional 1,800 hectares have been reserved for parking to manage the massive influx of vehicles.

## ARTISTIC SIGNIFICANCE

Adding to the grandeur, columns as tall as 70 feet, adorned with murals of Hindu deities, have been painted by a team of 14 artists. The beautification project also encompasses 29 temples and 11 corridors, creating a vibrant spiritual atmosphere for attendees.

## HERCULEAN PREPARATIONS

Over 25,000 laborers and artisans have been working tirelessly since October to transform the site. However, challenges remain, with delays caused by the Ganga's unseasonal reluctance to recede. With just three days left before the event begins, the race is on to complete the preparations.

## A TEMPORARY CITY OF DEVOTION

Every few years, the Maha Kumbh Mela gives rise to a temporary city along the Ganga's banks. This ephemeral metropolis, featuring roads, bridges, tents, and utilities, hosts millions of devotees before vanishing weeks later. It's a testament to India's organizational prowess and the enduring faith of its people. As the countdown begins,



Devotees walking on a pontoon bridge arrive at Sangam on the eve of the Maha Kumbh 2025, in Prayagraj on Sunday. ANI



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath administers an oath to achieve the vision of 'Clean Maha Kumbh - Clean Prayagraj' during the launch of various projects worth Rs 237.38 crore for security and cleanliness during Maha Kumbh-2025, in Prayagraj on 27 Nov, 2024. ANI

all eyes are on Prayagraj to witness the unfolding of this awe-inspiring event, a celebration of devotion, unity, and cultural heritage. Will the organizers meet the monumental deadline? The world waits to see.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The origins of the Kumbh Mela are deeply rooted in Hindu mythology, particularly the tale of the Samudra Manthan, or the churning of the ocean, where drops of the elixir of immortality fell at four earthly sites, including Prayagraj.

This mythological event has been commemorated for centuries, with historical records such as those by the 7th-century Chinese traveler Xuanzang, who documented the convergence of faith and commerce at the Kumbh Mela, where rulers and wealthy merchants

participated in rituals and offered lavish donations.

## GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The Uttar Pradesh government has undertaken 549 projects, ranging from infrastructure development to sanitation, with a budget of Rs6,990 crore for the Maha Kumbh. In comparison, the 2019 Kumbh Mela had 700 projects costing over Rs3,700 crore.

Officials estimate that the event will generate revenues of Rs25,000 crore and have an overall economic impact of Rs2 lakh crore on the state's economy.

## INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

To accommodate the massive influx of pilgrims, a temporary city spanning 4,000 hectares has been constructed along the river-

banks. This includes setting up 150,000 tents, connecting 450,000 new electricity supplies, and enhancing sanitation facilities.

The government has also improved transportation infrastructure, including the introduction of 98 special trains, to facilitate the movement of devotees.

## ACCOMMODATION

The hospitality sector has seen significant investments, with the establishment of luxury tents, hotels, guest houses, and dharamshalas to accommodate visitors. Super-deluxe tents and villas, priced between Rs18,000 and Rs20,000 per day, offer amenities such as private bathrooms, Wi-Fi, and butler services. Premium accommodations, such as those at Sangam Nivas Prayagraj, command tariffs of Rs1 lakh per night

for two guests and are fully booked on auspicious bathing days.

Additionally, the Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (UPSTDC) has set up various categories of tents, with prices ranging from Rs1,500 to Rs35,000 per night, catering to different segments of visitors.

## THE LIFELINE OF THE MELA ECONOMY

The Kumbh Mela provides a significant economic opportunity for small businesses and vendors. Food stalls, souvenir shops, and service providers anticipate substantial turnovers during the event. For instance, some food stall owners have invested crores in setting up their establishments, expecting a tenfold return on their investments.

The event also boosts employment, with thousands of workers hired for various services, including cooking, cleaning, and guiding pilgrims. This temporary employment surge contributes to the local economy and provides livelihoods for many.

## SPONSORSHIPS

The Maha Kumbh Mela attracts significant corporate interest, with brands seeking to engage with the massive congregation. International brands like Starbucks, Coca-Cola, and Domino's have set up outlets within the Mela grounds, aiming for substantial turnovers. Sponsorships and brand activations during the event provide companies with a unique platform to reach a diverse and extensive audience. Indian companies are set to spend Rs3,000 crore on branding and marketing at the 45-day Maha Kumbh, as brands see a massive consumption opportunity.

## SECURITY

Ensuring the safety of millions is a colossal task. The government has deployed around 40,000 police

personnel, supported by AI-powered surveillance systems, including drones and over 2,500 surveillance cameras, to monitor the event and prevent incidents. A seven-layer security framework has been implemented, featuring AI-powered cameras, drones, and anti-drone systems to provide round-the-clock surveillance across the Mela area.

## RAILWAY ENHANCEMENTS

Indian Railways has significantly bolstered its services for the event. The North Central Railway (NCR) plans to operate approximately 13,000 trains during the Kumbh period. Dilip Kumar, Executive Director of Information and Publicity of the Railway Board, stated, "Around 40 crore people are expected to attend. We have planned to operate 13,000 trains during the Kumbh."

To manage the crowds effectively, NCR has introduced unidirectional movement at stations, multilingual announcements, and enhanced passenger facilities, including assistance counters and waiting rooms.

## ROAD TRANSPORT INITIATIVES

The Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) is preparing a dedicated fleet of at least 7,000 buses, color-coded in saffron for clarity. These buses, compliant with BSIV and BSVI emission norms, will operate from various regions exclusively for the Maha Kumbh. Additionally, 100 electric buses will serve the Mela area. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasized the importance of these enhancements by flagging off 100 new buses to improve transport facilities for devotees.

## TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Authorities have devised a

detailed traffic plan, designating seven main routes leading to the Mela area from various directions, including Jaunpur, Varanasi, Mirzapur, Rewa/Banda, Kanpur, Lucknow, and Prayagrah. One-way routes, real-time diversions, and expanded parking facilities spanning 1,800 hectares have been established to manage vehicular flow. The Mela police have also set up a green corridor on Naval Rai Marg and reserved Lal Sadak for administrative purposes.

## AIR TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

To facilitate movement across the river, 28 pontoon bridges have been constructed, with 23 connecting Parade (City) and Jhunsi, and five linking Arail and Jhunsi. The deployment of color-coded e-rickshaws in different zones further aids in efficient intra-city transport. To accommodate pilgrims arriving by air, new direct flights from cities like Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, and Guwahati have been introduced. Upon arrival, taxis and city buses are available to transport visitors to the Mela grounds.

## TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

The introduction of the "Maha Kumbh Mela 2025" app provides pilgrims with essential information, including locations of ghats, temples, and other major religious sites, enhancing navigation and accessibility during the event.

These meticulously planned transportation and infrastructure developments underscore the commitment of authorities to ensure a safe, efficient, and spiritually enriching experience for all attendees of the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025.

The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj has attracted significant invest-

ments from major Indian corporations, with an estimated Rs.3,000 crore allocated for branding and marketing initiatives. Below is a table summarizing the key companies involved, their contributions, and the nature of their involvement:

Hindustan Unilever (HUL)
Coca-Cola
ITC
Bisleri
Parle
Dabur
Paytm
Emami
Electric Vehicle (EV) Companies
Low-Cost Mobility Providers
UPI Gateways
Park+
Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)

## GLOBAL RECOGNITION

The Kumbh Mela holds immense cultural and spiritual significance, symbolizing the confluence of faiths and traditions. In 2017, it was recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, highlighting its global cultural importance.

## FUTURE PROJECTIONS

The Maha Kumbh Mela of 2025 stands as a testament to the harmonious blend of spirituality and economic activity. The event not only offers a path to spiritual liberation for millions but also serves as a catalyst for economic growth, infrastructure development, and cultural exchange. The meticulous planning and execution of this colossal event underscore the potential of large-scale gatherings to drive economic and social progress, making the Kumbh Mela a unique phenomenon where faith and commerce converge seamlessly.

Compiled by Ruchira Talapatra

# WHY DID BHAGWAT JI HAVE TO SAY THIS?

It is not right to dig out new cases every day to foster contempt and hostility.

## OPINION

DR VIJAY DARDA



*Hindu ya Muslim ke absaasat ko mat chbediye,  
Apni kursi ke liye jazbat ko mat chbediye!  
Hum mein koi Hun, koi Shabk, koi Mongol hai,  
Dafn bai jo baat, ab us baat ko mat chbediye!  
Gar galiyan Babar ki thi. Jumman ka ghar phir kyun jale?  
Aise nazuk waqt mein balaat ko mat chbediye!  
Hain kaban Hitler, Halaku, Tzar ya Changez Khan,  
Mit gaye sab, qaum ki auqaat ko mat chbediye!  
Chbediye ek jang, mil-jul kar garibi ke kbilaaf,  
Dost meri mazhabi nagmaat ko mat chbediye!*

Renowned for his sharp and bold style, the people's poet Adam Gondvi penned a poignant poem that I quoted in this column in the first week of June 2022. At that time, the sarsangchalak of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Mohan Ji Bhagwat had made a significant statement: "History is something we cannot change. Neither today's Hindus nor today's Muslims created it. So why search for a Shivling in every mosque now?" Once again, Bhagwat Ji made a statement that brought this poem to my mind. In Pune, he said, "The Ram temple is a matter of faith for Hindus, but after the construction of the temple, some people feel they can raise similar issues elsewhere and position themselves as Hindu leaders. This is unacceptable. Digging out new cases every day to foster contempt and hostility is not right, and this cannot continue."

Currently, I am travelling abroad, and someone in Singapore asked me for my opinion on Bhagwat Ji's

statement. Should he have said such things? I replied that I have had the opportunity to know and interact closely with several sarsangchalaks, but Bhagwat Ji is completely different. He is broad-minded and inclusive in his ideology, besides being simple and straightforward. That is why his thinking stands apart from others. He believes in progress, respects everyone and engages with spiritual leaders of all religions. I am not discussing the core ideology of the RSS here, but Bhagwat Ji understands that if the RSS' practical approach does not evolve, it could impede India's progress. India must reach the pinnacle of development, foster entrepreneurship, fulfil the aspirations of its youth and bring prosperity to farmers and labourers. For these reasons, Bhagwat Ji is speaking pragmatically.

I completely agree with Bhagwat Ji's approach. At some level, we must put an end to such disputes, otherwise discord will continue to grow, which is not in the national interest under any circumstances. From what I have read, there are currently 18 lawsuits filed over 10 places of worship across the country. To prevent such situations, the nation had adopted the Places of Worship Act, 1991, which clearly states that the status



*Our society needs unity, not conflicts.  
Only then can we move forward.*

of religious sites as it was in 1947 should be maintained. However, the situation now is that this very Act has been challenged in the Supreme Court and hearings are underway. The Supreme Court has also directed courts across the country not to issue any orders or directions on related matters until the hearings on this Act are completed.

The truth is, if we want to create problems, countless issues will arise. The brutal events of history offer us ample opportunities for this. Numerous foreign invaders attacked India, looted and exploited our country. Invaders always attack local cultures, destroy symbols representing those cultures and create an atmosphere of fear. This happened in India

too. But now, should we remain entangled in history or should we write a new chapter focussed on the nation's development? It is reassuring that the leaders of the Vishva Hindu Parishad have also agreed with the views of the RSS chief. However, it is concerning that some 'Dharmacharyas' are now advising Bhagwat Ji not to speak on matters concerning Hindus. Let us hope that these opposing 'Dharmacharyas' will also understand the need of the hour. I was recently in Bali, Indonesia. In this country with the world's largest Muslim population, Muslims and Hindus live together in great harmony and the Hindus here proudly identify themselves as Hindus. Such social harmony is what drives a nation forward

on the path of progress.

Wishing all the readers a Happy New Year, I hope that instead of digging into history, we move towards a better future. At present, the most significant and serious challenge before us is related to values, culture and language. While in Singapore, I met a person of Uttar Pradesh origin who does not know Hindi and another of Gujarat origin who does not know Gujarati, not to mention culture. Even in India, language, values and culture are under severe threat. The decline in language troubles me deeply. There is no harm in wearing modern attire, but Indian ethos should remain in the heart. I am not upset over the triumph of English, but I am concerned about the shrinking space for our own languages. I do not oppose shaking hands, but I do fear the disappearance of our traditional Namaste and Pranaam.

Mohan Ji Bhagwat has a vast organisation at his disposal. He should focus on these issues as well.

Let us hope the New Year becomes a year for the preservation of our language, culture and values. Once again, I extend my best wishes for the New Year. Jai Hind!

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

## PERSPECTIVE

# THE KHURANAS MAKE AN ELECTORAL COMEBACK

The last time the Bharatiya Janata Party won the Delhi Assembly polls was in 1993, and at that time Madan Lal Khurana, one of the tallest leaders of the capital had spearheaded its campaign. Khurana had quit office in February, 1996, to express solidarity with Lal Krishan Advani, who had been named in the Jain Diaries, which led to the big Hawala scandal that changed the politics of the country at that time. All those who were in the list got a reprieve from a High Court ruling and the former Chief Minister expected that he would be reinstated in place of Sahib Singh Verma, who had succeeded him. Unfortunately for him, internal BJP politics followed and Sushma Swaraj was made the Chief Minister in October, 1998 leaving Khurana sulking. The BJP's top leadership of that time treated him unfairly and when he was asked to lead the campaign once again in 2003, deliberate and flawed ticket distribution by the Saffron Brigade ensured that Sheila Dikshit continued to be the Chief Minister. Even though the BJP had lost, Khurana would have become an effective leader of Opposition, thus wielding enormous influence, but the position was denied to him, and instead he was made the Governor of Rajasthan, much against his wishes. The grapevine at that point was that Atal Behari Vajpayee and LK Advani, found Sheila to be more convenient, since the Khurana-Sahib Singh feud would have taken away a lot of their time. In any case, Khurana's political innings was brought to an abrupt end and though many events followed subsequently, he was unable to make a comeback. After the BJP returned to power at the Centre in 2014, the Khurana family despite its great political record, continued to be on the sidelines. It is significant to state that Khurana was one politician who won more elections in the city than anybody else. He was victorious in 10 out of 11 polls, and the only time he lost was in 1984 following the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

I recall that I was in Times of India and when the counting of votes started for Delhi Sadar, his constituency, at the Ludlow Castle counting centre, Khurana led by 1500 votes from Moti Nagar/Kirti Nagar, his Assembly/Metropolitan Council despite the Congress wave. However, he conceded defeat and walked away. When asked why he was doing it despite his lead, he said that if in his own Metropolitan Council seat, he was winning by only 1500 votes and not 15000, as he would have wanted, how could he even think of winning in the remaining segments. Such was his calculation. The BJP has failed to win the Assembly polls and many believe that it was because of the unfair treatment to Khurana.

In any case, in the second list announced for the ongoing Assembly polls, Khurana's second son, Harish has got the nomination from his father's Moti Nagar seat, which for long was also represented by Subhash Sachdeva. Harish has a long way to go but he is likely to win and thus a Khurana maybe back in the Assembly. The former Chief Minister's elder son, Vimal had predeceased him and the family choice this time was to push for a ticket for Harish, who is also the party spokesman. Interestingly, Sahib Singh Verma's son, Parvesh is also contesting the Assembly polls on the BJP ticket against Arvind Kejriwal from New Delhi, a task which by no means can be described as easy.

The Saffron Brigade had not so far announced a Chief Ministerial face though speculation is that it could be ultimately a Poorvanchali, given that the largest vote base of the Aam Aadmi Party is from settlers belonging to that part of the country. In this context the name of Manoj Tewari, Lok Sabha MP from North East Delhi has been frequently mentioned but it is possible that the party could go with Satish Upadhyaya, former Delhi BJP Chief, who is contesting from Malviya Nagar. The demographics of the capital have considerably changed over the years and while the Punjabis dominated the political scene for several decades, the migrants from Eastern UP and Bihar, are a force to reckon with. The Punjabis have been on the margins and the BJP is wanting to also get its original vote bank back.

Harish has been given the ticket from Moti Nagar and Virendra Sachdeva is the current BJP president. In addition, Harsh Malhotra, MP from East Delhi is a member of the Union Council of Ministers. Whether these efforts would work to the advantage of the Saffron Brigade is not very clear as yet. Harish is making his electoral debut and must understand that following his father's footsteps is a Herculean task. Madan Lal Khurana was an icon and stood his ground. He was the architect of the BJP in Delhi in the same manner in which Advani built the party nationally. It should be recalled that at the height of Indira wave in 1972, there were only five Jana Sangh members of the Metropolitan Council, who were able to win. Khurana, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, the then Chief Executive Councillor and Daljit Tandon were among those who made it to the Council.

The current tussle in Delhi involves three parties. The AAP is trying to retain its hold, the Congress is attempting to retrieve its lost ground and the BJP is wishing to score a win after its grand showing in 1993. Most of the established leaders have been marginalized and it is for the newcomers to make a mark in the city's politics.

PANKAJ VOHRA

# Digital arrest: Need for vigilance, awareness, robust security

## OPINION

ABHINAV PANDEY

In the age of digital transformation, where every aspect of our lives has an online presence, the threat of cybercrime has escalated dramatically. Among the many sophisticated forms of cybercriminal activities, digital arrest has emerged as one of the most devastating and invasive. Digital arrest refers to the scenario where cybercriminals hijack an individual's online identity, financial accounts, or reputation, exploiting them for an financial gain, blackmail, or even sheer malice. In India, with its rapidly growing digital economy and significant adoption of online platforms, this menace has become a pressing concern. The methods employed by cybercriminals are multifaceted, often blending technical sophistication with psychological manipulation, and understanding these tactics is the first step toward prevention.

One of the primary techniques used in digital arrest is phishing, where fraudsters impersonate legitimate entities to extract sensitive information such as passwords, bank account details, and OTPs (one-time passwords). Victims often receive emails or messages that appear to be from trusted sources, such as banks, e-commerce platforms, or government agencies, urging them to act urgently. By clicking on malicious links or sharing their credentials, individuals unknowingly hand over the keys to their digital lives. This problem is exacerbated

by spear-phishing, a more targeted form of phishing, where cybercriminals use personal information about the victim to craft convincing messages.

Fake calls, also known as vishing (voice phishing), are another prevalent tool used in digital arrests. Cybercriminals often pose as representatives from banks, tech support, or government agencies, using fear and urgency to manipulate victims into sharing confidential details. These calls are alarmingly convincing, with scammers employing fake caller IDs and even background noises mimicking professional environments. For instance, a victim may receive a call claiming their bank account has been frozen or that they owe taxes. Under duress, many people divulge sensitive information or even transfer money directly to fraudulent accounts.

Once cybercriminals gain access to an individual's credentials, they often proceed with account hijacking. This involves taking control of the victim's email, social media, or online banking accounts by changing passwords and security settings, effectively locking the rightful owner out. In many cases, the attackers use these accounts to spread malware, scam the victim's contacts, or impersonate them for extortion. Social media platforms are particularly vulnerable, with criminals leveraging the victim's account to post defamatory content, manipulate followers, or delete

years of valuable data.

Another technical method employed in digital arrests is keylogging, where cybercriminals install malware on a victim's device to record every keystroke. This allows them to capture login credentials, credit card numbers, and other sensitive information without the victim's knowledge. Such malware is often delivered through phishing emails, fake software updates, or compromised websites. Similarly, ransomware attacks have become increasingly common, where criminals encrypt a victim's files or system and demand a ransom—usually in cryptocurrency—in exchange for the decryption key.

The exploitation of software vulnerabilities is another key factor in digital arrests. Many individuals fail to update their devices with the latest security patches, leaving them exposed to malware and hacking attempts. Cybercriminals exploit these weaknesses to gain unauthorized access to systems, install spyware, or exfiltrate data. These technical intrusions are often complemented by large-scale data breaches at organizations, exposing the personal information of millions. This stolen data is then sold on the dark web or used to launch further attacks on individuals.

Fake calls and phishing tactics are not just limited to individual victims. Businesses and organizations are frequently targeted, with employees being duped into sharing corporate credentials or unknowingly downloading malware. Such incidents can lead to significant financial losses, reputational damage, and even the collapse of businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises. Moreover, fake calls often exploit cultural

and psychological factors in India, where trust in authority figures is deeply ingrained. Scammers posing as law enforcement officers or government officials exploit this trust, threatening victims with legal action to extract money or information.

Cybercriminals have also begun leveraging emerging technologies like artificial intelligence to enhance their methods. Deepfake technology, for instance, allows them to create highly realistic but fake videos or audio recordings of individuals. These can be used to blackmail victims, spread misinformation, or tarnish reputations. Combined with social media manipulation, this creates a potent weapon for digital arrests, where the victim's credibility and identity are irreparably harmed.

The impact of digital arrest is devastating, affecting victims on multiple levels. Financially, individuals may lose their savings, face fraudulent loans in their names, or be forced to pay ransoms. Emotionally, the invasion of privacy, coupled with threats and blackmail, causes anxiety, fear, and a loss of trust in digital platforms. Reputational damage, the spread of defamatory content or the release of private information can damage personal relationships and professional opportunities. In many cases, victims struggle to recover from these losses, as the damage to their identity and finances is often permanent.

Addressing this threat requires a multi-pronged approach. On an individual level, practicing cybersecurity hygiene is essential. People must use strong, unique passwords for their accounts, enable two-factor authentication, and regularly update their devices and software. Being cautious about unsolicited emails, calls,

and messages is equally important, as is verifying the identity of the sender or caller before sharing any information. Installing reputable antivirus software and avoiding public Wi-Fi for sensitive transactions can also reduce vulnerability. At the organizational level, businesses must invest in robust cybersecurity infrastructure and train employees to recognize and respond to threats like phishing and fake calls. Governments and regulatory bodies must enforce stringent data protection laws and collaborate with telecom providers to trace and block fake calls. Public awareness campaigns can play a significant role in educating citizens about the risks of cybercrime and the steps they can take to protect themselves.

On a broader scale, international cooperation is vital, as many cybercriminals operate across borders. India must collaborate with global partners to track, apprehend, and prosecute cybercriminals. Strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies through training and technological advancements is also crucial in combating this evolving threat.

Digital arrest is a grave and growing challenge in India's digital landscape. With cybercriminals constantly refining their methods, staying ahead of these threats requires vigilance, education, and proactive measures. By fostering a culture of cybersecurity awareness and building robust defenses at both individual and institutional levels, India can mitigate the impact of digital arrests and ensure a safer digital environment for all.

In the face of growing digital threats, protecting oneself from cybercrimes such as digital arrest, phishing, fake calls, and other online frauds has never been more

important. Suspecting that one might be a victim of cybercrime requires swift action to report the incident to the appropriate authorities. In India, there are several resources available to help protect individuals and combat these crimes. For immediate assistance, the National Cybercrime Helpline at 1930 can be contacted. Operated by the Ministry of Home Affairs, this helpline is dedicated to addressing cybercrime incidents, including phishing, identity theft, fake calls, and financial fraud. It is available 24/7, enabling victims to report cybercrimes at any time. In addition to the helpline, the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal can be used. This official government platform enables individuals to report various cybercrimes, including hacking, online bullying, and identity theft, in a secure and streamlined manner. For incidents involving banking fraud or suspicious financial transactions, it is essential to contact the respective bank immediately. Most banks have dedicated fraud helplines that can block unauthorized transactions and provide immediate support.

The Police Helpline (112) should also be alerted if the crime involves serious threats or criminal activity. To reduce unsolicited calls or spam from telemarketers, registering the number with the Do Not Disturb (DND) service at 1909 can help. This service blocks unwanted calls, including fraudulent ones that may attempt to gain access to personal information. Staying vigilant, reporting suspicious activity to these helplines, and taking proactive measures to safeguard personal information can significantly reduce the risk of falling victim to digital arrest and other forms of cybercrime.

## 2ND WODI: JEMIMAH'S MAIDEN TON SEALS SERIES WIN FOR INDIA

TDG NETWORK  
RAJKOT

A collective batting performance headlined by Jemimah Rodrigues' maiden hundred formed the cornerstone of India's commanding 116-run win against Ireland in the second women's ODI here on Sunday as the hosts took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

India scored a massive 370 for five riding on three half-centuries and a ton before restricting Ireland to 254 for 7 in the stipulated 50 overs.

It was the elegant skipper Smriti Mandhana, who was first off the blocks with an attacking 73 off just 54 balls, while Rodrigues' first hundred (102 off 91 balls) ensured a smooth finish for the hosts.

Newcomer Pratika Rawal (67 off 61 balls) and seasoned Harleen Deol (89 off 84 balls) also made merry on a sub-par bowling attack.

Ireland batted steadily but never had the firepower to surpass a gigantic Indian total. Save Christina Coultter Reilly's 80, there wasn't much fight from the other batters as off-spinner Deepti Sharma emerged as the pick of the Indian bowlers with figures of 3 for 37. Seamer Titas Sadhu got 1 for 48 in 10 overs.

Earlier, India's total was based on two big stands



### SCORE BOARD

India scored a massive 370 for five riding on three half-centuries and a ton before restricting Ireland to 254 for 7 in the stipulated 50 overs.

-- 156 off 19 overs between Mandhana and Rawal and 183 off 28 overs between Rodrigues and Deol.

In all, Indian batters smashed an astounding 44 boundaries and three sixes in 50 overs.

As far as Rodrigues was

concerned, her record has been one that flattered to deceive with just six half-centuries across 40 games.

But once she got the boundary off medium pacer Arlene Kelly, the relief was palpable as she did a mock guitar-playing

act with her willow.

"It has been a long wait to get this hundred. Glad that the team gave me a role at No. 4 and I could deliver," Rodrigues told broadcasters Star Sports at the innings break.

"Today, the important thing for me was to be till the 50th over. Getting runs is not a problem, I am good at that, but being till the end was important and glad I could do that."

She said during their 183-run stand, it took some time for her and Deol to assess the nature of the track.

"Having Harleen there, initially we took time to assess the conditions. I know I can accelerate but while I took time, Harleen spoke to me to keep believing."

"We can't take any team lightly, we have followed domestic cricket here, 390 has been chased," she said.

## 'Rohit to lead India till ICC Champions Trophy; Bumrah in captaincy talks'

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI

Star batter Rohit Sharma will remain Indian captain till the ICC Champions Trophy this year, said sources in the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Also, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is being discussed as India's next captain, added the sources.

Rohit's captaincy has been a mix of memorable highs and some extremely disappointing lows. Be it a 10-match winning streak during the 2023 ICC Cricket World Cup at home, which concluded with a loss to Australia in the final or India's redemption with an ICC T20 World Cup title win in 2024 at Barbados, Rohit's captaincy has given fans plenty of positives. Under him, team also made it to the final of the ICC World Test Championship 2023, where they lost to Australia.

However, since the second half of 2024, luck seems to have deserted the 'Hitman'



both as a batter and captain. In the 2024/25 Test season which started with the home series against Bangladesh, Rohit scored just 164 runs in eight matches and 15 innings at an average of 10.93 with the best score of 52. During the recently-concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy, he could make just 31 runs in three Tests with best score of 10. His form struggles were such that he opted out of the final Test at Sydney.

As a captain, Rohit touched some embarrassing lows as of late. Just before the Test series against Australia, India lost their first home Test series in 12

years, to New Zealand by 0-3. This was also their first-ever whitewash in a home Test series of three matches or more.

After India won the first Test against Australia at Perth by 295 runs under the captaincy of Jasprit Bumrah, Rohit returned to the side after the birth of his second child. However, on his return, India lost the pink-ball Test at Adelaide, managed to draw the third Test at Brisbane, but lost the Boxing Day and New Year's Test at Melbourne and Sydney respectively.

In the 2024 calendar year, Rohit lost six Tests, includ-

ing four matches at home. This led to a decline in Rohit's Test record as captain, winning 12 and losing nine, while three ended in a draw.

On the other hand, Bumrah has so far led in three Tests, winning one and losing two.

The freshest challenge awaiting India is the ICC Champions Trophy, starting from February 19 till March 9. It will be hosted by Pakistan and UAE, with India playing its matches in UAE under hybrid model.

The eight-team tournament will feature 1550-over matches and will be played across Pakistan and in Dubai. The biggest match of the tournament between two arch-rivals India and Pakistan will be played on February 23 in Dubai. India will start its campaign against Bangladesh on February 20.

Group A of the tournament features current Champions Trophy holders and hosts Pakistan, along with India, New Zealand

and Bangladesh, while Group B features Cricket World Cup 2023 champions Australia, alongside Afghanistan, England and South Africa.

Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Karachi will be the three venues in Pakistan which will host the tournament. Each Pakistan venue will feature three group games with Lahore hosting the second semi-final.

Lahore will also host the final on March 9, unless India qualifies, in which case it will be played in Dubai. Both the semi-finals and the final will have reserve days.

The three group matches involving India, as well as the first semi-final, will be played in Dubai. Pakistan take on New Zealand in the Group A tournament opener in Karachi on February 19. The Dubai leg begins the following day with India taking on Bangladesh.

Group B begins on February 21, with Afghanistan squaring up against the Proteas in Karachi.

## IPL 2025 to start from March 23: BCCI

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

The 18th season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 will begin on March 23, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Vice President Rajeev Shukla confirmed on Sunday.

All 10 franchises have already picked the squad of their liking during the mega auction, which was held in Jeddah on November 24 and 25. After the end of the auction, there were speculations about the possible date when the cash-rich league would commence.

Rajeev Shukla, who attended the Special General Meeting (SGM) in Mumbai, revealed the date of IPL 2025 while speaking to reporters and said, "IPL is going to start from March 23."

Last season, the IPL 2024 kicked off on March 22 when the Royal Challengers Bengaluru took on Chennai Super Kings and the final was held on May 26 at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai.

Kolkata Knight Riders, who emphatically won the 2024 season, are the defending champions this year.

While interacting with the reporters, Shukla also confirmed that the venues for the WPL have been finalised and will be declared soon.

### IPL 2025 TEAMS:

Mumbai Indians squad: Batters: Suryakumar Yadav (retained), Rohit Sharma (retained), Tilak Varma (retained), Bevan John Jacobs

Wicketkeepers: Robin Minz, Ryan Rickelton, Krishnan Shrijith

All-rounders: Hardik Pandya (pace; retained), Naman Dhir (spin; RTM), Will Jacks (spin), Raj Angad Bawa (pace), Vignesh Puthur (spin)

Spinners: Allah Ghazanfar, Karn Sharma, Mitchell Santner

Fast bowlers: Jasprit Bumrah (retained), Deepak Chahar, Trent Boult, Ashwani Kumar, Reece Topley, Satyanarayana Raju, Arjun Tendulkar, Lizaad Williams

### CHENNAI SUPER KINGS:



Batters: Rituraj Gaikwad (retained), Rahul Tripathi, Shaik Rasheed, Deepak Hooda, Andre Siddarth

Wicketkeepers: Devon Conway, MS Dhoni (retained), Vansh Bedi

All-rounders: Ravindra Jadeja (spin; retained), Shivam Dube (pace; retained), R Ashwin (spin), Sam Curran (pace), Rachin Ravindra (spin; RTM), Vijay Shankar (pace), Anshul Kamboj (pace), Jamie Overton (pace), Ramakrishna Ghosh (pace)

Spinners: Noor Ahmad, Shreyas Gopal

Fast bowlers: Matheesha Pathirana (retained), Khaleel Ahmed, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Mukesh Choudhary, Gurjapneet Singh, Nathan Ellis

### ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU:

Batters: Virat Kohli (retained), Rajat Patidar (retained), Tim David, Manoj Bhandage, Devdutt Padik-



kal, Swastik Chikara

Wicketkeepers: Phil Salt, Jitesh Sharma

All-rounder: Liam Livingstone (spin), Krunal Pandya (spin), Swapnil Singh (spin), Romario Shepherd (pace), Jacob Bethell (spin), Mohit Rathee (spin)

Spinners: Suyash Sharma, Abhinandan Singh

Fast bowlers: Josh Hazlewood, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Yash Dayal (retained), Rasikh Salam, Nuwan Thushara, Lungi Ngidi



Batters: Rinku Singh (retained), Rovman Powell, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Manish Pandey, Luvnith Sisodia, Ajinkya Rahane

Wicketkeepers: Quinton de Kock, Rahmanullah Gurbaz

All-rounders: Venkatesh Iyer (pace), Andre Russell (pace; retained), Sunil Narine (spin; retained), Ramandeep Singh (pace; retained), Anukul Roy (spin), Moeen Ali (spin)

Spinners: Varun Chakravarthy (retained), Mayank Markande

Fast bowlers: Harshit Rana (retained), Vaibhav Arora, Anrich Nortje, Spencer Johnson, Umran Malik

### PUNJAB KINGS:



Batters: Shreyas Iyer, Shashank Singh (retained), Nehal Wadhwa, Harnoor Singh Pannu, Priyansh Arya, Pyla Avinash

Wicketkeepers: Josh Inglis, Vishnu Vinod, Prabhsimran Singh (retained)

All-rounders: Glenn Maxwell (spin), Marcus Stoinis (pace), Marco Jansen (pace), Harpreet Brar (spin), Azmatullah Omarzai (pace), Aaron Hardie (pace), Musheer Khan (spin), Suryansh Shedge (pace)

Spinners: Yuzvendra Chahal, Pravin Dubey

Fast bowlers: Arshdeep Singh (RTM), Lockie Ferguson, Yash Thakur, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Kuldeep Sen, Xavier Bartlett

### LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS:

Batters: Aiden Markram, David Miller, Ayush Badoni (retained), Himmat Singh, Matthew Breetzke

Wicketkeepers: Rishabh Pant, Nicholas Pooran (retained), Aryan Juyal

All-rounders: Abdul Samad (spin), Mitchell Marsh

(pace), Shahbaz Ahmed (spin), Yuvraj Chaudhary (spin), Rajvardhan Hangargekar (pace), Arshin Kulkarni (Pace)

Spinners: Ravi Bishnoi (retained), M Siddharth, Digvesh Singh

Fast bowlers: Mayank Yadav (retained), Mohsin Khan (retained), Akash Deep, Avesh Khan, Akash Singh, Shamar Joseph, Prince Yadav

### DELHI CAPITALS

Batters: Jake Fraser-McGurk (RTM), Harry Brook, Tristan Stubbs (retained), Faf du Plessis, Karun Nair

Wicketkeepers: KL Rahul, Abhishek Porel (retained), Donovan Ferreria

All-rounders: Axar Patel (spin; retained), Ashutosh Sharma (spin), Sameer Rizvi (spin), Darshan Nalkande (pace), Vipraj Nigam (spin), Ajay Mandal (spin), Manvanth Kumar (pace), Tripurana Vijay (spin), Madhav Tiwari (pace)

Spinners: Kuldeep Yadav (retained)

Fast bowlers: Mitchell Starc, Mukesh Kumar, T Natarajan, Mohit Sharma, Dushmantha Chameera

### GUJARAT TITANS:

Batters: Shubman Gill (retained), Sai Sudharsan (retained), Rahul Tewatia (retained), Sherfane Rutherdorf

Wicketkeepers: Jos Buttler, Kumar Kushagra, Anuj Rawat

All-rounders: Rashid Khan (spin; retained), Washington Sundar (spin), M Shahrukh Khan (spin; retained), Mahipal Lomror (spin), Nishant Sindhu (spin), Arshad Khan (pace), Jayant Yadav (spin), Glenn Phillips (spin), Karim Janat (pace)

Spinners: Manav Suthar, Sai Kishore

Fast bowlers: Kagiso Rabada, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Gerald Coetzee, Gurnoor Brar, Ishant Sharma, Kulwant Khejroliya

### SUNRISERS HYDERABAD:

Batters: Travis Head (retained), Abhinav Manohar, Aniket Verma, Sachin Baby

Wicketkeepers: Heinrich Klaasen (retained), Ishan Kishan, Atharva Taide

All-rounders: Abhishek Sharma (spin; retained), Nitish Kumar Reddy (pace; retained), Kamindu Mendis (spin)

Spinners: Adam Zampa, Rahul Chahar, Zeeshan Ansari

Fast bowlers: Mohammed Shami, Pat Cummins (retained), Harshal Patel, Simarjeet Singh, Jaydev Unadkat, Brydon Carse, Eshan Malinga

### RAJASTHAN ROYALS:

Batters: Yashasvi Jaiswal (retained), Shimron Hetmyer (retained), Shubham Dubey, Vaibhav Suryavanshi

Wicketkeepers: Sanju Samson (retained), Dhruv Jurel (retained), Kunal Singh Rathore

All-rounders: Riyan Parag (spin; retained), Nitish Rana (spin), Yudhvir Singh (pace)

Spinners: Wanindu Hasaranga, Maheesh Theekshana, Kumar Kartikeya

Fast bowlers: Jofra Archer, Sandeep Sharma (retained), Tushar Deshpande, Akash Madhwal, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Kwena Maphaka, Ashok Sharma.

## Malaysian Open: Satwik-Chirag's run ends in semi-finals

AGENCIES  
KUALA LUMPUR

The popular men's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty were knocked out of the ongoing Malaysian Open badminton tournament in the semifinal stage in Kuala Lumpur.

On Saturday, the seventh-seeded Indian duo was defeated by South Korea's Kim Won-ho and Seo Seung-Jae 10-21, 15-21 in a rather one-sided match within 40 minutes, bringing an end to the Indian challenge at the Malaysian Open, as



per Olympics.com. "They played well," Satwik summed up as quoted by Olympics.com.

"We saw them playing well earlier in the tournament as well and we were prepared. But I felt they

played really well today... They did not give away any easy points and made us work hard for every point."

"We followed our game plan... But kudos to them. Disappointed but it was a

good tournament for us," Satwik added.

Currently placed ninth in men's doubles rankings, 'Sat-Chi' were on the backfoot right from the start, trailing by 6-11 in the first game and losing it in just 19 minutes.

The Indian duo made a comeback during the second game, leading by 11-8. However, they failed to sustain this momentum and lost the match.

"We started to be a little more calmer in the second game right from the first point but credit to them. Maybe we gave away a few easy points," said Chirag.

Kim Won-ho secured the mixed doubles silver medal at the Paris 2024 Olympics while his partner Seo Seung-Jae is the current men's and mixed doubles world champion.

In the previous edition of the Malaysian Open last year, Satwik-Chirag had finished as runners-up.

In the earlier rounds, Olympians Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy faced an exit and could not make much impact. India Open will be taking place in Delhi from Tuesday onwards and will witness these stars in action again. (ANI)

'NOT A DAY HAS GONE WHEN I HAVEN'T BEEN ASKED ABOUT PAATAL LOK 2', SAYS JAIDEEP AHLWAT



TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Jaideep Ahlawat's career can be split into two phases: before "Paatal Lok" and after "Paatal Lok". The actor says there hasn't been a single day since the web series premiered on May 15, 2020 when he wasn't quizzed about its second season.

Ahlawat had already established himself as a dependable performer with films like "Gangs of Wasseypur", "Khatta Meetha", "Vishweroopam", and "Raazi" to his credit, but "Paatal Lok" made him a star overnight after it arrived on Prime Video during the peak of the pandemic.

Besides rave reviews from critics and viewers alike, industry seniors Manoj Bajpayee and Aamir Khan took notice of his performance as the worn-out Delhi Police cop Hathiram Chaudhary who lands a case of a lifetime in season one.

"Everything changed after May 15, 2020... Genuinely, there hasn't been a single day in the last four years when I haven't been asked about 'Paatal Lok 2'. There

has not been a single day when no one has asked me to my face, on social media, or messaged me about this," Ahlawat told PTI in an interview.

"If I post anything, there would be 25-30 comments like, 'When is season two of 'Paatal Lok' coming?' I wasn't tired but as I didn't have an answer to it, I would just say, 'It will be out soon'," he said.

Season one of "Paatal Lok", directed by Avinash Arun Dhaware and Prosit Roy, saw Hathiram trying to solve the assassination attempt on a popular TV journalist, played by Neeraj Kabi.

Ahlawat, a graduate from the Film and Television Institute of India, recounted receiving a call from Bajpayee one late evening after the show became a success.

"He said a lot of things but one thing touched me. He said, 'Yeh kaam dekh kar Jaideep, mujhe aisa laga maine ek workshop kar li apne aap ko revive karne ke liye' (Watching your performance was like attending a workshop, it revived my passion for acting)

'I'M HEARTBROKEN': PREITY ZINTA EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER LA WILDFIRES



TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Bollywood actress Preity Zinta expressed her heartbreak over the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles. She also assured fans that her family in LA is safe "as of now".

The actress also paid gratitude to the fire department, firefighters and others who are saving the lives of people amid the raging wildfire.

Preity Zinta got married to LA-based financial analyst Gene Goodenough in 2016. The actress has been shuttling between India and the US ever since. Recently, LA came under siege due to wildfires which resulted in the evacuation of the residents and burnt homes.

Taking to her X handle, the 'Koi Mil Gya' actress wrote that she is heartbroken by the 'devastation' around her.

"I never thought I would

live to see a day where fires would ravage neighbourhoods around us in LA, friends & families either evacuated or put on high alert, ash descending from smoggy skies like snow & fear & uncertainty about what will happen if the wind does not calm down with toddlers and grandparents with us. I'm heartbroken at the devastation around us & grateful to god that we are safe as of now," wrote Preity Zinta.

The actress further highlighted the contribution of firefighters in controlling the catastrophe and expressed gratitude towards god for keeping herself and her family safe.

"My thoughts & prayers to people who are displaced & have lost everything in these fires. Hope the wind dies down soon & the fires are contained. A big thank you to the fire department, firefighters & everyone else helping to save lives & property. Stay safe everyone"

PICTURE PERFECT

Bollywood actor Malaika Arora attends the Ajo Luxe Wknd Night, in Mumbai on Saturday. (ANI)



ACTRESS TABU JOINS AKSHAY KUMAR-STARRER HORROR-COMEDY 'BHOOTH BANGLA'

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

The anticipation for Akshay Kumar's upcoming film Bhooth Bangla has intensified after acclaimed actress Tabu joined the cast of this horror-comedy on Saturday.

Tabu announced her involvement in Bhooth Bangla by sharing a picture of a clapboard with the film's title on it. Teasing the project on Instagram, the crew actress wrote, "Hum yahan bandh hain" (Translation: "We are locked here").

Fans quickly flooded the comment section, expressing their excitement about Tabu joining the project.

Directed by Priyadarshan, Bhooth Bangla marks the reunion of Akshay Kumar and Priyadarshan after 14 years.



The duo previously worked on hit films such as Hera Pheri, Garam Masala, Bhagam Bhag, and Bhooh Bhulaiyaa.

The movie belongs to the

horror-comedy genre, a space Akshay Kumar has excelled in with earlier successes like Bhooh Bhulaiyaa and Laxmii. Tabu, celebrated for her ver-

satility in films like Andhadhun and Haider, is expected to add a unique depth to the film.

Bhooth Bangla is produced by Shobha Kapoor and Ekta R Kapoor's Balaji Telefilms and Akshay Kumar's production house, Cape of Good Films. The film is slated for a theatrical release on April 2, 2026. Meanwhile, Tabu's portrayal of Sister Francesca in the Hollywood web series Dune: Prophecy has garnered praise from fans and critics alike.

In Dune: Prophecy, Tabu plays Sister Francesca, a formidable Bene Gesserit and former lover of Emperor Javico Corrin, portrayed by Mark Strong. The series delves into Francesca's past, with Charithra Chandran portraying a younger version of the character.

Mallika Sherawat shares fun BTS video with Bruno Mars

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Bollywood actress Mallika Sherawat shared a fun behind-the-scenes moment with singer-songwriter Bruno Mars from the shoot of their upcoming music video, calling it an unforgettable experience.

Taking to her Instagram handle, Mallika shared a clip showcasing the shoot of Bruno Mars' upcoming music video, in which she is set to play a prominent role.

In the video, Mallika points a gun at Bruno Mars. He reacts by turning around, performing a dance step with the actress, and attempting to lip-synch the song. The entire crew bursts into laughter due to Bruno's humorous facial expressions.

Calling it an "absolute blast," Mallika captioned her post:

"Shooting a music video



with Bruno Mars was an absolute blast."

The post added, "Every moment on set was filled with excitement and fun. It's an experience I'll cherish forever!"

Fans flooded the comment section, expressing excitement over the unexpected collaboration between Mallika and Bruno Mars.

Meanwhile, Mallika Sher-

awat joined the global organization Veganuary as an ambassador last year. On the occasion of World Vegan Month in November 2024, Mallika shared her thoughts: "I am a firm believer in compassion and Ahimsa. Eating plant-based is my secret to being fit, active, and having a clear conscience. Give it an honest try, leave animals off your plate."

Director Harvey Laidman passes away at 82

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

Harvey Laidman, a veteran TV director who helmed several episodes of series such as The Waltons, Scarecrow and Mrs King, passed away at the age of 82.

Harvey's son, Dan Laidman, told The Hollywood Reporter that his father died of cancer on January 3 in a hospital in Simi Valley.

During his three-decade-plus career, Laidman also directed installments of The Blue Knight, Family, Hawaii Five-O, Hunter, Kojak, Eight Is Enough, The Incredible Hulk, Lou Grant, and others.

Laidman was born in 1942 in Cleveland to a librarian mother and an electrical contractor father. The director developed his foundation



in cinema after working with the legendary Kenley Players theatre company in Warren, Ohio, which hosted numerous productions with

big-name Broadway, film, and TV stars, according to The Hollywood Reporter. He studied electrical engineering at Kent State before transfer-

ring to USC, where he earned a degree in cinema in 1964.

Laidman served as assistant director and unit production manager on the second and third seasons of CBS's The Waltons from 1973-75. After this, he donned the director's cap for 11 episodes of this period drama from 1975-81.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the director also helmed 10 episodes of CBS's Scarecrow and Mrs. King from 1985-87; 33 episodes of NBC/ABC's Matlock from 1988-94; and 16 episodes of The WB's 7th Heaven, from 1996-2004.

Laidman later went back to school to earn a doctorate in education and taught science. From 2011 to 2023, he taught filmmaking at Cal State Northridge.

BRAIN PICKING



I love to take something ordinary and make it really special.



-SIDHARTH MALHOTRA  
(Indian Actor)

DILJIT DOSANJH SHARES STILLS FROM 'PUNJAB 95', HINTS AT FILM'S RELEASE IN FEBRUARY



TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Punjabi star-singer Diljit Dosanjh shared a series of stills from his much awaited film "Punjab 95", based on the life of human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra, on social media, suggesting it may arrive in cinemas next month.

"Punjab 95" is directed by Honey Trehan and produced by Ronnie Screwvala's banner RSVP Movies.

According to reports, the release of the movie was delayed when it ran into trouble with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). It also stars Arjun

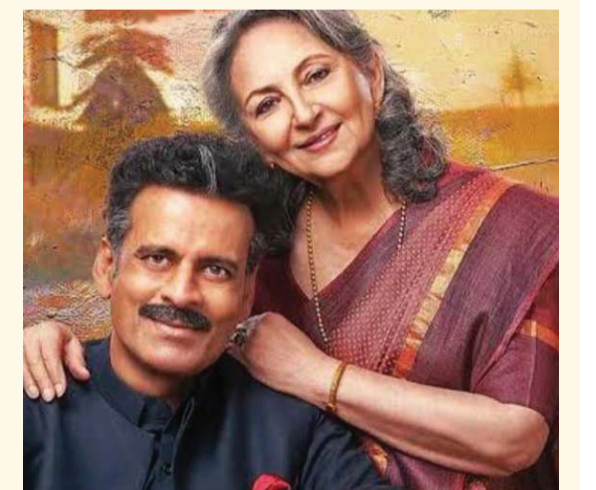
Rampal and Suwinder Vicky of "Kohraa" fame.

Dosanjh, who recently concluded his "Dil-Luminati India Tour", shared his pictures from the film on his Instagram page on Saturday. "I Challenge the Darkness. 'Punjab 95' In February," he wrote.

In 2023, "Punjab 95" was scheduled to have its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) but was removed from the line-up without any official statement from the organisers.

Khalra investigated the cremation of thousands of unidentified bodies in Punjab during a 10-year period from 1984 to 1994.

WATCHED 'MASOOM' WHILE MAKING 'GULMOHAR': RAHUL V CHITTELLA



AGENCIES  
BERLIN

"Gulmohar" director Rahul V Chittella says he watched Shekhar Kapur's "Masoom" along with his cinematographer Eeshit Narain when they were shooting for their National Award-winning film.

The filmmaker was speaking at the red carpet event of the Indian Film Festival Germany in Berlin where "Gulmohar" was screened along with "Masoom".

Chittella said the 1983 family drama "Masoom" served as a source of inspiration for 2023's "Gulmohar", which marked his directorial debut.

"... 'Masoom' has been such an inspiration for us for many years. It was one of those films that my DOP (director of photography) and I were watching constantly when we were shooting 'Gulmohar'," he said.

In "Gulmohar", Chittella explored different points of view across three generations of the Batra family who are set to move out of their 34-year-old home named 'Gulmohar', which draws its title from the ornamental tree with orange-red flowers. It starred Sharmila Tagore, Manoj Bajpayee, and Simran.

"Masoom", which was Kapur's directorial debut, followed a happily married couple -- played by Naseeruddin Shah and Shabana Azmi -- whose lives are upended when the husband's illegitimate son (Jugal Hansraj) from a past affair enters their home.

Chittella also shared that he gave a hat-tip to "Masoom" in "Gulmohar".

"There's a little trivia. Manoj's (character's) wife (played by Simran) is called Indu because of the Indu (played by Azmi) in 'Masoom'," he revealed.

## UNEXPECTED MEETINGS: GRAIN MARKET PRESIDENT MEETS TEWARI, BJP LEADERS

Mohit Sood, the new chairman of Grain Market, Sector 26, Chandigarh, met Congress and BJP leaders, sparking political speculation.

MANJEET SAHDEV  
CHANDIGARH

Mohit Sood, the newly elected chairman of Grain Market, Sector 26, Chandigarh, recently met with key political figures from both Congress and BJP, sparking discussions across the city. Sood, who is affiliated with the BJP, met separately with Congress MP Manish Tewari, BJP leader Sanjay Tandon, and former Chandigarh BJP president Arun Sood. This unexpected series of meetings has led to speculation among the public, with many questioning whether it was purely a political gesture or an attempt to build a broader network.

### SOOD'S CROSS-PARTY MEETINGS SPARK SPECULATION

- Mohit Sood, newly elected chairman of Sector 26 Grain Market, met key Congress and BJP leaders.
- Sood's BJP affiliation raises questions about his meetings with Congress MP Manish Tewari.
- The meetings sparked speculation on social media, fueling political debate in Chandigarh.
- Sood's cross-party engagement signals potential political balancing or networking efforts.
- The viral photos of the meetings have captured the public's attention, raising curiosity.



The meetings, which were documented in photographs and shared widely on social media, have become a hot topic of conversation. While Mohit Sood's ties with the BJP are well known, his inter-

actions with Congress leaders like Tewari have raised eyebrows. The political landscape in Chandigarh is closely monitored, and such meetings often fuel debates about alliances and political strategies. Sood's actions seem to signal a willingness to engage with leaders across party lines, which may suggest an effort to balance political relationships and gain support from various quarters. The viral photographs have only intensified the curiosity around these encounters. Whether these meetings signify the beginning of a new political approach or are simply a routine engagement remains to be seen, but for now, they have certainly captured the attention of the city's residents.

## CM inaugurates 250 gyms for rural youth, announces free equipment for 8 notified sports

YASHIKA SAINI  
PANCHKULA

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini participated in a state-level programme on National Youth Day, held in Panchkula's Sector-5. During the event, the CM announced several initiatives for the youth of the state.

The CM inaugurated 250 gyms simultaneously for rural youth, and announced free equipment for eight notified sports and inclusion of Inter Youth Club Games in the annual sports calendar of the state. He also announced opening at least one ITI in every block of the state.

During the event, Saini released a song, sung by singer Naveen Punia, on awareness against drug abuse. Later, he said that he also gave job offer letters to ITI trainees. Saini also felicitated youths and volunteers of the NSS on the occasion.

Giving Haryana the status of a sports powerhouse and a minefield of medals, Gaurav Gautam Minister of State for Sports, Youth Em-



“Announced to make a special policy to make the youth proficient in the languages of different countries and to bear the expenses of getting these certified from the concerned agency.”

- Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini

powerment and Entrepreneurship said that under the directives of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Haryana is moving ahead on the path of progress in every field.

Earlier, Additional Chief Secretary, Higher Education, Vineet Garg welcomed the guests and gave detailed information about the various schemes started in the interest of the youth.

Former Speaker of the Assembly Gian Chand Gupta, Director General of Information, Public Relations, Languages & Culture, KM Pandurang and Additional Director Varsha Khangwal, DC Monika Gupta, DCP Himadree Kaushik were also present on the occasion.

At the end of the programme, the youth recited the Preamble to the Constitution along with the Chief Minister.

## Sanjay Tandon congratulates ICC chairman Jay Shah, meets new BCCI secretary

MANJEET SAHDEV  
CHANDIGARH

UTCA President Sanjay Tandon congratulated the newly elected ICC Chairman Jay Shah during his first official event at the BCCI Special General Meeting held in Mumbai on Sunday. Tandon also met the newly appointed BCCI Secretary Devjit Saikia and Treasurer Prabhjit Singh Bhatia and congratulated them on their new roles. The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss ways to strengthen the



UTCA to bring forward more and more cricketing talent from the city. Tandon also presented a coffee table book on gully

abuse. The book reflects UTCA's commitment to promote cricket prospects at the community level and its efforts to create a structured pathway for aspiring players to move from gully cricket to professional platforms. Tandon provided an overview of the functioning and achievements of UTCA since its inception five years ago. He emphasised the role of UTCA in promoting cricket across the Union Territory, from organising tournaments to creating a strong infrastructure for the players.

## Seva Bharti distributes monthly ration to needy families

MAJOR ALI  
DERABASSI

Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary, Lohri and Makar Sankranti celebrations were organised by Seva Bharti, Derabassi at the local SS Jain Girls School. On this occasion, under the leadership of the Congress in-charge Deepinder Singh Dhillon, who was the chief guest, Seva Bharti distributed monthly ration to the needy families like every month. Deepinder Singh Dhillon congratulated the people on Lohri festival and Makar Sankranti festival and praised the social work being carried out by Seva Bharti for the last two decades. Ankit Jain, Kulwant Singh and Seva Bharti's head Rajiv Gupta, former head Rajjeet Singh, Ashwini Jain, Budhram Gupta, Jagdish Maggo, Barkha Ram, Baldev Gupta, Soma Rani, Puja, Sukhwinder and all the members were present with him.

Derabassi 002: Monthly ration was given to needy families on the occasion of Lohri.

## Pinjore triple murder: After recess, two more arrested

YASHIKA SAINI  
PANCHKULA

After the arrest of the two recces, Panchkula police have arrested two more persons in connection with the triple murder which occurred during the intervening hours of December 22 and 23, outside a café in Pinjore. The arrested have been identified as Manish and Nikhil, both residents of Rohtak and members of the infamous Nanu Gang.

Both Nikhil and Manish were apprehended from Hisar and were brought to Panchkula by the Crime branch. On Sunday, they were presented in court and were remanded to three days police custody.

Manish, on the other hand, provided logistics, including mobile phones and SIM cards for their communication. Through this, Manoj and

“Nikhil provided Rs. 5000 to the recces, Manoj and Surinder, to cover for their expenses while inspecting the location.”

- Panchkula police

Surinder where able to inform the shooters about Vicky's movement and then execute the murder altogether. 'We have secured the remand and now we will begin with the recoveries.' Said a police official.

Meanwhile, the sharpshooters, identified as Sahil, alias Poli, and Vijay Gahlot, alias Kalu, were apprehended in Bangalore by Delhi Police's Special Cell. The police stated that they are in the process of obtaining their production warrant, to bring the accused to Panchkula. 'In cases like this, takes 15-20 days to bring the accused.'

Said the police official. The sharpshooters are a part of the infamous Nandu Gang, headed by a UK based gangster Kapil Sangwan. Multiple cases were registered against them in both Haryana and Delhi. Currently, the shooters are remanded to seven-days in Delhi police custody. During the hours intervening December 22 and 23, three persons were shot dead in the parking lot of café Sultanat on Pinjore road. The victims included Vineet alias Vicky Mittra along with his nephew Teerth, both residents of New Delhi along with Vandna alias Nia, a resident of Jind.

## BJP Chandigarh concludes Sangathan Parv 2024 with election of district presidents

MANJEET SAHDEV  
CHANDIGARH

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Chandigarh has successfully concluded another crucial phase of its Sangathan Parv 2024 with the unanimous election of district presidents. The district presidents elected through the democratic process are set to take forward the party's grassroots initiatives and strengthen its organisational efforts in Chandigarh.

Bhupinder Saini has been elected as the district president of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya district. While Ravindra Malik has been

elected as the district president of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee district. Khushwinder Singh has been elected as the district president of Bharat Ratna Atal district, and Rekha Sood has been elected as the district president of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar district. Dalip Kumar has been elected as the district president of Shaheed Bhagat Singh district, and Anoop Gupta has been elected as the district president of Rani Laxmibai district. Sangathan Parv 2024 kicked off with a record-breaking primary membership drive that saw close to 1,20,000 new members join the party in Chandigarh.

Under their leadership, BJP's activities in Chandigarh will gain momentum and infuse new enthusiasm among the workers." Apart from the election of district presidents, BJP Chandigarh

has also elected its Pradesh Parishad members, who will soon participate in the selection of the state president. This phased and structured process will ultimately lead to the election of the BJP's National President, exemplifying the hard work and dedication of party members and workers in ensuring the smooth implementation of Sangathan Parv 2024. He said the initiative reflects the BJP's core principles of inclusiveness, democracy and grassroots empowerment.

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## Himachal buses seized in Chandigarh, two buses impounded, one challaned

MANJEET SAHDEV  
CHANDIGARH

Action has been taken against Himachal Roadways Transport Corporation (HRTC) buses in Chandigarh. Two buses have been seized at the Sector-17 bus stand in Chandigarh. A challan has also been issued for one bus. It is being said that the buses were being driven without papers.

The STA's Motor Vehicle Inspector took this action. After this, the impounded buses were taken to Sector-17 police station and parked there.

## Havan yagna conducted on the occasion of Pran Pratishtha Utsav of Shri Ram Lalla

MAJOR ALI  
ZIRAKPUR

A havan yagna was organized on the occasion of the Pran Pratishtha Utsav of Shri Ram Lal in Gill Colony located in Baltana area of Zirakpur. Giving information in this regard, social worker Rajendra Singla said that on this occasion, the residents of Gill Colony organized a havan yagna in the morning, after which Sunderkand was recited and after that bhajan kirtan was organized. At around 1:00 pm, a bhandaara was organized for the congregation after offering bhoga.



This bhandaara started at 1:00 pm and continued till 4:00 pm. On this occasion, President Satpal Tyagi, Gill Colony President Amarjeet Taneja, social worker Ra-

jendra Singla, CB Sharma, Deepu, Bittu, Vijay Kumar Shastri, besides the group members of Mahila Mandal and the group residents of Gill Colony were present.

## Tewari writes to Chandigarh Administrator, demands to establish international financial centre

MANJEET SAHDEV  
CHANDIGARH

MP Manish Tiwari has written a letter to Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria demanding the establishment of an International Financial Center (IFC) on the lines of Gujarat International Finance Tech-City (GIFT City) in Chandigarh. Tiwari said that setting up big factories in Chandigarh is not possible, in such a situation,

the expansion of the service sector is the most appropriate solution to increase employment opportunities. He has urged the administrator to discuss this proposal with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Tiwari has said in his letter that an international financial center for areas like Chandigarh, Mohali, Panchkula and New Chandigarh would be a great opportunity for economic

development. Large-scale manufacturing units cannot be set up in Chandigarh due to environmental reasons. In such a situation, expansion of the service sector is the only practical way to create employment opportunities. He believes that IFC can prove to be a revolutionary initiative to promote economic development in Chandigarh and the whole of North India. He has urged the Administrator to discuss with Union

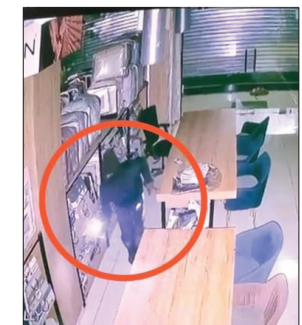
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to make this proposal a reality. The establishment of IFC will provide employment opportunities to the youth of the region and it will be a big step towards developing Chandigarh as a financial hub. The letter also includes a copy of another letter written by him to the Finance Minister, detailing the economic benefits of IFC and the reasons for Chandigarh being a suitable location.

## Thieves steal safe after breaking showroom locks

MAJOR ALI  
ZIRAKPUR

The incidents of theft in Zirakpur city are increasing day by day and the Zirakpur police is proving unsuccessful in catching the thieves. The thieves targeted a showroom located on Whip Road at 4:25 this morning and broke the locks of the showroom and fled with the safe kept inside it.

Showroom owner Pawan



Jain told that he has a handloom showroom named Decor 99 in front of We

Care Hospital on VIP Road. This morning a thief broke the locks of the showroom and took away the safe kept in the showroom. He had kept cash of 253000 in the safe which he had to pay to a dealer today. The thief took only 11 minutes to carry out this entire incident and the entire incident has been captured in the CCTV camera. The thief who carried out the theft was wearing a

cap on his head and he looks to be about 25 years old. When he came to his shop in the morning, he came to know about this incident. Showroom owner Pawan Jain immediately informed the police about this. After receiving information about the theft, the police visited the spot and started scanning the CCTV cameras of the shop and the surrounding area.

# ED OFFICIAL ARRESTED IN RS. 50 LAKHS EXTORTION CASE IN PANCHKULA

Panchkula police arrested an Enforcement Directorate official in a Rs. 50 lakh extortion case linked to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang.

YASHIKA SAINI  
PANCHKULA

Panchkula police arrested the Assistant Director of Enforcement Directorate's Shimla unit in Rs. 50 Lakhs extortion case, involving an associate from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang.

Vishal Deep, the ED official, was arrested from Panchkula on Friday. He was presented in the court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Rekha Sharma, where he was remanded to four days police custody. All of this came to light when a Panchkula's Sector-16 resident businessman alleged that the accused tried to extort Rs. 50 Lakhs through an intermediary Rohit Guj-

## ED OFFICIAL ARRESTED IN RS. 50 LAKH EXTORTION CASE

- Panchkula police arrested ED Assistant Director Vishal Deep in a Rs. 50 lakh extortion case.
- Extortion linked to Rohit Gujjar, an associate of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi.
- Businessman Vikas Bansal's nephew received multiple threatening calls demanding Rs. 50 lakh.
- Threats included personal details of the family and harm if money wasn't paid.
- FIR filed under sections 308 (2) and 308 (4); police investigation ongoing.



jar, who is reportedly linked to gangster Lawrence Bishnoi.

According to police, the complainant, identified as

Vikas Bansal stated that his nephew received a series of threatening calls from January 3 to 7. On January 3, the nephew received a What-

sApp call from an international number around 4PM. After identifying himself as Rohit Gujjar, the caller allegedly threatened to kill

the entire family unless they paid Rs. 50 lakhs. He, allegedly, further threatened to stop pursuing the corruption case filed against Deep by Vikas' brother Rajnish Bansal or face harm.

The threats escalated into multiple calls and messages, including specific details of the family residence in Ladwa, Kurukshetra. Fearing for his life, the nephew switched off his mobile and immediately informed his family, which led them to seek police's assistance.

A FIR under sections 308 (2) and 308 (4) was registered at the Sector 14 station respectively.

Upon enquiring further, the police said that further investigations are underway.

# CSCA celebrates Lohri with elderly at Old Age Home

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

The Chandigarh Senior Citizens Association (CSCA) celebrated Lohri at the Old Age Home, Sector 15, Chandigarh, with great enthusiasm. The event was held outdoors, with 40 inmates and staff members of the home, alongside approximately 125 CSCA members and guests, gathered in a circle on chairs to mark the occasion. The celebration began with a fun game of Tambola, which set a lively tone for the festivities.

The highlight of the event was the lighting of the Lohri fire (Lohri ki Agni), performed by CSCA President SC Aggarwal along with other governing members.

SC Aggarwal emphasized that Lohri is a festival that symbolizes happiness and prosperity, which aligns perfectly with the



spirit of the gathering. The atmosphere was filled with joy as members performed songs and dances, creating a warm and festive mood. As part of the celebration, traditional Lohri treats such as gajak, revadi, popcorn, peanuts, and bhuga were distributed to all attendees, adding to the festive cheer.

The event also saw Counselor Paras Preet acknowledging the efforts of CSCA in organizing the celebra-

tion. He spoke about the significance of Lohri, emphasizing its cultural importance and role in marking the harvest season while bringing people together in celebration.

The gathering served as a wonderful occasion for the elderly residents of the Old Age Home to join in the festive spirit, connect with the community, and enjoy the warmth and camaraderie shared during the event.

# Hawan and Sunderkand held for Ram Mandir Pratishtha Dwadashi at Shri Shiv Mandir

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

The first anniversary of the consecration of Ram Lalla at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya, known as Pratishtha Dwadashi, was celebrated with immense enthusiasm and grandeur at Shri Shiv Mandir in Sector 39-D. The temple's head, Naresh Mahajan, and the founder of the Bharatiya Sanskritik Gyan Sanstha, Anoop Sarin, addressed the gathering, highlighting the significance of the occasion. They emphasized that the magnificent Ram temple, a symbol of India's self-respect, is not just a temple for devotees but a national one, represent-



ing the collective sacrifices and struggles of many who fought for Ram Lalla.

In their address, Mahajan and Sarin called on everyone to follow the ideals of Shri Ram, urging the community to contribute to the upliftment of the country. They stressed the impor-

tant of building a happy, harmonious society by eliminating discrimination, fear, hatred, and violence. They also spoke about the need for prosperity, advocating for wealth earned through righteous means in line with religion. Additionally, they encouraged the audience

to work towards creating a civilized and cultured society by overcoming personal and societal vices.

The program, which began with a hawan (ritual fire ceremony) in the morning, was followed by the hoisting of the flag to mark the occasion. To add further sanctity to the event, Sunder Kand was recited by Harish Chandra, which is a revered section of the Ramayan, symbolizing devotion and the victory of good over evil.

The anniversary served as a reminder of the deeper moral and spiritual messages of Shri Ram and his ideals, encouraging all present to lead a life of righteousness, unity, and national pride.

# Gita Mandir celebrates Pran Pratishtha anniversary

TDG NETWORK  
PANCHKULA

On Saturday, January 11, 2025, Gita Mandir in Sector 11 was beautifully adorned to mark the first Pran Pratishtha Mahotsav of Shri Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. The temple, in its resplendent decor, became a hub of devotion as a women's Sankirtan was organized, along with the recitation of the Ramayan. The atmosphere was filled with spiritual fervor as women sang bhajans dedicated to Ram Lalla, their voices blending in sweet melodies that resonated throughout the temple. The devotion was palpable, as men and women, both young and old, danced in the temple courtyard to the rhythmic beats of the bhajans, all deeply moved by the spiritual energy of the moment. The sounds of "Jai Shri Ram" echoed through the temple



complex, creating an aura of unity and reverence. Devender Dhawan, the President of the temple, spoke of the significance of the day and shared that a langar (community meal) had been organized in honor of Shri Ram's first Pran Pratishtha. The langar served a simple but heartfelt meal of Chole, rice, puris, and halwa,

which was distributed to the residents of the sector as prasad. The spirit of generosity and community was evident as the devotees came together to share the meal.

Several prominent figures attended the event, including Pandit Santosh Pandey, Acharya Pradeep Pathak, Priest Sawali Mohan, as

well as Devender Dhawan, Vinod, Anil, Vimla, Punit, and other devotees. The event was not only a celebration of Shri Ram's first Pran Pratishtha but also a powerful reminder of the strength of community and devotion, creating a vibrant, spiritual atmosphere that will be remembered by all who attended.

# Lions Club takes pledge to make girls educated and self-dependent on Lohri

MAJOR ALI  
DERABASSI

Lions Club celebrated the auspicious festival of Lohri with a special focus on empowering girls through education and self-reliance. The event, held at Nachiketa Paper Mill, brought together Lions Club members who gathered around a fire to take a solemn oath to protect and educate girls, as well as make them self-dependent.

Club President Nitin Jindal highlighted the importance of girls' empowerment and emphasized that the club's efforts would

*Club President Nitin Jindal highlighted the importance of girls' empowerment and emphasized that the club's efforts would continue to focus on this cause.*

continue to focus on this cause. He stated that the club's mission is to ensure the safety and education of girls, aiming for a brighter and more self-sufficient future for them. Newly ap-

pointed General Secretary Amrish Bhalla added that, as part of the Lohri celebrations, the club distributed happy gifts to newborn girls in Derabassi, marking a symbolic gesture of goodwill. In addition to the gifts, blankets were given to underprivileged girls to provide warmth and care during the cold season.

The event was attended by several notable personalities, including Lions Club members Vijay Mittal, Balkar Singh, Upesh Bansal, Barkha Ram, Prem Singh, Atul Choubey, Dr. Ram Kumar, Ved Goyal,

SGPC member Nirmal Singh, Akali Dal's Manjit Malkpur, Dr. Paras Suri, Dr. Raveena Suri, Mahinder Pal, Ravindra Saini, and Rakesh Agarwal.

The gathering reflected the Lions Club's ongoing commitment to social causes, especially those aimed at uplifting girls in the community. This meaningful celebration of Lohri reinforced the club's resolve to continue working towards a future where girls are not only educated but also empowered to lead independent and successful lives.

# Shri Sanatan Dharma Shakti Dal Mandir Sector 16 expands leadership

TDG NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH

On Sunday, a significant meeting took place at Shri Sanatan Dharma Shakti Dal Mandir in Sector 16, under the leadership of Anjana Gupta, the Pradhan. The meeting focused on the expansion of the organization, and several key appointments were announced to strengthen the leadership. Baba Devnath was appointed as the Patron of the organization, while Manish Bhasin was designated as the Chairman. Suresh Rana was



appointed Senior Vice President, and Ankush Gupta was made the General Secretary. Dr. Girish Sachdeva took the role of Joint Secretary, and Aynar Thakur was appointed

as Minister. In addition, Davinder Sidhu was assigned the position of Treasurer, while Rachit Kaushal was entrusted with the responsibility of Legal

Advisor. The new appointments were made with the unanimous agreement of all members present, marking a significant step in the organization's expansion.

Other executive officers included Chand Bayana, Achala Bhalla, Surendra Thakur, Jaya Jain, Neena Chauhan, Sushila, Kamlesh Sharma, and Sabina Bansal. The meeting also witnessed the presence of executive members like Anuj Kumar Sehgal, Jeet Bansal, Sagar Dravid, Dr. Ashwani Kumar Bayana, Manjeet Kumar, Pan-kaj Sharma, and Sunil Bagdi.

# Two trommel machines worth lakhs damaged by rain

MAJOR ALI  
ZIRAKPUR

There is a mountain of legacy waste in the Bishnupura dumping ground. Out of the three trommel machines purchased by the Municipal Council at a cost of lakhs of rupees for garbage disposal in the dumping ground, two trommel machines are rusting. First, the trommel machine was not used for 6 months after the trial and when news related to this started getting published, the Municipal Council started using them.

The Nagar Parishad had bought two trommel machines in August 2023. At that time, the officials

claimed that by installing two machines, the disposal of garbage would be doubled. It was claimed that wet waste including plastic would be separated from the garbage through the machine. Out of the three trommel machines installed in Bishanpur dumping ground, one machine is installed inside the shed while the other two machines are installed under the open sky. The machine which is kept under the open sky is getting damaged by rain water and is rusting. It is worth mentioning that a trommel machine has four electric motors and an electric panel. When it rains, rain water goes into these motors and

water also falls on the panel. If by mistake this machine is started immediately after the rain, then all the motors and electric panels can become useless due to short circuit and then it cannot be denied that lakhs of rupees will be spent for their repair. If a shed is built over these two trommel machines, then it will not cost as much as it would cost to repair one trommel machine.

It takes hard work again to dry the manure that has become wet due to rain :::

When the trommel machine is operated under the open sky, the manure produced by it becomes wet when it rains. That wet manure is again dried



View of two of the trommel machines getting damaged due to rain water

ets, which requires double the effort. If this machine is installed under a shed, then firstly the machine can be saved from getting damaged and secondly, the

effort required to dry the manure again will not have to be done.

Every day 42 to 45 tons of garbage is generated from the city, most of it is single-use plastic...

More than 42 to 45 tonnes of garbage is generated in the city every day. It also includes a large amount of single-use plastic and thermocol. Single-use plastic is banned everywhere in

“ Action will soon be initiated to construct a shed over the trammel machines placed under the open sky in the dumping ground.

- Ashok Patharia, Executive Officer, Municipal Council Zirakpur.

the Tricity, but in Zirakpur it is banned only on paper. It is very important to improve the sanitation system. Single-use plastic is being used on a large scale. Single-use plastic and disposable plates are used in all kinds of events in hawkers, shops and marriage palaces. Municipal council officials claim that they have chal-

langed many shopkeepers for this. But the truth is that if the officials had run such a campaign, single-use plastic could have been banned. Contrary to the claims of the officials, no action is being taken against those who use and sell single-use plastic in the city. This is the reason why single-use plastic waste is continuously increasing in the city.

# BHARATANATYAM'S LEGACY CELEBRATED AT THE SECOND EDITION OF NRITYADHARA

## TDG NETWORK

Ayam Institute of Performing Arts celebrated the profound journey of Bharatanatyam, from the early steps of a learner to the pinnacle of mastery, at the second edition of Nrityadhara - Dwitya. Held at the Little Theatre Group (LTG) Auditorium, the evening was a tribute to the timeless elegance and devotional essence of Bharatanatyam, meticulously curated and choreographed by the visionary Guru Smt. Sindhu Mishra.

Rooted in the traditional bani of the esteemed Guru KN Dandayudhapani Pillai, Nrityadhara brought alive the intricate interplay of nritya (pure dance), bhava (expression), and tala (rhythm). The evening commenced with Pushpanjali, a heartfelt floral offering to the divine, the guru, and

the audience, set to the soulful strains of Raagam Bowli and Talam Adi composed and sung by Shri G. Elangovan. This was followed by the Dhyaan Shlokam, a reverential invocation to Lord Shiva, highlighting His omnipresence and cosmic grandeur, composed by Smt. Sudha Raghuraman.

Each performance showcased a unique blend of classical rigor and creative expression. The next performance, Shivashtakam, a composition by Shri Adi Shankaracharya set to Raagam Bhupali and Talam Khand Chaapu, vividly portrays the grandeur of Lord Shiva. He is depicted as the mighty destroyer of Asuras, the loving father of Ganesha, adorned with the moon and stars, and with his body smeared in sacred ash, embodying both cosmic power and ascetic serenity. Whereas Shri Ram



Chandra was a captivating Bharatanatyam interpretation of the bhajan composed by Goswami Tulsidas, set to Raag Sindhu Bhairavi and Adi Taal. Another highlight was Padam - Yaro Ivar Yaro, an abhinaya piece that beautifully encapsulated Sita's first encounter with Ram, drawing the audience into its

emotional depth. The piece was set to Raag Bhairavi and Taal Adi, with composition by Shri Arunachala Kaviyaray.

The evening also featured Bho Shambho, composed by Swami Dayananda Saraswati and sung by Shri G. Elangovan, celebrated Lord Shiva as the cosmic force of

creation and dissolution. Set to Raagam Revati and Talam Adi, it captivated the audience with its spiritual depth. The evening came to an end with Thillana, a rhythmic piece by Poochi Sreenivaasa Aiyangaar, praising Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. Set to Raagam Paras and Talam Adi, its intricate patterns



and vibrant energy left the audience spellbound.

Speaking about the event, Guru Smt. Sindhu Mishra said, "Nrityadhara - Dwitya is a celebration of dedication, devotion, and the eternal beauty of Bharatanatyam. It has been heartening to witness the overwhelming response from the audi-

ence, whose appreciation reaffirms the timeless appeal of this classical art form. Through this journey from a learner's first steps to mastery, we aim to preserve the rich traditions of Bharatanatyam while inspiring the next generation to carry its legacy forward."

Nrityadhara - Dwitya was more than a dance recital, it was an immersive experience that showcased the richness and versatility of Bharatanatyam while honoring its deep-rooted traditions. The event left the audience spellbound, reaffirming the timeless beauty and universal appeal of this classical art form.

## The Journey of Transformation Through Art: Poornima Dayal's 'KALP' Exhibition

### TDG NETWORK NEW DELHI

A solo art exhibition titled "KALP" (Phases) will be showcased by the renowned artist Poornima Dayal from 15 January to 21 January, 2025 at Lalit Kala Akademi in New Delhi. In the world of contemporary art, few exhibitions offer a more intimate and profound insight into an artist's personal evolution than Poornima Dayal's new exhibition, KALP. This dynamic collection, which spans five distinct phases, takes viewers on a visual journey of self-discovery, emotional growth, and transformation, all explored through Dayal's unique use of colors, textures, and abstract forms.

The exhibition, KALP, a word derived from the Sanskrit term for "imagination" or "creation," delves deep into the various stages of life and the emotional landscapes that accompany them. The five series within the exhibition—Out of the Box, Exploration, Resonance, Impressionist, and Cityscapes—each represent a significant phase in Dayal's personal and artistic growth.

The journey begins with the Out of the Box Series, where Dayal introduces the viewer to a vibrant world full of expressive strokes and rich symbolism. This series opens with a tribute to The Ramayana, honoring the divine, before evolving into powerful depictions of strength and warriors that celebrate life's exuberance. As the colors and forms unfold, deeper layers of the artist's personal transformation emerge, revealing the intricate processes behind her artistic and emotional development.

The Exploration Series represents a turning point in Dayal's work, as she begins to experiment with textures and symbolism to capture the essence of inner discovery. The cityscapes in this phase are abstract, metaphorical representations of Dayal's internal world—her evolving understanding of herself and her surroundings.



Poornima Dayal

This series invites the viewer to reflect on their own journey of growth, humility, and exploration.

Moving into the Resonance Series, the tone shifts towards serenity. Through soothing blues and greens, Dayal paints landscapes of emotion, evoking peace, clarity, and calm. The quiet introspection in these pieces mirrors the artist's own search for emotional tran-

sitions of the world around her.

Poornima Dayal said, "KALP" is a deeply personal journey through my own life, expressed in the language of colors, textures, and abstract forms. Each phase represents a different aspect of my inner evolution, from the vibrant beginnings of the Out of the Box series to the tranquil exploration of emotions in the Resonance series. Through this exhibition, I invite viewers to walk alongside me on this path of discovery, introspection, and growth."

Poornima's artistic career spans over three decades. A graduate of the Delhi College of Art, she has evolved from using traditional oils to experimenting with acrylics, allowing her work to take on a new depth and vibrancy. Based in Mumbai, her art

*Following the emotional depth of the Resonance series, Dayal presents her Impressionist Series, where abstract forms and strokes capture the essence of life's progression. The work here speaks to the impermanence of moments—what has been learned, what remains uncertain, and the continual process of transformation.*

quility, marking a peaceful departure from the intensity of earlier works.

Following the emotional depth of the Resonance series, Dayal presents her Impressionist Series, where abstract forms and strokes capture the essence of life's progression. The work here speaks to the impermanence of moments—what has been learned, what remains uncertain, and the continual process of transformation.

Finally, the Cityscapes Series presents a conceptual reimagining of urban landscapes. Though the cities depicted in this series are entirely fictional, they serve as potent symbols of emotional states and personal interpreta-

tions of the world around her. Prestigious galleries worldwide, including exhibitions in New York, Paris, and London.

In speaking about the exhibition, curator Kishore Labar described KALP as "a compelling visual narrative that captures the essence of human transformation. Through her innovative use of color, texture, and abstraction, Poornima not only reflects her personal journey but also invites the audience to reflect on their own life phases. It's an immersive experience that transcends traditional art, becoming a personal and emotional dialogue between the artist and the viewer."

## HARVEST ends on a high note with a powerful performance by the Raghu Dixit Project



### TDG NETWORK

The festival showcased diverse performances, including Kuchipudi, Kathak, Garba & Dandiya Raas, Bihu, Sufiana Qawwali, and much more.

It was a remarkable effort to transport audiences to the villages, showcasing their people, art, and culture in the most authentic and raw form. The five-day cultural festival HARVEST: Rhythms of the Earth, held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, concluded on a high note, leaving audiences energized by a rich array of performances celebrating India's cultural heritage. Curated by Sanjeev Bhargava of SEHER, the festival was part of the Grameen Bharat Mahotsav organized by NABARD under the aegis of the Department of Financial Services, focusing on the theme "Taking Rural India Forward."

The festival's opening day featured Vedic chants by Panini Kanya Mahavidyalaya from Varanasi, Rajasthan's Manganiyar tradition, Kuchipudi, and Kathak, setting the tone for a vibrant cultural journey.

Over the next four days, audiences experienced diverse traditions, including Kashmiri Folk & Sufi music, Manipur's Pung Cholom, Odissi dance, Kerala Temple Chants, and the soulful sounds of Baul music from West Bengal. The festival also showcased Punjabi hits like Jehda Nasha and Laila by Faridkot, and Mysore Se Aai and Shakkarpri by The Raghu Dixit Project.

A standout performance were the Buddhist chants by Gyoto Monks from Leh-Ladakh, followed by Gujarat's Kanaiya Dandiya Group's Garba and Dandiya Raas, and Assam's lively Bihu dance by Anwesha Mahanta & Group. Each act represented the essence of India's



cultural roots, connecting urban audiences with the country's vibrant heritage.

Sanjeev Bhargava, Founder of SEHER, said, "We live in megacities and skyscrapers but often forget the

roots that lie in our villages. HARVEST was our attempt to reconnect people with Indian villages.

Over five days, audiences experienced the vibrant sounds, stories, and traditions that define village

life. Inspired by NABARD's remarkable work in uplifting farmers and supporting rural economies, we aimed to bring the raw, authentic spirit of India closer to urban hearts through HARVEST."

# CELEBRATE LOHRI 2025: TOP FESTIVITIES NEAR DELHI

TDG NETWORK

**L**ohri, the vibrant Punjabi harvest festival, brings warmth and joy to chilly January nights. It's the perfect occasion to gather around a bonfire, enjoy traditional music, and savor festive treats. Here are some exciting Lohri celebrations near Delhi to make your evening unforgettable:

**Lohri Celebration at The Umrao, New Delhi**  
Celebrate Lohri in a luxurious setting with a traditional bonfire, live music, and an extensive buffet featuring North Indian delicacies. Guests can also enjoy an IMFL package with premium spirits and beers, adding a touch of grandeur to the festivities.

**ZONE CONNECT, SAKET**

This event promises a cozy and festive atmosphere with a bonfire and live barbecue stations. The sumptuous buffet includes soups, salads, main courses, and desserts. Live music enhances the festive spirit, making it an ideal spot for families and

friends to celebrate.

**MOIRE CAFE LOUNGE & BAR, NOIDA**

Known for its lively ambiance, this venue offers a traditional Lohri celebration complete with a bonfire, live music, and a delectable buffet. Open to all age groups, it's a great choice for those seeking a blend of tradition and modern vibes.

**LOHRI UTSAV AT REACH 3ROADS, GURUGRAM**

This event is perfect for those who love cultural performances. With traditional music, dance performances, and a warm bonfire, it's a delightful way to experience the spirit of Lohri with your loved ones..

**INDIA HABITAT CENTRE, NEW DELHI**

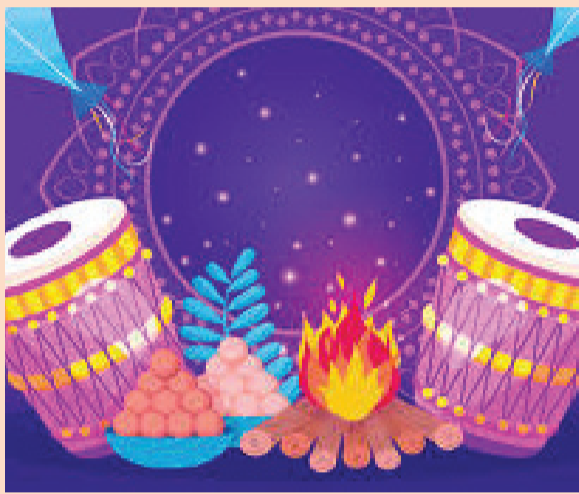
The Lohri celebrations at Margosa Lawn feature live performances by renowned artists, including Chaar Yaar and Ferro-Fluid. The cultural ambiance, combined with traditional music and dance, makes this event a must-visit for those looking to immerse themselves



in the festive spirit.

From sumptuous feasts to soulful music and cultural performances, these Lohri celebrations offer something for everyone. Whether you prefer a luxurious setting or a more traditional atmosphere, there's an event near Delhi that caters to your preferences.

Make sure to confirm event details and book in advance to secure your spot at these festive gatherings. Celebrate Lohri 2025 with joy, warmth, and a sense of community!



## Kailas Mansarovar Yatra



RAVI VALLURI

"Shiva Tattva is where there is no mind and the moon signifies the mind. When there is no mind then how can this 'no-mindedness' be expressed? You need a little bit of the mind to understand, experience and to express," says Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

The pristine snow clad peaks of Mt.Kailasa stand tall at a dizzy height of 6,638m. This august Kailash Range (part of the Gangdisê Mountains), is nestled in the Trans Himalaya in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China.

This undefiled peak is located near the holy Lake Mansarovar and Lake Rakshastal, in the vicinity of the interminable Asian rivers like the imposing and exalted Indus, the Sutlej, the Brahmaputra and the Karnali. It is noteworthy to mention that Mt.Kailasa is considered to be the sacred cradle of four prominent oriental religions, namely Bon, Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism.

The mountain itself derives its name from the word 'kelasa' or crystal. Preeminent authors of Tibetan-English history and literature have also mentioned the word 'kailasha' for this towering mountain, which essentially is a Sanskrit word.

The Tibetan name for the mountain is Gangs Rinpoche. *Gangs* or *Kang* is the Tibetan word for *snow peak*, analogous to *alp* or *hima*; *rinpoche* is an honorific meaning 'precious one'.

For those professing Hinduism, the peak is the home of the Hindu God Shiva and it is widely believed that Lord Shiva resides there; for Jains it is where their first leader was enlightened; for practising Buddhists it is the navel of the universe; and for adherents of Bon religion the mountainous range is the abode of the Sky Goddess Sipaimen.

The voyage spans over four-night stops, finally arriving at Darchen at an elevation of 4,600m, a small outpost that swells with pilgrims at certain times of the year.

Despite the existence of minimal infrastructure, modest guest houses are available for foreign pilgrims, whereas Tibetan pilgrims generally sleep in their own tents.

Circumnating the mountain, of which a part is an official park, is to be executed on foot, by pony or by domestic yak. It takes around three days of trekking, going past the Tarboche (flagpole) to cross the Drölma pass at 5650m.

An interesting facet for all pilgrims, troupers, mountaineers and those



pinning for inner peace to absorb is that Mt. Everest stands erect at m 8,848m in height, with the summit being scaled by over 4,000 people. The awe-inspiring Mt.Kailasa is 6,638m and yet its summit is yet to be conquered.

It is said that in 1926, Hugh Rutledge, an English Civil Servant and mountaineer studied the north face, and proclaimed that it was 'utterly unclimbable' and thereafter considered an ascent of the north-east ridge, but gave up the plan.

In 2001, reports emerged that the Chinese government had accorded permission for a Spanish team to climb the peak, which caused international back-

lash. Chinese authorities disputed the reports, and stated that any climbing activities on Mt.Kailasa were strictly prohibited. Reinhold Messner, an explorer and mountaineer unequivocally condemned the reported Spanish plans, and was to remark that, "If we conquer this mountain, then we conquer something in people's souls."

"It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves," remarked the iconic Edmund Hillary.

A trip to Mt.Kailasa and Lake Mansarovar fall in that category.

Ravi Valluri is working as the CEO of Cbbattisgarh East Railway Ltd. He is the author of *Bombay Review and Other Stories*.

## THE RISE OF LUXURY DESTINATION WEDDING CONSULTANTS: HOW EXPERTS ARE SHAPING THE ULTIMATE WEDDING EXPERIENCE



VAIBHAV SADHWANI

The reason luxury destinations have surged in popularity, is because couples are seeking exclusive, once in a lifetime experiences in some of the most breathtaking locales of the world. This shift has fuelled the demand for expert guidance in planning this extra ordinary event giving rise to a new class of professionals who are often called as luxury wedding destination consultants. These specialists craft dream weddings by blending vacation, culture and personalised service turning the entire wedding journey into an immersive, memorable experience. Lets see how these wedding experts are re shaping the ultimate wedding experience.

**CURATING UNFORGETTABLE DESTINATIONS:**

Luxury wedding consultants have a keen understanding of zeroing in on exotic locations, from private mediterranean islands to palatial venues in India. The insider knowledge allows them to offer exclusive access to hidden gems most travellers wouldn't even know exist. Beyond merely selecting a picturesque location, these experts design a setting that reflects the couple's personality, values and aesthetics. Adding to it, the experience resonates with the deep values of guests on a personal level.

**CURATING SEAMLESS EXPERIENCES**

Finding a destination

for wedding comes with complex logistics from handling travel arrangements to ensuring smooth operation of multi day events. Luxury expert consultants co ordinate the details related to logistics, transportation and guest experiences to create a seamless flow. With everything organized to perfection, couples and their guests can immerse in wedding festivities without worrying about anything. Incorporating unique cultural experiences

Today's couples often seek authentic cultural experiences to make their wedding feel both unique and meaningful. Luxury wedding consultants excel at weaving local traditions and cultural elements into the celebrations. Whether it is a traditional Hindu wedding ceremony in Rajasthan or a sunset yacht party in Maldives or a Tuscan vineyard dinner with locally sourced wine and ingredients. This adds authenticity, making the wedding a cultural journey for the couple as well as their guests.



every detail to align with their tastes. This customization could range from commissioning bespoke invitations to décor and designing personalized itineraries for the guests, ensuring that everyone feels truly special.

**CURATING THE GUEST EXPERIENCE**

Destination wedding consultants recognize that while the couple is the focus the experience of each guest is equally essential. To make everyone feel appreciated and pampered luxury consultants often organise curated pre and post wedding activities. Spa treatments, private tours and more. This thoughtful approach ensures guests leave with unforgettable memories feeling like they were part of something truly exceptional.

**SUSTAINABILITY AND ETHICAL PRACTICES**

Many luxury wedding consultants are increasingly prioritising sustainable practices. This includes collaborating with eco friendly vendors, minimising waste and choosing venues that adhere to positive environment practices. Ethical practices are essential, especially for couples who want their wedding to reflect their values and leave a positive impact on the host community.

**THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN DESTINATION WEDDINGS**

Technology has transformed how luxurious destination weddings are organized. From digital planning tools to virtual site tours to customized expert guidance at every step. Many consultants offer virtual consultations and real time planning updates making it easier for couples to stay informed and engaged even from afar. Guests can also enjoy interactive experiences like custom apps with event details and enhancing the experience for everyone involved.

The author is the Co-founder of Behind The Scene Weddings.

