

40 mobile medical units have been authorized to improve healthcare in border areas in Arunachal

Guwahati, Jan 11: In its first meeting of 2026, which was chaired by Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Thursday, January 8, the Arunachal Pradesh State Cabinet approved a wide range of policy decisions intended to improve public safety, strengthen healthcare delivery, increase employment and educational opportunities, improve urban governance, and strengthen environmental and wildlife conservation throughout the state. The Cabinet authorized the establishment of diagnostic infrastructure throughout the State by HLL Lifecare Ltd., a Government of India firm under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, which will significantly improve public healthcare. 256 Sub-Centers, 82 Primary Health Centers (PHCs), 25 Community Health Centers (CHCs), and 64 Block Public Health Units will be covered by the program, which is financed by the 15th Finance Commission Health Grants.

A Laboratory Management Information System will be implemented throughout all health institutions, including medical colleges, general and district hospitals, CHCs, PHCs, and sub-centers, as part of this project by HLL Lifecare Ltd. By streamlining supply chain management, inventory tracking, logistics, and data-driven operations, the digital platform is anticipated to increase laboratory efficiency and raise the caliber and dependability of diagnostic services. At

most 12,000 patients have benefited from HLL Lifecare Ltd's tele-radiology CT scan services at Aalo, Bomdila, Khonsa, Namsai, Tawang, Tezu, Yingkiong, and Ziro, according to the Cabinet. HLL Lifecare Ltd. was given permission to help all general and district hospitals and CHCs in the state become certified by the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board in order to enhance diagnostic radiology services.

The Government stated that the expansion of diagnostic infrastructure aims to make affordable and quality diagnostic services accessible closer to communities, reduce out-of-pocket expenditure, and promote evidence-based clinical decision-making for improved patient care. To strengthen healthcare outreach in remote and border areas, the Cabinet approved the procurement of 40 Mobile Medical Units (MMUs) under the Vibrant Villages Programme, funded by the Ministry of Home Affairs, with operational costs supported by the National Health Mission. The MMUs will serve 455 Vibrant Villages across 11 border districts, including Anjaw, Dibang Valley, East Kameng, Kra Daadi, Kurung Kumey, Lower Dibang Valley, Shi Yomi, Tawang, Upper Siang, Upper Subansiri, and West Kameng. Each unit will provide comprehensive primary healthcare services such as OPD consultations, maternal and child healthcare, elderly care, basic



diagnostics including AI-enabled portable handheld X-ray, essential medicines, screening for communicable and non-communicable diseases, teleconsultation, and referral services. The initiative is expected to significantly improve health indicators, bridge the rural-urban healthcare divide, and enhance the quality of life of residents in frontier areas. In response to the rising incidence of fire accidents and disaster-related emergencies, the Cabinet approved the proposal to enact the Arunachal Pradesh Fire and Emergency Ser-

vices Bill, 2025, replacing the existing 1991 Act. The new legislation is aimed at modernising the legal and operational framework of the department and will be placed before the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly for passage. To address career stagnation and recognise long service, the Cabinet also approved Special Grade promotions for Fire and Emergency Services personnel upon completion of 15, 20, and 30 years of service, benefiting 142 personnel. Additionally, the Cabinet sanctioned the creation of 91 posts for seven

sub-jails located at Longding, Khonsa, Changlang, Pasighat, Yingkiong, Aalo, and Kolariang to strengthen prison administration and management. In a major move to strengthen the education sector, the Cabinet approved the creation of 58 posts across various categories. This includes 14 administrative, non-teaching, and teaching posts, along with 32 Assistant Professor posts for the Government Model Degree Colleges at Piyong (Namsai district) and Kanubari (Longding district) to commence academic activities.

Assam govt crosses 1.5 lakh jobs mark

Guwahati, Jan 11: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on January 10 that the state has achieved a significant milestone by providing over 1.5 lakh government jobs since 2021, fulfilling a key promise made during the Assembly elections. Through a social media post, Sarma indicated that he would soon visit Sarusajai to distribute appointment letters to more than 6,000 candidates selected for Grade III positions under the Assam Direct Recruitment Examination (ADRE). He emphasized that the total government jobs awarded to date have reached 150,033, exceeding the prior commitment of one lakh jobs. The chief minister's announcement followed the distribution of appointment letters to 4,369 candidates for Grade IV roles through the same recruitment process. During a program at the Jyoti-Bishnu International Cultural Centre, Sarma described the ADRE's recruitment process as complex, specifically highlighting transparency as the primary challenge. Historically, separate departmental examinations led to issues such as overlapping tests, corruption allegations, and lengthy court disputes, resulting in staff shortages. Sarma underscored the credibility of this recruitment process, citing the absence of any ongoing court cases. Additionally, he announced the reopening of the 'Swagata Satirtha' portal on February 1 to assist in facilitating mutual transfers among government employees.

32 public employees were detained in 2025 on allegations of corruption Assam CM

Guwahati, Jan 11: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated on January 10 that his government has a zero-tolerance policy for corruption and that 32 public employees were detained by the state's vigilance and anti-corruption wing in 2025 on charges of graft. Sarma stated that the state would not compromise on integrity in public service while sharing the information in a post on social media site X. The chief minister wrote, "Seedhi Baat, No Bak-was (straight talk, no nonsense), Assam does

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on January 10, said that 32 public servants were arrested by the state's vigilance and anti-corruption wing in 2025 on charges of graft, reiterating that his government maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption.

not tolerate corruption." According to him, 32 public employees were arrested as a result of 29 trap operations conducted by the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption throughout the year. Sarma claims that the activities were a record of the vigilance de-



partment's interventions to make sure corruption "cannot raise its head" in the state.

Many traps were set, officials were appre-

hended, and charges were filed in all cases. "The message is obvious," he continued. The chief minister reiterated the state government's

unwavering commitment to combating corruption and declared that anybody discovered abusing their positions will face harsh consequences.

In Brief

Fail to deliver daily meals in schools

Itanagar: A survey of six schools in Itanagar revealed significant gaps in the PM Poshan Yojana implementation, with students receiving meals sporadically and uniforms distributed irregularly. Several schools serve meals on alternate days or have stopped altogether due to water supply issues, ingredient shortages, and low compensation for cooks. Students reported infrequent meals, contradicting the Education Department's directive for daily service. While uniform distribution varied, infrastructure improvements continue, with a state budget of Rs 3,000 crore for educational development.

Manipur police rescue four youths

Imphal: Manipur Police rescued four young individuals from forced recruitment into a banned militant organization after arresting Phandom Dinesh Singh, a 37-year-old active cadre member of the Kangleipak Communist Party (MFL), in Imphal West district. Singh was detained at his home and is accused of recruiting youth into the group. The rescued individuals were found in a rented property in Langjing. Authorities recovered a mobile phone and an unregistered Bajaj Pulsar motorcycle during the operation. The incident raises concerns about militant groups targeting vulnerable youth in the area, with police not disclosing the identities of those rescued for security reasons.

Codeine haul worth Rs 1.26 crore seized

Agartala: A joint operation by North Tripura Police and the GST enforcement wing led to the seizure of 12,600 bottles of codeine-based cough syrup, valued at Rs 1.26 crore, at the Churaibari sales tax gate on January 7, 2026. The truck was intercepted based on intelligence, and two individuals, Panjab Sheik and Based Sheik, were arrested. The consignment was hidden in ORSL packets to avoid detection, and an NDPS case is being registered against the driver. Authorities are continuing investigations to identify the source and intended destination of the shipment, marking the operation as a key success in combating narcotics smuggling in the region.

Inter-district roller skating championship

Dispur: Dispur will host the 12th Inter-District Roller Skating Championship 2025-26 on January 10, themed "From Turf to Table," linking sport with agriculture. The two-day event, organized in collaboration with APRINS and the Assam Roller Skating Association, will take place at the Dispur Skating Rink, starting at 3 pm on the first day. Approximately 300 skaters across various age groups from multiple districts are expected to participate.

Gauhati High Court Bar Association launches hunger strike

Guwahati, Jan 11: As resistance to the proposed judicial township in Rangmahal grew, members of the Gauhati High Court Bar Association (GHCBA) started a three-day hunger strike on January 8 in protest of the government's proposal to move the Gauhati High Court's principal seat to North Guwahati. The protest began at 10 a.m. in front of the former High Court building in Uzan Bazar and was set to last for six hours every day. It comes after a resolution that was approved earlier this week at the Bar Association's emergent extraordinary general meeting. The agitation is being led by K N Choudhury, president of the GHCBA. In Rangmahal, on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, the state government intends to construct a new High Court facility as part of a judicial township spanning 129 bighas, or more than 42.5 acres. On January 11, the Chief Justice of India is expected to lay the proj-

ect's foundation stone; the Bar Association has chosen to abstain from the event. The hunger strike was a "peaceful and democratic expression" of the GHCBA's objection to the relocation, according to a statement.

The Association stated that, following discussion, its general body has reiterated its long-standing opposition to moving the principal seat from its present location in central Guwahati.

This stance had previously been expressed in resolutions and a member referendum. All advocates are urged by the Bar Association to respect the group decision and refrain from attending the foundation stone-laying ceremony. The hunger strike is scheduled to continue on January 10 and 12. In November of last year, the Assam cabinet approved Rs 479 crore for the judicial township's initial building phase. The transfer, according to the



government, is a component of a larger plan to improve the Brahmaputra riverside, which calls for the High Court land in Uzan Bazar. The Gauhati High Court currently functions from a historic building and a modern multi-storey complex constructed a few years ago. The two structures, located on opposite sides of Mahatma Gandhi Road, are connected by an underground tunnel with escalator facilities. The GHCBA has maintained that shifting the court complex would inconvenience litigants and lawyers and has called for an immediate halt to the project, citing the interests of stakeholders and the public.

Assam Congress suspends joint secretary Shahnawaz Ahmed

The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) on January 6 suspended its joint secretary, Shahnawaz Ahmed, from the party with immediate effect for alleged breach of party discipline and actions that purportedly damaged the party's image.

Guwahati, Jan 11: Shahnawaz Ahmed, joint secretary of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), was suspended from the party effective January 6 due to alleged breaches of party discipline that purportedly damaged the party's image.

The suspension was initiated at the request of Assam Congress President Gaurav Gogoi, as outlined in an APCC order, citing "gross party indiscipline," harm to the Congress's reputation, and deliberate instigation of political discord among party members.

The order, signed by Bipul Gogoi, general secretary (organization) of the APCC, stated that Ahmed would remain suspended until further notice. Copies of the order were distributed to several senior party officials, including



AICC general secretary Jitendra Singh, APCC president Gaurav Gogoi, senior leader Debabrata Saikia, various AICC secretaries, and all INC MPs and MLAs from Assam. This suspension appears to reflect the leadership's efforts to reinforce internal discipline as the party faces organizational challenges and prepares for significant political developments in the state. At the time of reporting, Shahnawaz Ahmed had not provided a response regarding his suspension.

A significant obstacle in Nagaland is the underreporting of crimes Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton

Kohima, Jan 11: Nagaland Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton identified underreporting of crimes as a significant issue for the state's law enforcement, emphasizing that prompt case reporting and public collaboration are key components of efficient policing. Speaking at the opening of the Wokha district's new Superintendent of Police office building and police barrack, Patton, who also oversees Home and Border Affairs, urged people to report crimes without hesitation. According to him, timely complaint registration is essential for maintaining justice, bolstering law enforcement, and facilitating the best possible use of resources. The deputy chief minister stated, "When cases go unreported, it affects the overall assessment of the law and order situation and hampers future planning and development of police services." Senior police personnel, civil society representatives, and Nagaland Director General of Police Rupin Sharma attended the event, according to an official statement. Patton described the new facilities as a major step in bolstering the police infrastructure in Wokha district. He first opened the



police barrack and then the SP office building. Patton congratulated the district police on finishing the projects, stating that better infrastructure would increase operational effectiveness and raise police staff morale. He reaffirmed that Nagaland police recruitment would remain free, equitable, and only based on merit. Additionally, Patton praised the land donor for their contribution to the project and Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio for his funding and support of development activities. Speaking to the crowd, DGP Rupin Sharma emphasized the importance of district police as first responders and reiterated worries about the underreporting of crimes. He claimed that in order to improve the state's law and order situation, effective use of the new facilities, better management, and increased public faith in the police were crucial.

Wildlife monitoring at Mouling National Park in Arunachal Pradesh

Frontline staff receive field gear

Itanagar, Jan 11: In a notable advancement for wildlife protection and forest management, a field gear distribution program was conducted on January 6 at the Nature Interpretation Centre, Mouling National Park, Jengging, Arunachal Pradesh. The event, organized by the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) in partnership with Mouling National Park management, aimed to enhance the technical capacity and wildlife monitoring efforts within this ecologically sensitive area. During the program, which welcomed frontline staff, Obian Jonkey, the Range Officer of Jengging, outlined the program’s objectives. Bittam Darrang, the Divisional Forest Officer of Mouling National Park, emphasized the crucial role of frontline staff in conservation, highlighting that equipping them with adequate gear is essential for effective monitoring and patrolling efforts. He stated, “Providing frontline staff with essential field equipment is critical to strengthening wildlife protection and improving conservation outcomes in Moul-

ing National Park. This initiative will significantly enhance our ability to safeguard biodiversity in the years ahead.” The distribution of field gear to 34 frontline personnel was spearheaded by DFO Bittam Darrang, Tana Tapi, the former Field Director of Pakke Tiger Reserve, and Dr. Rajkamal Goswami, a Fellow at ATREE and Lead for ATREE–Arunachal Pradesh. Dr. Goswami elaborated on ATREE’s collaborative initiatives within the park, which include joint site assessments and coordinated camera-trapping exercises with the Forest Department. He showcased images of endangered and vulnerable mammal species captured in the initial phase of camera trapping and discussed plans for increased engagement of field rangers and stakeholder consultations to promote community involvement in conservation efforts. Tana Tapi shared insights from his extensive conservation experience, noting the vital contributions of frontline staff in biodiversity protection. He drew parallels to the successful conservation framework of the Pakke Tiger Reserve and inspired



personnel to emulate this model in their commitment to Mouling National Park’s ecological goals. The program culminated with remarks from Sisibiyang Nopi, the Range Officer for Ramsing Wildlife Range, who expressed gratitude and underscored the necessity of collaboration between the Forest Department and the community for effective conservation and development. This event highlighted a collective dedication among ATREE and Mouling National Park authorities to empower frontline staff and enhance conservation efforts in one of Arunachal Pradesh’s most significant ecological landscapes.

Tea planters want to discuss land rights legislation with the Assam government



Guwahati, Jan 11: Opposition groups in Assam Tea plantation owners have sought discussions with the Assam government to address legal and financial concerns arising from the amended Land Ceiling Act, which provides for granting land rights to workers for housing within tea garden areas. Industry representatives said the tea companies support the government’s intent to improve housing security for workers but want clarity on several issues before the law is implemented on the ground. Planters have flagged potential legal complications, financial liabilities and long-term implications for estate management if land ownership within gardens is transferred without adequate safeguards. The Consultative Committee of Plantation Associations (CCPA), an umbrella body of tea producers, has written to the state government outlining the challenges associated with permanent transfer of land in labour lines. The association has stressed that estate managements are not opposed to transfer-

ring land occupied by labour quarters, but have sought consultations to resolve what they describe as unresolved legal and operational hurdles. According to the planters’ body, tea estate employers are legally bound to provide housing and welfare facilities to workers under existing labour laws. As long as these obligations remain in force, the land in labour colonies would need to stay under management control, the CCPA said. The association pointed out that construction of houses under schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in tea gardens is currently permitted through no-objection certificates issued by estate managements, a system developed in co-ordination with the state labour department in 2017. However, these permissions do not involve transfer of ownership. Tea producers have also raised concerns that large portions of tea garden land, including labour colonies, are mortgaged to banks as collateral. Any dilution or transfer of such land would require approval from lending institutions, potentially creating complex financial and legal challenges. The CCPA further cautioned that granting ‘patta’ would confer heritable and transferable rights, making it difficult to prevent future sale or purchase of land within tea estates, which could affect the contiguity and integrity of garden areas. Tea Association of India (TAI) president Sandeep Singhania said these issues need to be addressed through dialogue before implementation of the amended law. Speaking earlier at a planters’ meeting, he noted that the Land Ceiling Act deals with land ownership and

does not account for compensation for structures such as labour quarters built by companies, which would require separate consideration under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. Singhania also highlighted that under central labour laws, including the Plantations Labour Act, now subsumed into the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, managements remain responsible for providing housing and amenities. He argued that transferring land ownership alone would not absolve employers of these statutory duties unless the law is amended. Assam has around 825 tea estates, with labour colonies spread over more than 2.18 lakh bighas, and the amended Act is expected to benefit over 14 lakh people. The legislation was passed by the Assam Assembly in November 2025. Reacting to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma’s recent warning that state incentives to tea gardens could be reconsidered if owners oppose land rights for workers, industry sources said it would be inappropriate to link the two issues. They maintained that incentives are granted under separate schemes with defined eligibility criteria and should not be tied to the Land Ceiling Act. The chief minister has said the land acquisition process has already begun and that workers will be given ownership rights, adding that the state provides incentives worth around Rs 150 crore annually to tea gardens and may reconsider them if obstacles are created in implementing the law.

Cross-party nominations in the Sribhumi sports election spark political discussion ahead of assembly elections

Guwahati, Jan 11: The upcoming general election of the Sribhumi District Sports Association has ignited political speculation within the district, especially following the endorsement of district Congress president Tapas Purkayastha by district BJP president Sanjeev Banik. This unexpected proposal has sparked significant discourse in light of the approaching Assembly elections. The sports association election is scheduled for January 8, with State Minister Krishnendu Pal already elected as president unopposed. Ten vice-presidents were also elected without contest, including Purkayastha, whose nomination has drawn particular attention due to its unusual bi-partisan support. The proposer’s list has become a focal point of political discussion in Sribhumi, where rumors have circulated concerning the collaboration between some Congress leaders and the BJP. Analysts have noted the apparent harmony between



the district leaders of these traditionally rival parties, despite ongoing tensions among their grassroots supporters. This situation has prompted observers to question the nature of the relationships at the leadership level, especially with Assembly elections on the horizon. Additionally, allegations have surfaced regarding the nomination of individuals affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)

to certain positions within the sports association. Reports suggest that the nomination process was not inclusive, raising further concerns about fairness and transparency. These developments have introduced a political layer to what is otherwise a standard election within a sports body, leading to extensive discussion in Sribhumi regarding the implications and timing of such cross-party interactions.

Mizo language school will be established in Kamalanagar



Aizawl, Jan 11: A Mizo language learning centre is set to be established in Kamalanagar, the headquarters of the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in Lawngtlai district, following a decision made in a meeting with officials from the District School Education Board, headmasters, and representatives of the Mizoram Chakma Students’ Union (MCSU). Mizo National Front legislator Rasik Mohan Chakma emphasized the significance of proficiency in the Mizo language for candidates seeking government jobs, as the Mizoram Public Service Commission (MPSC) requires language proficiency tests for recruitment. Chakma has pledged to use funds from his MLA quota to support the centre’s establishment, which aims to prepare candidates for these examinations. The centre will be managed by the MCSU, with logistical support from the CADC education department, ultimately benefitting Chakma youth and other aspirants by enhancing their language skills and improving their job prospects in state government positions.

The MSME department in Arunachal runs an outreach initiative

Itanagar, Jan 11: The Department of Industries, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, in partnership with the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and the Niumhi Foundation, held an awareness session about the Prime Minister’s Vishwakarma Scheme at the Town Club Hall in Namsai. The initiative’s goal was to educate local entrepreneurs, craftsmen, and potential beneficiaries about the different MSME programs and institutional support systems that are accessible to them. Nondo Doka, Deputy Director of Industries, Namsai, welcomed the attendees and gave an overview of the program’s goals, emphasizing the significance of empowering grassroots businesses through knowledge, skill development, and access to government programs. The technical workshops covered topics such as financial literacy, packaging, marketing tactics, business development, and government-backed programs. A thorough presentation on MSME programs and current initiatives was given by Satish Kumar, Assistant Director, MSME, Itanagar. He emphasized the importance of evaluating demand-supply dynamics and long-term business viability and urged prospective entrepreneurs to use creative strategies when entering the market. Emphasising quality as a cornerstone of sustainable enterprises, he stated that maintaining high product standards is crucial for market success.

Mizoram has discovered a new species of reed snake

Aizawl, Jan 11: Scientists have identified a new species of reed snake, Calamaria mizoramensis, in Mizoram, correcting a previous taxonomic error. This discovery, made by a collaboration of researchers from

Mizoram and international scientists, reveals a unique evolutionary lineage with over 15% genetic divergence from its closest known relatives. The snake, which is nocturnal, non-venomous, and inhabits humid forest en-

vironments, was assessed as “Least Concern” by IUCN. The findings highlight the rich reptilian diversity in Mizoram and the urgent need for further biological surveys in Northeast India.

India’s lowest temperature variation is recorded in Tripura

Agartala, Jan 11: Tripura has been experiencing unseasonably cold daytime temperatures over the past five days, significantly below normal levels, as reported by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). According to Dr. Partha Roy, Director of IMD Agartala, the maximum daytime temperatures since January 1 have consistently trended well below seasonal averages, with deviations documented between 3 and 9 degrees Celsius. On January 5, the maximum temperature in Tripura reached 16.8 degrees Celsius, marking a notable 8.6 degrees below the normal, which was the largest negative anomaly recorded across India for that day. Comparatively, Bihar reported around seven degrees below normal. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), daytime temperatures in Tripura have been abnormally low for the past five days. The IMD had forecast these low temperatures and anticipates their continuation for the next two to three days, predicting that maximum temperatures will remain 3 to 5 degrees below normal during this period, with minimal change expected in minimum temperatures, likely to stay between 11 and 13 degrees Celsius. Additionally, the IMD issued a dense fog warning for the state, anticipating thick fog affecting visibility at several locations over the next two days, and a yellow alert has been placed for numerous areas across all districts, alongside forecasts for shallow fog. In response to the severe weather conditions, advisories have been issued for the transportation sector, while the state government has resolved to close schools until January 10 as a precautionary measure. Residents are urged to exercise caution, particularly in the early morning when fog may significantly hinder visibility.

Congress objects to purported anomalies in the Assamese draft electoral rolls



The Assam unit of the Congress on January 6 staged a protest against the Election Commission of India and the BJP-led state government, alleging irregularities in the draft electoral rolls published after a Special Revision of voter lists ahead of the Assembly elections.

Guwahati, Jan 11: The Congress’s Assam branch protested against the BJP-led state administration and the Election Commission of India, claiming that the draft electoral records released following a Special Revision of voter lists prior to the Assembly elections had anomalies. The Assam Congress’s Guwahati city committee staged a sit-in protest close to the Secretariat building, accusing the ruling party of altering the voter list in order to retake power. Pradyut Bhuyan, general secretary of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, told reporters that the irregularities were intentional and driven by politics. He accused Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of trying to win another term through what he called “vote theft” and said

the Election Commission was working in the BJP’s favor. The Manavendra Sharma Complex, which is home to a Congress office, was roped off and barred by police; nonetheless, demonstrators eventually managed to get past the barriers and into the road. The protesters returned inside the compound and disperse amicably after shouting slogans and holding the demonstration for a while. According to the integrated draft electoral roll released on December 30, Assam’s voter turnout increased by 1.35 percent as a result of the Special Revision carried out prior to the Assembly elections. Compared to the previous final roll released in January 2025, the draft roll indicates a total of 2,52,01,624 electors. Last year, 4,47,196 names were removed and 7,86,841 names were added between January 6 and December 27. During the revision process, officials identified 4,78,992 deceased electors, 5,23,680 electors who had shifted their place of residence and 53,619 multiple entries.

Assam removes 6,200 bighas of Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary’s encroached territory 710 families affected

Guwahati, Jan 11: About 710 people were impacted by the Assam government’s January 6 completion of an eviction campaign to remove alleged encroachment from over 6,200 bighas, or nearly 830 hectares, of land inside the Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary, according to officials. In order to remove unlawful settlements from forest land dispersed throughout the districts of Sonitpur and Nagaon, a two-day eviction effort started on January 5 and ended on Tuesday night. Nearly 710 families have unlawfully occupied forest property inside the protected sanctuary, according to Sonitpur District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das. “The administration successfully evicted all illegal occupants and freed the encroached land during the two-day operation,” he stated. Several regions under the Tezpur Sadar and Dhakiajuli revenue circles, including Jamukot, Arimari, Siyali-char, Baghetapu, Galatidubi, Lathamari, Kundulihar, Purba Dubramari, and Batulihar, were evicted. After about 40% of the land had already been released previously, officials claimed the district administration sought to remove the remaining sections. Officials claimed that the alleged intruders had built homes and grown crops inside the sanctuary. Some residents stayed on the land, citing extreme cold and asking for more time to gather crops, while many others destroyed their homes and moved on their own. However, the administration refused to stop the operation, claiming that



it was impossible to allow unlawful possession of forest area at any time of year. According to Sonitpur Senior Superintendent of Police Barun Purakayastha, there were no unfortunate incidents during the entire operation. During the two-day push, 36 excavators and 60 tractors were utilized, and almost 300 police officers were called in to keep the peace. In February of last year, the Assam government cleared over 2,099 hectares of land in the Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary and surrounding villages in one of the biggest eviction efforts in the state, impacting almost 12,800 people. However, when some residents tried to re-enter the cleared areas in July, a confrontation between claimed encroachers and forest guards resulted in one fatality and at least seven injuries. Situated

around 180 kilometers east of Guwahati and 40 kilometers south of Tezpur, Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary spans 44.06 square kilometers on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra. The protected forest functions as a designated buffer zone of the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve and is an essential component of the Laokhowa–Burhachapori ecosystem. One-horned rhinoceroses, tigers, leopards, wild buffalo, hog deer, wild pigs, and elephants are among the animals that can be found in the sanctuary. The severely endangered Bengal florican, black-necked stork, mallard, open-billed stork, teal, and whistling duck are among its diverse biodiversity. The region was designated a wildlife sanctuary in July 1995 after being a reserve forest since 1974.

A complaint was made against LoP for making false accusations against the Tripura Minister

Agartal, Jan 11: The West District and Sessions Judge Court has received a complaint against Tripura Leader of the Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury for allegedly uttering false and disparaging remarks regarding SC Welfare Minister Sudhangshu Das. On October 10, 2025, Advocate Raju Datta said that Chaudhury asserted in the media that Minister Das's brother has substantial assets and is the greatest taxpayer in Tripura. According to the counsel, "he also allegedly made additional allegations regarding the minister's family property, suggesting that their wealth increased after Das assumed office." According to advocate Datta, these claims are wholly untrue and were manufactured with the goal of disparaging Minister Das. "The complaint has been filed in the West District and Ses-



sions Judge Court, with Public Prosecutor Biswajit Dey listed as the complainant. This statement is entirely false and was aimed at maligning the reputation of Minister Das," said Datta, emphasizing that the allegations have no factual basis.

At Mendipathar, Meghalaya records the first full freight rake loading

Shillong, Jan 11: The Northeast Frontier Railway announced that Meghalaya had accomplished a significant milestone in railway freight transportation with its first-ever full freight rake loading. Last week, a full rake of forty-two covered wagons laden with coal was sent to Jalalgarh from Mendipathar, North Garo Hills District, the

state's sole railway hub. According to railway officials, the improvement shows that the station is prepared to manage heavy freight operations. Mendipathar's first unloading operation took place on February 4 of last year, marking its entry into the railway freight network. Since then, the station has handled six full rakes and 29 micro rakes, for

a total of 20.5 complete rakes. It is anticipated that complete rake loading will improve freight connectivity, facilitate the flow of commodities, and promote. The commencement of full rake loading is expected to strengthen freight connectivity, ease the movement of goods and support economic activity across Meghalaya, officials said.

Modi Somnath's comments and the SC bail denial case are linked by the BJP

New Delhi, Jan 11: The BJP utilized the "M-factor" on Monday to highlight Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comments commemorating the first attack on the Somnath temple by Mahmud of Ghazni and the Supreme Court's rejection of bail to Delhi rioters Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam. Modi referred to the Somnath temple in Gujarat, which was rebuilt following numerous attacks by foreign invaders, as a representation of the "indomitable spirit of Indian civilization" in a blog post published on Monday. He described Mahmud of Ghazni's 1,026 assault on the shrine as an attempt to demolish "a great symbol of faith and civilization through a violent and barbaric invasion." The blog was published at the same time that the highest court denied bail to Khalid and Imam, two important defendants in the 2020 Delhi riots case whose ongoing

detention has garnered international attention. The BJP spoke to the media about both topics later in the day, commending Modi for highlighting the tenacity of India's Hindu civilization and applauding the ruling of the Supreme Court.

Sudhanshu Trivedi, a member of the Rajya Sabha, and Shehzad Poonawala, the party's spokeswoman, accused the opposition of being obsessed with the "M-factor." According to Trivedi, the "Macaulay factor of the 19th century and the Marx factor of the 20th century" were what he meant by the "M-factor." He did, however, add that he had "full faith" in the journalists' intelligence, even though they were perceiving something different. In his blog, Modi also made fun of Jawaharlal Nehru, the prime minister at the time, saying that he was not impressed by the repair and reopening of the Somnath temple in 1951.



Trivedi went one step further and said that in his book The Discovery of India, Nehru exalted Mahmud of Ghazni. Modi recalled that when the restored Somnath temple was opened to devotees on May 11, 1951, with then President Rajendra Prasad in attendance, Nehru was "not too enthused" by the event. According to Modi, Nehru had objected to the President and Union

ministers associating themselves with the ceremony, arguing that it would create a "bad impression" of India. "But Dr Rajendra Prasad stood firm and the rest is history," Modi wrote.

Trivedi alleged that Nehru had advanced a "false narrative" by suggesting that Mahmud's attacks on Hindu temples were motivated solely by the desire to loot wealth and not by

religious faith. He claimed Nehru had even described Mahmud as an art lover, adding that a historian who accompanied Mahmud had contradicted this portrayal. Trivedi hailed Modi for "restoring the country's civilisational glory". After Trivedi, Poonawalla addressed the media, saying that after "Jai Somnath" it was now time to say "Satyameva Jayate".

The Hindi heartland should emulate Tamil Nadu: Ex Chief Economic Advisor

New Delhi, Jan 11: The Hindi heartland should adopt the Tamil Nadu model of growth, according to former Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India Arvind Subramanian, who cited the state's superior capacity to draw in investment and control economic risks. Speaking at a Chennai event, Arvind Subramanian cited Tamil Nadu's skill base and multi-city expansion, noting that investors saw less risk when making investments there than in other areas. He claimed that Tamil Nadu has attracted consistent investments throughout the years thanks to this confidence.

The statements were delivered during the start of MK Stalin's "Ulagam Ungal Kayil" (The World Is in Your Hands) initiative, which involved giving laptops to 20 lakh schoolchildren throughout the State. For the program, the Tamil Nadu government has set aside Rs 2,000 crore. Speaking to the crowd, Chief Minister Stalin stated that by expanding access to educa-



tion through technology, the funding should be viewed as an investment in the next generation rather than an expense.

Arvind Subramanian said India's development depended on a mix of cooperative and com-

petitive federalism, where leading States set examples for others to follow. "Some States lead and others follow because leading States like Tamil Nadu can be both a model and a magnet by attracting talent, technology

and investment," he said. He added that if India was to develop further, the Hindi heartland would need to evolve along the lines of Tamil Nadu's current economic and governance model.

Civil society in Arunachal criticizes the anti-corruption bureau

Itanagar, Jan 11: Members of civil society organizations urged that the Rs 130-crore Lada-Sarli Frontier Highway land compensation scandal be turned over to the Central Bureau of inquiry (CBI), citing widespread irregularities and insufficient inquiry. Speaking at a press conference at the Arunachal Press Club, Chopra Cheda Gyadom, chairman of the Lada Sarli Frontier Highway Land Compensation Scam Issue (LSFHLCSI), along with members Kumar Sonam, Tutu Dolo, and Anil Rebe, stated that the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has only arrested two people and seized Rs 7 crore thus far, which they deemed insufficient considering the scope of the alleged scam. Cheda claimed that the ACB is unable to carry out an impartial and independent inquiry since it is a part of the state administration. Although the ACB's reputation is undeniable, its institutional limitations under the state government render it useless in a case this size. Without political backing, corruption of this scale cannot be carried out by technocrats and bureaucrats alone, he claimed. The group called for the arrest of all officials, managers, department heads, and brokers who were allegedly implicated in the scam, including Himanshu Nigam, a former deputy commissioner and IAS officer. Cheda called investigators "toothless tigers" and claimed that the arrest of DLRSO Takam Kechak and one trader was just a "eye wash." Cheda cited alleged corruption in the Potin-Palin and Joram-Koloriang Trans Highway projects, where contractors and former deputy commissioners were detained but then



"rehabilitated politically," drawing comparisons with past cases. He also brought up the Seppa-Chayangtajo NEC road scandal, alleging that engineers implicated in the fraud were eventually given promotions and some were even elected as MLAs, raising grave concerns about accountability. The group asked the Chief Minister to give the ACB complete authority and to include the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the investigation. The organization demanded, among other things, the return of compensation payments paid irregularly, the seizure and freezing of brokers' and alleged fraudulent beneficiaries' bank accounts, and departmental investigations into all involved officers. Additionally, Cheda urged DLRSO Takam Kechak, who is currently under arrest, to refrain from making false claims and taking sole responsibility. He stated, "Transactions to beneficiaries' accounts must be thoroughly investigated and recovered."

North Eastern Tea Association honours Wagh Bakri Tea chairman Piyush Desai Lifetime achievement award

Guwahati, Jan 11: The North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) presented Wagh Bakri Tea Group Chairman Piyush Desai with the Lifetime Achievement Award on January 10 in honor of his exceptional contribution to the Indian tea industry. One of the most well-known tea enterprises in India is the Wagh Bakri Tea Group, which has been in the industry since 1892. NETA Advisor Bidyanand Barkakoty highlighted the close ties between Assam and Gujarat in India's tea ecosystem when announcing the award, calling Desai a towering figure in the industry. "In the Indian tea sec-

tor, Desai is a patriarch. Since Gujarat is the biggest consumer of tea and Assam is the biggest producer, there is a unique relationship between the two states, Barkakoty told PTL. NETA's immediate past chairman Ajay Dhandhanias said Desai is widely respected as a tea tasting and evaluation expert and a visionary who has played a key role in shaping the industry over decades. A former chairman of the Federation of All India Tea Traders Association (FAITTA), the apex body representing tea packers and traders in the country, Desai brings with him over six decades of rich experience in the tea trade. NETA



officials noted that the Lifetime Achievement Award has earlier been conferred on eminent industry veterans Apurba Kumar Baroah and Sagar Mehta, both octogenarians who have made significant contributions to the

tea industry and society at large. The award recognises Desai's enduring legacy and leadership in strengthening India's tea sector, particularly in bridging production regions and consumer markets across the country.

ISRO will launch the PSLV-C62 mission, which will carry the EOS-N1 satellite, in 2026

New Delhi, Jan 11: The PSLV-C62 mission, which will launch the EOS-N1 earth observation satellite and fourteen other payloads into orbit, will kick off the Indian Space Research Organization's 2026 launch schedule on January 12. The co-passenger satellites are owned by both local and foreign clients, and the mission is being carried out by ISRO's commercial division, NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL).

Pre-launch inspections are underway, and the vehicle and satellites have been fully integrated. According to ISRO on

Saturday, the PSLV-C62 mission is scheduled to launch from the first launch pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on January 12 at 10.17 hours. The entire mission is expected to conclude more than two hours after liftoff.

The 25-hour countdown is scheduled to begin on January 11, ahead of what will be the 64th flight of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle. ISRO said the EOS-N1 satellite has been jointly built by Thailand and the United Kingdom.

The entire mission is expected to conclude more than two hours after liftoff. The primary

payload - 'Earth Observation Satellite' built by Thailand and the United Kingdom, will fly piggyback along with 13 other co-passenger satellites, which would be deployed into the intended sun-synchronous orbit around 17 minutes after lift-off. However, the separation of the fourth stage of the rocket (PS4) and demonstration of Kestrel Initial Technology Demonstrator (KID) capsule belonging to a Spanish startup, is expected to take place in over 2 hours after the launch. ISRO said scientists would restart the fourth stage of the rocket to demon-

strate the KID capsule to make its re-entry into the earth atmosphere. For this to occur, the scientists would re-start the fourth stage to de-boost and enter a re-entry trajectory, and this will be followed by the KID capsule separation. Both the PS4 stage and the KID capsule (which will be the last co-passenger) will re-enter the Earth's atmosphere and make a splashdown in the South Pacific Ocean, ISRO said. PSLV has completed 63 flights so far, including the ambitious Chandrayaan-1, Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), and Aditya-L1 mission.

Nagaland partners with WRI India

Kohima, Jan 11: Under the collaboration, NGISRSC and WRI India will jointly deploy the Energy Access Explorer to support inclusive and climate-resilient energy planning in Nagaland. The platform enables the integration of energy demand, infrastructure, socio-economic indicators and climate data, allowing decision-makers to pinpoint regions where clean energy solutions can deliver maximum impact. EAE is recognised as the first digital public good dedicated specifically to advancing climate-friendly energy transitions. Speaking on the occasion, Senior Project Director of NGISRSC, Er. Mhathung Kithan, said the MoU represents the next phase of an evolving partnership with WRI India. He noted that the collaborative framework reinforces transparency, shared responsibility and long-term impact, particularly in advancing inclusive and sustainable development planning across the state.

Private flight crash-lands near Rourkela

Rourkela, Jan 11: A private airline's small plane crashed near Rourkela on Saturday, injuring at least six persons, according to Odisha's Commerce and Transport Minister B B Jena. He claimed that the incident happened close to Rourkela. "A private, nine-seater A-1 aircraft transporting people was involved in an accident. The passengers are stable and have only minor injuries. It happened ten kilometers from Rourkela at Jalda. This isn't a serious accident, by God's goodness," Jena said reporters. "The aircraft was en route from Bhubaneswar to Rourkela," stat-

ed Prasanna Pradhan, director of Biju Patnaik International Airport. Ten kilometers prior to Rourkela, it crashed. There were two crew members and four passengers.

Everyone is secure. India One Airlines is operating the service. C-208 is the flight number. According to the minister, the Director General of Civil Aviation has been informed of the issue by the state administration. "Our director will also soon visit the accident site," he stated.

The injured were taken to the hospital right away for treatment as rescue crews



raced to the scene. It was a routine flight operated by a private operator between

Rourkela and Bhubaneswar, according to airport sources.

How Venezuela should be considered by India in light of the shifting US sanctions on Caracas

The United States’ policy towards Venezuela has been inconsistent since the failed coup against Hugo Chávez in 2002, marked by a series of diplomatic initiatives, sanctions, and military posturing, culminating in a planned naval build-up in the southern Caribbean by 2025. Over two decades, both Democratic and Republican administrations have aimed to dismantle the corrupt, authoritarian regime responsible for significant migration crises, while controlling vast oil reserves and harboring networks accused of terrorism and drug trafficking. The pivotal moment occurred in April 2002 when Chávez was briefly overthrown; the coup was quickly reversed due to regional condemnation and domestic support, fostering a longstanding distrust of the U.S. among Chávez’s supporters,

who attributed Venezuela’s issues to “imperial meddling” rather than local governance failures. After Chávez’s death, Nicolás Maduro’s rise saw increased repression and a shift in U.S. strategy towards sanctions, starting with Barack Obama’s 2015 declaration of a national emergency. The U.S. imposed targeted sanctions towards Venezuelan officials, expanding them to include the oil sector. Throughout the years, the U.S. aimed to increase the regime’s costs of repression while offering potential relief for democratic reforms. The geopolitical landscape shifted in 2019 when the U.S. and many nations recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó, contrasting with Russian, Chinese, and Cuban support for Maduro, resulting in a Cold War-like dynamic minus direct military in-

tervention.The Ukraine war in 2022 prompted the U.S. to experiment with easing sanctions in response to rising oil prices. However, this strategy saw setbacks as Maduro failed to uphold agreements regarding elections. The U.S. reinstated sanctions while maintaining limited exemptions for Chevron to stabilize energy markets, emphasizing the need for electoral reform and refined oil supply management. By early 2025, following a problematic election process, the U.S. escalated sanctions and intensified naval actions in the Caribbean, reflecting a strategic balancing act aimed at addressing mass migration, countering great-power competition, and ensuring energy security.Venezuela’s political turmoil has significant implications beyond U.S. borders, particularly for India, which views

the situation as both a strategic problem and an opportunity for economic self-reliance. With significant investments in Venezuelan oil, India’s energy security is jeopardized by U.S. sanctions that hinder its ability to import crude. As India’s dependency on Venezuelan oil highlights vulnerabilities, it stresses the need for strategic autonomy in energy procurement. Efforts to mitigate these dependencies include revisiting initiatives like the oil-for-drugs program and strategically diversifying energy sources amidst complex global power dynamics involving Russian, Iranian, and Venezuelan oil supplies. Ultimately, Venezuela serves as a pivotal test of India’s capacity to safeguard its energy sovereignty and assert its national interests amid external pressures.

Bangladesh’s Dark Prince

Tarique Rahman, often referred to as Bangladesh’s “dark prince,” occupies a significant yet contentious role in the nation’s political sphere, symbolizing the enduring legacy of dynastic politics amid the persistent structural challenges faced by Bangladeshi democracy. His political journey, marked by personal loyalty and family heritage, contrasts sharply with the ideals of institutional integrity, accountability, and collaborative governance. Emerging as the son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Rahman quickly rose within the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) during its 2001-2006 government tenure, becoming a central power broker despite lacking formal elected office. His informal authority, however, stirred criticism for creating parallel power structures that undermined democratic accountability and emphasized personality-driven politics over policy-oriented governance.The term “dark prince” encapsulates his dual influence—commanding loyalty from party supporters while fostering suspicion and critique from opposition figures, civil society, and the media. This reflects a broader pattern in Bangladesh, where political narratives are often dominated by towering personalities such as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Khaleda Zia, and Ziaur Rahman, sidelining reformist voices and undermining efforts towards institutional strengthening. Rahman’s political journey has unfolded against a backdrop of intense polarization, marred by allegations of corruption and misuse of state resources as the adversarial dynamics within Bangladeshi politics complicate efforts to ascertain objective accountability.Following the BNP’s tumultuous governance period, Rahman entered a prolonged self-imposed exile in the UK, where he has maintained significant influence over the BNP’s strategies, organizational structure, and electoral strategies. This paradox of a physically absent yet politically omnipresent figure underscores debates over political authority, justice, and accountability in a landscape where personal and partisan loyalties often overshadow the rule of law. His exile has transformed him from a party operative into a symbolic figure representing both the continuity of political ideologies and unresolved issues regarding political ethics and reconciliation.Furthermore, Tarique Rahman’s narrative complicates the examination of the structural attributes of Bangladesh’s political system, which have facilitated dynastic rule and weakened internal party democracy. His case highlights the intertwining of family legacy with political identity, overshadowing meaningful policy discussions and creating a climate where loyalty and legacy often take precedence over governance based on merit.

PoK demonstrations expose the Pakistani elite’s persistent repression

The United States’ policy to Venezuela, which culminates with the 2025 naval build-up in the southern Caribbean, has never been consistent since the failed coup against Hugo Chávez in 2002. Rather, it has alternated between diplomatic talks, law enforcement operations, sanctions, and sporadic military signals. Although this may appear illogical to outsiders, the pattern is not as mysterious as it seems. Both Democratic and Republican US administrations have worked for more than 20 years to stop the establishment of an authoritarian, corrupt government that controls one of the worst migration crises in contemporary history, sits atop the world’s largest proven oil reserves, and offers sanctuary to networks Washington accuses of terrorism, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling. The first pivotal moment occurred in April 2002 when a brief coup overthrew Chávez. That episode was crucial since it ended in two days as a result of regional censure and domestic mobilization. The Organization of American States (OAS) condemned the unlawful disruption and reminded Washington that inter-American standards, not coercion, are the foundation of legitimacy in Latin America. The incident fostered a long-lasting mistrust

of the United States among Venezuela’s Chavistas, who support Hugo Chávez’s political ideology. They believed that the country’s problems were caused by “imperial meddling” rather than poor management, corruption, or socialist authoritarianism. In Caracas, governmental propaganda is still based on that idea. Following the death of Hugo Chávez and the rise of Nicolás Maduro, tensions increased, marked by violent protests and U.S. sanctions beginning in 2014. President Obama initiated targeted sanctions against Venezuelan officials, which expanded to include oil and sovereign debt restrictions, aiming to pressure the Maduro regime while offering a path to relief contingent on democratic reforms. The conflict became geopolitical in 2019 with the U.S. recognizing opposition leader Juan Guaidó, while Maduro found support from Russia, China, and Cuba. Following the Ukraine war in 2022, Washington cautiously relaxed some sanctions under the Barbados Agreement, but Maduro’s failure to adhere to electoral commitments led to a re-tightening of sanctions. By 2024, Venezuela’s elections were criticized for lacking transparency, prompting further U.S. sanctions and military maneuvers against

Venezuelan drug trafficking. Washington’s strategy, which avoids normalizing ties with Maduro or direct intervention, is driven by three interconnected factors: 1) Mass migration, with millions fleeing Venezuela, reshaping U.S. border policies. 2) Great-power competition, with nations like China and Russia holding significant investments in Venezuela, making a stable Maduro regime a strategic concern for the U.S. 3) Asset protection and energy security, as the U.S. balances sanction enforcement with oil market demands.In this context, India’s interests are directly impacted by Venezuela’s instability. India relies on Venezuelan crude, notably through its Reliance refinery, and must navigate U.S. sanctions which impair its energy security and economic sovereignty. The need for strategic autonomy is emphasized as India seeks to secure energy supplies without dependency on U.S. policies, highlighting the interlinked nature of energy, pharmaceuticals, and broader economic strategies. India’s ability to assert its national interests amid complex geopolitical dynamics is critical, as energy sovereignty is tied to national sovereignty. Therefore, India is urged to act decisively in protecting its resources and securing its economic future.

Vande Bharat

In a significant boost to India’s railway modernisation drive and a major connectivity milestone for the eastern and north-eastern regions, Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has announced that the country’s first-ever Vande Bharat Sleeper Train will soon begin operations between Kolkata and Guwahati, marking a transformative step in long-distance rail travel as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to flag off the landmark train service, a development that underscores the government’s sustained focus on world-class infrastructure, indigenous manufacturing, passenger comfort and regional integration, with the Minister stating at a press conference in New Delhi that Indian Railways has successfully completed the final high-speed trials of the indigenously designed and manufactured Vande Bharat Sleeper Train, thereby clearing the last major technical hurdle before commercial operations commence, while emphasising that this new-generation sleeper train represents a natural evolution of the Vande Bharat platform that has already redefined semi-high-speed daytime travel across multiple routes in the country, as the sleeper variant has been specifically conceptualised and engineered to cater to long-distance overnight journeys ranging from one thousand to one thousand five hundred kilometres, a segment traditionally served by conventional express and mail trains, and by introducing modern design, superior ride quality and enhanced safety features, the Vande Bharat Sleeper is expected to significantly elevate passenger experience on routes such as the strategically and economically important Kolkata–Guwahati corridor, which connects the Northeast with the rest of the country and carries substantial passenger volumes comprising students, professionals, traders, tourists and families, with Mr Vaishnaw highlighting that the new train will operate in a 16-coach configuration and will be equipped with a host of state-of-the-art passenger amenities, including ergonomically designed sleeper berths for improved comfort during overnight travel, automatic sliding doors for enhanced safety and convenience, modern vacuum-based toilets with improved hygiene standards, advanced airconditioning systems tailored for diverse climatic conditions, and improved lighting and interior aesthetics aligned with global standards, all of which reflect Indian Railways’ commitment to delivering a premium yet accessible travel experience under the broader vision of “Make in India” and “Atmanirbhar Bharat,” as the train has been fully designed, developed and manufactured domestically by Indian engineers and production units, thereby strengthening local capabilities and reducing dependence on imported rolling stock technologies, while also creating employment and fostering innovation within the railway ecosystem, and the Railways Minister further noted that the fare structure of the Vande Bharat Sleeper Train has been carefully calibrated to balance affordability with premium services, with indica-

tive fares being around Rs 2,300 including food for Third AC, approximately Rs 3,000 for Second AC and about Rs 3,600 for First AC, positioning the service competitively against existing premium trains while offering significantly enhanced comfort, speed and reliability, and by including onboard catering as part of the fare, Indian Railways aims to ensure a hassle-free journey for passengers, particularly those undertaking long overnight trips, as the introduction of the sleeper variant also reflects a strategic shift to extend the Vande Bharat brand beyond short and medium daytime routes to overnight sectors, thereby maximising asset utilisation and offering passengers a seamless high-quality travel option irrespective of journey duration, with officials pointing out that the Kolkata–Guwahati route has been chosen for the inaugural sleeper service due to its high demand, economic importance and its role as a lifeline for the northeastern states, and the deployment of this train is expected to reduce travel time, enhance punctuality and provide a reliable alternative to air travel, especially for passengers seeking comfort at a comparatively lower cost, while also contributing to decongestion at busy airports and highways, and the initiative aligns with the government’s broader objective of strengthening connectivity to the Northeast, a region that has witnessed unprecedented infrastructure development in recent years across rail, road, air and inland waterways, as part of an integrated approach to national development and regional inclusion, with the Railways Minister reiterating that the Vande Bharat Sleeper Train incorporates advanced safety features such as crashworthy design elements, improved braking systems, fire detection and suppression mechanisms, and real-time monitoring systems, all of which enhance operational safety and passenger confidence, while the train’s superior acceleration and deceleration capabilities, combined with a smoother ride enabled by modern suspension systems, are expected to offer a noticeably quieter and more comfortable journey compared to conventional rolling stock, and the announcement has generated widespread anticipation among passengers and railway enthusiasts alike, particularly in Assam and other northeastern states, where improved rail connectivity is seen as a catalyst for tourism, trade, education and cultural exchange, with stakeholders noting that faster and more comfortable overnight trains can significantly benefit students and working professionals who frequently travel between Guwahati and major metropolitan centres such as Kolkata, and the flagging off of the Vande Bharat Sleeper Train by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also being viewed as a symbolic reaffirmation of the government’s emphasis on railways as a backbone of national integration and economic growth, as successive railway budgets and policy initiatives have prioritised network expansion, electrification, station redevelopment, rolling stock modernisation and passenger-centric reforms.

Pakistan bleeds within, while ministers, generals hide behind false bravado

Pakistan, which keeps drawing a false sense of consolation by assuring itself that all’s well with it, especially after Operation Sindoor, is hit hard by a fresh string of terror attacks in the very recent past. Eleven military personnel have been killed in a gunfight with armed fighters in the country’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), as per the Pakistani Army. The gun battle erupted on October 8 during an intelligence operation in the Orakzai district near the Afghan border. During the raid, the military claimed, there was an “intense” exchange of fire with “Khawarij”, a term used for banned groups such as the Pakistan Taliban (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan), which claimed responsibility for the attack. Among the dead were Lieutenant Colonel Junaid Arif, his deputy, Major Tayyab Rahat, and nine other soldiers. The army further said 19 fighters were also killed. Pakistani security officials also reported that the fighters ambushed a military convoy with a roadside bomb before resorting to fire. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif lauded the security forces for their service and paid tribute to the troops who lost their lives. In reality, however, the Pakistan Army seems demoralised, and the tall claims of the country’s army chief and other top military brass that their country was secure stand punctured by this dreaded terror assault. It may be recapitulated that in recent months, the Pakistan Taliban, which wants to overthrow the government and replace it with their hardline brand of Islamic governance, has stepped up attacks on Pakistani security forces, specifically targeting them. Islamabad alleges the group uses neighbouring Afghanistan to train and plan attacks against Pakistan, while archival India funds and backs them, charges denied by both countries. Meanwhile, in another development, Afghanistan’s United Nations-sanctioned Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi has arrived in India, the first visit by a top Taliban leader since they returned to power in 2021, following the withdrawal of United States-led forces and the fall of Kabul.

Amir Khan Muttaqi’s trip on October 9 was made possible after the UN Security Council granted him a travel waiver and is expected to be closely watched by India’s regional rival Pakistan, amid India strengthening its ties with the Taliban government. Muttaqi had met with India’s Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri in January this year in Dubai and was expected to hold talks with its External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar. Neither side has disclosed the agenda, but trade and security were likely to be at the forefront, although India has not yet extended its formal recognition. It is important to note that the trip highlights Taliban efforts to expand engagement with regional powers in a quest for economic ties and eventual diplomatic recognition. Muttaqi’s visit follows meetings in Russia—the only country so far to have officially recognised the Taliban administration. India has long hosted tens of thousands of Afghans, many of whom fled the country after the Taliban returned to power. In this context, it may be mentioned that the

Indian Mission in Kabul is limited to coordinating humanitarian aid and is gaining wide acceptance (however, while the Afghan Foreign Minister is in India, both sides may agree to upgrade it to a full-fledged mission). Earlier on October 7, at Muttaqi’s regional meeting in Moscow, Afghanistan’s neighbours, including India, Pakistan, Iran, China and several Central Asian countries, had issued a joint statement opposing the deployment of foreign military infrastructure in the region.

The statement, a rare showing of a unified front, was regarded as a signal of strong opposition to US President Donald Trump’s stated objective to retake control of the Bagram military base near Kabul. In a different and bizarre development, diving to a new low against improving bilateral relations, Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has made yet another baseless claim, alleging India was “never truly united” except under the rule of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb—a statement which is completely devoid of history. In an interview with Pakistan’s Samaa TV, Asif also said that “chances of war with India are real”. Such jingoism, parroted on behalf of the Pakistani military, is very unbecoming of a Defence Minister. His remarks came days after India warned Islamabad against backing state-sponsored terrorism or facing losing its geographical presence. On the contrary, to put the record straight, for over seven decades since independence from the British, India has remained a stable and unified democracy, unlike Pakistan, which has seen a series of military coups and internal fragmentation. Khawaja Asif has a history of embarrassing Pakistan on global platforms. Last month, he gave a bizarre “solution” to tackle Pakistan’s flood situation. He asked Pakistanis living in low-lying areas to “store” the floodwater in containers, rather than letting it go to drains. He also asked people to see the flooding as a “blessing”. During Operation Sindoor, he had exposed Pakistan’s misinformation campaign after India destroyed nine terror sites. During an interview with CNN, Asif tried to spread fake news about Pakistan shooting down Indian fighter jets during the strike. When asked for evidence, he attributed it to social media. “It’s all over social media, on Indian social media, not just our social media. The debris of these jets fell into Kashmir,” he claimed. The CNN anchor Becky Anderson quickly interjected, saying not to talk about social media content. He committed similar faux pas while being interviewed by prominent news anchor Mehdi Hasan on the Zeteo news channel. In the meantime, in a Pakistan-Afghanistan development, Pakistani fighter jets carried out airstrikes (October 9) on Afghanistan’s capital, Kabul, targeting Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) positions in Kabul. The strikes coincided with Afghanistan’s acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi’s visit to India for his high-profile meeting with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. Residents in Kabul’s central and northern districts heard loud explosions.

Starmer’s bid to recast India–UK relations for a new era

The visit of British Prime Minister Keir Starmer to India marks an important moment in the evolution of the India–UK relationship. As Starmer’s first official bilateral visit since taking office, along with a large business delegation, it carried symbolic and practical weight. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) was signed in July 2025, and now it was an opportunity to turn it into a functioning reality. Beyond trade, the visit also sought to infuse new vitality into cooperation on technology, defence, climate action, higher education, and people-to-people exchanges, thereby giving a contemporary dimension to a long and complex historical relationship. At the heart of the visit lay the implementation of CETA. The two PMs underscored the need to achieve concrete benefits, not just diplomatic satisfaction. They revived the India–UK Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) as the platform to oversee tariff reduction, dispute resolution, and sectoral partnerships under CETA. In parallel, the India–UK CEO Forum held its first meeting in Mumbai, drawing business leaders fro. The results were tangible. Sixty-four Indian firms announced investments worth over £1.3 billion in the United Kingdom, expected to create nearly seven thousand jobs in sectors such as technology, engineering, pharmaceuticals, and the creative industries.

For India, the visit promised improved access for goods and services to the UK market, while Britain saw in India both a source of inward investment and a rapidly expanding consumer base. Uks Revolut in digital payment may invest Rs 340 crore. Graphcore semiconductor chip company may invest Great Britain Pound (GBP) 1 billion, among others. Analysts believe that if CETA is effectively implemented, bilateral trade could expand by tens of billions of pounds by 2035. The visit also served to elevate the technological and innovation partnership. Both governments agreed to establish an India–UK Connectivity and Innovation Centre, along with a Joint Centre for

Artificial Intelligence. These will collaborate in next-generation networks, telecommunications, cybersecurity, and AI research. The expansion of the Critical Minerals Supply Chain Observatory will now include a new industry guild and a satellite campus at IIT-ISM Dhanbad. This aims to promote resilience in supply chains and to secure essential materials for clean technologies. In addition, a Climate Technology Startup Fund, jointly supported by the UK government and the State Bank of India, was announced to encourage entrepreneurship in green innovation.

These initiatives illustrate a growing complementarity between India’s scale and talent and Britain’s strength in research. Together, both aspire to participate in emerging technologies and help shape their global standards. Defence and security cooperation is another significant aspect of the visit. A major G2G agreement was signed for the supply of lightweight multirole missile systems from the UK to India, marking a deepening of mutual trust. Indian Air Force qualified flying instructors will serve in the United Kingdom’s Royal Air Force, an arrangement that enhances professional cooperation and shared capacity building. Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to maritime security and to collaboration under the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative. Plans were outlined for a Regional Maritime Security Centre of Excellence and joint work on electric propulsion for naval vessels. The timing of the visit coincided with the ongoing naval exercise “Konkan 2025”, which involved the UK’s Carrier Strike Group and Indian warships, further demonstrating the growing interoperability of their armed forces. These developments underline the strategic dimension of the partnership and its relevance in ensuring stability in the wider Indo-Pacific region. Since 2021 the UK has become ASEAN’s 11th Dialogue Partner. Education and people-to-people ties received equal emphasis.

The government uses an impressive RTI stonewall to avoid the IMF’s “C” grade criticism



New Delhi: According to a response that India Today received from the Ministry of numbers and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the government has not provided an explanation for the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) “C” rating for India’s national accounts numbers. Rather, the government cited existing statistical guides and publicly accessible IMF materials. The IMF’s assessment of India’s GDP data quality, the process for estimating output in the unorganized sector, the presumptions underlying quarterly GDP estimates, and the status of the ongoing GDP base-year revision were the four main questions that MoSPI was asked to address in the RTI application. MoSPI’s National Accounts Division did not point out any particular flaws or issues brought up by

the IMF when asked to explain the evaluation. Without summarizing its conclusions or outlining the government’s stance, the ministry only referenced the IMF Staff Report from the 2025 Article IV Consultation. Therefore, it is unclear from the RTI response which elements of India’s national accounts structure contributed to the “C” rating. MoSPI stated that it uses methods described in official documents published in 2012 and 2015, both of which are publicly accessible, to estimate GDP and Gross Value Added (GVA) for the unorganized sector. However, the response does not indicate whether any internal review was undertaken to assess the reliability of these estimates after major economic disruptions such as demonetisation, the rollout of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), and the Covid-19 pandemic, periods during

On the estimation of GDP and Gross Value Added (GVA) for the unorganised sector, MoSPI said it follows methodologies outlined in official documents released in 2012 and 2015, both available in the public domain.

which data availability for the informal economy was widely believed to have been disrupted. The ministry confirmed that quarterly GDP estimates are prepared using the benchmark-indicator method. Under this approach, data for a quarter is extrapolated from the same quarter of the previous year using sector-specific indicators. While the ministry acknowledged that data inputs are drawn from various government departments and private agencies, it did not disclose the assumptions used to bridge data gaps, nor did it specify steps taken to improve the robustness of high-frequency economic data. On the long-awaited GDP base-year revision, MoSPI said FY 2022–23 has been chosen as the new base year, with revised national accounts scheduled for release on February 27, 2026. The ministry has also published two discussion papers outlining proposed methodological changes under the production, income and expenditure approaches. An Advisory Committee on National Account Statistics (ACNAS), chaired by economist BN Goldar, has been set up to guide improvements and the use of new data sources. However, the RTI reply does not explain how the revised GDP series will specifically address concerns around unorganised sector estimation or respond to the IMF’s assessment of India’s data quality.

Despite the 4.3% target, BMI projects India’s fiscal deficit to be 4.6% in FY27

New Delhi: According to a report released on Thursday by BMI, a division of Fitch Solutions, the government’s budget deficit could rise to 4.6% in the upcoming fiscal year compared to its objective of 4.3%, which is anticipated to be revealed in the Budget 2026–2027, due to increased spending requirements and decreased tax receipts. Although income tax and Goods and Services Tax (GST) reforms in 2025 would reduce tax revenue in the upcoming fiscal year, BMI stated that the new spending requirements would not inevitably result in larger public deficits if the government could collect more revenue.

According to the analysis, reducing customs duties in the upcoming Union Budget would likely result in even fewer revenue receipts. Even while defense spending as a percentage of central government expenditures has stalled after declining significantly between 2018 and 2020, BMI said that India’s more hazardous external environment also presents new investment needs. According to the research, “New Delhi must consider spending more on security in FY26-27 due to China’s elevated defense spending levels and Pakistan’s recent decision to increase its defense budget. According to BMI’s research, in order to fulfill its medium-term debt objective while minimizing disruptions to economic activity, the government would need to budget for a target of 4.3% in the upcoming fiscal year. In the FY26 Budget, Union



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a shift to the debt-to-GDP ratio as the primary fiscal anchor, moving away from the practice of using the fiscal deficit as the operational target. Under the new glide path, the Centre aims to bring down the debt-to-GDP ratio to 50 per cent by FY31, with a permitted deviation of one percentage point on either side. The vision of

Viksit Bharat, BMI said, would require public investments in infrastructure and support for small to medium-sized enterprises.

“Unfortunately, a side effect of past fiscal consolidation efforts was to reduce capital expenditure vis-à-vis GDP,” the report said. The report noted that measures to arrest the slide in public capital expenditure would raise the deficit. Latest data from the Controller General of Accounts showed that the fiscal deficit for the first eight months of this financial year increased by 15 per cent compared to the corresponding period last year, even though the total fiscal deficit target is lower by 2.75 per cent this year at Rs 15.7 trillion. According to the research, even while defense spending as a percentage of central government expenditures has stagnated after sharply declining between 2018 and 2020, India’s more hazardous external environment also presents new investment needs. According to the research, “New Delhi must consider spending more on security in FY27 due to China’s elevated defense spending levels and Pakistan’s recent decision to increase its defense budget.”

ONGC and Japan’s Mitsui form a joint venture to ship ethane

New Delhi: In collaboration with Japanese shipping giant Mitsui OSK Lines (MOL), state-owned ONGC announced on Monday that it will acquire a 50% share in each of two joint venture (JV) businesses that will own and run ethane carriers. As per the agreements, ONGC will purchase 200,000 ₹100 equity shares of Bharat Ethane One IFSC Private Limited and Bharat Ethane Two IFSC Private Limited, all of which are registered in Gift City, Gandhinagar. Each joint venture will run one Very Large Ethane Carrier (VLEC) under the



Indian flag, according to the Maharatna firm.

The ships will deliver ethane to ONGC Petro Additions Limited (OPaL), ONGC’s petrochemicals business, from the United States. “By leveraging MOL’s global maritime expertise alongside ONGC’s

strong regional presence and operational capabilities, the partnership is expected to create substantial value across the energy transportation and value chain,” the business stated in a BSE filing. Additionally, it stated that the action is part of ONGC’s effort to diversify its operations. The company stated that it hopes to take advantage of new prospects in energy logistics by entering the ethane transportation market. Additionally, it aims to have a strong operational presence in specialized shipping and improve integration throughout its value chain.

Wipro leases 145K sq ft office in Navi Mumbai

New Delhi: In addition, common area maintenance (CAM) charges have been fixed at Rs 12 per sq ft per month, and Wipro will get 97 car parking spaces in the deal. The Indian multinational technology firm has also paid Rs 5.83 crore as a security deposit for the space.

Earlier, in June, Wipro leased 3.87 lakh square feet of office space at Mindspace Business Park in MMR for a tenure of 10 years at a monthly rent of almost Rs 2.5 crore in addition to its existing Navi Mumbai footprint of 3.45 lakh square feet of office space in Mindspace Business Park. Mindspace Airoli East is spread across an area of 50.1 acres. 4.7 million square feet (msf) of the project have been developed with a total leasable area of 6.8 msf. According to Mindspace Business Parks’ website, Mindspace Airoli East is the largest business park in the Mumbai Region



HDFC AMC uses a Rs. 2,500 crore fund to enter the private lending market

New Delhi: With its new Structured Credit Fund-I, HDFC Asset Management Company has entered the rapidly expanding private credit sector, offering alternative debt financing to mid-market businesses. As an anchor investor in HDFC AMC’s Structured Credit Fund-I, the World Bank Group member International Finance Corporation (IFC) would contribute up to ₹220 crore, according to a statement released by the asset management firm on Monday.

The fund is aiming for a total corpus of ₹1,500 crore with a green-shoe option of an additional ₹1,000 crore. In its first close, it garnered commitments totaling approximately ₹1,290 crore.

A sponsor commitment of up to

14% of the fund corpus from HDFC AMC is included in the commitment amount.

The fund has already committed ₹380 crore to three projects in a variety of industries, and it will invest in mid-market businesses. Over a period of four to six years, it will aim for mid-teen returns.

According to HDFC AMC, the fund will increase underprivileged mid-market enterprises’ access to financing by supporting job creation, promoting product and market innovation, and offering alternative debt financing where traditional financing frequently has restrictions. According to HDFC AMC, it will also promote the expansion of private credit for mid-market businesses and boost India’s private credit ecosystem.

Skydo receives final RBI authorisation

Mumbai: Fintech for international payments The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) granted Skydo final approval on Friday to operate as a cross-border payment aggregator (PA-CB). The Bengaluru-based payments company said it will broaden its product offerings and increase coverage in more trade corridors with the complete license. Skydo can process cross-border payments, particularly to facilitate inbound transactions, thanks to its PA-CB-I license.



According to a statement from the company, “Skydo has introduced several first-to-market offerings for India’s growing MSME export sector, including seamless local payment acceptance

in difficult corridors like Africa.” The authorisation comes at a time when multiple domestic payment aggregators, including online

and offline players, have obtained their own cross-border licences. At present, the RBI has authorised 19 entities with the PA-CB licence. The firm claims to serve more than 30,000 Indian MSMEs, freelancers and startups across more than 50 cities, supporting collections in over 32 currencies. The company is expanding to the United States after it raised \$10 million in a Series A funding round led by Susquehanna Asia Venture Capital, with participation from existing investor Elevation Capital, in December 2025.

Techno Paints appoints Sachin as a brand ambassador Targets a Rs. 500 cr IPO in FY27

Hyderabad: According to company sources on Saturday, Techno Paints and Chemicals intends to raise Rs 500 crore through an IPO in the upcoming fiscal year. It is anticipated that Sachin Tendulkar’s appointment as the paint manufacturer’s three-year brand ambassador will aid in the company’s nationwide expansion. The paint manufacturer stated in a press statement that the addition of the “Master Blaster” will help the brand expand its national reach. ”

We are honoured to collaborate with one of the world’s most iconic cricketers and a Bharat Ratna, Sachin Tendulkar. We are looking forward to achieving bigger and greater things this year with expansion and the IPO, and no one could have been a better ambassador or growth partner for us,”

said Akuri Srinivas Reddy, Chairman of Techno Paints and Chemicals. Earlier in 2023, the company had announced the appointment of film actor Mahesh Babu as its brand ambassador. He served in that role for a period of two years.

According to Reddy, the company made Rs 210 crore in income in 2024–2025 and is anticipating Rs 450 crore in the current fiscal year. By 2029–2030, it hopes to reach Rs 2,000 crore. With more than 3,000 hues of ornamental paints, Techno Paints produces industrial, specialty, and decorative paints. Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Odisha, and Chandigarh are the states where the company presently operates. According to the statement, it intends to expand to the Middle East



in 2026–2027 and Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, West Bengal,

and Uttar Pradesh by the end of this year.

SBI claims that, Crude oil prices may fall to \$50/barrel by June 2026

■ According to the SBI Research report, the deceleration of prices is likely to be faster, and this could average CPI inflation for FY27 decisively below 3.4 per cent

New Delhi: According to a survey released on Monday, crude oil prices are predicted to drastically decline in 2026 and may reach \$50 per barrel by June of that year. The SBI Research analysis predicts that prices would decline more quickly, which could result in an average CPI inflation rate for FY27 that is significantly lower than 3.4%. It stated that benign energy costs will have a positive effect on the GDP forecast and that an annual GDP growth impact of 10–15 basis points is anticipated. It further stated that the medium-term patterns for the Indian basket and Brent since 2022 indicate a decline in oil prices. The research noted that the most recent development in Venezuela has not had a major positive effect on the pricing. For the past week, the price of Brent crude has been about \$60 per barrel. It stated that a decrease in the import bill due to crude import prices will affect the rupee because



oil prices make up the majority of the import basket and cannot be temporarily replaced by domestic output. A portion of this could occur in Q4 FY26, according to analysis based on recent history. Assuming a USD/INR base price of Rs 90.28, the 14% anticipated correction may lead

to a 3% appreciation in the rupee, or roughly Rs 87.5 per dollar. The US Energy Information Administration estimates that the Brent crude oil price will fall to an average of \$55 per barrel in the first quarter of 2026, largely driven by the buildup of inventory.

Arunachal saw a 36% increase in GST from April to December of FY26

₹1,519 cr collected

New Delhi: In comparison to the same period in the previous fiscal year, Arunachal Pradesh’s Goods and Services Tax (GST) receipts increased by a staggering 35.7% in the first nine months of the 2025–2026 fiscal year, officials reported on Monday. According to them, the collection surpassed the 6.8% national growth average, indicating robust economic activity and enhanced tax compliance in the state.

Between April and December of 2025, the state collected ₹1,519 crore in GST, an absolute increase of ₹195 crore compared to ₹1,324 crore during the same time in 2024. The central GST Commissionerate here claims that improved taxpayer compliance, consistent economic performance, and successful revenue-boosting initiatives are to blame for the notable increase. The increased collections, according to officials, are a sign of expanded markets, increased economic activity, and better tax administration in key industries including retail, services, tourism, transportation, and hospitality. They credited the expansion to legislative initiatives that have expanded the



tax base and boosted investor confidence, such as increasing digitalization, governance changes, and ease of doing business. According to officials, the increase in revenue has improved the state’s financial standing and made it possible to spend more on social welfare, infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Officials further added that steps are being taken to sustain the momentum, including deeper tax digitisation, closer engagement with businesses, improved revenue tracking systems, and enhanced training for both taxpayers and tax officials.

Rubio claims that while the US won't rule Venezuela, it will use an oil boycott to force reforms

Washington: Secretary of State Marco Rubio hinted that the United States would only enforce an existing “oil quarantine” on Venezuela. This was a change from President Donald Trump’s announcement the day before that the United States would be in charge of the country after Nicolás Maduro was overthrown. Mr. Rubio’s remarks on TV talk shows appeared to be intended to allay worries that another protracted foreign involvement or unsuccessful attempt at nation-building may result from the robust American action to bring about regime change. They contrasted with Mr. Trump’s sweeping but ambiguous assertions that the United States would at least temporarily “run” the oil-rich country, remarks that implied some kind of system of government under which Washington would be in charge of Caracas. However, Mr. Rubio presented a more nuanced perspective, stating that the United States would maintain the oil quarantine that was in place on sanctioned vessels prior

to Mr. Maduro’s overthrow early on Saturday, January 4, and would use that leverage to drive policy reforms in Venezuela. Mr. Rubio stated on CBS’s “Face the Nation” that “that’s the sort of control the president is pointing to when he says that.”

The blockade of sanctioned oil tankers, some of which the United States has seized, “remains in place, and that’s a tremendous amount of leverage that will continue to be in place until we see changes that not just further the national interest of the United States, which is number one, but also that lead to a better future for the people of Venezuela,” he continued. Some Democrats were alarmed by Mr. Trump’s promise to “run” Venezuela, which he made more than six times during a press conference in Florida on Saturday, January 3. It also alarmed observers who remembered previous nation-building initiatives in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as members of his own Republican coalition, particularly a “America First” base



that opposes foreign interventions. Mr. Rubio dismissed the criticism, claiming that a “foreign policy establishment” obsessed with the Middle East had misinterpreted Mr. Trump’s intentions. According to Mr. Rubio, “the entire foreign policy apparatus believes that everything is Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan.” “The Middle East is not this. And this is a very different mission for us. The Western Hemisphere is this. Additionally, Mr. Rubio said, “We’re going to judge everything by what they do, and

we’re going to see what they do,” implying that the United States would give Mr. Maduro’s now-ruling subordinates some time to rule. Additionally, Mr. Rubio stated that the present U.S. “force posture” was capable of blocking drug boats and sanctioned tankers, even if he did not rule out a U.S. military deployment in Venezuela. “We’re going to run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper, and judicious transition,” Mr. Trump said to reporters the day before.

Zohran Mamdani’s anti-Israel views endanger a number of NYC voters

New York: Voters in New York City have differing opinions about Mayor Zohran Mamdani’s remarks regarding Israel. varied voter groups have varied opinions, according to a recent survey conducted by the Honan Strategy Group. Mamdani’s promise to detain Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu if he travels to New York on an International Criminal Court warrant is the subject of ongoing discussion at the time of the poll. His criticism of his associates’ opinions and Israeli military activities has garnered national notice. Between December 4 to12, the Honan Strategy Group polled 848 voters, 131 of whom were Jewish. Overall, the margin of error was ±3.7%, while for the Jewish subsample, it was ±8.6%. Voters were asked in the study if Mamdani’s alliances and remarks made them feel uncomfortable or intimidated. Concerning the growing acceptance of antisemitism in public life, 53% of Jewish voters stated they had cause for concern. However, according to 55% of non-Jewish voters, those worries are an overreaction driven by politics. The New York Post and The Forward both reference these findings. Additionally, 51% of Jewish voters saw Mamdani’s rise as a concerning indication that antisemitism may be normalizing in progressive politics, while 54% of Jewish voters thought his views exacerbate division and friction. Non-Jewish voters responded differently, with 61% seeing his ascent as evidence of healthy debate and diverse opinion. Voters were divided on whether Mamdani’s criticism of Israel is legitimate policy debate or crosses a line into



antisemitism. 47% of Jewish respondents said his criticism reflects legitimate policy disagreements, while 40% said it fuels antisemitism. Also Read: Cea Weaver row: Mamdani official’s alleged old posts go viral amid fury over remark on ‘white people’s property’ Among non-Jewish voters, 53% said his statements represent policy debate, according to The Forward. 71% of Jewish voters said speaking out against Israeli military actions today is likely to be perceived as antisemitic. Among non-Jewish voters, 51% shared that concern. Jewish voters expressed strong opposition to mayoral involvement in foreign affairs. 69% said it is inappropriate and dangerous for a mayor to intervene in international matters, while 46% of non-Jewish voters agreed, reported NY Post.

Leader of BNP’s volunteer wing, shot dead near hotel in Dhaka

Dhaka: The leader of the volunteer branch of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Swechhasebak Dal, Azizur Rahman Musabbir, was shot dead in Dhaka on Wednesday night by unidentified gunmen who also wounded another individual. The Daily Star, a Bangladeshi media site, reports that Musabbir was shot at 8:30 p.m. close to the Super Star Hotel in Karwan Bazar, Dhaka. Another Bangladeshi media outlet, the Dhaka Tribune, stated that Musabbir (spelled Mosabbir in the report) was the member secretary of the Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Swechhasebak Dal, despite Daily Star identifying him as a previous leader of the group. According to Fazlul Karim, additional deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Tejgaon Zone), he was taken to BRB Hospital in Panthapath but was pronounced dead, according to The Daily Star. According to reports, Musabbir was also the general secretary of the Dhaka City North Swechhasebak Dal. Two guys opened fire on Sufian Byapari Masud, the injured victim, as he was strolling down a path close to the hotel where he was attending an event with Musabbir. Masud serves as the Tejgaon Thana Van Workers’ Union’s general secretary. According to Inspector Md. Faruq,



who oversees the police camp at the hospital, Masud was wounded in the left side of his belly and is being treated in the DMCH’s emergency ward. According to party members, Musabbir spent the evening at the Super Star Hotel with a group of Shariatpur locals. The attackers fled the scene on foot, police said. A group of people including local BNP men staged protests near the Sonargaon intersection after the incident. Musabbir, hailing from Shariatpur, was a BNP-backed candidate for the councillor post in Ward-26 of Tejgaon during the city corporation elections in 2020. His family lives in a house on Garden Road of West Karwan Bazar, as per the report. According to family members cited in the report, Musabbir, eldest among three siblings, spent much of his time in jail during the Awami League regime and was arrested multiple times in connection with several political cases.

Nicole Renee Good death: Following an ICE shooting, a protester burns the American flag on a Minneapolis street

Washington: Following the shooting death of a 37-year-old woman by an ICE agent, a video has surfaced on social media showing a demonstrator burning the American flag on a Minneapolis street while a crowd looks on. In the footage, a man is seen holding the US flag in front of a group of demonstrators before setting it on fire and watching it burn to the ground. The crowd’s jeers overpower some of the other protesters’ applause. “Remain in your f—ing houses.” Leave. Oh no. A man can be heard shouting, “Instigator.” A crowd had gathered at the scene of Renee Nicole Good’s gunshot death when the incident occurred. She attempted to mow down an ICE agent, according to federal agents, and was shot. The demonstrators pelted cops and federal agents with snowballs. One man was even shot with pepper balls after trying to grab a weapon from a law enforcement officer, the New York Post reported. About 50 protesters gathered near the federal courthouse in the city, blocking the entrance and shattering a glass door, the Minnesota Star Tribune reported. “ICE out!” they shouted, before finally dispersing. Video appeared to show Good’s Honda Pilot making contact with an ICE agent as he opened fire. According to Homeland Security officials, the agent shot her in self-defense after being struck by her vehicle. Good was killed in a middle class neighborhood in south Minneapolis where ICE agents were carrying out an immigration operation on Wednesday, January 7. Good, along with several other people, blocked the street with their



vehicles to prevent the agents from moving, the Department of Homeland Security said. Good allegedly sped towards one of the officers, and even pushed him with her car, when agents got out of their blocked truck and ordered her to move her SUV. As the agent spun towards the driver’s seat

window, he fired three shots into the car, footage shows. Good was shot at least one in the head. She was later pronounced dead at the hospital. Good, who described herself as a mother, a wife and a poet, was previously married to a comedian who died in 2023, also aged 37.

The United States will leave 66 international organizations

Washington: As the United States progressively withdraws from international collaboration, the Trump administration will leave dozens of international organizations, including the UN’s population agency and the UN treaty that establishes international climate negotiations. According to a U.S. official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a presidential decision that had not yet been made public, President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, suspending U.S. support for 66 organizations, agencies, and commissions in response to his orders for his administration to review funding and participation in all international organizations, including those connected to the United Nations. The majority of the targets are UN-affiliated organizations, commissions, and advisory panels that concentrate on labor, climate change, and other topics that the Trump administration has classified as supporting diversity and “woke” measures. According to a statement from the State Department, “the Trump Administration has found these institutions to be redundant in their scope, mismanaged, unnecessary, wasteful, poorly run, captured by the interests of actors advancing their own agendas contrary to our own, or a threat to our nation’s sovereignty, freedoms, and general prosperity.” Additionally, the United States has left the India-France-led International Solar Alliance, which was introduced on November 30, 2015, at the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Paris by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then French President Francois Hollande.



laboration to tackle global issues coincides with his administration’s military operations or threats that have alarmed both allies and enemies, such as the capture of autocratic Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro and the declaration of an intention to annex Greenland.

The administration has adopted a larger, a-la-carte approach to paying its dues to the world body, choosing which operations and agencies they believe align with Mr. Trump’s agenda and which no longer serve U.S. interests. As a result, it has previously suspended support from organizations like the World Health Organization, the UN for Palestinian refugees known as UNRWA, the UN Human Rights Council, and the UN cultural agency UNESCO. The UN, which is already going through its own internal reckoning, has been compelled to respond with a number of staffing and program cuts as a result of this significant change from how previous administrations, both Republican and Democratic, have handled the organization. The U.S. administration’s decision last year to reduce foreign aid through the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, has resulted in numerous project closures, according to numerous inde-

pendent nonprofit organizations, some of which collaborate with the UN. Despite the significant change, U.S. officials, including Mr. Trump, claim to have recognized the UN’s potential and prefer to use taxpayer funds to increase American influence in numerous UN initiatives that set standards and compete with China, such as the International Labor Organization, the International Telecommunications Union, and the International Maritime Organization.

The most recent attempt by Mr. Trump and his supporters to disassociate the United States from international organizations that deal with climate change is the withdrawal from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, or UNFCCC. UNFCCC, the 1992 agreement between 198 countries to financially support climate change activities in developing countries, is the underlying treaty for the landmark Paris climate agreement. Mr. Trump — who calls climate change a hoax — withdrew from that agreement soon after reclaiming the White House. Mainstream scientists say climate change is behind increasing instances of deadly and costly extreme weather, including flooding,

droughts, wildfires, intense rainfall events and dangerous heat. The U.S. withdrawal could hinder global efforts to curb greenhouse gases because it “gives other nations the excuse to delay their own actions and commitments,” said Stanford University climate scientist Rob Jackson, who chairs the Global Carbon Project, a group of scientists that tracks countries’ carbon dioxide emissions. It also will be difficult to achieve meaningful progress on climate change without cooperation from the U.S., one of the world’s largest emitters and economies, experts said. The UN’s population agency, which provides sexual and reproductive health across the world, has long been a lightning rod for Republican opposition and Mr. Trump himself cut funding for the agency during his first term in office. He and other GOP officials have accused the agency of participating in “coercive abortion practices” in countries like China. When President Joe Biden took office in January 2021, he restored funding for the agency. A State Department review conducted the following year found no evidence to support these claims. Other organisations and agencies that the U.S. will quit include the Carbon Free Energy Compact, the United Nations University, the International Cotton Advisory Committee, the International Tropical Timber Organization, the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation, the Pan-American Institute for Geography and History, the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies and the International Lead and Zinc Study Group.

Trump extends an invitation to the president of Colombia to visit the White House

Washington: On Wednesday, January 7, 2026, U.S. President Donald Trump dramatically changed his tone on his Colombian counterpart, Gustavo Petro, claiming that they had had a cordial phone conversation and that he had even extended an invitation to the South American nation’s leader to visit the White House. Mr. Trump said on his social media platform, “It was a Great Honor to speak with the President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, who called to explain the situation of drugs and other disagreements that we have had.” “I look forward to meeting him soon, and I appreciated his call and tone.” The encounter would be held at the White House, he wrote. That occurred only days after Mr. Trump claimed that “Colombia is very sick too” and accused Mr. Petro of “making cocaine and selling it to the United States” following the U.S. attempt over the weekend to remove Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Regarding Mr. Petro, Mr. Trump said, “He’s not going to be doing it very long, let me tell you,” while speaking to reporters on Air Force One on Sunday, January 4, 2026. When asked if the United States could intervene, Mr. Trump said, “Sounds good to me.” Speaking to thousands of demonstrators he had rallied against U.S. military threats later on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, Mr. Petro claimed to have had an hour-long conversation with Mr. Trump. He addressed the crowd in downtown Bogotá, where protesters had only moments before screamed anti-American slogans at Mr. Petro’s request, “I talked about two things: Venezuela and the issue of drug trafficking.” In order to turn Mr. Trump against him, Mr. Petro told the audience that Colombian politicians purportedly connected to drug trafficking had deceived the US president about Mr. Petro’s background. “Those (people) are to blame for this crisis that has arisen between the United States and Colombia—let’s call it diplomatic for the time being, verbal for the time being,” he declared. Given that the president of Colombia referred to the U.S. effort in Venezuela as a “abhorrent” breach of



Latin American sovereignty, Mr. Trump’s apparent warmth toward Mr. Petro is particularly unexpected. Colombia has long been a cornerstone of Washington’s foreign counternarcotics strategy and one of America’s most steadfast Latin American partners. The United States and Colombia, the world’s top producer of cocaine, have collaborated closely for thirty years to combat rebel groups, apprehend drug traffickers, and promote rural economic development. However, tensions between the United States and Colombia had been escalating for months prior to Mr. Trump’s conciliatory post. Due to allegations of involvement in the international drug trafficking, the Trump administration placed sanctions on Mr. Petro, his family, and a government official in October. Colombia is regarded as the heart of the global cocaine trafficking. Mr. Trump ordered scores of deadly strikes on alleged drug-smuggling boats that were launched from Venezuela in the Caribbean to start his month-long pressure campaign on Maduro. Eventually, he extended the operations to include suspected Colombian vessels in the eastern Pacific. For the first time in over 30 years, Colombia, the country that receives the greatest aid from the United States in the area, was added to the list of countries that are not cooperating in the fight on drugs in September. U.S. aid to the nation was cut as a result of the classification. On Sunday, January 4, 2026, Mr. Trump referred to Mr. Petro as having “cocaine factories and mills.” “He won’t be doing it.”

Visit Kozhikode in 2026 Kerala Literature Festival Asia’s Largest Literature Festival



The Kerala Literature Festival (KLF) 2026, which takes place from January 22–25, 2026, is advertised as Asia’s greatest literary conclave with over 650,000 attendees, 400 speakers, and Germany as the Guest Nation. This is a carefully curated guide to visiting, dining, and shopping in Kozhikode during that time.

- Locations to See:**
Gujarati Street is ideal for strolls in the evening because of its pastel façades, spice shops, and historic cafés.
The famous Tali temple, tiled Keralan residences, and historic mosques can all be found in the Kuttichira and Tali Quarters. Watch skilled artisans construct enormous wooden boats by hand at Beypore Uru Shipyards.
A family-friendly center for science and discovery is the Regional Science Center & Planetarium.
The Kadalundi Estuary is a birdwatching haven where the river and sea converge. The

Elathur and Chaliyar River Cruise offers backwaters and mangroves for leisurely travelers. Smrithipadham is a renovated cemetery that has been transformed into a cultural venue with coffee shops and book launches. S.M. Street is a famous shopping avenue that has handloom shops, halwa shops, and banana chips.
A literary pilgrimage site, Basheer’s Residence (Beypore Sulthan’s House) is the preserved residence of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer.

- Where to Eat:**
The Smoke House, Puka, offers pulled beef, brisket, and smoked meats.
Lissy (Karanthoor): A classic Keralan meal including fresh fish.
The famous fish breakfast location is Chandrettan’s Kada (Kunnamangalam).
A nostalgic specialty drink from Kozhikode, Milk Sarbath Shop.
Beach Food Street: Evening vendors offering seafood, kappa, and muttamala.
Another biryani institution that is closely

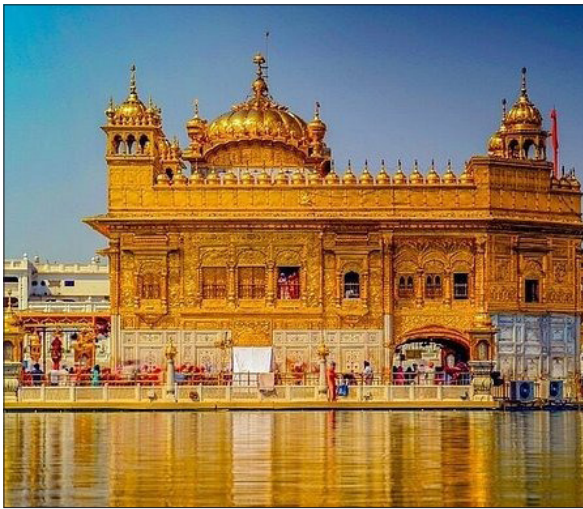
linked to Kozhikode’s culinary history is the Rahmath Hotel.
Fish curry dishes in the authentic Keralan thali style are served at Amma Mess, Ambika Hotel, and Alakapuri.

- Where to Buy:**
S.M. Street: Kerala souvenirs, snacks, spices, and handloom textiles.
Hilite Mall and Gokulam Mall provide coffee breaks, bookshops, and branded shopping.
Jayalakshmi and Kalyan Kendra: Festive attire and elegant silk sarees.
The Halwa Bazaar features rows of halwas in jewel tones that are ideal as presents.
Vasudevan Chips are renowned Calicut banana chips that are golden and crunchy.
Kozhikode During KLF: Kozhikode provides a distinctive fusion of commerce, tradition, gastronomy, and literature. The city becomes a center of culture where readers and tourists meet Nobel laureates, Booker Prize winners, historians, artists, and activists.

TRAVEL

Arrange an Affordable Trip to Amritsar in this winter

Although it may seem difficult to plan a vacation to Amritsar on a small budget, most travelers are unaware of how feasible it is. The Golden Temple’s spiritual allure, Wagah Border’s patriotic atmosphere, and the tastes of real Punjabi cuisine attract tourists all year long, but many are unaware of how reasonably priced it can be with a little planning. When you know where to spend and where to save, flexibility is beneficial. Amritsar provides affordable, spiritual experiences, vibrant bazaars, and rich culture. You may maximize every rupee without missing out on the top attractions of the location if you make well-considered choices. Continue reading to learn how to see Amritsar for around Rs 15,000. You may take advantage of good weather without paying peak season costs by traveling during the shoulder seasons, which run from October to March. There will be less people, and lodging and transportation are typically less expensive. This implies that you may travel freely while controlling your spending. Train travel is the most cost-effective method to go to Amritsar. 3AC tickets cost between Rs 1,200 and Rs 1,800, while sleeper class tickets cost between Rs 500 and Rs 800. For rates as low as Rs 4,000 to Rs 6,000, reserve low-cost flights at least 30 days in advance. By saving you one night’s lodging, overnight trains allow you to spend more on activities and meals. Near the Golden Temple and Hall Bazaar, Amritsar



offers a number of reasonably priced hotels and homestays. The starting price for a room is between Rs 700 and Rs 1,200 per night. You should budget between Rs 1,500 and Rs 3,000 for two nights. You may save even more money by taking advantage of the free breakfast offered by many places. Eating at street vendors and dhabas lowers everyday costs. Plates of dishes including lassi, chole, and Amritsari kulcha cost between Rs 100 and Rs 300. Food expenses can be kept between Rs 1,000 and Rs 1,500 during the course of three days. The langar in the Golden Temple is a soul-stirring, free event that you shouldn’t miss. The main attractions of Amritsar are inexpensive or free. Take in the Wagah Border ritual and see the Golden Temple at Jallianwala Bagh (transport costs around Rs 500). Set a budget and browse Hall Bazaar for phulkari dupattas and juttis. Entry to the Partition Museum costs between Rs. 10 and Rs. 50. For local transport, use

shared taxis, auto rickshaws, or cycle rickshaws rather than private taxis. While shared taxis to Wagah Border can cost as little as Rs 150 to Rs 200 per passenger, short journeys inside the city typically cost between Rs 50 and Rs 150. This method maintains your total traveling expenses around Rs 800. Although Amritsar is well-known for its spices, juttis, and phulkari, impulsive purchases might blow your wallet. Establish a budget for mementos, such as between Rs 1,000 and Rs 1,500. For better prices, haggle at Hall Bazaar and Katra Jaimal Singh. For genuine yet reasonably priced purchases, stay away from upscale retailers and stick to local markets. Between Rs 12,000 and Rs 15,000, you may easily stay under Rs 15,000. Traveling to Amritsar for less than Rs 15,000 is quite possible if you plan ahead, choose economical lodging, go at the appropriate time, and use smart transportation. Enjoy your journey!

Gulmarg Becomes Dreamy With the Start of Chillai Kalan



This winter, Gulmarg and the neighboring areas are once again in the limelight due to fresh snowfall. The renowned hill resort in north Kashmir has been covered in snow, according to recent reports. Its picture-perfect scenery has returned as a result. Travelers are coming back for skiing, gondola rides, and the sheer excitement of witnessing a Himalayan winter at its height when white slopes replace autumn greens and the temperature drops rapidly. In Kashmir’s seasonal calendar, the snowfall occurs at a critical point when winter conditions worsen and the snow starts to settle rather than melt. This implies two things simultaneously for travelers: Gulmarg is currently at its most striking, but it also necessitates greater preparation and forethought.

Travel considerations include weather windows, road access, and extremely frigid temperatures. Here are some tips for making the most of a vacation to Gulmarg, regardless of whether you are drawn to the romanticism of snow-covered mountains or adventurous sports. Recent reports state that Gulmarg’s meadows, ski

slopes, and nearby forests are blanketed with fresh snow, making the area perfect for winter sports. When the weather permits, tourists are lined up for various activities, which has resulted in a noticeable rise in foot traffic. Snow at this period is more likely to stay on the ground than early-season flurries, which can go rapidly. This lends Gulmarg its distinctive winter appearance, but it also results in slick roads, slower traffic, and sporadic delays during periods of heavy snowfall. The present snowfall falls during Chillai Kalan, a 40-day period that is traditionally regarded as Kashmir’s hardest winter. It lasts until late January and starts around December 21. The Valley is notorious for its icy conditions, frequent precipitation, and frigid temperatures throughout this time. This period is the most dependable for skiing and snowboarding since snowfall often builds up and persists during this season. At the same time, following significant snowfall, road access may be momentarily blocked, water pipes may freeze, and evenings may be quite cold. Visitors should be informed that patience and flexibility are crucial at

this time, even though residents adjust to these conditions on a regular basis. Gulmarg has a wide selection of lodging options, including modest lodges, mid-range hotels, and luxury resorts. Verifying heating facilities, hot water supply, and accessibility during snowfall is particularly crucial in the winter. When roads are blocked by snow, properties nearer the main area could provide better access to services. Usually accessible by road, Gulmarg is around 50 kilometers from Srinagar. The closest airport is Srinagar International Airport, which has frequent connections to important Indian cities. Depending on the weather, the travel to Gulmarg takes around 1.5 to 2 hours.

Jammu Tawi, which has excellent connections to major cities, is the closest major railroad. Travelers usually take the route from Jammu to Srinagar, a trip that might take seven to nine hours, depending on the weather. Overnight pauses are frequently scheduled in winter since weather-related delays may occur. From Tangmarg and Srinagar, shared cars and taxis are available. Authorities may control travel outside of Tangmarg in the winter, particularly during Chillai Kalan, and cars may be obliged to apply anti-skid chains. With slopes suitable for a variety of ability levels, skiing and snowboarders continue to be the major attractions. Another feature is the Gulmarg Gondola, which, in excellent sight, provides sweeping vistas of snow-covered peaks.

In addition to planned activities, many tourists just like snapping pictures, strolling through snow-covered scenery, or just relaxing and taking in the ambience. Watching snowfall from a café window or enjoying hot kahwa are examples of ordinary moments that become part of the experience. Gulmarg is in full winter mode with new snow and Chillai Kalan in progress. Travelers who plan ahead and come equipped will be rewarded with the season’s beauty and difficulties. This is Gulmarg at its most alluring for those looking for a true Himalayan winter, replete with crisp air, striking scenery, and a slower pace sculpted by snow.

Rajgarh

A Central Indian Bundela Hill Palace



The aspirations of the Rajput rulers, who governed from walled cities and hilltop strongholds, changed the wooded hills of northern Madhya Pradesh long before Khajuraho became a popular tourist destination. One of these was Rajgarh, a hill castle built over 350 years ago by a member of the Bundela dynasty, whose cultural and political power formerly included a large portion of the Bundelkhand area. About 20 kilometers from Khajuraho, Rajgarh was established in the late seventeenth century, a time of power struggles between the growing Mughal Empire and local Rajput rulers. The palace was built by Maharaja Hindu Pat (also known in some accounts as Raja Hindupat Singh Bundela), a Bundela king who used architecture to achieve both strategic security and symbolic dominance, according to contemporary sources and subsequent regional histories. The palace, which was purposefully built on high ground with a view of the surrounding plains, was intended to serve as both a dwelling and a declaration of power. On the Maniyagarh (also called Managad or Maniyagarh) Hills, a modest but steep hill that forms part of the northern edges of the Vindhya range, Rajgarh has a dominant position. Hill communities that combined defense, surveillance, and access to natural resources have historically benefited from this terrain, which is characterized by undulating hills, seasonal streams, and dense deciduous woodland. The palace’s closeness to water sources guaranteed long-term habitability, and its elevation offered expansive vistas across wooded plains dominated by palash and sal trees. The estate’s rain-fed lake, which is still there today, is an example of the ancient water-harvesting methods prevalent in central India, where monsoon cycles influenced settlement layout and construction. Between the 16th and the 18th centuries, the Bundelas were a prominent Rajput clan, building fortresses and capitals in what is now southern Uttar Pradesh and northern Madhya Pradesh. Forts, palaces, temples, and stepwells are examples

of their architectural heritage, which is distinguished by sturdy stone construction and a terrain-adaptive design. Rajgarh is an example of this custom. It integrates defensive logic within a residential structure, although it is not a fortress in the traditional military sense. With courtyards, vaulted halls, raised terraces, and enclosed residential quarters built to follow the hill’s contours, the palace complex developed naturally. The distinction between fort and court was blurred by these hill palaces, which served as administrative hubs, ceremonial venues, and temporary dwellings. Rajgarh remained a regional hub, its significance based on local government rather than imperial aspirations, in contrast to colossal cities like Orchha.

This relative humility guaranteed its survival as a lived and used area over generations, but it also led to its limited prominence in colonial-era gazetteers. Oral histories and regional records indicate Rajgarh’s continued habitation and importance within the local cultural environment, despite the lack of comprehensive archival data. In contrast to many similar hill constructions that were demolished or fell into ruin, the palace has survived until the contemporary period. Geographically, Rajgarh is located in a historically populated central Indian corridor. An earlier stage of regional creative excellence may be seen in nearby Khajuraho, with its renowned temples constructed by the Chandela dynasty in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The wooded areas that make up Panna National Park further west are reminiscent of a place where agricultural communities and royal hunting grounds historically coexisted. In this context, Rajgarh has a more subdued position in history as a living palace integrated into its surroundings rather than a capital city or religious hub. Its importance is found in continuity rather than spectacle: a framework formed by time, dynasty, and location that reflects the rhythms of central Indian history outside of the more well-known imperial chronicles.

A Pediatrician’s Guide: 6 Brain-Boosting Foods for Kids

Children are at that growing stage where their brains require nutrients to focus on all the learning. Nutrition is one of the building blocks for memory, concentration and overall cognitive development. So, as a parent, making your child finish homework on time or stay up to date with coursework won’t be enough to make them smart. Real smartness comes from within, and nutrition is the fuel for that. Diet for children, especially, cannot afford to be shallow with empty nutrients for convenience’s sake, like the boring and generic cereals for breakfast. To truly ensure your child thrives, add fresh foods with a robust nutrient profile which fuel their growing brains and, in turn, help to learn better at school.

Dr Kushagra Gupta, paediatrician at Fortis Hospital in Greater Noida, told HT Lifestyle that certain nutrients even help children overcome learning difficulties and support the symptoms of neurodevelopmental disorders. ADHD is one of them and is very frequent among school-aged children. As per DSM-5, ADHD or Attention



Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder means, “A persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development.” Dr Gupta, regarding ADHD’s relation to nutrition, said, “Increased omega-3 intake and better blood sugar management are even more important for children with challenging learning difficulties such as ADHD. ” Even other than ADHD, school kids struggle with concentration and focus. But nutrition helps with their hyperactivity. Dr Gupta listed 6 brain-friendly foods that are

beneficial:
1. Fatty fish: Salmon, mackerel and sardines are filled with omega-3 fatty acids, which are key for brain development. These good fats are great for improving memory, lowering ADHD symptoms, and helping with neural connections. Local options are fresh river fish available.
2. Eggs: Source of the best brain food: stuffed eggs contain choline important for the production of neurotransmitters. Whether it is masala scrambled eggs or eggs in parantha, eating eggs give you superb concentration and attention.
3. Berries: Berries, blueberries and dark berries are rich in antioxidants, which help improve communication between brain cells and enhance short-term memory. Throw them in smoothies or serve as a healthy snack.
4. Leafy greens: Palak, methi, and sarson ka saag are all abundant in folate, vitamin K and iron, all nutrients

that help support concentration and prevent cognitive decline. These are easily available vegetables, and they beautifully find a place in Indian curries and lentil dishes, which I cook.
5. Seeds and nuts: Walnuts, almonds and pumpkin seeds have vitamin E and healthy fats that can help brain cells. Use as snacks or mix into homemade trail mixes. Always test for allergic reactivity in young children.
6. Whole grains: They help in giving energy over a period of time because they have both complex carbohydrates and B vitamins. This helps in sustaining focus and concentration during the time spent in school.
Lastly, he cautioned against certain snacks, “Severely processed snacks, sweet beverages that have added sugars, and sugary sweets lead to an energy rush and crash that directly affects concentration and emotion. Opt for natural alternatives that will give you lasting energy, instead.” Children naturally have a tendency to lean towards processed foods, but it becomes the responsibility of the parent to encourage healthy eating habit.

Laura Ashley: From Wales to a global fashion empire



There’s no clearer sign that the prairie look is still gaining popularity than when incongruously sported by an icon of metropolitan life: New Yorker Carrie Bradshaw of Sex and the City. In the final season of the show’s divisive sequel, And Just Like That, which concluded in August, a trip to her boyfriend Aidan’s farmhouse in rural Virginia has her running off to the local store to clothe herself in the lacy collars, puffed sleeves and long floral skirts more commonly seen on 19th-Century settlers. Her transition from witty columnist to the writer of Victorian-era romantic fiction sees her throwing off her Manolo Blahniks and dressing like her characters. And it’s not just Carrie. Nostalgia for Victoriana, and the simple way of life it embodies, has seeped into social media via tradwife influencers such as Utah farmer Hannah Neeleman of Ballerina Farm; and on to catwalks and high streets. Several decades before this 19th-Century homestead look spread across the internet, however, there was an earlier revival of nostalgic, romantic fashion, spearheaded by the British clothing and textile designer Laura Ashley, who was born 100 years ago on 7 September 1925. Widely considered an influential tastemaker, she was described as “creating an image of Englishness that women worldwide wanted to buy”. Through the 1970s and early 80s her signature rose-tinted, bucolic style was a big mood in UK fashion and homeware.

“I don’t think there’s anything very special about our things,” the Welsh designer, batting back the suggestion that she was a “trendsetter”. Instead, the designs simply gave women what they needed, and “evolved from necessity”. The business had a quintessentially British beginning in 1952, with Ashley, a secretary for the Women’s Institute, visiting the organisation’s display of traditional handicrafts at the V&A. Inspired by the patchwork textiles, she resolved to make something similar. However, the Victorian fabrics she had admired at the museum, featuring small flowers and delicate stripes, no longer existed: she would have to print her own. The result – made possible by a rudimentary printing screen fashioned by her husband Bernard – who also co-managed the business – pleased her, and, noting a gap in the market for items that were both pretty and practical, she began making scarves, tea towels, and later, aprons. Bernard had bigger ideas, envisaging reams of upholstery fabric sold wholesale, and so it was Laura’s name that went on the label, and stayed there as the orders flooded in. In 1968, customers queued at the door of the first Laura Ashley shop in South Kensington. By Laura’s death in 1985, the company had 220 shops in 12 countries, only fading out when looks such as ‘80s power dressing and ‘90s minimalism took over, reflecting women’s changing role in society. The timing of Laura Ashley’s Victorian-inspired venture was perfect, bolstered by a post-war boom in production, and offering a wholesome, high-necked alternative (always in natural fibres) to the bold hot pants and revealing miniskirts of the hedonistic Swinging Sixties scene. Feminism might have been in ascendance, but

not everybody welcomed this shifting society. Ashley was offering a retrograde alternative, just as the tradwife trend does today. “I knew in my heart that was not what most people wanted,” she said. “I sensed that most people wanted to raise families, have gardens and live life as nicely as they can.” Laura Ashley’s aesthetic, and the values it espoused, were romantic throwbacks to what she felt was a simpler time. As Anne Sebba notes in her 1990 biography Laura Ashley: A Life by Design: “To her mind, the Victorian era symbolised gentle, gracious living, a time when standards, domestic and industrial, were at their highest and England at its best.” Her clothing was intended for women in a traditional domestic setting, that was both comfortable and charming. It was “brilliant marketing,” Sebba. Laura struggled to reconcile the demands of the business with her belief that a mother shouldn’t work when the children were around, sometimes packing the children off to bed at 4:30pm to make this possible. She would also decline her OBE – deeming it a slight on Bernard, particularly as the letter addressed her as “Ms”, which, for someone who valued the sanctity of marriage above all, felt beyond the pale. For a while, in the ‘70s and early ‘80s, Victoriana seemed unstoppable. The more fashion-conscious hippies seeking a more billowing, bohemian silhouette jumped on the trend, and children’s characters such as Holly Hobbie and Strawberry Shortcake, dressed in patchwork pinafores and bloomers, flooded the US and European markets with merchandise, from dolls and stationery to bed linen and curtains. Meanwhile, the US series Little House on the Prairie (1974-1983) became one of television’s most popular shows. Melissa Gilbert was just a child when she played Laura Ingalls with her strawberry-blonde plaits, but 50 years on, her lifestyle brand Modern Prairie, founded in 2022, answers a demand for cottagecore dresses, smock aprons and textiles reminiscent of the era. And there is a Netflix reboot of Little House on the Prairie currently in the making. The simple Victorian prints that Laura Ashley had seen in the V&A worked brilliantly in monochrome, which, coupled with imported cotton, kept costs low, enabling customers to style themselves and their homes on a budget. “They somehow clocked the aspirational desires of a whole generation,” says Sebba. “And by producing these clothes that seemed to come from the countryside and were very cheap, and the household fabrics to go with it, they enabled a whole generation to ignore social class, and that was powerful.” That their fabrics should be described as “an image of Englishness”, however, overlooks the company’s connection with Wales, where Laura was born. In 1960, now parents of three – and later, four – children, the couple relocated to a 500-acre farm in the Welsh Valleys, bringing the company with them, and providing welcome employment. A champion sheep shearer became their master garment cutter, and even when their products were stocked by Harrods and Liberty’s, “made in Wales” was printed on the labels, and the fabric dyed in the earthy browns, greens and grey-blues that recalled the landscape she loved. This connection with the British countryside was part of the packaging of the look. “It was the first company to offer this whole lifestyle,” explains Sebba. “It wasn’t simply that you were buying a dress or decorating your walls, or making curtains, you were buying into this whole notion that the rural life was preferable to urban life.” Fifty years on, Carrie Bradshaw’s milkmaid look enacts this fantasy of a country life, as well as her desire for domestic stability, described by Laura Ashley as “security at home”, and central, she said, to her clothing’s appeal. ”

Eating Right, Evolving Fast: What 2025 Taught Us About Nutrition

The way we eat is evolving. No longer just about cutting calories or tracking macros, nutrition in 2025 is about understanding how food fuels the body at a cellular level. It’s about metabolic health, longevity, gut-brain-skin connections, and nutrients that communicate with our genes.

“We’re finally beginning to understand that the way we eat has less to do with dieting and more to do with how our cells function,” says Shradha Sounil Khanna, AVP Nutrition, Well-being Nutrition. “The mitochondria, the powerhouses of the cell, are now the stars of nutrition science,” explains Khanna. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, amino acids, polyphenols from berries, olives, and green tea, as well as botanical extracts like matcha and berberine, enhance mitochondrial efficiency. The result? Cleaner, sustainable energy, fewer blood sugar spikes, and even healthier ageing. “Think less post-lunch fatigue, no brain fog, and reversing cognitive decline,” she adds. Gut health continues to dominate headlines, but the conversation has shifted. “It’s not just about more fibre,” says Khanna, “but about the optimal balance of soluble and insoluble fibres to generate short-chain fatty acids that energise colon cells and reduce systemic inflammation.” A daily mix of legumes, millets, fruits, and whole grains helps regulate blood sugar, cholesterol, and weight, while also supporting immune health.



“Protein isn’t just about quantity anymore,” Khanna notes. “The timing and type of protein, paired with compounds like leucine or Velositol, can double muscle protein synthesis.” Collagen peptides aid tissue repair, while creatine, once seen as a muscle-only supplement, now shows benefits for cognition and recovery. Personalisation is key: “It’s not just how much protein you eat, but when, what kind, and with what,” she emphasises. Micronutrients are emerging as the unsung heroes of health. “Magnesium doesn’t just relax muscles; it activates over 300 enzymatic reactions, affecting everything from glucose regulation to mood stability,” says Khanna. Iron, zinc, and vitamin D are equally crucial; missing them is like running the latest software on an outdated device.

Static diets are giving way to cyclical nutrition. “Fasting, re-feeding, or rotating nutrients can turn on autophagy, the cell’s cleaning process, and prevent metabolic plateaus,” explains Khanna.

Timing these cycles with the body’s circadian rhythm optimises cellular function and overall well-being. Celebrity dietician Simrat Kathuria adds, “One diet works for none. Personalised nutrition, based on gut microbiome and genetics, is far more effective than one-size-fits-all plans.” She notes the rising importance of protein-fibre synergy to stabilise blood sugar, improve satisfaction, and aid weight control. Sustainability is also central: choosing local, minimally processed foods is not just healthy, it’s responsible. Ria Pawar, Coaching Specialist at Elevate Now, sums it up: “Nutrition in 2025 is about the basics done right – complete proteins and fibre-rich whole foods. True longevity comes from personalisation and timely interventions to help your body function at peak performance.” Correct eating in 2025 is precision nutrition: it’s not a trend, it’s cellular self-care. The focus has shifted from chasing quick fixes to supporting long-term metabolic, cognitive, and immune health. In short, eating right now means eating smart, sustainable, and in tune with your body.

Genelia D’Souza Stuns in Kalamkari and Rich Browns for Festive Season

Genelia D’Souza has always had a way of making traditional wear feel fresh, relatable, and aspirational all at once. This time, she stepped into the festive spotlight in an earthy-toned lehenga look that celebrated both heritage and modernity. With a hand-painted Kalamkari dupatta as the hero and statement silver jewellery to match, her ensemble wasn’t just about looking glamorous; it was about telling a story through craft, colour, and culture.

For her latest look, Genelia D’Souza wore a regal lehenga set by Aamra by Lavanya. The look centred around a brown lehenga set priced at Rs 54,000, paired with a standout Kalamkari dupatta. The lehenga featured subtle striped shimmer detailing, which caught the light and gave the silhouette a luxurious, fluid movement. But it was the dupatta that became the focal point of the ensemble. With hand-drawn Kalamkari artistry depicting birds, the drape added not just visual appeal but also a touch of storytelling and symbolism. It was a nod to heritage craftsmanship, reinterpreted for today’s festive wardrobe.

Understanding and managing monsoon-related joint pain easily

The sound of raindrops brings joy to many, but for those living with arthritis or chronic joint pain, the monsoon season often signals discomfort. Stiffness, swelling, and inflammation seem to rise with the rains, leaving many to wonder whether the weather is to blame. Doctors confirm that this is more than just a coincidence; there are scientific explanations behind the flare-ups. “People often complain that their knees or shoulders hurt more during the rainy season, and it’s not in their heads. There are physiological changes triggered by weather shifts that directly impact joint health,” says Dr. Prateek Gupta, Consultant – Orthopaedics, Manipal Hospital, Ghaziabad.

Drop In Atmospheric Pressure – When the air pressure dips, joint spaces expand, creating strain in already sensitive joints. “This widening effect can worsen pain for those with arthritis, osteoporosis, or old injuries,” explains Dr. Gupta.

High Humidity Levels – Moist air causes tissues around the joints to swell and stiffen. High humidity acts like a trigger, leading to increased discomfort and reduced mobility.

Temperature Drops – Cooler temperatures tighten muscles and restrict free movement. This explains why sudden weather dips often bring on stiffness.

Reduced Physical Activity – “During the monsoon, people tend to stay indoors and cut down on their exercise routines,” says Dr. Gupta. This leads to poor circulation, muscle stiffness, and lower flexibility.

Old Injuries Resurface – Injuries from years ago may ache again. Weather changes can flare up scar tissue or weak joints, making dormant pain feel active.

Vitamin D Deficiency – Less exposure to sunlight reduces vitamin D synthesis. “Low vitamin D can weaken bones and worsen aches,” Dr. Gupta emphasises.



Increased Risk Of Infections – Damp weather also promotes viral or bacterial infections. For those with autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, this can further fuel joint inflammation.

The good news is that a few simple adjustments can help ease the discomfort. “Keeping joints warm with compresses, doing gentle indoor stretches, and maintaining regular movement are very effective,” says Dr. Gupta. Low-impact exercises like yoga or light walking indoors promote circulation and prevent stiffness. The good news is that a few simple adjustments can help ease the discomfort. “Keeping joints warm with compresses, doing gentle indoor stretches, and maintaining regular movement are very effective,” says Dr. Gupta. Low-impact exercises like yoga or light walking indoors promote circulation and prevent stiffness. Alongside medical advice, simple lifestyle tweaks can help manage the season better. Warm soaks, turmeric-infused drinks, and light stretching routines can go a long way in keeping pain at bay. Avoid sitting for too long, dress warmly, and keep joints covered during damp spells.

Akhilesh Yadav points out inconsistencies in SIR



Lucknow, Jan 11: Akhilesh Yadav, the national president of the Samajwadi Party, launched a scathing attack on the Election Commission and the BJP-led Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday regarding the draft Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, claiming that the process was being used as a “conspiracy” to favor the ruling party while selectively removing votes from specific communities. Yadav told reporters that the SIR experiment had not been opposed at first by any political party. But after the draft list was made public, worries grew. “Almost three crore votes have been eliminated, as anticipated. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had previously stated that four crore votes would be eliminated before the draft was even released. How did the chief minister know this when there was no data? He claimed that the effort seemed to be intended to increase the BJP’s electoral advantage while reducing the votes of PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, and Alpsankhyak) populations. He added, “We had previously stated that SIR is nothing more than CAA-NRC in a different format.” The former chief minister stated that the Election Commission has to address significant disparities in voter data and raised three specific points.

The Thiruparankundram Hills deepam ceremony is approved by the Madras High Court BJP attacks DMK

New Delhi, Jan 11: Taking advantage of a Madras High Court division bench’s decision on Tuesday to permit the ritualistic deepam (lamp) to be lit atop the Thiruparankundram Hills in Madurai, the BJP launched a fierce attack on the ruling DMK-led alliance, accusing it of being “anti-Hindu” and attempting to gain electoral ground ahead of the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. A division bench upheld a single judge’s December 1 judgment that the DMK government had contested. The decision was made in the midst of controversy as members of the Opposition INDIA group filed an impeachment notice against Justice G.R. Swaminathan, the lone judge, in the Lok Sabha last month, accusing him of “ideological bias” and eroding secular values. The BJP’s poll coordinator for Tamil Nadu, Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, was stationed at the party headquarters to criticize the DMK’s and the INDIA bloc’s “appeasement politics.” Goyal declared, “Today’s ruling has amply demonstrated that the DMK and the INDIA alliance are anti-Hindu.” He continued by saying that the state government’s claim of a possible law and order issue had been dismissed by the court, which called it a “imaginary ghost.” He declared, “This is nothing more than appeasement politics by the INDIA alliance to favor one community.” Along with Bengal, Kerala, and As-



sam, Tamil Nadu is set to hold elections in April and May. In an attempt to establish a presence in the politically difficult southern state, the BJP has been pushing the Hindutva platform. The party is relying on an alliance with the AIADMK and a few other parties to increase its influence because it has limited organizational depth and popular appeal on its own. The court’s decision was made one day after Union Home Minister Amit Shah wrapped up a two-day trip to the state, where he spoke at a party rally and had strategic discussions in front of the Assembly elections. For the next state elections, Shah has become the BJP’s top poll strategist. Goyal emphasized Hinduism and Sanatan Dharma during the media briefing in an attempt to paint the ruling DMK and the INDIA alliance as being at odds with the religion of the nation’s majority: “The repeated criticism and attacks on Sanatan Dharma by Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin, his son

Udhayanidhi, and other DMK leaders are not coincidental,” Goyal stated. He claimed that the party’s ideological stance was connected to the following refusal of permission for the ceremonial lighting of the lamp during the Tamil Karthigai Deepam festival, citing Udhayanidhi’s September 2 remarks advocating for the destruction of Sanatan Dharma. He stated, “This coincidence should not be disregarded.” Because there was a dargah at the location, the Tamil Nadu government had prohibited the lamp from being lit atop the hill, citing possible law and order issues. Goyal claimed that the state government was trying to placate “members of one community” connected to the dargah, dismissing the concerns as “imaginary.” Additionally, Goyal called the impeachment notice against Justice G.R. Swaminathan a “anti-Hindu effort” and accused the INDIA bloc MPs of trying to frighten the judiciary.

Satwik-Chirag and PV Sindhu give the 2026 season a successful start



New Delhi: India experienced a mixed day at the Malaysia Open, with PV Sindhu and the doubles team of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty securing wins, while Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly faced first-round exits in women’s doubles. Sindhu, returning from injury, defeated Sung Shuo Yun of Chinese Taipei in a tightly contested match, showing resilience after an early deficit. She will next face eighth seed Tomoka

Miyazaki. Rankireddy and Shetty won convincingly against their Taiwanese opponents. However, Gopichand and Jolly lost after a hard-fought match against Indonesian competitors, as did Rutuparna and Swetaparna Panda, who succumbed to the second seeds in the women’s doubles. In mixed doubles, Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto lost to Smith and Gai in a close three-game match.

Rahul Gandhi invokes Indira Gandhi when criticizing the PM over Trump’s tariffs

New Delhi, Jan 11: Congressman Rahul Gandhi sharply criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi for “surrendering” under duress in response to recent U.S. tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump. Gandhi posted a video message on social media site X with the tagline “Fark samjho sirji,” emphasizing what he saw as Modi and former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s radically different leadership philosophies. Trump’s recent remarks at the House GOP Member Retreat, in which he asserted that Modi had asked to meet, are the source of the dispute. He said, “Prime Minister Modi came to see me, Sir, may I see you please.” Indeed. Trump added that India is currently subject

to high tariffs, especially after cutting back on its purchases of Russian oil “very substantially.” Gandhi mocked Modi and the BJP-RSS in his video, saying, “I know these BJP-RSS people very well now.” They flee in terror when you apply even a small amount of pressure or push. They grabbed up the phone and said, “What are you doing, Modi ji?” as soon as Trump gave a signal. Narendra Modi ji surrendered and followed Trump’s signal with “ji Huzur.” Gandhi used Indira Gandhi’s leadership during the 1971 Indo-Pak War to emphasize his thesis. He recalled, “You might remember a time when the phone call didn’t come — the Seventh Fleet had come. In the 1971



war, the Seventh Fleet came, weapons came, an aircraft carrier came.

Indira Gandhi ji said, ‘I will do what I have to do.’ This is the difference.”

Nick Kyrgios leaves Brisbane early in 2026 after Sabalenka wins handily

New Delhi: In just 47 minutes, Aryna Sabalenka defeated Cristina Bucsa of Spain 6-0, 6-1 to secure her spot in the third round of the 2026 tournament. Nick Kyrgios, making his eagerly awaited singles comeback after over a year away, was unable to advance and lost in straight sets to American Aleksandar Kovacevic, while Sabalenka’s strong victory marked a commanding start to her championship defense. After their recent exhibition match, both players came to Brisbane in the spotlight, but only Sabalenka was able to convert that focus into on-court triumph. After breaking Bucsa’s serve three times, the world No. 1 quickly established herself and finished the first set in just 22 minutes. Sabalenka finished the match with 18 winners against just nine unforced errors, demonstrating her aggressive purpose. This is a noteworthy performance as she prepares for the Australian Open,



which starts on January 18. “Definitely my serve worked really well,” Sabalenka remarked following the game. “I performed a few serve-and-volleys, which is amazing. I’m really pleased with the level. I’m glad to be back. Playing in front of all of you is always fun for me. I gave a fantastic performance. Throughout the match,

Sabalenka’s serve proved to be crucial. She performed a clinical performance that equaled the fastest victory of her career and ended the match with an ace. Bucsa had little opportunity to relax or react to her attacking strategy, which included numerous incursions into the net. Bucsa only managed to hold serve once in the first set, demon-

On August 22, Dhankhar wrote to the Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, requesting an official residence entitled to former vice presidents. However, he has not been provided with the accommodation he is entitled to, a person close to him said.

strating control right away. Sabalenka applied constant pressure by making accurate shots and deep returns after converting her early break opportunities. Sabalenka’s precision and pace dictated rallies in the second set, which ended quickly. In contrast, Kyrgios endured a difficult return to singles competition. The Australian, sidelined by injury since March, struggled to find rhythm and timing as he went down 6-3, 6-4 in 65 minutes. Despite strong crowd support, the match highlighted the challenge ahead as he works his way back to full fitness.

NATIONAL & SPORTS

The head of the Orthodox Church now highlights RSS’s involvement in Christian attacks

New Delhi, Jan 11: The Supreme Head of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church claimed that attacks on Christians and other minorities persisted because the ruling party did not denounce or regulate them, which he claimed could only be interpreted as a part of a bigger scheme. “We can only see it as part of their plan when the ruling party is not controlling or condemning the attack on Christians and other minorities,” stated Baselios Marthoma Mathews III. His comments are spoken in the midst of nationwide Christmas celebrations and targeted violence against churches in December 2025. He claimed that organizations linked with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), such as the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, were attacking Christians and minorities and that an awareness campaign was necessary to address these crimes. He mentioned recent events, saying that celebrations outside churches had been ruined and that priests were now being targeted after nuns. “It won’t take much time to enter the church,” he added, noting that although all religions upheld justice and truth, religious eccentrics will always exist and that it was the duty of those in positions of authority to keep them under control. He claimed that all Indians were equally free and that there



was no distinction between majority and minority communities, citing the Constitution’s promise of equality. The freedom to construct places of worship is granted by God and the Constitution, he stated. He claimed that certain terrorist organizations and communal forces were opposing these rights, and that the silence of those in positions of authority amounted to support. Mathews III cited an instance in which Christmas symbols were demolished in a shopping center and claimed that Hindi chants declaring that other religions were unnecessary were shouted. He claimed that comparable slogans, such as “India for Hindus,” would not be effective in India and likened this to former US President Donald Trump’s “America for Americans.” He went on to say that history buffs were aware that even Hindus were not native to India. Around 2000 BC, the Aryans

arrived from Iran and established Brahmanical worship. He questioned who might be classified as foreigners and added, “Dravidians also came from Africa to India via Iran.” Foreigners should return, according to those who arrived here in 2000 BC. “Who are foreigners?” he inquired. He said that when people aware of history heard slogans asking foreigners to leave, it reflected ignorance, and when rulers supported such ignorance, minorities would be marginalised. Reiterating his remarks, Mathews III said that if slogans like “India for Hindus” were raised by the RSS, Christians would not hesitate to become martyrs. “Christianity came into existence through martyrdom and persecution. Resistance to persecution began from the first century itself,” he said, adding that Christians had not forced conversions and that their population remained at 2.47 per cent of India’s population. His remarks mark a significant shift from 2023, when he met Narendra Modi at his Parliament office, welcomed and praised the Union government’s development initiatives, and engaged in dialogue on issues affecting Christian institutions, expressing confidence that engagement could help resolve concerns, amid the broader context of the BJP’s outreach to Christian leaders in Kerala during that period.

Jemimah and Smriti Mandhana were recruited to the testing pool of the national anti-doping agency

Mumbai: The National Anti-Doping Agency’s Registered Testing Pool for the first quarter of 2026 included notable Indian women cricketers Smriti Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues, but the majority of the 347 names—118—came from athletics. The previous RTP, which included 227 athletes, was expanded by 120 names. The Commonwealth and Asian Games later this year, as well as India’s drive for more stringent testing, are the reasons for the notable increase. Athletes on the RTP list must notify the anti-doping agency of their whereabouts and be accessible for testing during a designated window each day. A doping infraction is defined as three instances of not providing whereabouts. Big names like steeplechaser Avinash Sable, hurdler Jyothi Yarraji, decathlete Tejaswin Shankar, and sprinter Animesh Kujur are included for the first quarter of the new NADA RTP, which had 68 names in the previous one. After being removed from the World Anti-Doping Agency’s RTP, which now only includes the javelin throw combination of Neeraj Chopra and Sachin Yadav, Sable is making a comeback to the NADA list. Suryakumar Yadav and Sanju Samson have been replaced by Mandhana and Rodrigues, making a total of 14 cricket players. Both Yadav and Samson will be seen in action during next month’s T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka. The other names remain unchanged from cricket with Test and ODI skipper Shubman Gill, his ODI deputy Shreyas Iyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Jasprit Bumrah, K L Rahul Arshdeep Singh and Tilak Ver-



ma among those picked. From the women’s team, which won a historic ODI World Cup last year, all-rounder Deepti Sharma and Shafali Verma continue to be on the list alongside Renuka Singh Thakur. From hockey, senior stars Manpreet Singh, skipper Harmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas and Hardik Singh are there along with women’s team captain Salima Tete, Savita Punia, and Navneet Kaur. Wrestlers also form a large chunk of the registered athletes with 29 names, including Olympic bronze winner Aman Sehrawat.

The Lok Sabha Speaker’s probe committee is challenged in the Supreme Court by Justice Yashwant Varma

New Delhi, Jan 11: Judge Yashwant Varma of the Allahabad High Court argued before the Supreme Court on Wednesday that the creation of an inquiry committee by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha to look into allegations of corruption against him was against the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 and Article 124(5) of the Constitution. Senior attorney Mukul Rohatgi, speaking on behalf of Justice Varma, informed a bench made up of Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma that the law requires a joint procedure when impeachment motions are started in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on the same day. He contended that under these situations, both Houses of Parliament must jointly form an inquiry committee, not just one. Rohatgi stated that impeachment motions against Justice Varma were filed in both Houses on July 21, 2025, citing the Judges (Inquiry) Act’s provisions. He argued that no committee should be formed until the motion is approved by both Houses when notices of motion are delivered in both Houses on the same day. In that case, the Act allows the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha to constitute a joint committee. One of the motions in this case was denied. As a result, the committee that was subsequently established is not legally binding, according to Rohatgi. On August 11, a motion in



the Rajya Sabha was initially accepted but later rejected by the deputy Chairman. Despite this, the Lok Sabha Speaker formed an inquiry committee the next day, which Rohatgi deemed “non-est” in law, arguing it violated constitutional procedures due to improper motion processes. He stated that per the Judges (Inquiry) Act, a motion must be signed by a specified number of members before inquiry proceedings can commence. The court questioned whether the rejection of a motion in one House prohibits the other from acting, noting the lack of explicit legal barriers. Rohatgi argued for the necessity of a joint process when motions are simultaneously moved in both Houses. The inquiry concerns Justice Varma, who was accused of misconduct after currency notes were found at his residence, and has sought to quash the Speaker’s actions concerning the motion and inquiry committee, claiming unconstitutionality.

Owaisi hopes a woman wearing a headscarf will become prime minister

New Delhi, Jan 11: Invoking a contrast between India and Pakistan, AIM-IM president Asaduddin Owaisi emphasized the inclusive nature of the Indian Constitution, asserting that it allows any citizen to aspire to high office, unlike Pakistan’s constitution which restricts the Prime Minister role to one religion. He expressed his dream of seeing a hijab-clad woman become Prime Minister. Criticiz-



ing the politics of hatred against Muslims, Owaisi argued that such sentiments would not last. His com-

ments prompted a response from BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla, challenging Owaisi’s inclusivity within his own party. Owaisi also criticized the amendments to the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act by the Congress, linking it to the prolonged incarceration of undertrials. His remarks come as AIM-IM campaigns for urban local elections in Maharashtra, focusing on constitutional rights and identity.

Barcelona advances to the Spanish Super Cup final by defeating Athletic Bilbao 5-0

New Delhi: Barcelona delivered a commanding performance, defeating Athletic Bilbao 5-0 in the Spanish Super Cup semifinal held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The victory marked the Catalans’ ninth consecutive win, showcasing their dominance as they await the outcome of the other semifinal between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid. Fermin Lopez was instrumental in the match, scoring one goal and assisting two others.

The scoring commenced in the 22nd minute when Ferran Torres capitalized on a fortunate pass from Fermin, converting it into a goal with a precise finish from close range. Just eight minutes later, Fermin increased the lead to 2-0, cleverly redirecting a low cross from Raphinha into the net. He further contributed by assisting



Roony Bardghji in the 34th minute, allowing Bardghji to score with a low shot after maneuvering within the box. Barcelona’s offensive onslaught continued, with Raphinha netting the fourth goal shortly after halftime. He made a powerful run into the box before striking the ball into the net from an acute angle. Raphinha completed his brace in the 52nd minute, registering his

second goal when he seized on a defensive lapse from Bilbao, firing a left-footed shot into the net. This victory not only demonstrated Barcelona’s attacking prowess but also reinforced their ambitions to defend their Super Cup title, which they had claimed the previous season, and aimed for a record 15th victory in the competition. The final is set to take place on Sunday in Jeddah.

Ben Stokes hints at the end of Bazball



New Delhi: England suffered a 4-1 series defeat in the Ashes against Australia, prompting captain Ben Stokes to question the effectiveness of the “Bazball” aggressive cricket philosophy. Following a five-wicket loss in the Sydney Test, Stokes acknowledged that opposing teams have adapted to counter England’s attacking style, particularly when the batting conditions seem favorable. He noted the need for England to reassess their approach and took personal responsibility for the team’s failures during the series. The defeat has sparked debate over the future of Bazball, with former captain Michael Vaughan calling for a shift in strategy. Stokes emphasized the importance of honest discussions among the leadership team to ensure progression. As England prepares for its next Test series in June against New Zealand, they face a crucial decision: adapt their philosophy or risk further decline in performance.

Novak Djokovic abruptly leaves the tennis player organization he formed

New Delhi: Citing deep-seated reservations about the Professional Tennis Players Association’s (PTPA) governance, transparency, and handling of his voice and image, Novak Djokovic announced a stunning separation from the players’ organization he helped form six years ago. The ruling raises new concerns about player representation in professional tennis and represents a significant turning point for the organization. “After careful consideration, I have decided to step away completely from the Professional Tennis Players Association,” Djokovic posted on social media late on Sunday. This choice was made in response to persistent worries about governance, transparency, and the representation of my voice and image. Although he expressed pleasure in the PTPA’s founding mission, he stated that “it has become clear that my values and approach are no longer aligned with the current direction of the organization.”

The 24-time Grand Slam champion stated that he will now concentrate on “my tennis, my family, and contributing to the sport in ways that reflect my principles and integrity.” He is getting ready to start his 2026 season at the Australian Open. The PTPA, which has been involved in legal and political disputes with tennis’s governing bodies, is at a critical juncture following Djokovic’s departure. In reaction to long-standing player dissatisfaction with the way professional tennis is managed, Djokovic and fellow player Vasek Pospisil co-founded the Professional Tennis Players Association in 2019–2020. The primary goal of the PTPA was to provide players, both male and female, with a collective voice apart from the organizations that oversee the sport, such as the International Tennis Federation, the Women’s Tennis Association, the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), and the International Tennis Integrity Agency. Prior to the establishment of the PTPA, players were partially represented by the ATP Player Council, an advisory body that was

Animesh Kujur plans big for 2026

Fastest man in India

New Delhi: In his off-season, sprinter Animesh Kujur told India Today, “I want to hit 10-flat in 2026.” He has never previously discussed it in public. However, Animesh realizes that dreaming in private is no longer sufficient after the kind of year he has experienced. Animesh Kujur had a breakthrough year in 2025. His timings broke records, his pace attracted attention, and all of a sudden the topic of Indian sprinting gained a new identity. Animesh became India’s fastest man during the previous season.

In his favorite race, the 200 meters, he finished in 20.32 seconds and the 100 meters in 10.18 seconds. He just continued getting better at different times over the year, race after race, meet after meet. The 22-year-old’s rise has been gradual rather than abrupt, even though he was introduced to sprinting later than most. 2025 was not a freak increase, as those who have followed his progress closely are aware. Animesh accomplished all an Indian sprinter could hope for in a single season, including breaking numerous



national records, competing on the U23 Diamond League circuit, and running the heats at the World Athletics Championships.

Meeting his hero, Usain Bolt, and getting up close and personal with the world’s greatest athletes were moments of wonder that lingered long after the spikes were removed. With the Asian Games set to take place in September, Animesh believes that he will be a medal contender in at least two of the events that he will participate in — the 200m sprint and the 4x100m men’s relay. “This time, when I go to the Asian Games, I’ll go as a medal contender, not just to participate,” he said. “Asian Games and Commonwealth Games are my main targets.”



part of the ATP Tour organization. In 2020, Djokovic resigned from that council to assist in the founding of the new organization, citing the need for tennis players to have a more powerful and autonomous voice.

The organisation was designed as a non-profit players’ association rather than a traditional union (tennis players are independent contractors rather than team sport employees). Its mission included pushing for greater transparency in decision-making, fairer financial structures, more say in scheduling, and improved protections for player welfare — especially for those outside the very top of the rankings. In March 2025, the PTPA filed a broad antitrust class-action lawsuit against the ATP, WTA, ITF, and ITIA, charging that these governing bodies engaged in anti-competitive practices, unfair scheduling, and policies that disadvantaged players and compromised their welfare. The suit alleged systemic problems, including exploitative structures that limit player earnings and

perpetuate a grueling calendar. The PTPA also built a player executive committee and launched programmes intended to provide legal and professional support to members. It attracted hundreds of signatories from across the ATP and WTA rankings, including prominent voices advocating for player rights. These initiatives drew sharp responses. The ATP and WTA criticised the legal action as baseless and accused the PTPA of division and distraction from the sport’s growth. Some critics within the tennis community also questioned whether the PTPA had overreached or lacked broad enough support to effect lasting structural change. Analysts suggest Djokovic’s departure signals deep internal disagreements about strategy and direction, especially given his reported discomfort with some legal approaches the PTPA has taken. His absence also weakens the group’s influence in broader negotiations with tennis authorities and may force a strategic re-evaluation.

Fletcher, Manchester United’s acting manager, will oversee the FA Cup matchup with Brighton

New Delhi: Darren Fletcher, the temporary manager of Manchester United, expressed “massive disappointment” following a dominant performance that ended in a 2-2 tie with lowly Burnley on Wednesday, depriving him of a victory in his first game as manager. After Ruben Amorim was dramatically fired on Monday, the former United midfielder took over the position. Despite leading a performance that resulted in 30 shots, a goal that was disallowed, and numerous Burnley clearances off the line, he only managed a point. “I find it extremely disappointing that we have drawn,” Fletcher said to the BBC. “If you consider the game’s context and the opportunities we created—lots of attacking play—we created more than enough to win.” When United plays Brighton & Hove Albion in the FA Cup’s third round on Sunday, the 41-year-old Scot announced he will be in control once more. He said, “And then we’ll take it from there.” “Prior to this, I spent years with the first team. I’m simply thinking on the current task and the upcoming game. According to British media reports, the club intends to select Amorim’s permanent replacement during the off-season. The United mainstay, who has made 342 appearances for



the team, will stay in post until a caretaker is found for the remainder of the campaign. Leading the team at Turf Moor was “an amazing experience,” according to him. “I’m disappointed we didn’t win the game, I can’t hide that. But in terms of leading the team out, it was a pleasure and an honour,” he said. Wednesday’s match also brought a boost for

Benjamin Sesko, who scored both United goals to end a lean spell for the striker. “I was so happy for him,” Fletcher said. “We spoke yesterday and presented a video showing his movement and showing his goals, just showing how it is coming and he needs to keep believing. He did that tonight and scored two great goals. A real positive night for Ben.

Raphinha bags brace as Barcelona thrash Athletic Bilbao 5-0 to reach Spanish Super Cup final

New Delhi: Barcelona defeated Athletic Bilbao 5-0 in the semi-final on Wednesday in Saudi Arabia, and Raphinha scored twice as they easily advanced to the Spanish Super Cup final. In Sunday’s final, either Real Madrid or Atletico Madrid—who play each other on Thursday—will take on the holders and record 15-time champions. At the King Abdullah Sports City stadium in Jeddah, Hansi Flick’s squad easily won despite starting with teenage sensation Lamine Yamal on the bench. After a challenging season, Athletic was destroyed by the La Liga leaders, who have now won nine straight games in all competitions. After Flick’s team won the Spanish Super Cup last season—the first title of the German’s reign—Barca went on to win La Liga and the Copa del Rey. The coach had stated that he hoped to utilize the competition as a springboard for further success. “It’s us who make games easy or hard -- when we’re playing well, doing things right, defending well, attacking well, the game is easier,” Raphinha stated to Movistar. After recovering from a hamstring injury that kept him out for about two months, the forward has been playing well. “I am always looking to be at my best level, and I will never say I’m at my best,” continued Raphinha. “I will keep looking, keep trying to have a season that, if not perfect, is almost perfect, always looking for the best for the



team.” Ferran Torres bundled home the opener after 22 minutes with a stroke of fortune after Fermin Lopez’s bungled shot fell kindly for him. Barca sliced Athletic open with a more attractive second goal, with Raphinha cutting the ball back for Lopez to blast into the top corner, for the first of three goals in eight minutes. Swedish winger Roony Bardghji got the third after being given a helping hand by Athletic goalkeeper Unai Simon, who somehow mishandled the low shot under his own body and into the net. It offered Spain coach Luis de la Fuente food for thought, given Simon is his number one and Barca stopper Joan Garcia is knocking at the door ahead of the World Cup, although the Euro 2024 winning manager was absent with the flu. Raphinha lashed into the top left corner for Barcelona’s fourth after 38 minutes as the Catalans attacked relentlessly. Oihan Sancet struck the post at the other end with Athletic’s best chance on a miserable night for the Basque side, who last won the competition in 2021.

Jemimah Rodrigues must pass a difficult test to win the Delhi Capitals captaincy

New Delhi: Jemimah Rodrigues has demonstrated significant growth as a player, overcoming previous struggles in high-pressure situations. Notably, her performance in the World Cup semi-final against Australia, where she transformed from early failures to scoring a century, marked a pivotal moment in her career.

As she prepares to lead the Delhi Capitals in WPL 2026, succeeding Meg Lanning, she faces the challenge of converting her talent into effective leadership. Despite not having captained at the highest levels before, her recent victory in the Senior Women’s T20 Challenge with Mumbai—where she was the top scorer—showcases her leadership capabilities and influence. Having learned from Lanning’s experience, Jemimah is poised for her new role, infused with the



lessons of strategic execution and mentorship she received over the past three seasons. Jemimah expressed admiration for her former captain, Meg Lanning, citing her phenomenal leadership at DC and the valuable insights gained. With Lanning’s departure, Jemimah sees a chance to apply these lessons. The Capitals have yet to win a

WPL title but have been consistent top performers. Marizanne Kapp believes Jemimah has potential future leadership qualities, especially as India may seek a new captain as Harmanpreet Kaur approaches the end of her career. Alongside other young talents like Smriti Mandhana and Richa Ghosh, Jemimah has the opportunity to establish herself as a significant leader in Indian women’s cricket. By delivering results in the upcoming WPL season, she could strengthen the Capitals and position herself as a future captain.

Tilak Varma will miss the first two Twenty20 Internationals against New Zealand

New Delhi: Due to a groin injury, Indian batsman Tilak Varma will miss the first two games of India’s Twenty20 International series against New Zealand, which starts on January 21. The Hyderabad batter complained of groin strain and had a small operation. The 23-year-old was receiving treatment at a private hospital in Rajkot while participating in the group phase of the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2025. Tilak will

miss the games in Nagpur and Raipur. Tilak was India’s hero in the Asia Cup 2025 final victory over bitter rival Pakistan. His recuperation will determine whether or not he plays in the final three games.”

Tilak was brought to the hospital for scans after complaining of some groin pain. He has received the required treatment, but he may have to miss two of the next T20I series due to the



recuperation period, according to a team source. Tilak scored his sixth List A hundred in the first of Hyderabad’s two Group B matches against Bengal and Chandigarh. But by then, the club was out of

the running for the quarterfinals. Prior to the T20 World Cup 2026, which is set to start in India and Sri Lanka on February 7, New Zealand is traveling to India for a white-ball series.