

Delhi Police Crack Down Drunken Driving



Guwahati, Jan 02: The Delhi Traffic Police issued 868 challans for drunken driving during New Year's Eve celebrations, officials said on Thursday, as authorities intensified enforcement to curb dangerous road behaviour. Special teams were deployed across major arterial roads, nightlife hubs and residential areas to check offences such as drunk driving, speeding and motorcycle stunts. Breathalyser tests were carried out at multiple checkpoints through the night, with en-

forcement teams frequently changing locations to prevent motorists from bypassing checks. Alongside traffic regulation, the Delhi Police pressed nearly 20,000 personnel into service to maintain law and order as the city rang in the New Year. Crowd movement was monitored through CCTV surveillance, while district control rooms remained in constant coordination to ensure quick response to any untoward incident. Police said heightened traffic and prevent violations.

STF seeks more custody of 11 arrested Jihadis as investigation widens

Guwahati, Jan 02: The three-day police remand of the 11 suspected jihadis arrested by the Assam Special Task Force (STF) has ended, and all the accused are expected to be produced before the court again today. The STF is likely to request an extension of custody as the investigation into the suspected terror network continues to deepen. According to sources, the questioning of the accused is not being handled by the STF alone. The Special Branch (SB) of Assam Police and central intelligence agencies are also involved in the interrogation process. Officials believe the statements collected so far are important for the investigation and could help uncover further links. During interrogation, the arrested suspects reportedly revealed key information about plans to destabilise the North East with support from across the Bangladesh border. Investigators claim that the men admitted to being connected with a Bangladesh-based extremist network that had been working to expand its



footprint in Assam and other parts of the region. They also reportedly named several cadres of the Bangladesh-based IMK group who

are believed to be active in India. The arrests were made during a co-ordinated intelligence-based operation carried out on the intervening

night of November 29 and 30, 2025. STF teams, along with Assam Police units, conducted simultaneous raids across Barpeta, Chirang, Bak-

The three-day police remand of 11 suspected jihadis arrested by the Assam Special Task Force (STF) has concluded, with the accused set to appear in court again.

sa and Darrang districts in Assam, as well as certain locations in Tripura. A total of 11 people were taken into custody during the crackdown. Among those arrested was Nasim Uddin, also known as Tamim, who is suspected to be the head of the Assam module. Others arrested include individuals from both Assam and Tripura who are believed to have been working together. Security agencies later stated that the network is linked to Imam Mahmud Kafil (IMK), a Bangladesh-based extremist organisation said to have ideological roots in the banned Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). The IMK group is believed to have been formed in 2018 and has reportedly been trying to extend its activities inside India in recent years.

In Brief

PIL in SC against racial violence targeting NE people

Aizawl: A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Supreme Court to seek judicial intervention regarding "continuing constitutional failure" in addressing racial discrimination and violence against citizens from northeastern states. This follows the brutal killing of Anjel Chakma, a 24-year-old MBA student from Tripura, who died on December 26 after a racially motivated attack in Dehradun. Chakma's family demands capital punishment or life imprisonment for the assailants. The PIL cites violations of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Constitution, calling for action against racial violence and discrimination. The plea highlights Chakma's tragic claim of his constitutional identity in the face of violence before his death.

Skyway inaugurated at Lok Bhavan, Assam

Guwahati: Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya inaugurated the "skyway" in Guwahati, which connects the Brahmaputra and Barak wings of Lok Bhavan. This construction, carried out by the State Public Works Department, aims to enhance operational efficiency for officials working in the building by facilitating smoother movement between the wings. The Governor thanked Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for his support of the initiative. The inauguration ceremony was attended by First Lady Kumud Devi, Secretary to the Governor SS Minakshi Sundaram, and other officials.

Zubeen death case

Guwahati: The Assam government will appoint a Special Public Prosecutor on January 12 to ensure speedy justice in the case related to the death of legendary singer and state's cultural icon, Zubeen Garg. This was announced by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during an interaction with the media at the State Guest House in Koinadhora here on New Year's Day. "The appointment of the Special Public Prosecutor will be made on January 12, along with three to four criminal advocates to strengthen the prosecution. While the name of the Special Public Prosecutor has not yet been finalised, it will be officially announced by January 5 or 6," Sarma informed. The Chief Minister also praised the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for completing the investigation swiftly and filing the chargesheet in a short span of time. Zubeen Garg passed away while swimming during a yacht trip in Singapore on September 19, 2025, a day before he was scheduled to perform at a cultural festival there.

First-ever sunset viewing programme held at Sakawrhmutui Hill, Mizoram

Aizawl, Jan 02: The State Tourism Department for the first time organised a year-end sunset viewing programme titled "Sakawrhmutui Sunset" at Sakawrhmutui Hill in Mizoram on New Year eve.

The event was attended by the Tourism Minister, Lalthinglova Hmar, and the local MLA, Lalthansanga, who is also the Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change.

Tourism Minister Lalthinglova Hmar, in his address, appreciated the dedication and cooperation of the Sihphir village leaders and residents, stating that their collective effort made the successful organisation of the programme possible. He said this reflected in practice his long-cherished vision of promoting community-based tourism. He described Sakawrhmutui Hill as exceptionally beautiful and worthy of wider recognition, and said that the sunset viewing experience from the hill has strong potential to attract more tourists from outside Mizoram. He added that the programme would be on a larger



scale in the coming years. He also expressed his hope that Sakawrhmutui Hill would be increasingly valued by the public and that the local community of Sihphir would benefit economically from visiting tourists.

Local MLA Lalthansanga also spoke on the occasion, expressing his appreciation for the collaboration between the Tourism Department and the leaders and residents of Sihphir village in organising such a programme.

The Tourism Minister was accompanied by R. Lalrodingi, Director, Tourism Department, along with other departmental officials. Besides local residents, a large number of tourists from outside Mizoram also attended the event. Popular contemporary Mizo singers entertained the crowd with performances to mark the farewell of the outgoing year and the arrival of the New Year. Food stalls and carnival activities were by the Sihphir community. With well-planned arrangements for security, medical services, and traffic management, attendees were able to enjoy the event in a safe and festive atmosphere.

Acquiring real knowledge is the essence of education: Tripura CM

Agartala, Jan 02: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday awarded 23 students who secured the highest marks in the Madhyamik and Higher Secondary examinations between 2022 and 2025. The awards were given during the Golden Jubilee Year celebrations of the Tripura Board of Secondary Education (TBSE) held at the Nazrul Kalakshetra in Agartala. As part of the programme, the Golden Jubilee Year magazine of TBSE was officially unveiled. Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Saha emphasised that true education was not confined to academic studies alone. "Instead, acquiring real knowledge is the essence of education," he added. Saha advised students to use Artificial Intelligence responsibly in their learning process. He highlighted that the government is implementing various schemes and initiatives to enhance the overall standard of education across the state. The Chief Minister further reaffirmed that the state government is continuously working towards the comprehensive development of the education sector to ensure



quality education for all students. "The Tripura Board of Secondary Education has been working with pride from the very beginning in building the future of the state's boys and girls. However, keeping pace with the present times, we call upon everyone to move forward towards the future with the goal of doing something new be-

yond the traditional stream," Saha said. The event was attended by Education Secretary Ravel Hemendra Kumar, Director of Education N.C. Sharma, Vivek Nagar Ramakrishna Mission monk Bhakti Sudhananda Maharaj, TBSE president Dhananjay Gan Chowdhury, TBSE Secretary Jaydeb Bhattacharya, along with other dignitaries.

PIL in SC against racial violence targeting NE people

Aizawl, Jan 02: A PIL was filed in the Supreme Court seeking judicial intervention to address the "continuing constitutional failure" to prevent and respond to racial discrimination and violence against citizens from northeastern states and other frontier regions.

The PIL was filed in the backdrop of the brutal killing of Anjel Chakma, a 24-year-old MBA student from Tripura, who succumbed on December 26 to grievous injuries sustained in a racially motivated attack in Selaqui area of Dehradun.

Anjel from Unakoti district's Machmara went to Dehradun after completing his graduation from Holy Cross School, Agartala, to pursue MBA, where he was stabbed to death in the presence of his younger brother Michael.

The family members of Chakma want capital punishment or at least life imprisonment for all the accused involved in the

incident. Anoop Prakash Awasthi, a Delhi-based lawyer, has made the Centre and all the states and Union territories as parties to the PIL. "That the present writ petition is being filed seeking issuance of writ under Article 32 of the Constitution seeking issuance of writ in the nature of mandamus, order, direction or any other appropriate writ for the violation of fundamental rights as under article 14, 19 (1) a & (g) and 21, and thus seeking judicial intervention to address the issue of racial discrimination and violence against Indian citizens from the north-eastern states and other frontier regions of India," the plea said. "We are Indians. What certificate should we show to prove that?" words that tragically became the last recorded assertion of Anjel Chakma about his constitutional belonging before the confrontation escalated into brutal violence, it said while recounting the offence leading to his death.

70 pc reduction in violent incidents in NE under Modi govt: Centre

Aizawl, Jan 02: There has been 70 per cent reduction in violent incidents and 85 per cent in civilian casualties in the North East under the Modi government, a statement issued by the Central government on Friday stated.

It further said that along with the establishment of peace in the region, the Centre is also giving emphasis on cultural development in the region through promotion of various events and activities.

On the situation in strife-torn Manipur, the statement said the Government of India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, remains fully committed to restoring lasting peace in Manipur and providing all necessary assistance in this regard.

Skyway inaugurated at Lok Bhavan, Assam

Guwahati, Jan 02: Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya today inaugurated the "skyway" connecting the two separate wings of Lok Bhavan, Assam in Guwahati. The skyway constructed by the State Public Works Department connects the Brahmaputra and Barak wings of Lok Bhavan. The Governor expressed his gratitude to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for supporting the initiative that will facilitate smooth movement between the two wings and enhance functional efficiency of the officials working in Lok Bhavan.



First Lady Kumud Devi, Secretary to the Governor SS Minakshi Sundaram and other officials were present at the inauguration ceremony.

Deputy CM Bhatti pledges government backing for Numaish expansion

Hyderabad, 02 Jan: Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Thursday said that in an era of globalisation, where the world has become a small village, there is a need for the All India Industrial Exhibition Society to grow to global standards. IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu, Transport Minister Ponnampallapragada and others were present.

He was speaking after inaugurating the annual Numaish at Nampally. Vikramarka said previous governments had made several promises to strengthen the Exhibition Society but failed to implement them. The present government, he said, was determined to expand the Society on a large scale, generate revenue and realise its long-term vision.

Describing the Numaish as not merely a festival for Hyderabad but a major celebration for the entire state, Vikramarka said the Exhibition Society was started in 1938 at Public Garden by Osmania Graduates' Association with the objective of serving society. From its incep-



tion, small and medium industries, cottage industries and artisans from across the country participated, and the event gradually evolved into an organised platform.

He said Hyderabad offered an environment where people of all sections, religions and regions could

live according to their preferences. With the city emerging as a global hub, the government was committed to developing Hyderabad into one of the safest cities in the world, with a pollution-free environment, 24-hour quality power supply and strong law and order.

Referring to severe pollution in cities such as Delhi, Vikramarka said it had become difficult to stay there even for a week, and asserted that the state government would take strict measures to ensure Hyderabad does not face a similar situation.

A few stray incidents, but NY fete largely peaceful, says Karnataka Minister Parameshwara

Bengaluru, 02 Jan: Barring a few stray incidents, the New Year celebrations in the city were largely peaceful. Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara said the celebrations were incident-free due to efficient policing and deployment of 20,000 police personnel. DG and IGP Dr MA Saleem, along with other senior IPS officers, visited the home minister at his Sadashivanagar residence on Thursday and wished him for the New Year. Parameshwara himself personally monitored the security at the command centre in the office of the city police commissioner till 1.30 am on Thursday. "We had expected a large number of people gathering for the celebrations. According to the police, nearly seven to eight lakh people ringed in the New Year on MG Road. 'Celebrate responsibly' was the motto for this year and everybody celebrated responsibly. There was no untoward incident and even the movement of traffic was normal," the home minister said. Parameshwara himself personally monitored the security at the command centre in the office of the city police commissioner till 1.30 am on Thursday. Meanwhile, the Bengaluru Traffic Police conducted a 10-day special drive on drunk-driving and booked 4,648 cases against two-wheelers and four wheelers. The traffic police had checked 3,30,106 vehicles during



the special drive. On Wednesday alone, the traffic police checked 28,500 vehicles and booked 501 riders/drivers. Sanitation workers deployed by the Bengaluru Central Municipal Corporation cleared nine tonne of waste in just five hours after the New Year celebrations on from MG Road, Brigade Road, Church Street, St Mark's Road, Residency Road and 100-ft Road in Indiranagar on Thursday morning.

AIUDF leader opposes Nagaon eviction

Hyderabad, 02 Jan: A major eviction drive launched by the Doboka administration on January 2 in the Jamunamukh Maudanga Reserved Forest area of Nagaon district has sparked political resistance, with All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) leader Bilal Uddin attempting to obstruct the operation.

The eviction exercise seeks to reclaim nearly 6,000 bighas of reserved forest land that officials say has been illegally occupied over the years. According to the administration, around 1,250 families are affected by the drive, which is being carried out as part of a broader effort to protect forest land and enforce government regulations.

Tensions escalated on the ground as police and district officials moved in to clear the encroachments, with protests and ob-

jections raised by the AIUDF leader and local residents. Heavy police deployment has been made in the area to maintain law and order during the operation. Administrative officials said the situation remains under close watch, and necessary measures have been put in place to prevent any untoward incidents. They reiterated that the eviction drive is aimed at safeguarding reserved forest land and is being conducted in accordance with legal provisions. The AIUDF, led by its president Badruddin Ajmal, has strongly opposed the Nagaon eviction drives, appealing to the government to suspend the operations immediately due to humanitarian concerns. The drives involve clearing significant areas of land, with one recent operation targeting nearly 6,000 bighas of forest land.

'Mee Intiki Mee Doctor' project to be launched in ASR district from February

Visakhapatnam, 02 Jan: The 'Mee Intiki Mee Doctor' project will be launched in Alluri Sitarama Raju district from February with financial assistance from the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) Foundation, New Delhi. ASR District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar said that the initiative is being implemented by the Indian Red Cross Society, Andhra Pradesh State Branch, with a focus on providing healthcare services to poor, remote and inaccessible tribal habitations. Dinesh Kumar stated the project would be inaugurated in the first week of February 2026 by Governor S Abdul Nazeer, who is also the President of the Indian Red Cross Society, AP State Branch. The programme will be implemented in the district at an estimated cost of Rs 8.41 crore over a period of three years. Under the project, primary healthcare services will be provided at the doorstep of beneficiaries through mobile health clinics. The

initiative aims to strengthen the public healthcare system by operating mobile clinics in coordination with government health facilities. Key objectives include reducing maternal and infant mortality, controlling communicable diseases and ensuring 100 per cent immunisation coverage in the identified project areas. "As part of the implementation, applications are being invited for appointments to mobile health clinics, including the posts of doctor, nurse, pharmacist and driver, the Collector said. The recruitment process would be carried out to ensure uninterrupted delivery of healthcare services in the interior and tribal regions of the district," Collector Dinesh outlined. Candidates applying for the doctor post must possess MBBS or MD qualifications and will be offered a monthly salary of Rs 80,000. Applicants for the nurse post should have completed GNM or B.Sc. Nursing and will be paid Rs 25,000



per month. For the pharmacist post, candidates must have a B.Pharmacy degree or a Diploma in Pharmacy, with a monthly remuneration of Rs 18,000. Applicants for the driver post must hold a valid driving licence for heavy vehicles and have a minimum of five years' driving experience. The monthly salary for the driver post is Rs 18,000.

Assam cabinet approves Rs 455 cr for construction of 100 schools

Guwahati, 02 Jan: In a bid to bolster educational infrastructure, the Assam Cabinet approved an allocation of Rs 455 crore for the construction of 100 schools across the state, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Thursday.

The cabinet met for the first time in the New Year, following an interaction between the chief minister and media persons. The Council of Ministers also approved Rs 1,201.16 crore for the construction of a medical college centered around Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital (MMCH) along with the Kalapahar campus in Guwahati. Thursday's meeting marked the cabinet's first sitting of the New Year, with officials saying the decisions reflect the government's emphasis on health and education as priority sectors. The state government has decided to procure a proton therapy machine worth Rs 500 crore for cancer treatment, a move that will make it the first state in the country to introduce the advanced technology in the public healthcare system.

Proton therapy is a highly precise form of radiological cancer treatment. The machine will be installed at the State Cancer Institute at Gauhati Medical College Hospital. CM Sarma said that Assam would become the first



state in the country to constitute the 8th Pay Commission following its formation by the Centre. He said the state's 8th Pay Commission will be headed by former additional chief secretary Subhas Das and will undertake a comprehensive revision of the pay structure of state government employees.

Indore water contamination: Mayor says informed of 10 deaths

Indore, 02 Jan: Indore Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava on Friday said he had received information about 10 deaths due to a diarrhoea outbreak caused by contaminated water in the Bhagirathpura area of the city. However, residents claimed that 14 people, including a six-month-old infant, have died due to the health crisis. The health department has not confirmed the claim, and its official data puts the death toll from the diarrhoea outbreak in Bhagirathpura at four. "I have received information about 10 deaths due to this outbreak," Bhargava told PTI. When asked about a suspected

cholera outbreak based on preliminary test reports of drinking water samples collected from Bhagirathpura, the mayor said that only the health department could provide details on the matter. Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) Dr Madhav Prasad Hasani said on Thursday that laboratory test reports from a city medical college had confirmed contamination in the drinking water supply due to a leakage in a pipeline. However, he did not share the detailed findings of the report. More than 1,400 people have been affected by vomiting and diarrhoea in Bhagirathpura over the past nine days. A health de-

partment official said that, as of Thursday night, 272 patients had been admitted to hospitals in the area, of whom 71 have been discharged. Of the 201 patients currently hospitalised, 32 are undergoing treatment in intensive care units.

Administrative officials have also avoided giving clear information on the issue.

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1,000 detained in police crack down during equal pay Teachers' protest

Hyderabad, 02 Jan: Even as people remained in a celebratory mood as the state rang in the New Year, secondary grade teachers demanding equal pay for equal work continued their protest for the seventh consecutive day on Thursday. The protest was held near the Gandhi Irwin Bridge in Egmora. More than 1,000 teachers, who participated in the protest, were detained by the police and taken to marriage halls. Alleging police excesses, a protesting teacher said, "We are being subjected to police brutality every day. Today, a teacher's hand was fractured when the police tried to forcibly get him into a bus." Teachers were also grabbed by their hair and lifted from the protest site to evict them from the spot. He added that many teachers refused to eat the food provided at the marriage halls as a mark of protest against the police action. "We are only asking the DMK government to fulfil the poll promise. Instead, they are taking action against us," he said. The teachers said they would continue their agitation even after schools reopen following the



half-yearly holidays. "So far, there have been no meaningful talks with the government. Despite clearing several examinations, our basic pay is on a par with government posts that require only a Class 8 qualification. Until this injustice is addressed, we will continue our protest," said J Robert, state general secretary of Secondary Grade Seniority Teachers' Association. Several government employees' organisations, including the CPS Abolition Movement, extended support to the protesting teachers. TNIE could not reach police officers and government officials for a comment.

Bangladesh: For the BNP, politics

Itanagar, 02 Jan: It was not expected that Begum Khaleda Zia would be in a position to return to normal life, given that she had been seriously ailing of late. Yet the reality of her having been a pre-eminent political figure in Bangladesh was highlighted anew in the aftermath of her demise last Tuesday. Tributes have been pouring in for her.

A remarkable instance of magnanimity was demonstrated by former prime minister Sheikh Hasina when she publicly paid tribute to her arch-rival in a message of condolence. Her gesture in calling Tareque Rahman over the phone to express her sense of grief at Begum Zia's passing away has evoked appreciation in wide sections of Bengali society. Indeed, many have been the comments to the effect that the respect demonstrated for the late BNP leader and former prime minister goes beyond the narrow confines of Bangladesh's bitter politics and embraces a wider space encompassing human emotions. But what has also left people a trifle surprised is the statement, on behalf of the BNP, by the senior party leader Nazrul Islam Khan at Begum Zia's funeral, pinning the blame on the Awami League and especially Sheikh Hasina for the progressive decline in the BNP leadership's health.

There are, of course, large sections of citizens who have always felt distressed at the ways in which Begum Zia was subjected to humiliation by the Awami League government, with circumstances leading to the former prime minister spending time in the old Dhaka central jail. Repeated calls for Khaleda Zia to be permitted to go abroad were ignored by the Awami League government. Such behaviour has rankled with citizens, even those who have traditionally been drawn politically to Sheikh Hasina and her party. So such realities have been the staple of politics in Bangladesh in recent years. Even so, at a time when the nation is in a clear mood to see the back of Muhammad Yunus' unconstitutional regime through a credible and therefore inclusive election, Nazrul Islam Khan's statement naturally did not make people happy. But why pin the blame on Khan? The statement was drafted and read out on behalf of the BNP. Why the party chose to bring the old politics of bitterness into a solemn occasion, as Begum Zia's funeral is somehow inexplicable, particularly when the BNP appears increasingly to be in need of allies as it shapes strategy for the future. Quite frankly, the BNP at this point is a rather lonely traveller on the national political landscape. Arrayed against it are the Jamaat-e-Islami and a clutch of other Islamist

political parties as well as the National Citizens Party. There is little doubt that Tareque Rahman's return to Bangladesh after a seventeen-year exile in Britain has not made the Islamist forces happy. These parties would clearly not wish to see the BNP return to power and have indicated in a number of ways that steps to prevent a BNP victory at the election, whenever it is held, are a priority for them. It is an issue Tareque Rahman and his colleagues in the BNP will be required to study with grave and serious intent if their long walk in the woods is to be over. That brings into this discussion the question of when or whether or how the BNP means to reach out to the Awami League and formulate a plan that will neutralise the Islamists' bid to come by power. The BNP will need to have a good equation with the Awami League on the election issue. Obviously Sheikh Hasina at the head of a fifteen-party alliance and Begum Khaleda Zia as the leader of a seven-party combine relentlessly campaigned for the fall of the autocracy epitomised by the military regime of General Hussein Muhammad Ershad. The struggle paid off. Perhaps the moment is here for a revival of the old struggle in a new form, this time to free Bangladesh of the anti-liberation and illegitimate regime foisted on it in August 2024.

Tripura plans Eklavya Residential Schools in all 58 blocks to improve tribal education

Agartala, Jan 02: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has said that the state government is planning to set up Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in all 58 blocks of the state so that more tribal students, especially those living in far-flung and rural areas, can get access to quality education. Speaking at a programme on January 1, Saha said the government is placing special focus on improving education facilities for students belonging to Scheduled Tribes. He said the aim is to ensure that good schooling is not limited to urban centres but reaches students living in interior areas as well. The EMRS scheme is funded by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. These schools provide residential education for tribal students so that they can study in a safe environment and

get better opportunities for higher education in the future. The Chief Minister pointed out that before the Bharatiya Janata Party came to power in Tripura in 2018, the state had only four such schools. After that, the central government sanctioned 21 EMRSs for Tripura. Out of these, 12 are already running, while two more are expected to start functioning by March 2026. Saha said the state government now wants to expand the scheme further so that every block has one such school. He added that during his recent visit to New Delhi, he requested the Centre to relax the existing rules for setting up EMRSs in Tripura. At present, a block must have at least 50 per cent tribal population and a tribal population of 20,000 or more to qualify for an EMRS. According to

Saha, these norms make it difficult to open schools in some areas where tribal communities are present but do not meet the population threshold. He said he hoped that the Centre would consider Tripura's request and allow flexibility so that more schools can be established. The Chief Minister added that such a move would help strengthen education among tribal communities and support the larger goal of inclusive development. Saha also said that the state government remains committed to ensuring that tribal children receive equal access to education and opportunities. He stated that EMRS institutions play an important role in creating an environment where tribal students can focus on studies without disruption.

Arunachal Pradesh Celebrates Donyi Polo Day With Vibrant Festivities And Deep Traditional Fervour

Itanagar, Jan 02: Donyi Polo Day was celebrated across Arunachal Pradesh on Wednesday with traditional gaiety, religious fervour, and deep reverence for indigenous faith and culture. People from various districts participated in prayers, rituals, and cultural programmes, reaffirming their commitment to the

age-old belief system rooted in nature and ancestral wisdom. Chief Minister Pema Khandu extended greetings to the people of the state on the occasion of Donyi Polo Day, describing the indigenous faith as the core identity of the state and a living tradition rooted in ancestral wisdom, ethics and harmony with nature. CM Khandu

said the declaration of December 31 as Donyi Polo Day was a powerful affirmation of the state's indigenous roots. Emphasising that the faith is intrinsic to the people's way of life, he said Donyi Polo is neither adopted nor borrowed, but an inseparable part of their existence. "Donyi Polo is not a borrowed belief.

Tezpur University VC sent on leave

Tezpur, Jan 02: Nearly three months after protests erupted at Tezpur University, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has ordered Tezpur University Vice Chancellor Shambhu Nath Singh to proceed on leave and ordered an enquiry panel to probe into allegations against him. The committee has been asked to submit its report within a maximum period of three months. The decision comes amid mounting pressure from students and faculty members, who have been agitating since mid-September over alleged administrative and financial irregularities under Singh's tenure. The protesters observed a 24-hour hunger strike on Monday on the completion of 100 days of their agitation. In the interim, the ministry has appointed Amrendra Kumar Das from the department of design at IIT Guwahati as pro-VC of Tezpur University to ensure continuity in academic and administrative functioning.

Centre notifies new Chief Justice for Meghalaya High Court

Shillong, Jan 02: The Centre has notified the appointment of a new Chief Justice for the Meghalaya High Court, following a round of judicial appointments and transfers recommended by the Supreme Court Collegium. According to the notification issued by the Union Ministry of Law and Justice, Justice Revati Prashant Mohite Dere, a judge of the Bombay High Court, has been appointed as the Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court. She will now take charge of the High Court in Shillong. Her appointment comes after the transfer of Justice Soumen Sen, who had been serving as the Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court. Justice Sen has now been moved to the Kerala High Court, where he

will serve as the Chief Justice. The notification said that the appointment of Justice Dere has been made in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, as required under the Constitution. Once she assumes office, she will formally begin her duties as the head of the Meghalaya High Court. Justice Revati Mohite Dere has served in the Bombay High Court as a judge and has handled several important matters. With her elevation to Chief Justice, she will now lead the High Court in Meghalaya and oversee judicial administration in the state. The transfer of Justice Soumen Sen and appointment of Justice Dere are part of a wider reshuffle of judicial leadership across



different High Courts in the country. These changes were recommended by the Supreme Court Collegium in its meeting held on December 18, 2025. In the same round of decisions, Justice Soumen Sen was transferred to the Kerala High Court to take over as Chief Justice

after the retirement of Kerala Chief Justice Nitin Madhukar Jamdar on January 9, 2026. Another appointment notified by the Centre is that of Justice Sangam Kumar Sahoo of the Orissa High Court, who has been elevated as the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court.

Anjel chakma 'Murder': Uttarakhand BJP leader pledges strict action against perpetrators

Agartala, Jan 02: BJP leader from Uttarakhand and former Member of Parliament, Tarun Vijay met Governor of Tripura Indrasena Reddy Nallu on Thursday, and held detailed discussions regarding the measures taken by the Uttarakhand government in connection with the death of Tripura youth, Anjel Chakma. Tripura MLA Shambhulal Chakma was also present during the meeting. Anjel, a 24-year-old student from Tripura was fatally assaulted by a group, allegedly in a racially motivated attack, in Dehradun on December 9.

He succumbed to his injuries a few days later in hospital. "There will be no leniency for those who involved in the alleged brutal murder of Anjel Chakma, an MBA student from Agartala, who was pursuing his studies in Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Strict action will be taken against the accused," Vijay stated. He further said the Uttarakhand government is taking all necessary steps to ensure strict and speedy

■ *BJP leader Tarun Vijay met with Tripura Governor Indrasena Reddy Nallu to discuss actions taken by the Uttarakhand government following the racially motivated murder of Anjel Chakma, a 24-year-old student from Tripura.*

action against those responsible for the crime. Later, Vijay informed that he would visit the residence of the deceased, Anjel Chakma, at Machmara in Unakoti district of Tripura, on Friday morning to meet the bereaved family members and express his condolences. The unfortunate incident has triggered protests and wide-spread condemnation from political leaders, parties, groups and citizens from across the country and not just the Northeast. The All-India Chakma Students' Union (AICSU) has demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) investigation into the tragic incident, and transfer of the trial outside Uttarakhand, preferably to the national capital.

Zubeen death case: Assam Govt to appoint special public prosecutor on Jan 12

Guwahati, Jan 02: The Assam government will appoint a Special Public Prosecutor on January 12 to ensure speedy justice in the case related to the death of legendary singer and state's cultural icon, Zubeen Garg. This was announced by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during an interaction with the media at the State Guest House in Koinadhora here on New Year's Day. "The appointment of the Special Public Prosecutor will be made on January 12, along with three to four criminal advocates to strengthen the prosecution. While the name of the Special Public Prosecutor has not yet been finalised, it will be officially announced by January 5 or 6," Sarma informed. The Chief Minister also praised the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for completing the investigation swiftly and filing the chargesheet in a short span of time.

He further underscored that all actions would comply fully with legal procedures. Reiterating the government's commitment to justice, Sarma also said after appointment of the Special Public Prosecutor in the case, the government would approach the Gauhati High Court for setting up a special court exclusively for a transparent and fast-track trial. "Assam has lost a cultural legend, and it is our duty to ensure that justice is served with fairness and speed," Sarma said, reaffirming the government's resolve to see the case through. Zubeen Garg passed away while swimming during a yacht trip in Singapore on September 19, 2025, a day before he was scheduled to perform at a cultural festival there. According to reports, a Singapore court will open a coroner's inquiry into the death of the popular singer on January 14, 2026.

JDU Nagaland condemns killing of Tripura student, seeks strict action and better safety for northeast students

● *The Janata Dal (United) Nagaland condemned the racially motivated murder of 24-year-old Anjel Chakma from Tripura in Dehradun, calling it a shocking and brutal act.*
● *The party demanded strict punishment for the perpetrators, including capital punishment, and a fast-track investigation with immediate arrests.*
● *JDU Nagaland called for firm action against such violence to uphold national unity and the rule of law.*

Kohima, Jan 02: The Janata Dal (United) Nagaland has strongly condemned the killing of 24-year-old student Anjel Chakma from Tripura, who was reportedly murdered in a suspected racially motivated attack in Dehradun. The party has called the incident shocking and deeply disturbing, and has demanded strict and exemplary punishment for those involved. In a press release issued on December 31, JDU Nagaland described the incident as a "brutal and senseless killing" that has shaken the conscience of the nation. The party said the way the crime was carried out raises serious questions about the safety and security of students from the Northeast who go outside their states to pursue higher education. The party expressed deep condolences to the family of the deceased student and said it stands in complete solidarity with them during this painful and irreparable loss. The party further stated that such



crimes deserve the harshest possible punishment, including capital punishment, so that it serves as a strong deterrent against similar crimes in the future. JDU Nagaland also demanded a fast-track investigation into the case. The party called for immediate arrest of all accused persons, transparent proceedings, and time-bound delivery of justice. It also urged Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami to ensure that justice is not delayed and that the case receives serious and urgent attention. In the same statement, JDU Nagaland also expressed

concern over reports of attacks on pastors and vandalism of churches in different parts of the country. The party said that such incidents are an attack on India's constitutional values, including secularism, religious freedom, and peaceful coexistence. The party stated that India's greatest strength lies in its diversity, and any attempt to intimidate or marginalize communities weakens national unity and the rule of law. It called upon both the central and state governments to take firm and impartial action against those responsible for such violence and hate-motivated crimes.

Centre Appoints New Pro-VC at Tezpur University

Tezpur, Jan 02: The Ministry of Education has appointed Professor Amrendra Kumar Das of IIT Guwahati as the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Tezpur University, even as it constituted a high-level committee to probe the ongoing crisis and allegations concerning the institution's functioning. An official communication issued by the Department of Higher Education confirmed that Prof. Das, currently serving in the Department of Design at IIT Guwahati, has taken charge as Pro-Vice-Chancellor with immediate effect. His service terms will be governed by the Tezpur University Act, Statutes, and Ordinances, and the

appointment has been approved by the competent authority. Simultaneously, the Ministry issued an Office Memorandum setting up an Enquiry Committee under Section 9 of the Tezpur University Act, 1993. The committee will examine issues related to the prevailing administrative turmoil, including allegations against the Vice-Chancellor. The three-member panel will be headed by Prof. Lokendra Singh, Vice-Chancellor of Manipur University, and includes Prof. Jagadish Kumar Patnaik, Vice-Chancellor of Nagaland University, and Prof. Manish R. Joshi, Secretary of the University Grants Commission (UGC).

As per the directive, the Vice-Chancellor of Tezpur University has been asked to recuse himself from all official duties and proceed on leave until the completion of the enquiry. The committee's mandate includes a thorough review of the earlier Fact-Finding Committee report submitted to the Chancellor's office. It will also assess the circumstances leading to resignations and changes in key university positions, and may interact with stakeholders, inspect documents, and scrutinise any other relevant matters. The panel has been given a maximum of three months to submit its findings. The UGC



will provide secretarial support, while Tezpur University authorities have been instructed to extend full cooperation. These interventions mark a

significant move by the Centre to restore administrative stability and address concerns over governance practices at the central university.

Indian Army Strengthens Community Ties with New Year Outreach in West Siang

West Siang, Jan 02: The Indian Army ushered in the New Year with a heartwarming outreach programme in Bene village of West Siang district, reinforcing its longstanding tradition of fostering military-civil camaraderie in border regions. Troops under the Spear Corps organised a range of interactive sporting events, including tug of war, archery and traditional village games. The celebrations saw spirited participation from residents across all age groups, generating an atmosphere of joy and togetherness. Army officials stated that such initiatives reflect the organisation's "People First" ethos—ensuring that operational readiness remains aligned with

meaningful engagement and cooperation with the civilian population. The outreach aims to strengthen trust, enhance communication and deepen the sense of unity in strategically significant locations like West Siang. Marking the beginning of 2026 alongside the local community, the Army highlighted that its mission goes beyond guarding national frontiers. It also remains committed to being a dependable partner in maintaining peace, social harmony and development in remote border areas. The event concluded with renewed pledges of collaboration, further reinforcing the shared bond between the Indian Army and the people it serves.

Two crucial things to concentrate on for work in the upcoming year

In the current educational landscape, only about 1% of youth passing examinations secure government jobs, which are viewed as highly desirable. However, it is essential for young individuals to abandon the belief that government employment is the sole career path. Hope lies in the introduction of realistic entrepreneurship schemes, as there is a notable skills deficit across various sectors. Skill-based training can empower youth to become self-employed and lead dignified lives. Entrepreneurship is often misunderstood as simply running a business, yet the mindset change from seeking jobs to creating jobs is crucial in mitigating unemployment.Challenging the societal norm that equates social status with government positions is paramount. Leaders and intellectuals must promote the idea that all professions hold equal value, thus encouraging a more diverse approach to employment. For instance, in developed countries, the inclination towards entrepreneurship far surpasses the pursuit of government jobs. Moreover, fostering a professional attitude towards sports is vital for youth engagement. Assam’s Chief Minister proposed creating football teams in every police station, signaling a step towards greater sports involvement, though clarity on team formation is needed.Sports can greatly enhance discipline among youth and elevate the nation’s international reputation. Despite Assam’s favorable climate for sports, the current infrastructure is inadequate. While the government has allocated funds for playground improvements, the execution has fallen short, compounded by instances of fund misappropriation. The shortage of sports teachers and coaches exacerbates the situation, with only a fraction of required personnel employed across thousands of high schools, hindering effective sports education.To improve this scenario, a comprehensive plan is necessary. Key recommendations include strengthening rural sports infrastructure, ensuring dedicated sports instructors in each school, organizing competitive events at the grassroots level, and formulating robust sports policies with diligent oversight. Proper investment in athlete development can yield both health benefits for the population and enhance national prestige. Ultimately, shifting the mindset surrounding employment beyond government jobs will open up countless opportunities, restoring hope and prosperity in households. The way forward requires commitment from both government and society to cultivate an environment ripe for diverse career paths.



The reasons behind the crisis of France’s cherished eateries, from bien appetit to Uber Eats

Spare a thought for the poor French restaurateur. Once the iconic image of a sybaritic nation that loved nothing more than a boozy meal out with friends or colleagues, the French restaurant is in deep crisis. Traditional restaurants are closing faster than you can shout “garçon!”, as eating habits change and the cost of living pinches.“It’s a catastrophe for our profession,” Franck Chaumès, president of the restaurant branch of the Union of Hospitality Trades and Industries (UMIH) said in a television interview recently. “Some 25 restaurants are going out of business every day.” The UMIH has demanded – so far in vain – that the government ration the opening of new restaurants, in proportion to the local population, and license only professionals who are qualified in cooking and accounting.The only businesses that seem immune to the hollowing out of France’s hospitality sector are those providing haute cuisine at eye-watering prices to the super-rich and fast-food chains such as the ubiquitous McDonald’s, which does a roaring trade.The days when business, politics and diplomacy were transacted over lengthy wine-fuelled lunches are mostly gone. When I started as a reporter in Paris in 1978, there was no point calling a ministry or corporate press office between 1pm and 3pm, even in a crisis. Everyone was à table. Nowadays, only parliamentarians perpetuate the gluttonous tradition. Changing lifestyles, rising wholesale food prices and perverse tax rules are driving ever-more restaurant owners to the wall, as ordinary French people struggle to make ends meet. Gen Z and millennials eat less, drink less alcohol and spend less time at the din-



ing table. Add to that the inroads of home-delivery services such as Deliveroo and Uber Eats – often ferrying food prepared in “dark kitchens”, without a dining room attached – and it’s easy to see how old-fashioned restaurants are struggling to survive.“I used to serve 75 covers every lunchtime, and we had at least two home-cooked dishes of the day, with meat or fish and fresh vegetables,” says Alex Diril, who used to run a bar-restaurant in Paris’s fifth arrondissement, frequented by office workers, craftsmen and young people from nearby universities. “Things changed after the pandemic. Customers who used to eat out every day came maybe once or twice at the beginning of the week. You would offer people a fresh, healthy plat du jour, and mostly they wanted burgers and fries. As the wholesale cost of food rose, we couldn’t increase prices because of the competition from fast-food joints and sandwich places.”Despite the hard work put into serving freshly cooked food, the restaurant was losing money. Diril cut his losses and stopped serving food at the end of 2024. His bar-tobacco shop is just one of thousands of victims of a crisis that is changing the face

What if your house was rendered unsellable due to flooding? A growing number of people in Britain are dealing with that fact

When I visited Christine’s bungalow in Trowell, Nottinghamshire, and asked if I should take my shoes off, she joked: “I wouldn’t worry, I’ll be getting a new carpet soon enough when it floods again.” She’s got another good one about the time she, a 70-year-old great-grandmother, had to climb through her conservatory window because her front and back doors had been sealed shut by flood barriers. “If you don’t laugh, you’ll cry,” she says. And there is a lot to cry about: mainly the fact that her home is unsellable due to multiple floods.In 2020, the brook that backs on to Christine’s home burst its banks and water poured into her house, as well as the homes of her neighbours Jackie, 67, and Rhona, 76. As we sit around a table drinking tea, they tell me about having to rip out their floorboards, skirting boards, kitchen cupboards and entire bathrooms. Doors had to be taken off their hinges and thrown into skips. Fridges, washing machines, furniture, all joined the pile.Fortunately, their insurers paid for their houses to be refurbished and for furniture to be replaced. Property Flood Resilience assessments were carried out by the Environment Agency (EA), the government body responsible for flood management. As not enough houses were affected, the optimum but most expensive solution – to install embankments and



walls to stop water from topping the brook – was not implemented. (For context, the EA has faced an overall cut in its funding of 50% during the past decade.)Instead, the cheaper alternative of flood-proofing individual houses was offered. Christine, Jackie and Rhona had a mix of flood doors and barriers installed, and were provided with pumps to remove any water that did make it into their properties. In 2023, having been delayed by Covid, the work was finally completed. Eight months later, their houses flooded again.It turns out the assessments had missed the fact that their homes were built on platforms and the water was coming up through the ground and into them. The barriers provided only stopped surface water from getting into their properties.While they were telling me this, heavy rain began to thud on the conservatory roof. Christine looked concerned. “It

makes you panic,” she says. In bad weather, the women remain vigilant for the next flood warning. When there is one, they log on to the relevant government website and stay up during the night, fully dressed, messaging one another in their group chat and checking the levels provided by a gauge fixed to the brook. Jackie has an exact plan of how to stack her furniture so that some of it can be saved, and plastic raisers to place under what furniture can’t be stacked. Then there are the flood barriers to be erected in her garage and outside her back door. I lifted one up, and it felt as heavy as a barbell. This is no way for a pensioner to live, but as far as the EA is concerned, it has done its job for Christine, Jackie and Rhona. The work carried out has made them “flood-resilient” rather than flood-proof. Flooding is to be expected, and damage minimised.Residents believe that the flooding

begin after the building of multiple nearby housing developments, with one more leisure development to come. Extra discharge and surface runoff now drain into the brook. According to the lead local flood authority, once all the developments in the area are complete, runoff into the brook will be about 44% more compared with the pre-development baseline. The particular shape of this brook means that when it is overwhelmed with too much water, too quickly, it creates a second river – straight into people’s homes. Planning rules should prevent any new building developments from increasing flood risks, but there is a small, but not inconsequential, loophole that is preventing this. Developments are assessed one at a time and often done in phases. Taken on its own, a project may be viable, but when the impact of multiple developments is added up, this can have

disastrous consequences for communities. Every time we build we not only add more runoff, but we also build on the very land that acts as a natural flood protection: tarmac and concrete don’t soak up water, whereas soil does.Repeated risk of flooding is making Christine, Jackie and Rhona’s properties unsellable. Like all homeowners, they are required to inform buyers of any flooding in the previous five years, and unsurprisingly this has affected the sales of their homes. Jackie would like to move in order to be closer to her soon to be born grandchild, but looking at sales of similar properties in her area, she may have to drop the price significantly and use her pension money to help her move. Her experience tracks with larger trends: a study from Bayes Business School suggests that homes at risk of flooding are sold for between 8% and 32% lower than average compared with non-affected properties.Even when sellers are able to find buyers, some lenders, such as Nationwide, may no longer provide mortgages. The government has stepped in to cover the flood-risk element of home insurance until 2039 so that customers do not see a spike in premiums. However, the end date for this scheme and the fact that it doesn’t cover houses built after 2009 means that mortgage lenders do not want to fund homes that will lose value and be sold

at a loss if repossession occurs when a mortgage is defaulted. This is a dynamic that may become worse as flood risk encroaches on more of the UK’s housing stock. Labour’s “build, baby, build” housing policy means more homes are being built on green belt land, meaning less natural flood defences, more runoff and increased flood risk for existing homes. Even worse, Guardian analysis has predicted that more than 100,000 of these new homes could be built on the highest-risk flood zones in England. At the same time, extreme weather is increasing because of climate breakdown and the Environment Agency data says 6.3m properties, residential homes and businesses are in areas at risk of flooding, rising to 8m by 2050.All this points to a potential risk for the financial sector. As long as the government is covering flood risk, the Bank of England sees little threat to financial stability from flooding, but after the current scheme ends the outlook may look very different as negative equity and mortgage defaults lead to banks having reduced collateral and capital.Of course, all of this may be needless worry if the government remains an insurer of last resort. But that is dependent on what politicians decide in 2039. Meanwhile, Christine, Jackie and Rhona will spend their days at the mercy of the weather forecast.

Gen Z is nurtured by conscription

Conscription, also known as the draft, is a system in which the state legally requires citizens to perform national service, usually in the armed forces, and although many countries in 2025 depended mainly on professional volunteer militaries, conscription still remains an important and often debated part of national defence policies across the world. Several countries, such as Israel, South Korea, Eritrea, Switzerland, and Brazil, continue to follow compulsory military service to ensure national security. The modern idea of universal conscription developed during the French Revolution in the 1790s, which aimed to mobilise the population for national defence. During the First and Second World Wars, conscription was widely used by almost all major powers to create large “citizen armies” capable of fighting prolonged and large-scale wars. After the end of the Cold War, many Western nations gradually moved away from compulsory service and adopted all-volunteer forces, giving preference to smaller, professional, and technologically advanced militaries instead of large infantry-based forces. However, in recent years, changing security challenges and geopolitical tensions have encouraged several European countries to reintroduce or expand conscription. Germany approved plans to restart mandatory registration and medical examinations for 18-year-old men from 2025, with full assessments. In Scandinavian countries, Norway and Sweden already follow gender-neutral conscription systems that include both men and women, and Denmark introduced a similar system. In the Baltic region, Latvia restored compulsory military service to strengthen regional security. In the United States, active conscription ended in 1973, but the Selective Service System continues. India does not follow compulsory military service. Since independence in 1947, joining the Indian Army, Navy, or Air Force has always been voluntary. There is no law in India that forces citizens to join the armed forces. However, the Constitution gives the Union Government the power to require compulsory service for public purposes if it is necessary for national interest. This power is mentioned in Article 23(2) of the Indian Constitution and can include military service, but it has never been used to enforce a draft. India continues to follow an all-volunteer military



system. From time to time, proposals to introduce conscription have been discussed in Parliament, but none have become law. For example, the Compulsory Military Conscription Bill, 2019, suggested mandatory military service for young people between 17 and 23 years of age, but the bill was not passed.A mental toughness programme in basic military training aims to build a strong and positive mindset through physical and mental challenges. After training, the military mindset is usually defined by discipline, courage, and a sense of purpose. This training helps young people become more resilient, emotionally balanced, and better able to face difficulties in life. The main goal of conscription-style training is to shape youth in a constructive way and turn them into a productive national resource. To achieve this, it is important to take care of both physical and mental health. Military training develops mental maturity and shifts the mindset from obeying rules out of fear to practising self-discipline based on values such as duty, honour, and responsibility. By facing stressful situations, youth learn mental toughness and the ability to continue working despite difficulties, often supported by simple practices like mindfulness to control emotions. The training also teaches punctuality, accountability, teamwork, and leadership. Research shows that such training improves psychological well-being, reduces stress, and builds social support, while physically it improves strength, fitness, and heart health. It also sharpens focus, quick thinking, and decision-making under pressure. India should consider introducing conscription or compulsory basic training at the school level and linking it with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. However, full universal conscription is not practical in India because of its very large population, as around 20 million young people turn 18 every year. Managing and funding such a system would be extremely difficult. Instead, a more suitable option could be to expand the National Service Scheme (NSS) by making one year of national ser-

vice compulsory. Under this system, youth could choose different forms of service, such as basic military training, teaching, disaster relief work, or learning basic life-saving medical skills. This would help in developing well-rounded and skilled human resources. Another option is corporate-linked volunteerism, where employees are encouraged to complete national service. Companies could be given tax benefits or incentives for hiring people who have completed such service, and service experience could be given importance in the job market. For government jobs, special benefits could be provided to those who have volunteered for national service, such as preference in recruitment, promotion, or access to higher opportunities. Psychometric tests could also be introduced at different levels to assess personality, discipline, and leadership skills. Instead of introducing conscription only after education, service-orientated training can be included within the education system itself. Making the National Cadet Corps (NCC) compulsory in schools and colleges is one practical approach. This would help students develop discipline, teamwork, and basic military skills without the high cost of full-time military training facilities. Mandatory service offers a well-organised way for young people to learn important life skills such as leadership, teamwork, time management, and handling difficult situations. By bringing together people from different regions, languages, cultures, and economic backgrounds, national service helps reduce social divisions and builds a strong sense of national unity and shared identity. It works as a common platform where caste and class differences matter less, encouraging mutual respect and cooperation. Such training also improves physical fitness and mental strength. It helps young people learn how to manage stress, stay healthy, and follow disciplined daily routines, such as waking up early and maintaining regular habits. Overall, mandatory service can help create a disciplined, skilled, and socially united generation. Although India has traditionally followed a voluntary system, supporters believe that introducing structured national service could prepare youth as a “second line of defence” for the country while also equipping them with essential life and work skills that are useful throughout their lives.

Ahead of the Union Budget, railway stocks rise by Rs 66,500 crore

Mumbai: India's railway stocks are showing signs of recovery after a long period of weakness, with the sector witnessing a sharp rally over the past five trading sessions. The recent surge has added more than Rs 66,500 crore to the market value of railway-linked companies, as investors reposition ahead of the Union Budget and respond to improving revenue signals. Railway stocks had remained under pressure for most of 2025 after the sector peaked in July 2024. Since then, many stocks corrected sharply as high valuations cooled and expectations around policy support eased. The latest rebound suggests a cautious return of investor interest, driven by a mix of fare hikes, budget hopes and company-specific developments. The rally has been led by Jupiter Wagons, whose shares jumped nearly 37 per cent in just five days, making it the best-performing railway stock in the recent upswing. Rail Vikas Nigam Limited rose around 27 per cent, while Indian Railway Finance Corporation gained more than 20 per cent during the same period. Other railway-related companies such as Ircn International, Titagarh Rail Systems, RailTel Corporation of India, Texmaco Rail & Engineering,



RITES and BEML also posted strong double-digit gains. Despite the sharp bounce, most railway stocks are still trading well below their previous highs.

One of the key triggers behind the rally has been Indian Railways' decision to revise passenger fares from December 26. This marked the second fare hike in FY26, with long-distance travel fares increased by 1 to 2 paise per kilometre across ordinary, Mail and Express trains. The move is expected to bring in nearly Rs 600

crore in additional revenue during the remaining part of the financial year, while suburban services have been kept out of the hike. Passenger train operations continue to run at a loss, with fares estimated to be around 45 per cent below cost. These losses are largely subsidised through freight earnings. The latest fare rationalisation is expected to improve revenue visibility and help reduce losses in passenger services, supporting efforts to improve the railways' operating ratio.

India's GDP is expected to expand by 7.4 percent FY26

India's economic growth is expected to pick up pace in the current financial year, with GDP projected to grow at 7.4 per cent in FY2026, a new report said on Tuesday. This would mark an improvement from the estimated 6.5 per cent growth in FY2025, according to a report by ICRA Limited. The report said economic expansion may remain strong in the first half of FY2026, with GDP growth expected to be around 8 per cent. However, growth is likely to ease to below 7 per cent in the second half as the impact of a favourable base effect fades. External challenges, especially weak exports, could also weigh on economic activity later in the year unless a trade deal with the United States is finalised. ICRA noted that economic activity remained healthy in the third quarter of FY2026, supported by a festive-season demand boost following GST rate cuts. It added that mining, construction and electricity demand are expected to see a seasonal rise in the coming months after being affected by rainfall-related disruptions. At the same time, the slowdown in exports is expected to deepen in the second



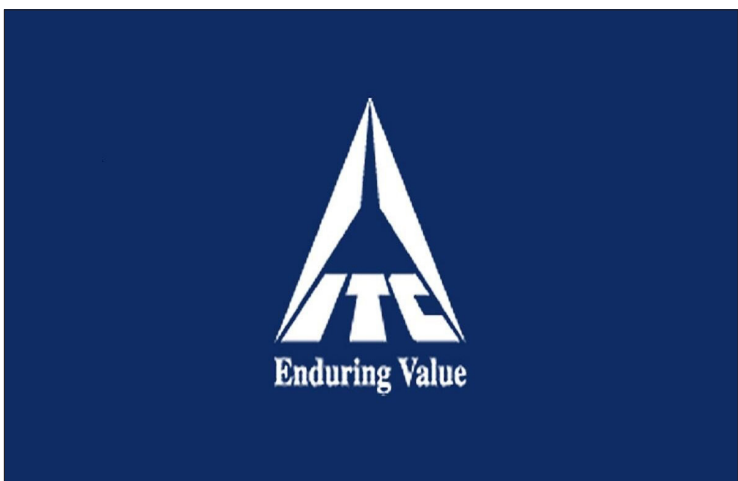
half of the fiscal, creating a drag on growth. Commenting on the outlook, Aditi Nayar said growth outcomes in 2025 turned out better than expected due to strong policy support. She said income tax relief, GST rate rationalisation, cumulative policy rate cuts of 125 basis points and liquidity measures helped boost demand. "Growth outcomes have panned out better than expectations in 2025. This has benefited from sizeable policy stimulus

including income tax relief GST rate rationalisation 125 bps policy rate cuts and liquidity support," Nayar explained. "Lower inflation eased pressure on household budgets, while an above-normal monsoon supported farm output," she added.

However, she cautioned that concerns on the external front remain and could impact growth in the near term if a trade agreement with the US does not materialise soon.

ITC shares hit 3-year low after excise shock; should investors buy the dip

New Delhi: ITC Ltd shares extended their sharp decline for the second straight session on Friday, January 2, after the government imposed additional excise duty on cigarettes. The move triggered heavy selling across tobacco stocks. ITC shares fell as much as 5.1 per cent to a low of Rs 345.25 in early trade, marking a fresh three-year low. The stock later recovered some losses. At around 11:18 am, ITC was trading at Rs 349.70 on the NSE, down Rs 14.15 or 3.89 per cent. The stock has fallen sharply in recent sessions. ITC has declined nearly 14 per cent in just five trading days. Over the past one month, the stock is down more than 13 per cent. In the last six months, it has corrected over 15 per cent. On a one-year basis, ITC shares have fallen close to 30 per cent. The government announced a significant increase in excise duty on cigarettes. The tax hike varies by cigarette length and is steeper for longer cigarettes. Brokerages say companies may need to take sharp price hikes to protect margins, which could impact demand. Brokerages have cut



targets and downgraded the stock, citing weaker growth visibility. UBS has maintained a Buy rating on ITC but cut its target price to Rs 430 from Rs 490. The brokerage said the additional excise duty will weigh on the stock and create uncertainty. It added that current prices are factoring in cigarette EBIT growth of just 2 to 3 per cent, which appears conservative. Macquarie has maintained an Outperform rating with a target of Rs 500. It said maintaining EBIT

per stick would require price hikes of 10 to 35 per cent across cigarette categories.

While moderating leaf tobacco costs may offer some support, the brokerage flagged concerns on near-term growth due to higher taxation. JP Morgan downgraded ITC to Neutral from Overweight and cut its target to Rs 375 from Rs 475. It said early estimates suggest a weighted average price hike of over 25 per cent would be needed, depending on

whether NCCD is removed. The brokerage warned of risks of downtrading, higher illicit sales and pressure on volumes, which could cap upside over the next 6 to 9 months. Jefferies downgraded the stock to Hold from Buy and reduced its target to Rs 400 from Rs 535. Nuvama also downgraded ITC to Hold from Buy and cut its target to Rs 415 from Rs 534. It said the magnitude of the cigarette tax hike was higher than expected and could lead to consensus downgrades to volume, EBITDA and valuation multiples. Most brokerages agree that the sharp tax hike weakens ITC's near-term earnings outlook. While valuations have corrected sharply, visibility on volume growth and pricing remains limited. For existing investors, many analysts suggest a Hold approach until there is clarity on tax structure, pricing actions and demand trends. For fresh investors, brokerages indicate that patience may be required, as stock performance could remain under pressure in the coming quarters despite long-term fundamentals.

Nifty Bank tops 60,114 to new high, hits finish line Nifty50 in New Year 2026

New Delhi: The Nifty Bank index surged to a fresh record on Thursday, January 2, outperforming the broader market and reaching a new peak ahead of the Nifty50 in the New Year. The banking index touched an all-time high of 60,118.10 during intraday trade, crossing its earlier record level of 60,114 (1 Dec 2025). At the time of writing, Nifty Bank was trading at 60,080.25, up 368.70 points or 0.62 per cent. The index opened higher at 59,757.40, compared with its previous close of 59,711.55, and extended gains through the session on sustained buying interest in heavyweight banking stocks. Nifty Bank tops 60,114 to new high, hits finish line before Nifty50 in New Year 2026 A key positive development has been the return of foreign portfolio investors after three months of outflows. FPIs turned net buyers in October, supported by stronger earnings expectations, lower consumption taxes and progress in India-US trade negotiations. They have added nearly USD 1.3 billion since the start of last month. The early Diwali celebration with fireworks continued in the equity markets for the third consecutive session on October 17, as the Nifty 50 surpassed its June swing high and hit a fresh 52-week high. The index

closed above 25,700 for the first time since October 1, 2024, igniting strong confidence among market participants. As long as the index sustains above 25,700, it may close the long bearish gap of October 3, 2024, and set the stage for an upmove toward 26,000 and then 26,277 (record high). Support is placed at 25,500, followed by 25,400, which was earlier a strong resistance and has now turned into support, according to experts. The continuation of the higher high-higher low structure, healthy momentum indicators, renewed Nifty 50 gained momentum as the session progressed and hit a day's high of 25,782 in the second half. The index finished the session at 25,710, up 125 points (0.49 percent), with above-average volumes. It formed a bullish candle with minor upper and lower shadows on the daily timeframe, signaling a positive trend. The index has decisively surpassed the crucial overhead resistance zone of 25,400-25,500 levels (down-sloping trendline as per daily/weekly charts). "The underlying trend of Nifty continues to be positive, and the market is likely to move up further in the short term," said Nagaraj Shetti, Senior Technical Research Analyst at HDFC Securities..

iPhone 16 becomes selling phone in India



New Delhi: US-based tech giant Apple sold about 6.5 million iPhone 16 units in the first 11 months of 2025, making it the country's highest-selling smartphone, according to a new report. The report from Counterpoint Research said that Apple outpaced Android rivals in the same period. The research firm's data found the gap is striking as iPhone 15 also made to the top five best-selling list. The research firm said Apple's performance reflects changing buyer behaviour in a market, historically dominated by entry-level and mid-range devices. Further, the change is underpinned by a strategic push by Apple to expand local manufacturing and reduce reliance on China. Apple recently opened three new Apple Stores in Bengaluru, Pune, and Noida, taking its total retail presence in India to five stores. Financing options such as no-cost EMI, cashbacks and bank schemes have made high-end phones more attainable to more consumers. Apple Inc clocked the highest value of exports from India in November, shipping iPhones worth \$2 billion, as per latest industry data. Apple clocked the highest value of exports from India in November, shipping iPhones worth \$2 billion. In November, a company filing showed that Apple India posted a record high domestic sales of \$9 billion in FY25, and one in every five iPhones made globally in FY25 was manufactured/assembled in India. The company's manufacturing in India contributed 12 per cent of Apple's global production value. The iPhone maker also began local assembly of high-end Pro and Pro Max models of iPhones in India for the first time. The company filings showed that the Americas brought in \$178.4 billion in FY25 - nearly 43 per cent of Apple's global revenue - and a growing share of those iPhones were shipped from India.

Where should investors place their funds 20 favorite funds are listed by Anil Singhvi Mutual Funds Top Picks 2026:

New Delhi: The mutual fund industry began 2026 with strong momentum after steady growth in 2025. Assets under management crossed 80 lakh crore rupees, supported by consistent inflows into equity-oriented schemes, passive funds and record SIP investments. Rising retail participation reflected growing confidence among investors. As the new year starts, market participants are focusing on fund categories that can offer stability and long-term wealth creation amid global uncertainty and evolving market conditions. Zee Business Managing Editor Anil Singhvi said investors should follow a balanced and goal-based approach in 2026. He said asset allocation is more important than short-term market timing. Singhvi advised investors to avoid chasing quick returns and focus on disciplined investing. According to him, diversification across asset classes helps manage volatility and protects portfolios during uncertain market phases. Singhvi said flexi-cap funds continue to be a preferred equity category for 2026. These funds invest across large, mid and small-cap stocks, allowing fund managers to adjust portfolios based on market conditions. He said this flexibility helps manage risk while capturing growth opportunities. Singhvi highlighted HDFC Flexi Cap Fund and Parag Parikh Flexi Cap Fund as his preferred schemes in this category.

Singhvi favours multi-asset allocation funds that invest in equity, debt and gold. He said these funds help reduce volatility and improve diversification. Singhvi advised investors to choose schemes with more than 65 per cent equity exposure to retain equity taxation benefits. He mentioned ICICI Prudential Multi Asset Allocation Fund, Kotak Multi Asset Fund and DSP Multi Asset Allocation Fund.

Singhvi said selective exposure to the consumption theme can be considered in 2026. He said rising income levels, improving demand and stable economic conditions could support consumption stocks. In this segment, he highlighted HDFC Non-Cyclical Consumer Fund and Axis Consumption Fund. He advised investors to take limited exposure and align investments with their risk profile. Singhvi identified banking and financial services as another key theme for 2026. He said credit growth and economic expansion remain supportive for the sector. For investors seeking sectoral exposure, he mentioned the Invesco India Financial Services Fund and the SBI Banking and Financial Services Fund. He advised cautious allocation, as sectoral funds can be volatile. On the debt and hybrid side, Singhvi said falling interest rates could support returns in 2026. For short-term investments, he prefers arbitrage and income plus arbitrage funds due to better tax efficiency. He men-



tioned SBI Arbitrage Opportunities Fund, Invesco Arbitrage Fund, Axis Income Plus Arbitrage Fund and HDFC Income Plus Fund. He also cited ABSL Equity Saving Fund and Kotak Equity Saving Fund. Singhvi said diversification, discipline and patience will be crucial in 2026. He advised investors to maintain a balanced portfolio across equities, debt and gold. For debt

allocation, he prefers short-term duration and banking and PSU debt funds, including HDFC Short-Term Debt Fund, Kotak Short-Term Debt Fund, ICICI Prudential Banking and PSU Debt Fund, Kotak Banking and PSU Debt Fund and HDFC Banking and PSU Debt Fund. He said long-term consistency matters more than short-term market movements.

Trump says US hit ‘big facility’ linked to alleged Venezuelan drug boats

New York: Donald Trump has said the US has carried out a strike on a “dock area” linked to alleged Venezuelan drug boats.The US president said there had been a “major explosion” where “they load the boats up with drugs” - but did not give more details or the dock’s location. Venezuela’s government is yet to respond.The explosion was caused by a drone strike carried out by the CIA, said CNN and the New York Times, citing sources close to the matter. If confirmed, it would be the first known US operation inside Venezuela.Since September, the US has launched strikes on what it says are drug-smuggling boats, targeting more than 20 vessels in the Pacific and the Caribbean, and killing at least 100 people. The most recent strike was on Monday, with US Southern Command saying in a social media post that two “narco-terrorists” were killed in a “lethal kinetic strike” in the eastern Pacific. Trump has previously threatened land strikes in Venezuela, as well as authorising covert CIA action in the nation, as part of a pressure campaign on President Nicolás Maduro.Reporters asked Trump on Monday if the CIA had carried out the attack, and he said, “I don’t want to say that. I know exactly who it was, but I don’t want to say who it was.”“We hit all the boats, and now we hit the area... it’s the implementation area. That’s where they implement, and that is no longer around,” he said of the strike. Trump’s comments are the second



time he has mentioned the explosion. In a radio interview last week, Trump described a US operation against a “big facility”, but he provided limited details.The Pentagon referred questions from BBC News to the White House. The White House has yet to comment.When the US has previously carried out strikes on alleged drug boats - including Monday’s - the Pentagon has published images and videos on social media to confirm the strikes. So far, no images of the dock incident have been shared. The Trump administration has described strikes on vessels in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific, mostly from Venezuela, as attacks against terrorists attempting to bring deadly and illegal drugs to the US by boat.The US has deployed 15,000 troops and a range of aircraft carriers, guided-missile destroyers, and amphibious assault ships to the Caribbean.The stated aim of the deployment - the largest to the

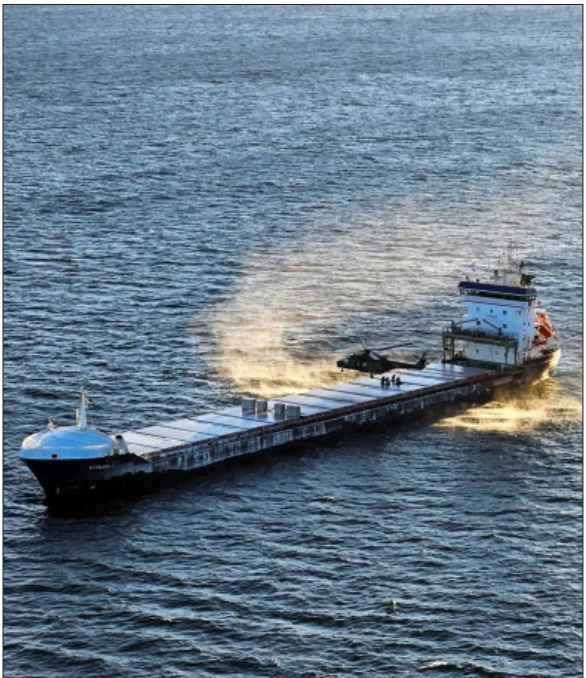
region since the US invaded Panama in 1989 - is to stop the flow of fentanyl and cocaine to the US.Among the ships is the USS Gerald Ford, the world’s largest aircraft carrier. US helicopters reportedly took off from it before US forces seized an oil tanker off Venezuela on 10 December.The Trump administration has accused Venezuela of using oil revenues to fund drug-related crime. Venezuela condemned the seizures as “piracy”. Maduro has denied US claims that he is a cartel leader and has accused the US of using its “war on drugs” as an excuse to try to depose him and get its hands on Venezuela’s vast oil reserves.Last week, Trump was asked whether the goal of the seizures was to force Maduro from power. Trump responded: “Well, I think it probably would... That’s up to him what he wants to do. I think it’d be smart for him to do that. But again, we’re gonna find out.”

Police in Finland arrest 2 in connection damage to undersea telecom cable

New York: Finnish authorities have arrested two people in connection with damage to an undersea telecommunications cable in the Gulf of Finland that occurred earlier this week between the capitals of Finland and Estonia, police said Thursday.The damage was discovered early Wednesday in Estonia’s exclusive economic zone. The cable belongs to Finnish telecommunications service provider Elisa and is considered to be critical underwater infrastructure.Helsinki police have opened an investigation into aggravated criminal damage, attempted aggravated criminal damage and aggravated interference with telecommunications.Officials placed two other people under travel bans as a result of the ongoing investigation, Helsinki police said in a statement Thursday. The individuals’ connections to the ship was not immediately clear and police would not release their nationalities or other details

The ship, named the Fitburg, was flagged in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It had been traveling from Russia to Israel. The 14 crew members hail from Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan and were detained by Finnish authorities.Finnish National Police Commissioner Ilkka Koskimäki said earlier this week that the ship was dragging its anchor for hours when it was discovered in Finland’s exclusive economic zone. He noted investigators are not speculating on whether a state-level actor was behind the damage.Finnish Customs discovered structural steel in the cargo that originated in Russia and falls under sanctions imposed by the European Union, the agency said in a statement.“Import of such sanctioned goods into the EU is prohibited under EU sanctions regulations,” the statement said. “Finnish Customs continues to investigate the sequence of events and the applicability of EU sanctions legislation to this case.”The undersea cables and pipelines that crisscross one of the busiest shipping lanes in Europe link Nordic, Baltic and central European countries. They promote trade and energy security and, in some cases, reduce dependence on Russian energy resources.Finnish authorities last year charged the captain and two senior officers of a Russia-linked vessel, the Eagle S, that damaged undersea cables between Finland and Estonia on Christmas Day in 2024.

The Finnish deputy prosecutor general said in an August



statement that charges of aggravated criminal mischief and aggravated interference with communications were filed against the captain and first and second officers of the oil tanker. The officers, whose names were not made public, denied the allegations, the statement said.The Kremlin previously denied involvement in damaging the infrastructure, which provides power and communication for thousands of Europeans.The Eagle S was flagged in the Cook Islands but had been described by Finnish customs officials and the European Union’s executive commission as part of Russia’s shadow fleet of fuel tankers. Those are aging vessels with obscure ownership, acquired to evade Western sanctions during the war in Ukraine and operating without Western-regulated insurance.For the West, such incidents are believed to be part of widespread sabotage attacks in Europe allegedly linked to Moscow following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

We want end to war, but not end of Ukraine

New York: In his New Year’s Eve address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Ukraine wants the war to end but will not accept a weak peace agreement, stressing that any deal must not come at the cost of the country’s future. His remarks came shortly after Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated his belief that Moscow would prevail in the ongoing conflict.Speaking just before midnight in a 21-minute televised address to the nation, Zelenskyy acknowledged that Ukrainians were exhausted after nearly four years of war, a period he noted was longer than the German occupation of many Ukrainian cities during World War II.However, he made it clear that fatigue would not translate into capitulation. “What does Ukraine want? Peace? Yes. At any cost? No,” Zelenskyy said, adding, “We want an end to the war but not the end of Ukraine.”“Are we tired? Very,” he said. “Does this mean we are ready to surrender? Anyone who thinks so is deeply mistaken.”The Ukrainian leader warned that any agreement without firm and credible guarantees would only prolong the conflict rather than resolve it.“Any signature placed on weak agreements only fuels the war,” he said. “My signature will be placed on a strong agreement.”Zelenskyy said that ongoing diplomatic efforts were focused on securing a durable and meaningful settlement. “That is exactly what every meeting, every phone call, every decision is about now,” he said. “To secure a strong peace — not for a day, a week or two months, but peace for years.”He added that weeks of US-led diplomacy, including talks held last weekend with US President Donald Trump in Florida, had brought negotiations close to completion.

“A peace agreement is 90 percent ready,” Zelenskyy said. “That 10 percent contains everything. It will determine the fate of peace, the fate of Ukraine and Europe.”

Life-threatening bushfire Australia

New York: A ‘watch and act’ alert was also in place for people in an area bounded by Clayton Road, Scott Street, Great Eastern Highway, Lionel Road and Glen Road with authorities telling them there is a possible threat to lives and homes as a fire is burning in the area and conditions are changing. Aerial support was been sent to assist ground crews.Emergency alerts were issued to locals, telling them to leave in a westerly or easterly direction on the Great Eastern Highway.“If the way is clear, leave now for a safer place,” alerts read. More than 1100 vehicles were set on fire and over 500 people detained across France during New Year’s Eve celebrations, the country’s Interior Ministry has revealed.In accordance with the Interior a significant number of collective defence measures were deployed, demonstrating the systematic response of the internal security forces: 1,262,” read a statement issued by the ministry.“On the other hand, there has been an increase in vehicles set on fire (main source and spread): 1,173 vehicles burned, compared to 984 last year,” it added.Millions of French people had gathered to celebrate New Year’s Eve to mark the arrival of 2026. To ensure these festivities took place in a spirit of conviviality and peace, the ministry said that it had put in adequate security measures across the country, including placing the prefects and internal security forces, under the authority of the Minister of the Interior who were fully mobilised to oversee the smooth running of the celebrations and guarantee everyone’s safety.

With or without Donald Trump, mRNA vaccinations are the way of the future

New York: The late scientist and thinker Donald Braben argued that 20th-century breakthroughs arose from scientists being free to pursue bold ideas without pressure for quick results or rigid peer review. The rapid development of Covid-19 vaccines seemed to validate his claim: emergency conditions sped up trials, relaxed regulatory sequencing and encouraged scientists to share findings before peer review. Out of that sprang one of the great scientific success stories of our age: mRNA vaccines. These use synthetic genetic code to train the immune system to defend itself against viruses. Katalin Karikó and Drew Weissman, whose work enabled the mRNA Covid vaccine, went on to win the Nobel prize. Their breakthrough suggests that loosening traditional constraints could accelerate major scientific advances.The extensive scientific and logistic infrastructure built during that period is now occupied with turning the technology towards other diseases: flu, HIV and even cancer. Until very recently, the US, which put more than \$10bn into mRNA development, appeared primed to reap the scientific and commercial rewards. Despite the deregulatory zeal that birthed mRNA, the second Trump administration has rejected it. Instead, it has been remarkably steady in its commitment to the radical anti-science and anti-vaccine agenda of the US health secretary, Robert F Kennedy Jr. He has spent the past year undermining and outright sabotaging the US’s own success. Over the summer, the US Department of Health and Human Services announced a “coordinated wind-down” of federal funding for mRNA research, cancelling an additional \$500m in funding for 22 projects.These cuts will be devastating. Developing safe novel therapies depends on long timelines, steady funding and – despite Braben’s thesis – predictable regulation. The abrupt US reversals signal that Washington is now an unreliable partner, willing to walk away after others have invested heavily. And when once-trusted federal agencies stop recommending mRNA vaccines or deliberately slow approvals, the harm doubles: it undermines public confidence and cripples the system meant to keep people safe. That’s all too visible in falling vaccination rates in the US. The pharmaceutical industry is not a benevolent actor, but these firms want to deliver – and profit from – mRNA technology. An unstable US market makes that significantly more difficult. The future of vaccinationAlthough mRNA vaccines proved their efficacy against Covid, the next frontier remains an open question. Early lab and trial data shows that they excel at priming the immune system, though real-world results are harder to pin down. They can be made quickly, tweaked easily, and a factory that makes one kind of mRNA vaccine should – with some caveats – be able to make any other one too. This means that scientists can test huge numbers of candidates: there are hundreds



of vaccines currently in clinical trials, including early-stage work on extremely difficult pathogens like HIV.So far, mRNA’s biggest impact has been on diseases that we already vaccinate against, but not very effectively. For example, flu shots are slow to develop and cumbersome to produce, a terrible match for a virus that mutates every year. In some winters, the standard flu jab protects against serious illness only about 30% of the time. Recently developed mRNA flu vaccines like Moderna’s mRNA1010 and Pfizer’s modRNA significantly outperformed the standard flu jab in final-phase trials. This is another vote of confidence for the technology, but also sets up a potentially clarifying conflict with the Trump administration: the decision on US approval for those vaccines is expected in early 2026 and rests with the US Food and Drug Administration’s Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research – which is run by Vinay Prasad, a close ally of Mr Kennedy. A negative or stalled result would confirm just how far the administration is willing to go in its anti-mRNA crusade.Ironically, the most ambitious mRNA work has escaped the Trump administration’s notice. Com-

panies are racing to develop personalised cancer vaccines – drawn by both the huge market and the fact that the White House doesn’t seem to view these treatments as “vaccines” at all. As a result, they’ve been largely left untouched.

The development of mRNA was not just an academic enterprise. The technology advanced because firms built the infrastructure needed to turn laboratory findings into therapies. Paradoxically for a Republican president, it is this business that US policy now jeopardises.

The world’s responsibilityIt will take more than a mercurial Donald Trump to destroy the US’s advantage in mRNA research and production. The technology emerged from an American university, most industry jobs are there, and nearly 75% of all manufacturing comes out of the US (the remainder is almost entirely in the EU). However, both public and industry researchers are alarmed by the government’s actions, and both say that they will take their work elsewhere if it continues. It’s quite a leap from threatening to move to actually doing it. Given the circumstances, the UK and the EU should help them

along.The EU has made the right noises on recruiting US scientists horrified by Mr Trump, with a proposed €500m from the European Commission and another €100m pledged by France. But it is only a fraction of what the US president has cut, and it remains to be seen if that money will materialise. it is already comfortably in second place.

The UK has a role to play as well. It is a major vaccine research power and has taken an interest in mRNA cancer therapies and partnerships with industry. Its manufacturing ambitions have been largely focused on vaccine self-sufficiency but, with several facilities already able to make vaccines, the knowhow is there to be built on.As long as Mr Kennedy is allowed to set policy, American mRNA research will be operating in a hostile environment. This is a critical moment for the technology, with a second generation of vaccines emerging and a plethora of promising long-term programmes that need support. The US underwrote much of the early success of these vaccines, but it was always a global project. The rest of the world must now see it through.

2026 Men’s Style Forecast

Men’s fashion in 2026 is set to be bolder, smarter, and more expressive than ever before. As global trends shift toward comfort, sustainability, and emotional well-being, the new year’s style forecast blends purposeful colours, thoughtful textures, and modern silhouettes that suit the way men live today. From calming, eco-inspired hues to functional layering and adaptable everyday wear, 2026 is all about fashion that looks sharp, feels good, and supports a more conscious lifestyle, shares Ritika Mehra, Co-Founder, Stylox Fashion. This year, menswear will move beyond trends and step into a more meaningful, future-ready direction. WGSN and Coloro have pronounced Transformative Teal as the colour of 2026. This colour can be interpreted as a blend of rich blue and greenish water; it conveys calmness, healing, and a fresher sense of purpose. It reflects the global movement towards being environmentally friendly and buying consciously, especially as concerns about climate have begun to significantly impact people’s lifestyle choices. Described as “calming and restorative”, Transformative Teal goes beyond visual appeal — it symbolises personal reset, balance, and a desire for harmony. WGSN suggests using it as a versatile alternative to classic dark shades across categories such as utilitarian wear, outerwear, relaxed tailoring, and even occasion dressing. Expect to see this colour appear in structured jackets, hybrid streetwear pieces, winter layers, lightweight knits, and accessories. Transformative Teal, nonetheless, is the year’s stronghold. Besides that, the Spring/Summer 2026 season will introduce a luxurious colour range that mixes vibrant and soothing tones, thereby indicating a more feeling-based use of colours. As a daring and lively pink, Electric Fuchsia is the perfect choice for either the main feature or the minor details. It brings liveliness to neutral outfits, and at the same



time, it is a sign of the increasing use of colour in menswear. Expect it in streetwear, activewear inserts, graphic tees, and limited-edition festival collections.

Blue Aura: A serene pastel blue-grey, Blue Aura embodies softness and inclusivity. The colour is introduced as gender-neutral, and it easily fits into stylishly relaxed outfits, soft shirts, loungewear, and summer knits. Besides, it attracts men who look for minimalism but with a soft undertone.

Amber Haze: An earthy yellow-amber tone, Amber Haze represents warmth and grounding, ideal for seasonal transitions. Designers may use it for overshirts, light outerwear, chinos, and fall layering pieces, especially where they want to bring a natural, sun-warmed feel.

Jelly Mint: Fresh and playful, Jelly Mint adds youthfulness to the palette. This season, mixing pastels with neutrals paired well with summer shirts, activewear, lightweight outerwear, and accessories like caps, bags, and sneakers. Pastel colours would be mainly liked by the youth of Gen Z who are trendy and not scared to play around with colours. Together, these colours create an emotional spectrum – from bold and expressive to soft and stabilising – offering men the freedom to build wardrobes that reflect mood, purpose, and personal style.

Main Menswear Trends to Monitor in 2026

Soft Utility
The functional aspect continues to be the main theme but in a more user-friendly and softer way. Expect cargo trousers in fluid materials, utility shirts in gentle colours, and function-led jackets with minimal hardware. Comfort remains king.

Elevated Everyday Wear
Menswear is moving toward refined basics – T-shirts with tailored seams, structured knit polos, relaxed trousers, and everyday pieces made with premium-hand-feel fabrics. The aim is to look polished without trying too hard.

Weather-Responsive Layering
Lightweight layer-on-layer dressing will be the number one choice as a result of climate unpredictability. The male population will combine performance outer shells with mid-weight knits, thermal-lined overshirts and extensions of the pieces designed for varying temperatures.

Conscious Fashion Choices
Sustainability is being increasingly highlighted, and this has led to men opting for fewer but better-quality items. Recycled fibres, bio-fabrics, low-dye processes, and long-lasting construction will all be part of influencing the customer in making a decision in 2026.

Beauty Industry Learns The Language of Skin Longevity

In 2025, beauty stopped speaking the language of appearance and began speaking the language of longevity. Skincare, once dominated by promises of instant glow and visible correction, increasingly aligned itself with ideas borrowed from health, nutrition, and preventive science, resilience, repair, and long-term performance. This shift reflects a deeper understanding that skin is not just a surface to be perfected, but a living organ whose capabilities change with time, environment, and lifestyle. This evolution is not limited to consumer behaviour. Rachna Bahadur, founder & CEO of Flout Beauty, says, “It is being shaped at the highest levels of the global beauty industry. Major groups such as L’Oréal, Unilever, and The Estée Lauder Companies have invested heavily in skin biology research, barrier science, microbiome studies, and extended clinical testing models. The emphasis has shifted from fast trend cycles to longer scientific timelines, where products are designed and evaluated for how they support skin health over years, not weeks.” At the heart of this shift is a more nuanced understanding of what longevity means in skincare. Lon-



gevity is often mistaken for a softer version of anti-ageing. In reality, it represents a fundamentally different approach. Traditional anti-ageing frameworks have largely been interventional, focused on correcting visible signs after they appear. Longevity, by contrast, is supportive and preventative. It prioritises preserving skin’s core functions so that visible ageing progresses more gradually. Its ability to repair, renew, defend, and adapt. Importantly, this perspective does not position skincare against aesthetic procedures. Instead, it re-frames skincare as the long-term foundation that works alongside interventions, supporting skin before and after treatments and helping maintain results over time. This longevity lens has naturally brought skin barrier health into sharper focus.

In 2025, the barrier was no longer a niche concern reserved for sensitive skin. It became widely recognised as central to how skin ages. Barrier breakdown is now understood to play a role in inflammation, pigmentation irregularities, heightened sensitivity, and accelerated ageing. As a result, longevity-oriented routines emphasise strengthening barrier integrity while delivering actives in ways skin can tolerate consistently over the long term. This does not mean abandoning performance ingredients. Proven actives such as retinoids remain foundational, but they are being re-examined through a longevity lens, not for speed or intensity alone, but for sustainability, formulation balance, and long-term compliance. Alongside these, a new generation of emerging actives

is being explored for their role in cellular resilience and repair signalling. Many of these are still in early scientific stages, and the industry is increasingly cautious, recognising that longevity rewards evidence accumulated over time, not novelty alone. As this global movement toward longevity matures, another important realisation is gaining ground: skin does not age in a vacuum. Indian skin, in particular, operates under unique conditions – higher UV exposure, heat, humidity, pollution, and lifestyle stressors. All of which place sustained pressure on the skin barrier and inflammatory pathways. This means that longevity solutions developed for temperate climates or different skin types do not always translate effectively. What is changing is the recognition that Indian skin requires its own research frameworks, testing protocols, and formulation logic. Rather than importing global ingredient trends, the focus is shifting toward understanding how skin behaves in local environments and designing solutions that reflect those realities. As the conversation around longevity carries into 2026, consumer expectations are evolving faster than industry conventions.

How to plan your first trip to Mexico

With cactus-strewn highlands, thick southern jungles and miles of sun-drenched beaches, Mexico is made for adventure for any first-time visitor. But, as I’ve discovered during my research trips for guidebooks and articles, the country is also crammed with cultural experiences, from pre-Hispanic monuments to local markets, where Mexico’s Indigenous communities showcase their culture. Mexico has long been a favourite among tourists for its Mayan ruins, spring break scene and globally beloved cuisine. But the nation has been focusing on its travel infrastructure for some time now. In December 2023, the first section of the controversial train line Tren Maya opened between Campeche and Cancun in the Yucatán Peninsula. Eventually, it will cross five regions and run 966 miles (1,554km), connecting with the Mayan ruins of Palenque. Airport additions have also increased access. Felipe Angeles International Airport opened in Mexico City in 2022 and Tulum’s first airport, Felipe Carrillo Puerto International Airport, came in 2023. Jalisco’s new Costalegre Airport has begun welcoming private fliers and shuttle service to Puerto Vallarta, with commercial flights planned, though not yet confirmed. Meanwhile, a steady stream of luxury accommodations has flooded in over the last decade, particularly in Mexico City, Oaxaca and Tulum. With the current peso rate, your dollar, pound or euro will stretch a long way. But what keeps me returning again and again, and eventually buying a casita in the colonial town of Guanajuato, is the Mexican people: a proud, diverse group of 130 million who embrace family, food and fiestas. Not to mention the colours (those aquas, oranges and pinks) and the distinctly delightful din – mariachi and fireworks, horns and bells – that will resonate long after your departure.

Things to do in Mexico

It’s easy to tailor your trip around your interests, be

they cultural, outdoorsy or culinary. First-time visitors should consider the following.

Cultural attractions

With 35 Unesco World Heritage sites, Mexico’s official cultural landmarks are many – and they feel magical. My personal favorites include the cities of Guanajuato and San Miguel in Guanajuato state, the Mayan ruins of Palenque in Chiapas, Chichén-Itzá and Uxmal in Yucatán and Calakmul in Campeche. Alternative itinerary items include visiting the decorative Franciscan Missions in the Biosfera Sierra Gorda, Querétaro and the agave fields in Jalisco. There, you can learn about the process of making mezcal and tequila. In Mexico City, visit La

Casa Azul, home to Frida Kahlo, and take in Diego Rivera’s murals in the city’s historic center. You can find them in multiple locations: the Museo Mural Diego Rivera, the Palacio Nacional and – the best kept secret and my personal pick – the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) building, where over 100 murals illustrate Rivera’s Marxist politics. Venture to Teotihuacán, the extraordinary pre-Columbian city and massive pyramids on Mexico City’s outskirts, and make sure to leave plenty of time to wander through



want to miss the mystical-feeling cenotes that are dotted around Yucatán. A train known as El

with Bici-Burro and head to mining ghost towns around San Miguel de Allende in central Mexico.

Shopping

room in my luggage for the odd impulse buy: high-end handicrafts, beautiful textiles and folk art. Indigenous village markets, such as those



Chepe offers a breathtaking way to wind

the remarkable – and very large – Museo Nacional de Antropología. **Outdoor adventures** National parks are all over Mexico. These range from remote zones with volcanoes to cloud forests, such as Biosfera Sierra Gorda in Querétaro state. I’m a repeat visitor here. There is an extraordinary array of birdlife as well as the distinctive Franciscan monasteries. As far as Mexico’s unique natural wonders, you won’t

through the Parque Nacional Barranca del Cobre (Copper Canyon National Park). For water-lovers, Mexico’s Caribbean coast has the world’s second-largest barrier reef and is the perfect place for diving, snorkeling, kayaking and paddle-boarding. You can also dive with whale sharks at Isla Mujeres, the easternmost point in Mexico, off the coast of the Yucatán Peninsula. Cyclists, meanwhile, can hit desert tracks



Mexico City is a shopper’s delight, with options ranging from small, artsy boutiques to massive flea markets. Both Oaxaca and San Miguel are standouts, and I always leave

around San Cristóbal de las Casas, also sell fabulous traditional handicrafts alongside modern felted toys. **Food and drink** If you come expecting

the globalised version of Mexican food, you’re in for a treat. Just as the world has welcomed Mexican flavours, international fare fuses here. As for the local: each region has its own specialties, though corn, beans, avocado and seafood (on the coast) are staples. My favourites are antojitos (“little whims”), a quick-food category that includes gorditas, quesadillas and tacos. I’ve found the best way to get my head and mouth around Mexican treats is on a walking tour in Mexico City with Eat Like a Local. (I’ll spell out two perfect days in Mexico City, below). Read more about the “pay what you can” initiative spreading through Mexico City’s dining scene, here, and dive into the bustling market that serves as the “unlikely backbone of its fine-dining revolution”. If you’re a cocktail connoisseur, book an adventure on the Tequila Express, or visit the town of Tequila, home to some 25 distilleries including Jose Cuervo, near Guadalajara. In Oaxaca, mezcalerías (mezcal bars) are the trend. Local beer is served throughout Mexico, offered in both clara (light) and oscura (dark) lagers, from brands you may recognize, like Modelo, Tecate and Pacifico. For a sweet refreshment that’s family-friendly, try horchata, a non-alcoholic blend of rice milk, cinnamon and vanilla served in many restaurants and markets. **Two perfect days in Mexico City** Many visits to Mexico start or end in Mexico City. A word of advice: go slowly on the first day if you’ve just arrived from overseas;

the altitude here is 7,350 feet (2,240m) and can affect travellers. For a varied taste of D.F. (Distrito Federal), as the city is affectionately known, these ideas might help. **Where to stay in Mexico** For accommodations, Mexico covers the full budget gamut – hostels, basic guesthouses, boutique hotels, all-inclusive resorts, vacation rentals and luxury lodgings. The luxury options tend to be in larger towns and popular tourist locations only. In smaller villages, you’ll be limited to basic to mid-range hotel options. Mexico City, Oaxaca, San Miguel de Allende, Yucatán and Quintana Roo (especially in Tulum) have the largest array of luxury hotels and resorts. These range from stylish boho-chic options, like the 11-room, thatched-roof La Valise Tulum, to Mexican Brutalist design, like Otro Oaxaca. Tourist-oriented locales such as Oaxaca, Mérida, Guadalajara and San Miguel de Allende burst with boutique hotels – with options veering towards modern-minimalist as well as Mexican maximalist (folkloric art, textiles and local curios aplenty). The country also offers some wonderfully unique stays, such as jungle hideaways and cabañas on the beach. One of the most special (and I’m revealing my all-time “secret” favorite here) is Posada Corazon, located in the heart of San Miguel. The house belongs to a long-standing local family who have committed to preserving Mexican modernist architecture and its stunning wall-enclosed garden and orchard. It has six tranquil rooms, and the breakfast served here is one of Mexico’s best. says owner Cesar Arias. “We have a relationship with our visitors; it’s another kind of hospitality.” (I vouch for that). Suliis hilica is hos in vigit rei ex nonsis ori sima, viu et gra, quem ac reora es clesid sciensum. Aximum publicatium dium teamat diomde hactum nonferteris firmiao essa diem teresen dacio, C. Verectem tanum imihica que mo co

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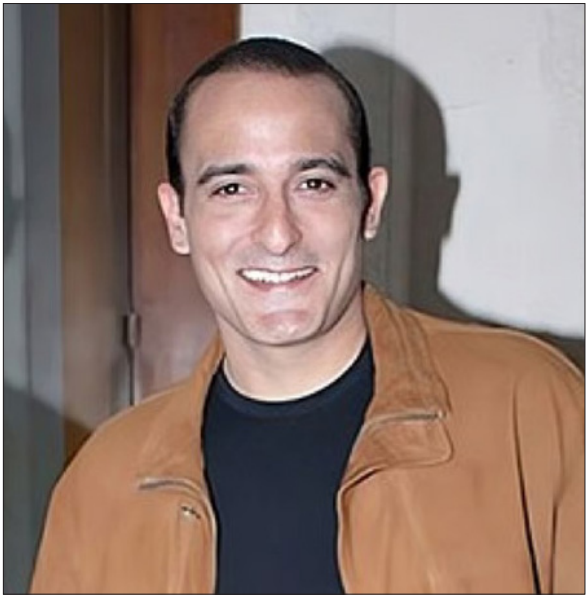
Javed Akhtar criticizes an AI video that shows him donning a skull cap



Mumbai: A number of A-listers and celebrities have voiced their opposition to the abuse of artificial intelligence. Veteran poet and playwright Javed Akhtar has denounced a deepfake video

that features him, just days after Kangana Ranaut criticized AI-generated images of her. The computer-generated bogus message that is making the rounds on the internet claims that Akhtar has “turned to God” while sporting a white headgear. Akhtar vehemently denounced the altered video, calling it “rubbish,” and threatened legal repercussions. “A fake video is in circulation showing my fake computer-generated picture with a topi on my head, claiming that ultimately I have turned to God,” he wrote in a post on X. He declared, “I am seriously considering to report this to the cyber police and ultimately drag the person responsible for this fake news, and those who forward it, to court for damaging my reputation and credibility,” indicating that he is thinking about taking legal action and intends to report the issue to the cyber police. A public person has previously voiced worries about the improper use of artificial intelligence. Actress and MP Kangana Ranaut fell prey to phony AI-generated posts a few days prior. Online, pictures and videos of her entering Parliament in a suit, shirt, and tie went viral.

Akshaye Khanna, is beaming while filming her Telugu debut, Mahakali



Mumbai: Actor Akshaye Khanna and director Puja Kolluru recently posted a selfie from the Mahakali set. Khanna makes her Telugu cinema debut. Right now, Akshaye Khanna is relishing the success of his most recent film, Dhurandhar, in which he portrayed Rehman Dakait. A fresh photo of the actor attracted attention amid the

hype. Alongside Mahakali director Puja Kolluru, he can be seen grinning his signature smile in the picture. The snapshot with Akshaye was among the photos Puja shared on Instagram, along with the caption, “Grateful 2025! You introduced me to myself and pushed me past my comfort zone.” Dhurandhar made Rs 12.40 crore on its 27th day in

theaters, which is somewhat less than Tuesday’s Rs 12.60 crore total, according to data released by Jio Studios. In India, the movie has made a total of Rs 766.90 crore. In its first week of release, the movie made Rs 218 crore, while in its second week, it made Rs 261.5 crore. With earnings of Rs 189.3 crore, collections fell in the third week. On December 5, the movie was released. The movie, which is based on actual events, shows Ranveer Singh battling some of the most dangerous militants in Pakistan. Social media users have been speculating about the characters’ true identities, but the creators have not provided any information. Ranveer’s role, which is thought to have been inspired by Major Mohit Sharma, is fictional, the Censor Board explained. Aditya Dhar was the director of Dhurandhar. Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam versions of the sequel will be available on March 19, 2026.

Tommy Lee Jones’s daughter was discovered dead in a San Francisco hotel

Mumbai: The 34-year-old daughter of seasoned Hollywood actor Tommy Lee Jones, Victoria Jones, was reportedly discovered dead in San Francisco. Victoria was reportedly discovered early on Thursday, January 1, at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. Just before three in the morning local time, the San Francisco Fire Department responded to a medical emergency at the hotel, the department confirmed to PEOPLE. One person was discovered deceased at the scene, according to officials. The same media site was also informed by the San Francisco Police Department that when officers got at the hotel, they encountered paramedics and declared an adult woman deceased. According to a police source, Victoria Jones is thought to be the dead, according to NBC Bay Area. The cause of death is yet unknown. Foul play is not suspected, according to NBC Bay



Area. Tommy Lee Jones and Kimberlea Cloughley, his ex-wife, gave birth to Victoria. Additionally, the ex-couple has a 43-year-old son named Austin Jones. In a few projects, Victoria made fleeting appearances as a kid actor. She debuted on screen alongside her father in Men in Black II. Later, she appeared in Tommy Lee Jones’ film The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada and made a cameo in the teen drama series One Tree Hill. Actor Tommy Lee Jones, 79, won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor in the film The Fugitive.

After a four-year break, BTS confirms their return on March 20



Mumbai: Popular K-pop boy band BTS is about to make their first full-fledged comeback to the music world in almost four years, which will be a huge delight for the ARMYs. The band’s reunion date was made public by BigHit Music, their agency. “March 20 Comeback Confirmed,” the post stated. BTS’s four-year sabbatical since enlisting in the nation’s required military duty will end with their March 2026 comeback. The adored K-pop artists RM, Jin, Suga, J-Hope, Jimin, V, and Jungkook have been anxiously anticipated by fans ever since. On March 20, 2026, the band will release their first album since 2022’s “Proof,” following which they put a halt to group activity. In addition to their military duties, the members worked on numerous independent initiatives. The musicians had been teasing new music since the end of their military duty. BTS vocalist Kim

Namjoon, also known as RM, even hinted at a return in a Weverse update, saying, “The music is coming out pretty nicely! Everyone is making an effort. Please anticipate it.” I think this spring will be more important than ever,” said Jungkook, adding fuel to the fire.

I therefore genuinely wish that everyone has a fun and safe spring. In June 2025, Jung Kook, Suga, RM, V, and Jimin were released from the South Korean military, several months after J-Hope and Jin. In a joint statement at the time, the musicians declared, “We’ll be releasing a new BTS album in the spring of next year... In addition to the new album, we have a world tour planned. We hope you’re as thrilled as we are about visiting fans worldwide.” But-ter, Dynamite, Stay, Fake Love, Life Goes On, and Black Swan are a few of their most well-known songs.

Dharmendra and Agastya Nanda’s Film Mints Rs 7 Crore



Mumbai: On its first day at the box office, Dharmendra’s swan song Ik- kis, which was directed by Sriram Raghavan, made a strong impression.

The figures are noteworthy because Dhurandhar, starring Ranveer Singh, is still doing well at the box office. Sacnilk, a trade tracker, reports that Ik- kis made Rs 7 crore in the home market. As the day went on, foot traffic dramatically rose, demonstrating the influence of word-of-mouth. According to Sacnilk, attendance for morning shows was 12.09%, for afternoon shows it was 35.29%, for evening concerts it was 46.77%, and for night shows it was 33.62%. The However, Ranveer Singh’s December 5 release, Dhurandhar, doesn’t appear to be slowing pace. The movie has made over Rs 750 crore in the domestic market after four weeks. “Ik- kis will most definitely not command anything like

the windfall that Dhurandhar has seen, but it is reassuring that Mumbai has not been emptied of filmmakers who will not swim with the tide and will stick to their guns (the sort that fire shots of sanity) no matter what,” wrote film critic Saibal Chatterjee, who rated the movie with 3.5 stars out of 5. Go watch Ik- kis for that and a lot of other reasons. It’s not your typical Hindi war movie.

Dharmendra’s final appearance on screen is in the film Ik- kis, directed by Sriram Raghavan. The title of the film, which is based on the life of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal and centers on the Battle of Basantar during the 1971 India-Pakistan War, alludes to the age at which Arun Khetarpal became a martyr. The Jaideep Ahlawat and Agastya Nanda play important parts in the movie alongside Dharmendra. Despite the record-breaking Dhurandhar wave, Sriram Raghavan’s war drama

Ik- kis has done well at the box office. The story of the film, which was based on the life of Arun Khetarpal, was highly anticipated, as was the fact that it was Dharmendra’s final release. All eyes are now on the weekend as Ik- kis debuted at Rs 7 crore on its first day. It is already one of the most highly regarded movies of 2026.

This movie is based on the life of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, PVC, a ferocious character previously portrayed by Varun Dhawan.

However, it appears that Agastya Nanda, a novice, was destined to play this soldier. This is a tale of bravery, conviction, and youthful passion—the type that alters history and serves as a reminder of what real bravery looks like. Ik- kis examines issues of morality, mortality, patriotism, and the strength of fresh blood that rises when the country beckons through Arun’s trip.

Drashti Dhami posts her daughter Leela’s first pictures



Mumbai: On January 1, television star Drashti Dhami finally unveiled the face of her daughter Leela. On Leela’s first birthday, the pictures provided a unique look into her personal life. Almost fourteen months after Leela’s birth, the pictures were uploaded, and they immediately garnered a lot of attention from both fans and celebrities. Dhami shared three pictures from what seemed to be a tiny, private birthday celebration on Instagram. The child, dressed in a purple dress and matching hairband, can be seen in the pictures standing next to a decorated birthday cake. Simple yet happy decorations adorn the back-

ground. The actor wrote, “Hello World!” as the caption for the pictures. Meet: Ms. Leela Khemka (sic). Fans responded to the post with love and support after this introduction struck a chord with them. The starlet revealed her pregnancy in June 2024 after getting married to businessman Neeraj Khemka in 2015. On October 22, 2024, the couple welcomed their first child. “SHE IS HERE” was their combined social media post announcing the news. October 22, 2024! (sic) Dhami has balanced her personal and professional lives while sharing sporadic glimpses of her path into motherhood since Leela’s birth. For many of her fans, who had been waiting for such an update, her choice to disclose Leela’s face on her first birthday was a momentous occasion. The actor chose a low-key approach, so the birthday party seems to have been a private event. The intimate space and modest décor emphasized how intimate the event was. Regarding her career, Drashti last appeared in the web series Duranga in 2022 and the television series Silsila Badalte Rishton Ka in 2018.

Neelima Azeem claims that having grandchildren made her happy

Mumbai: Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan’s espionage characters Tiger and Pathaan had a spectacular exchange in 2023’s Pathaan that was an overt jab at those who thought the Khan-dom period was over. The top spies (stars), who were old, bruised, and had shattered ribs, likewise appeared to consider giving up on everything before clapping back at the new generation. Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan were above all these silly games, so no names were taken—not because it would create a commotion. To begin with, they were getting close to sixty at the time. Aamir Khan, the third member of the Khan troika, and the Karan Arjun combo are both sixty years old today. The three Khans have made the decision to go all out in the upcoming year and decade at the end of 2025, just as Pathaan’s post-credit scene concludes. “Bhai, humein hee karna pade-ga. Shah Rukh Khan’s Pathaan tells Salman Khan’s Tiger, “Desh ka sawaal hai,

bachhon pe nahin chhod sakte.” Despite the recent release of “Dhurandhar,” Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, and Aamir Khan take control of Bollywood in 2026. Salman Khan’s films were review-proof long ago, and he was no longer just an actor. According to his own comments from Kick, “dil mein aate hain, samajh mein nahin,” he is a phenomenon. The actor, who turned 60 on December 27, had a difficult year in 2025. Even the most devoted bhai fans weren’t impressed by his Sikandar, which failed miserably at the movie office.

With a reported budget of Rs 200 crore, the film made Rs 176 crore, making it one of the biggest grossing Hindi films of the year despite its failure. No year in his 37 years as an actor has seen a movie without Salman Khan, regardless of the duration of the part. It won’t be any different in 2026. One of the most significant movies in the Bollywood star’s career will be shown there.



Will Smith was sued for sexual harassment

Mumbai: A tour violinist has filed a lawsuit against Hollywood actor Will Smith, claiming that the rapper and actor fired him for reporting a sexual assault while on tour. Following an altercation in March in Las Vegas during the



rapper’s Based on a True Story 2025 tour, Brian King Joseph is suing Will Smith and his business, Treyball

Studios Management, for unfairly dismissing him. During Will Smith’s tour last year, Joseph accused him of “predatory behavior” and “deliberately grooming and priming Mr. Joseph for further sexual exploitation.”

A UP doctor uses a false marriage promise to rape a nursing student

New Delhi, Jan 02: An intern physician at a government medical facility has been arrested by the police for allegedly raping a nursing student under false pretenses of marriage and threatening to release her private images. On Thursday, Deputy Commissioner of Police Vishwa-jeet Srivastava stated that efforts are being made to locate the intern physician and that his background and residences are being checked. According to him, a magistrate will hear the nursing student’s statement.

The nursing student filed a formal report (FIR) at the Qiaserbagh Police station alleging that the accused had repeatedly engaged in sexual encounters with her under the guise of marriage. According to the complaint, the

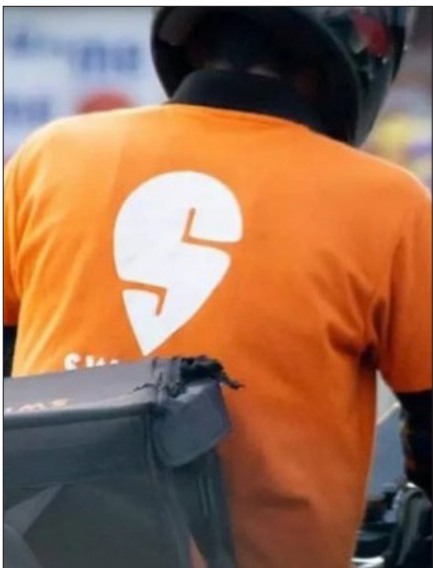


accused allegedly refused to formalize the marriage when she urged him and threatened to post her personal pictures on social media. In the last two weeks, the institute has reported two similar cases. A West Bengali physician had previously filed a complaint

against a fellow physician, claiming she was forced to convert to a different religion prior to marriage and was ensnared in a “love-jihad” plot. In that instance, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath spoke with the victim, but the perpetrator is still at large.

The center suggests that gig workers work 90 days a year

New Delhi: According to the draft rules made available for public comment by the Union labor ministry, gig and platform workers would now have to be employed by an aggregator for at least 90 days (or 120 days in the case of multiple aggregators) during a fiscal year in order to be eligible for social security benefits. The announcement, dated December 30, 2025, was sent out the day before platform and gig workers went on strike on New Year’s Eve to demand better compensation and working conditions. In order to be eligible for social security benefits set by the Center, gig and platform workers must work for an aggregator for at least 90 days within a fiscal year, according to the draft regulations. The necessary time frame rises to 120 days for those using multiple aggregators. Regardless of the amount paid, a worker is considered engaged under the regulations if they have received payment for labor completed for an aggregator on a specific calendar day. Here is a brief explanation of this regulation based on the document’s explanation: If a gig worker or platform worker receives any payment, regardless of the amount, for work completed for an aggregator on a given calendar day, they will be considered active with the aggregator for that day. The total number of engagement days will be counted cumulatively across all aggregators if a gig worker or platform worker works for several aggregators. A gig worker or platform worker will be considered engaged for three days if they work with three aggregators on the same day. The regulations also make it clear that anyone hired by an aggregator directly or through an affiliate company, holding company, subsidiary company,



limited liability partnership, or third party are qualified gig or platform workers. It stated that each qualified registered unorganized worker will receive a digital identity card with their photo and other information specified by the Central Government, while also requiring them to register on the Center’s official portal. Interestingly, the labor ministry has already started the e-Shram portal registration procedure, which acts as the country’s unorganized worker database. Registered workers can get social security benefits and be recognized using this site. Additionally, eligible unorganized workers will have to update their residence, employment, cellphone number, skill, and any other necessary information on a regular basis. According to the draft regulations, employees may lose their eligibility for social security programs if these facts are not updated.

Gautam Gambhir and Ajit Agarkar Are Chastised for Ignoring Sarfaraz Khan



New Delhi: Despite Sarfaraz Khan’s steady performances in domestic cricket, former India batsman Dilip Vengsarkar has taken aim at the Ajit Agarkar-led selec-

tion committee for consistently disregarding the Mumbai batsman. In Mumbai’s Vijay Hazare Trophy encounter against Goa in Jaipur on Wednesday, Sarfaraz hit 157 off 75 balls. With nine fours and fourteen sixes in his spectacular knock, the 28-year-old helped Mumbai surpass the 400-mark and left the Goa bowlers stunned. Vengsarkar highlighted Sarfaraz’s contributions anytime the selectors gave him an opportunity, expressing surprise at the decision to exclude him from all formats. “You know, I find it extremely perplexing that he hasn’t been selected for India in any format despite his

regular success, even for India when given the chance. In Dharamshala, I witnessed him batting alongside Devdutt Padikkal against England. It was an important meeting. They created a crucial partnership and batted brilliantly, which helped India win the Test match, according to Vengsarkar. The 69-year-old further criticized the team’s management for not providing Sarfaraz with a single chance during the 2024-2025 Australian tour, calling the choice a “real shame.” And he was not given the chance to play another Test following that (the home series against England). He was, of course, on the

Border-Gavaskar Trophy tour of Australia in 2024-2025, but he received no opportunity at all. plus he’s a skilled enough player to play in all game modes, so that truly perplexes me. Such a talent has been disregarded and overlooked. It is quite unfortunate. The former selector for India continued. Under the direction of Rohit Sharma, Sarfaraz made his Test debut in February 2024 against England at home. Since then, he has scored at a healthy 74.94 and amassed 371 runs at an average of 37.10 in six Test matches, including a century, three fifties in 11 innings, and a top score of 150.



Virat Kohli in 2026: Three Significant Turning Points in India’s History

New Delhi: 2025 was a unique year for Virat Kohli. In addition to winning the Champions Trophy with the national team, the former captain of the Indian cricket team eventually won the IPL trophy with Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB). In India’s last ODI series of the year, he scored two hundreds against South Africa to round off the year. For Kohli, 2026 has the potential to be really memorable. This year, he can accomplish three significant goals. To become the first batter in IPL history to reach 9000 runs, Virat Kohli only needs to score 339 runs in 2026. He is now the highest scorer in IPL history with 8661 runs in 259 innings. He is surpassed by Rohit Sharma (7046 runs in 267 innings). Throughout his career, Kohli has only represented one team: RCB. Kohli has scored more than 600 runs in each of the previous three IPL seasons. After Sachin Tendulkar, Kohli has the potential to become the second batsman to reach 15,000 ODI runs. The only batter to score more than 15,000 runs in ODIs is Tendulkar, who has amassed 18,426 runs in 452 ODI innings. As of right now, Kohli is the second-highest run scorer in ODI cricket with 14,557 runs in 296 innings. To attain 15,000 runs, Kohli has to score 443 runs. In his opening game of 2026 against New Zealand, Kohli can accomplish this milestone. In 623 innings (Tests + ODIs + T20Is), he has amassed 27,975 runs in international cricket.



Border-Gavaskar Trophy tour of Australia in 2024-2025, but he received no opportunity at all. plus he’s a skilled enough player to play in all game modes, so that truly perplexes me. Such a talent has been disregarded and overlooked. It is quite unfortunate. The former selector for India continued. Under the direction of Rohit Sharma, Sarfaraz made his Test debut in February 2024 against England at home. Since then, he has scored at a healthy 74.94 and amassed 371 runs at an average of 37.10 in six Test matches, including a century, three fifties in 11 innings, and a top score of 150.

In a captivating speech, Usman Khawaja confirms his retirement

New Delhi: Usman Khawaja, Australia’s first Muslim Test cricket player, said on Friday that he would retire from international cricket following the fifth and final Ashes match against England. Khawaja also took aim at what he called “racial stereotyping” during his 15-year career. When the Test begins in Sydney on Sunday, the 39-year-old will prepare for the final time, if he is chosen, putting an end to months of conjecture on his future. The elegant left-hander’s 88th Test match would mark the end of a career that started when he made his debut against England at the Sydney Cricket Ground in

2011. “Contentment is the most important emotion. I consider myself really fortunate to have represented Australia in so many games,” Khawaja remarked. “I hope I have inspired people along the way.” I’m a proud Muslim youngster from Pakistan who was informed that he would never be able to represent Australia in cricket. He continued, “Look at me now, and you can do the same.” As a young child, Khawaja moved to Australia from Islamabad, overcoming all obstacles to become the nation’s first Muslim and Pakistani-born national player. He is regarded as a role model



who paved the way for others and was formerly Australia’s only Asian first-class player.” Usman has made a huge contribution to

Australian cricket both through his outstanding achievements as one of our most stylish and resilient batters since his Test debut 15 years ago, and off field, particularly through the Usman Khawaja Foundation,” said Todd Greenberg, chief executive of Cricket Australia. “On behalf of Australian cricket I would like to thank and congratulate Usman for all he has achieved.” Khawaja’s charity provides educational support and beginning cricket programs to young people from refugee, immigrant, Indigenous, and low-income families. In Test cricket, Khawaja, a certified pilot, has amassed 6,206

runs with 16 hundreds at an average of 43.39. A year ago, he scored a career-high 232 against Sri Lanka, but he hasn’t hit three figures since. The experienced batsman has come under fire during the current Ashes series, which has been quite the rollercoaster. Travis Head, who scored a century to win the match, took his place as opener in the second innings after he hurt his back during the first Test in Perth. Khawaja was left off the squad for the third Test in Adelaide and did not play in the subsequent match at Brisbane. However, he was saved when Steve Smith withdrew due to illness shortly before the toss.

Buzz about Uttar Pradesh’s cabinet enlargement increases after the BJP names a new state chief



New Delhi, Jan 02: The long-overdue enlargement of the state council of ministers and organizational reforms are next on the party’s agenda, following the appointment of Pankaj Chaudhary as the new chief of the Uttar Pradesh BJP. These modifications are most likely to occur following the joyous Makar Sankranti celebration on January 14–15, 2026. According to party insiders, the process of political appointments to commissions, boards, and councils

will also soon start. Rampur Sadar MLA Akash Saxena, who defeated senior Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan’s nominee Asim Raza in a bypoll in December 2022, is likely to be the front-runner for a ministerial seat. Saxena is the first Hindu to be elected to the assembly seat in Rampur Sadar. More than half of the voters in this assembly segment are Muslims. The SP leader was disqualified as an MLA and given a three-year prison sentence in a hate speech case,

which made the bypoll necessary. Speculation has increased as Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently attended Saxena’s daughter’s wedding in New Delhi. This reorganization will probably result in Bhupendra Chaudhary, who resigned as the state BJP chief, returning to the state cabinet. Chaudhary served as the panchayati raj minister prior to assuming leadership as the state BJP president. Rajesh Chaudhary, a Mant MLA, is reportedly vying for a government position in this reorganization. A BJP leader stated, “Any change in the state cabinet will take into consideration the panchayat polls due early next year and 2027 assembly polls.” With the exception of the crucial position of state general secretary (organization), the party’s organizational structure is undergoing change, according to a top BJP leader. Eighteen vice presidents, seven general secretaries, sixteen state secretaries, and one treasurer make up the state BJP’s current organizational structure. In addition, six regional presidents as well as the presidents of the party’s numerous organizations (morchas) are probably going to be replaced. The party’s organization, led by new state president Pankaj Chaudhary, will welcome new members and those who have held the position for a number of years may be granted additional responsibilities.

A car crash in Faridabad ends friends’ New Year’s Vrindavan trip

New Delhi, Jan 02: In Faridabad, a Maruti Suzuki Baleno with five companions overturned after the driver lost control due to a sudden burst tire. Four people were hurt and one person died in the collision. The pals were scheduled to travel to Vrindavan on New Year’s Day when the disaster happened early on Thursday. Saransh, 25, has been named as the victim. Lakshya, Raghav, Tushar, and Yatharth are the injured. Each of the five is a graduate student who resides at Jawahar Colony in Faridabad. Films, will be released in theaters. The party departed the house at around three in the morning, according to the police. Lakshya was seated next to Saransh in the driver’s seat, while the other three were in the back. One of the car’s tires burst when it crossed the Neelam Flyover in Faridabad. The car crashed into a divider close to Bata Metro Station, lost control, struck a grill, and toppled. After the glass broke, Saransh was flung from the vehicle and had a fatal head injury. Lakshya was just slightly hurt, while the three people in the back seat were seri-



ously hurt. The injured were rescued by on-lookers who raced to the scene. They were brought to a hospital in the area. In command of the central police station According to Randhir, the police are looking into the matter and Saransh’s body was given to the family following the post-mortem.

Recent medical tests have shown “positive signs” for Damien Martyn

New Delhi: During Fox Cricket commentary on the Melbourne Renegades vs. Sydney Sixers Big Bash League match, Adam Gilchrist gave the much-needed update on Damien Martyn’s health. Martyn is receiving treatment at Gold Coast University Hospital after becoming ill on Boxing Day; his condition has been characterized as critical. Gilchrist informed viewers on Thursday that Martyn is still in the hospital and that tests conducted over the past 24 hours have shown hopeful results. He said that more information will be released when it becomes available. He remains in the hospital. More information will be released when it becomes available, but in the past 24 hours, there have been some encouraging indicators from the many tests he is undergoing, according to



Gilchrist. “There has been a lot of love and interest. A great guy and a great player. He continued, “I just hope he can continue to recover.” During the same on-air moment, Gilchrist also conveyed a message from Martyn’s family, thanking everyone who has expressed support since the former Australian batter’s sickness was made public. “On behalf of Damien Martyn, a wonderful friend and former teammate of a few of us...on behalf of his family, Amanda, his partner, thank

you to everyone for the heartfelt love and wishes and care for Damien as he’s gone through and continues to go through a challenging time,” Gilchrist added. As part of his therapy, Damien Martyn was put into an induced coma after being diagnosed with meningitis. Gilchrist’s remarks are the most lucid public update because no comprehensive medical bulletin has been made available: Although Martyn is still in the hospital, fresh testing have revealed encouraging results. The 54-year-old Martyn, who represented Australia from 1992 to 2006, was renowned for his poise and composure under duress. With 13 hundreds and a best score of 165, he amassed 4,406 runs at an average of 46.37 in 67 Test matches. He scored 5,346 runs at 40.90 in 208 ODIs games, with a high of 133 not out.

Venus Williams, 45, Receives a Wildcard to the Australian Open

New Delhi: Venus Williams, a seven-time major singles champion, became the oldest woman to compete at the season-opening Grand Slam on Friday when she was granted a wildcard to the Australian Open at the age of 45. For the first time since 2021, the American will participate in Melbourne Park’s main draw. “I’m excited to be back in Australia and looking forward to competing during the Australian summer,” Williams stated. “I’ve had so many incred-

ible memories there and I’m grateful for the opportunity to return to a place that has meant so much to my career.” Williams, who has won two US Opens and five Wimbledon titles, advanced to the Australian Open singles finals in 2003 and 2017. After returning to the circuit at the US Open last year following a 16-month hiatus, Williams, a four-time Australian Open doubles champion, will start preparing for the January 18–Feb 1 competition at the Auckland Classic next week.

Dutchman Sjoerd Marijne named chief coach of Indian women’s hockey team



New Delhi: Dutchman Sjoerd Marijne was on Friday reappointed as the chief coach of the Indian women’s hockey team, marking his return to the set-up after guiding the side to a historic fourth-place finish at

the Tokyo Olympic Games. The 51-year-old, who was associated with the Indian women’s team from 2017 to 2021, will be supported by Matias Vila as analytical coach. Vila, a former Argentina midfielder,

made his international debut in 1997 and represented his country at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and the 2004 Athens Olympics. He has been involved in coaching for over two decades Also returning to the Indian

hockey set-up is Wayne Lombard, who will serve as scientific advisor and head of athletic performance. He will be supported by Rodet Yila and Ciara Yila, both in the role of scientific advisor. “It’s great to be back. After 4.5 years, I return with fresh energy and a clear vision to support the team’s growth and help the players achieve their full potential on the world stage,” said Marijne, under whose tenure India broke into the top 10 of the world rankings, in a release.

Marijne’s first big challenge as chief coach will be the Women’s World Cup Qualifiers in Hyderabad, Telangana from March 8 to 14. Marijne will arrive in India on January 14, while the National Coaching Camp begins on January 19 in SAI, Bengaluru. “We welcome Sjoerd Marijne, and the entire support staff to the Indian Hockey family,” Hockey India President Dr Dilip Tirkey said. “We extend our gratitude to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) and Sports Authority of India (SAI) for expediting the appointment in order to ensure the team’s preparations for the upcoming World Cup Qualifiers is not hampered.”

“Emphasis has a been laid on fitness of the team which was one of the key reasons for Indian Women’s historic performance in Tokyo.

Real Madrid star Kylian Mbappé sidelined with knee injury

Estimated Recovery: 21 days



Paris: Real Madrid forward Kylian Mbappé has injured his left knee, the Spanish club said on Wednesday. Madrid said in a brief statement the France superstar had been diagnosed with a sprain but did not provide a timeline for his recovery.

French sports daily newspaper L’Equipe said Mbappé would be unavailable for at least three weeks, without quoting a source. L’Equipe added that Mbappé had been suffering for several weeks from an issue with the lateral ligament in his knee, and an MRI carried out on Wednesday morning revealed a lesion that requires treatment

and rest. The striker has been in great form. Earlier this month, Mbappé scored his 59th goal for Madrid in 2025, tying the club record for the most in a year held by Cristiano Ronaldo.

The former Paris Saint-Germain player, who joined Madrid in the summer of 2024, has scored 29 times for Madrid this season, including a league-leading 18. Mbappé was at Africa Cup of Nations games between host Morocco and Mali on Friday and Cameroon vs. Ivory Coast on Sunday. Madrid’s next game is on Sunday against Real Betis in La Liga.

Chess wars: Defiant Kramnik sues FIDE for defamation in Swiss civil court

New Delhi: Russian chess great Vladimir Kramnik has sued world chess governing body FIDE for defamation in a Swiss civil court after he became the subject of an inquiry for allegedly harassing players with “unsubstantiated” cheating claims following the death of American Grandmaster Daniel Naroditsky. Kramnik posted on ‘X’ that he has been forced to take the legal route after being relentlessly attacked by fellow players and FIDE, whose CEO Emil Sutovsky described Kramnik’s allegations of cheating against Naroditsky as “appalling and outright shameful”. The exact cause of 29-year-old Naroditsky’s death is not known but in his last livestream, he talked about being under immense mental stress over the allegations levelled by Kramnik.

Czech Grandmaster David Navara has also claimed to have felt distressed and suicidal due to Kramnik’s online cheating charge against him. The defiant Russian has, however, maintained that he has not spoken without basis. “I have initiated formal legal proceedings against FIDE in accordance with Swiss law in the Court of Lausanne. Under the applicable Swiss procedural rules, an obligatory preliminary procedure must first take place. This phase typically lasts 2-3 months,” the former world champion said Russia’s Vladimir Kramnik Former world chess champion may face discipline for treatment of Daniel Naroditsk “The specific legal provisions of the Swiss Code on which the claim is based, as well as the exact amount of financial compensation sought from FIDE, will be finalized and specified by my legal team immediately



prior to filing the main claim. “Additionally, a formal request for the preservation of evidence has been personally delivered to the FIDE headquarters today,” he added.

Kramnik said a request has been submitted to ensure that all documents, correspondence, electronic records, and any other evidence relevant to the ongoing legal proceedings against FIDE are “properly preserved and not altered, deleted, destroyed, or otherwise made unavailable. “I will provide further details in due course as the proceedings advance,” he said.

Lambasting the players critical of him, a group which also includes world number one Magnus Carlsen and some prominent Indians like Nihal

Sarin who accused him of being responsible for Naroditsky’s death, Kramnik said, “Several players have publicly named and shamed me. “None have shown the integrity to apologise or retract their statements, instead ignoring the evidence that I provided in response.” Kramnik also asserted that his legal claim was not in response to the body’s ethics inquiry against him. “The upcoming court case has little relation to FIDE’s complaint to the Ethics Commission (it merely adds points), my legal claims go far beyond the scope of this FIDE action,” he said. FIDE opened an ethics inquiry against Kramnik, citing a two-year “pattern of conduct” that hurt players’ dignity.

Venus Williams is back at the Australian Open five years after her last appearance, 28 after her first

Melbourne: Seven-time Grand Slam singles champion Venus Williams has received a wild-card entry for the Australian Open beginning Jan. 18 in Melbourne. The tournament said Friday that the 45-year-old Williams would make a return to Melbourne Park 28 years after her first appearance. In 1998, she defeated her younger sister Serena in the second round before losing in the quarterfinals to fellow American Lindsay Davenport.

Venus had announced in November that she would play in Auckland, New Zealand, where she also received a wild card, two weeks before the Australian Open. The Australian Open said Williams was also entered to play a tournament in Hobart, Australia a week later and just before play begins at Melbourne Park. She last appeared in Melbourne in 2021 and has finished runner-up in

the women’s singles twice, losing to Serena in the finals in 2003 and 2017. “I’m excited to be back in Australia and looking forward to competing during the Australian summer,” Williams said. “I’ve had so many incredible memories there, and I’m grateful for the opportunity to return to a place that has meant so much to my career.” Williams’ record at Melbourne Park is 52 wins and 21 losses. This year will be the 22nd time she has appeared in the main draw.

The tournament said Williams is set to become the oldest woman to compete in an Australian Open main draw, surpassing the record previously held by Japan’s Kimiko Date, who was 44 when she lost in the first round at Melbourne Park in 2015. In late December, Williams married Danish-born model and actor Andrea Preti at Palm Beach, Florida.



Pakistan-born Australian Khawaja, set to retire from cricket, criticizes racial stereotypes



Sydney: Veteran Australia batter Usman Khawaja has announced he will retire from international cricket after the fifth

Ashes test beginning Sunday at the Sydney Cricket Ground. He didn’t go quietly. The Pakistan-born Khawaja, who was

the first Muslim to play for Australia, used his retirement announcement Friday to criticize the “racial” stereotyping he experienced during his career. It will be the 39-year-old Khawaja’s 88th and final test — played at the ground where he began his first-class career. Khawaja scored his first Ashes century at the SCG with 171 against England in 2018.

It was also at that the SCG where he revived his career at age 35, scoring two centuries against England. That prompted one of the great late-career revivals, as Khawaja hit seven centuries in his next two years back in the side. But Khawaja’s position had come under scrutiny and criticism this season after being unable to open in the first Ashes test in Perth due to back spasms and then missing the Brisbane test with the injury.

He was then initially left out in Adelaide until Steve Smith’s vertigo allowed Khawaja to return, before an 82 in the first innings there ensured he would stay in the side for the fourth test in Melbourne. Australia, with a 3-1 lead going into the fifth test, has retained the Ashes. Khawaja said he felt he was treated “a little bit different, even to now,” because of his Pakistan and Muslim background. “Different in the way I’ve been treated, different in how things have happened,” he said at a media conference in Sydney. “I had back spasms, it was something I couldn’t control. The way the media and the past players came out and attacked me . . . I copped it for about five days straight. Everyone was piling in. “Once the racial stereotypes came in, of me being lazy, it was things I’ve dealt with my whole life. Pakistani, West Indian, colored players... we’re selfish, we only care about ourselves, we don’t care about the team, we don’t train hard enough.”

Khawaja was criticized in the days leading up to the Perth match for golfing twice and not taking part in an optional training session. Some commentators suggested the golf might have been responsible for his back issues. “I can give you countless number of guys who have played golf the day before a match and have been injured, but you guys haven’t said a thing,” Khawaja told the assembled media. “I can give you even more examples of guys who have had 15 schooners (large glasses of beer) the night before a game and have then been injured, but no one said a word because they were just being ‘Aussie larrikins,’ they were just being lads. But when I get injured, everyone went at my credibility and who I am as a person. Khawaja said he knew the end of his career was imminent. “I guess moving into this series, I had an inkling this would be the last series,” he said. “I’m glad I can go out on my own terms.” Khawaja has scored 6,206 runs at an average of 43.49 in his 87 tests with 16 centuries and 28 half-centuries.

“Usman has made a huge contribution to Australian cricket both through his outstanding achievements as one of our most stylish and resilient batters . . . and off field, particularly through the Usman Khawaja Foundation,” Cricket Australia chief executive Todd Greenberg said in a statement “Usman has been one of Australia’s most reliable opening batters and testament to his success was him being named ICC test cricketer of the year the same season that Australia won the World Test Championship (in 2023).” Khawaja said his No. 1 emotion on announcing his retirement was “contentment.” “I’m very lucky to have played so many games for Australia the way I have,” Khawaja said.