

In Brief

Strengthen cyber security

Agartala: Tripura has achieved a significant milestone in power sector cybersecurity by becoming the first northeastern state to obtain the ISO/IEC 27001:2022 certification for its State Load Dispatch Centre. Announced by Power Minister Ratan Lal Nath, this certification focuses on information security management systems and is mandated for all SLDCs in India to address increasing cyber threats to critical power infrastructure. Following a System Surveillance Audit and rectification of various non-conformities, the certification was awarded by the Ministry of IT. Nath emphasized the centrality of the power sector to the state's development, highlighting ongoing modernization efforts including online load management, digital consumer services, and plans to lay underground power cables in Agartala for improved infrastructure reliability.

Chief justice of Meghalaya High Court

Shillong: Justice Revati Prashant Mohite Dere will become the new chief justice of the Meghalaya High Court following a presidential appointment on January 1, 2026. Currently a judge at the Bombay High Court, she will replace the outgoing chief justice, Soumen Sen, who is being transferred to the Kerala High Court. This appointment is part of a larger judicial reshuffle impacting various high courts, with notifications issued by the Department of Justice under the Ministry of Law and Justice. The reshuffle also includes Justice Sangam Kumar Sahoo, who has been appointed chief justice of the Patna High Court.

Congress prepares the third stage of public outreach

Guwahati: The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee will commence the third phase of its outreach campaign, Rajjor Podulit Rajjor Congress, focusing on collecting voter feedback in areas such as employment, education, healthcare, agriculture, and governance to inform its 2026 manifesto. Coordinated by a committee led by Pradyut Bordoloi, five teams will simultaneously traverse various regions of Assam, with a regrouping event in Guwahati on January 10, aiming to consolidate input from trade unions and civil society organizations. All teams are scheduled to regroup in Guwahati on January 10 for a culmination programme that will bring together representatives of trade unions, professional bodies, civil society organisations and sectoral groups for consolidated consultations.

AIUDF leader opposes Nagaon eviction drive

Nagaon: A major eviction drive in the Jamunamukh Maudanga Reserved Forest area of Nagaon district, initiated by the Doboka administration on January 2, aims to reclaim nearly 6,000 bighas of illegally occupied forest land, affecting about 1,250 families. The operation has faced political resistance, particularly from AIUDF leader Bilal Uddin, who has attempted to obstruct the process. Tensions rose with heavy police presence as local protests began. Officials have stated that the eviction is necessary for protecting forest land and is being conducted legally, with measures in place to ensure safety and order during the operation.

Tezpur University crisis

Tezpur: Students, teachers, and staff at Tezpur University have welcomed the Ministry of Education's decision to establish an enquiry committee regarding ongoing protests and allegations against Vice-Chancellor Shambhu Nath Singh. The committee, formed on January 1, is tasked with reviewing the situation within three months. Stakeholders emphasized their commitment to ongoing agitation until justice is assured. Concerns about administrative irregularities and disrespect towards cultural figures triggered sustained protests, which included a recent 24-hour hunger strike.

Assam education minister visits a Tiwa Autonomous Council function in Morigaon

Announces Rs 1 Cr grant

Guwahati, Jan 04: Assam Education Minister Dr. Ranaj Pegu attended a program at the Tiwa Autonomous Council headquarters in Morigaon, where statues of Indraching Deuri, who is considered the father of the Tiwa people, and Raja Bir Jongal Balhu, a symbol of the courage and bravery of the Tiwa community, were unveiled. The event, which took place on the second day of the New Year, satisfied a long-standing request from the Tiwa Autonomous Council. In conjunction with the unveiling of the statue and the laying of the foundation stone for a new auditorium on council property, a large public gathering was arranged. Dr. Pegu, Tiwa Autonomous Council Chief Executive Member Jiban Chandra Konwar, Morigaon District Commissioner Anamika Tewari, former chief executive member and current

council member Pravan Man-ta, Zila Parishad President Pranati Kalita Deka, Tiwa Rajdarbar President Jursing Bordoloi, Mayor Jugesh Tamuli, and other council officials, Tiwa kings, and representatives from various regions attended the public meeting after the unveiling. Numerous Tiwa community members from throughout the area and beyond also took part in the event. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Pegu spoke on issues concerning the Tiwa community and reiterated the state government's commitment to the development of the Tiwa Autonomous Council.

He also laid the foundation stone for the proposed auditorium and announced a grant of Rs 1 crore for its modern and improved construction. Speaking to the media on the sidelines of the event, the minister said the objective of



the government was to maintain unity among the people of Assam and ensure harmony among different communities.

He said there was no animosity, conflict, or protest among communities in the state, attributing this to the policies

and approach of the NDA government. Officials said the programme highlighted the cultural heritage of the Tiwa

community and underscored efforts to strengthen institutional infrastructure for its development.

Guwahati NIA court has sentenced a Hizbul conspirator to life in prison

Guwahati, Jan 04: A special court in Guwahati sentenced Md. Kamruj Zaman, the main suspect in a Hizbul Mujahideen conspiracy case connected to Assam, to life in prison after finding him guilty of organizing terrorist acts intended to instill fear in the populace. After considering the National Investigation Agency's case, the court sentenced Zaman, also known as Dr. Hurairah and Kamaruddin, to three different terms of simple imprisonment, the most severe of which was life in jail. Every sentence will run simultaneously.

According to Section 18 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, Zaman received a life sentence. Additionally, he was given two more five-year sentences under Section 38 of the Act and Section 18B of the Act read with Section 120B of the Indian Penal Code.

Each offense was fined ₹5,000 by the court, and failure to pay will result in an extra three months in jail. The case concerns an effort by Zaman to establish a local branch of the outlawed Hizbul Mujahideen in the Ja-



munamukh area of the Hojai district in 2017-18. According to investigators, the plan was created to enlist young people from the area and carry out terrorist acts in Assam. According to the NIA, Zaman had recruited several individuals, including Sahnawaz Alom, Saidul Alam and Omar Faruk. The agency filed its chargesheet in March 2019 against five accused.

Alom, Alam and Faruk were earlier convicted after pleading guilty, while another accused, Jaynal Uddin, died due to illness during the trial. The verdict marks a major conclusion to the long-running case registered as RC-08/2018/NIA-GUW, which authorities described as a serious attempt to expand militant networks in the state.

In Dima Hasao, cars transporting illicit timber were set on fire

Guwahati, Jan 04: Following a serious incident at Chesko hamlet, around 16 km from Umrangso, the forest mafia's persistent presence in Dima Hasao district has once again come under scrutiny, raising concerns about the safety of the area's delicate environment.

Authorities said that unidentified miscreants in the region set fire to a truck and a Gypsy car. The Forest Department and police only learned about the incident after it happened, even though it happened the day before yesterday.

According to reports, the vehicle was transporting suspicious lumber that was allegedly obtained illegally from adjacent forest regions. The fire totally destroyed both cars.

The Forest Department has registered an FIR at Umrangso Police Station in connection with the incident. Officials said that neither of the vehicles bore registration number plates, and no individual has so far come forward to claim ownership. Significantly, the incident occurred within a reserved forest area, pointing towards organised illegal activities. Forest officials said the



episode strongly suggests that forest mafia operations remain active in Dima Hasao despite enforcement efforts.

However, the identities of those who set the vehicles on fire and the ownership of the vehicles involved are yet to be ascertained.

An investigation is currently underway to identify those responsible and to determine the source of the timber, as authorities seek to curb illegal logging and protect the district's forest resources.

East Siang in Arunachal celebrates Donyi Polo Day



Itanagar, Jan 04: Donyi Polo Day was celebrated with enthusiasm by the Adi community and other Tani tribes in Arunachal Pradesh's East Siang district, organized by the Central Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang (CDPYK). The event showcased traditional prayers and rituals honoring Donyi (the Sun) and Polo (the Moon), pivotal symbols of life and guidance. Elders and

youths were recognized for their contributions to Donyi Poloism, which officially gained recognition as a religion in 1986. President Tajom Tasung emphasized the day's historical significance as a celebration of identity, cultural pride, and the community's connection to nature, reinforcing their commitment to preserving their indigenous religion and heritage.

Pre-feasibility studies are supported by the Komkar village in Arunachal



Itanagar, Jan 04: By signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the state government on December 30, the people of Komkar village in the Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh formally expressed their overwhelming support for the creation of the project's Pre-Feasibility Report (PFR), which is a significant boost to the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP). With the approval of 245 of the 257 households in Komkar village, the Memorandum of Understanding was signed, indicating a 95% agreement to carry out PFR-related research for the

project, which the Indian government deemed to be of national importance in 2008. Chief Minister Pema Khandu, who attended virtually, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Ojing Tasing, Mariyang-Geku MLA Oni Panyang, Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta, and other high-ranking government officials were there when the deal was finalized.

The development was hailed by officials as a major step forward for the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project and as an illustration of informed consent, ongoing communication,

and community involvement. Village representatives stated that the safety and prosperity of the Adi community and the Siang belt, as well as long-term water security and national interest, were the driving forces behind their support.

Additionally, they recognized the state government's efforts to carry out comprehensive discussions and awareness campaigns regarding the project's strategic, ecological, and water-security aspects. Speaking to the crowd, Chief Minister Pema Khandu expressed gratitude to the residents of Komkar for becoming the first village in Upper Siang district to publicly endorse the PFR process.

Four villages in nearby Siang district had previously signed similar agreements. He reaffirmed that no construction activity would be carried out without thorough consultations and the approval of the Project Affected Families, and he underlined that the current Memorandum of Understanding only relates to the development of the Pre-Feasibility Report.

In order to guarantee ecological flow and regional water security, Khandu also highlighted new hydrological issues pertaining to the Siang River, such as the potential for decreased or redirected water flow as a result of upstream activities.

All government and provincialised schools in Kamrup metro to stay closed for a week due to cold wave

Guwahati, Jan 04: Guwahati is currently experiencing a spell of very cold weather, and because of this, all government and provincialised schools in the Kamrup (Metropolitan) district will remain closed for one week starting from December 31, 2025. The decision has been taken by the district education authorities to ensure the safety and well-being of school students during the severe cold conditions being reported across the city. Officials said the order was issued on December 30 af-

ter the district administration reviewed the weather situation. The advisory came from the Office of the District Elementary Education Officer-cum-District Mission Coordinator under Samagra Shiksha, Kamrup (Metro). The decision was also approved by the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup (Metropolitan) district before being formally notified to the schools concerned. According to the order, the closure will remain in force from December 31, 2025, to January 6, 2026.

Schools are expected to reopen after this period. However, officials have also mentioned that the reopening date may be reviewed again if the cold wave continues or if fresh instructions are issued by the administration. Education authorities have asked all school heads to make sure that students, parents, teachers, and other staff members are properly informed about the week-long closure. Schools have also been instructed not to conduct any academic, co-curricular, or extra-cur-

ricular activities during this period. This includes outdoor activities, school functions, or any form of student gathering on the school premises. Officials said the decision was taken keeping in mind the fact that children may be more vulnerable to health complications caused by prolonged exposure to cold weather. The administration also felt that many students come from distant areas early in the morning, when temperatures are at their lowest, which increases health risks.

Naga People's Front is concerned about assaults on religious liberty



Kohima, Jan 04: The Naga People's Front (NPF) has emphasized significant political achievements as 2025 comes to an end while voicing concern over recent events that have affected religious peace in several regions of the nation. The party reiterated its commitment to the welfare and interests of the Naga people in a year-end press release from its central offices in Kohima, stating that it was heartened by consistent development despite obstacles. One of the year's biggest highlights, according to the NPF, was the merger with the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP), which has improved unity and stability in governance and strengthened regional politics. The Naga public, religious authorities, civil society organizations, and well-wishers were thanked by the party for their unwavering support, prayers, and advice. Simultaneously, the NPF expressed displeasure over persistent unhappiness among the Naga people after US-based

As 2025 draws to a close, the Naga People's Front (NPF) has highlighted key political milestones while expressing concern over recent incidents affecting religious harmony in different parts of the country.

preacher Rev. Franklin Graham was denied a visa for a planned trip to Nagaland. The party also mentioned recent events that it said had alarmed the Christian community, such as reported interruptions of church services and damage of Christmas decorations in multiple states.

The NPF called for prompt and appropriate action by the relevant authorities to protect religious freedom and foster peace and harmony among various communities, characterizing such instances as delicate and against the constitutional spirit of secularism, mutual respect, and freedom of faith. The NPF also welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation in a Christmas service, expressing hope that it reflects genuine respect for all faiths along with sincere efforts to protect religious freedom across the country. Looking ahead to 2026, the party renewed its pledge to serve the people with dedication, honesty, and integrity, while extending New Year greetings with the hope that the coming year ushers in peace, unity, and progress.

The Rs 1.58-Cr bridge in Sribhumi, Assam, has stopped

Guwahati, Jan 04: A bridge project sanctioned at a cost of over Rs 1.58 crore in Assam's Sribhumi district remains incomplete even after a year, triggering public outrage and protests in the area. The bridge, located in Raipur under the Ramkrishnanagar constituency, was sanctioned following long-standing demands from local residents for a permanent crossing.

The project, approved at an estimated cost of Rs 1 crore 58 lakh 18 thousand, was given to Tasip Construction Company Private Limited, a firm alleged by locals to have links with South Karimganj MLA Siddique Ahmed. Construction work began in 2024, but soon faced allegations of poor-quality work, prompting local residents to stage protests that led to the temporary suspension of the project.

Although earth-cutting work resumed after a brief halt, progress remained slow. Even after one year, not a single pillar of the bridge has been completed, residents said. Locals further alleged that the contractor has withdrawn machinery and equipment from the site without completing the work, raising concerns that the project has been abandoned.

The incomplete structure has made the route unsafe for both pedestrians and vehicles. According to residents, thousands of people use the road daily, and if the bridge is not completed before the onset of the monsoon season, nearly 5,000 people in the area could face severe difficulties. The issue has sparked widespread resentment, with locals demanding immediate intervention. Residents have appealed to the Chief Minister and the local MLA to ensure the early completion of the bridge and to take action against those responsible for the delay.

Opposition in Assam criticizes the govt over turmoil in Karbi Anglong

Alleges political conspiracy

Guwahati, Jan 04: Opposition groups in Assam claimed that the recent violence between two communities in the West Karbi Anglong district was the result of a "political conspiracy" and accused the administration of having no control over the situation. Major opposition parties sent a unified team to the central Assamese region of Kheroni, where they met the families of the victims and evaluated the damage inflicted by the turmoil. According to a statement released by the Assam Congress, the delegation claimed after the visit that the incident was the consequence of a "divide and rule" program intended to sow discord between hill and plain communities as well as among other tribes for vote-bank interests. Debabrata Saikia, the leader of the opposition, announced that the delegation would meet with the governor on December 31 to present a memorandum outlining their conclusions and demands following an immediate investigation.



The Karbi and Bihari groups in West Karbi Anglong have been at odds over claims that Hindi-speaking settlers have encroached on Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) and Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) areas in the tribal belts. In Kheroni, the situation descended into violence, resulting in over 180 injuries, including 173 security personnel, and two fatalities—one after police gunfire and the other from being burned alive inside his home. Saikia said that deaths and injuries resulted from the state government's failure to

uphold law and order. He stated that in addition to an investigation into the losses brought on by the violence and sufficient relief for those impacted, the opposition will demand compensation in accordance with standards for the families of the dead and injured. Saikia criticized the BJP, claiming that despite significant violence in Assam, the party has not taken any significant action although seeking President's Rule over small occurrences in West Bengal. He claimed that the BJP-ruled Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and the administration head-

ed by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had failed to manage the situation. Leaders from the Congress, CPI(M), Rajior Dal, Assam Jatiya Parishad, and CPI(ML) Liberation made up the combined delegation. The violence came after Karbi agitators went on a 15-day hunger strike to demand that alleged illegal settlers—mostly from Bihar—be removed from VGR and PGR holdings in the districts of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong. On December 22, the situation worsened as police removed three demonstrators from the agitation site in the wee hours of the morning. The administration later stated that this action was necessary for their hospitalization. Given the worsening circumstances, an Army column, usually consisting of 60 to 80 soldiers, was sent in to conduct flag marches in the regions impacted by the violence in an effort to bring about normalcy.

Invoking the heritage of U Woh Kiang Nangbah, the Jaiñtia National Council demands a united front to defend rights and land

Shillong, Jan 04: The Jaiñtia National Council (JNC) on December 30, commemorated the 163rd martyrdom anniversary of legendary freedom fighter U Woh Kiang Nangbah, renewing calls for unity to protect Jaiñtia land, culture and traditional institutions. Members of the JNC gathered at the Kiang Nangbah memorial stone in Khliehriat, where the freedom fighter was executed by British colonial forces in 1862.

Leaders and members from the JNC Central Executive Committee, along with representatives from various zones, units and circles, paid floral tributes and honoured his legacy. Addressing the gathering, JNC President Sambormi Lyngdoh drew parallels between the colonial era and present-day challenges faced by the Jaiñtia community. He said the struggle led by U Woh Kiang Nangbah continues to resonate as Jaiñtia land and customary rights face renewed threats. Recalling historical events, Lyngdoh said that British authorities had misled village elders and Dollois during Nangbah's time, undermining Jaiñtia traditions and governance systems. He referred to the historic assembly of Ka Ri ki Khat-ar Dolloi at Nartiang Elaka as a turning point that gave rise to Nangbah's resistance. Lyngdoh also cited the symbolic episode of Nangbah emerging from the Myntdu River holding a sacred leaf, which he described as a call for unity among the people. "The message was clear, unity in vision, strength and principles is essential to protect our communities," he said. The JNC president alleged that similar patterns of deception continue today, accusing outside forces and certain authorities of attempting to appropriate ancestral land through industrial projects, mining activities and alleged encroachments.

He claimed such developments threatening historical events, Lyngdoh said that British authorities had misled village elders and Dollois during Nangbah's time, undermining Jaiñtia traditions and governance systems. He referred to the historic assembly of Ka Ri ki Khat-ar Dolloi at Nartiang Elaka as a turning point that gave rise to Nangbah's resistance. Lyngdoh also cited the symbolic episode of Nangbah emerging from the Myntdu River holding a sacred leaf, which he described as a call for unity among the people. "The message was clear, unity in vision, strength and principles is essential to protect our communities," he said. The JNC president alleged that similar patterns of deception continue today, accusing outside forces and certain authorities of attempting to appropriate ancestral land through industrial projects, mining activities and alleged encroachments.



en the Sixth Schedule protections enjoyed by the region. Calling for unity, Lyngdoh urged Jaiñtia people to remain vigilant and resist divisive forces. He said the organisation would continue to stand firm in safeguarding Jaiñtia land culture and identity, drawing inspiration from U Woh Kiang Nangbah's sacrifice. The programme concluded with renewed pledges by JNC members to uphold the legacy of the freedom fighter and strengthen collective efforts to defend traditional rights.

The Supreme Court is being urged to classify racial slurs as hate crimes after a student from Tripura died

New Delhi, Jan 04: Following the death of Anjel Chakma, a 24-year-old MBA student from Tripura who died from injuries sustained during an alleged racially motivated assault in Dehradun, a public interest lawsuit has been filed with the Supreme Court. More than two weeks after being stabbed during an altercation on December 9 in the Selaqui neighborhood of the capital of Uttarakhand, Chakma passed away from his wounds on December 26, 2025. Anoop Prakash Awasthi filed the suit under Article 32 of the Constitution, requesting court action to address the state's alleged inability to stop and resolve racial violence against residents of north-eastern India. A gang of guys allegedly targeted Chakma and his younger brother with racial slurs because of their appearance when they were shopping, according to reports.

Chakma sustained serious neck and spinal injuries that rendered him comatose during his treatment, and both brothers were assaulted and stabbed. The petition argues that there is no way for India's criminal justice system to identify racial bias as a unique aggravating factor in the early phases of an investigation. According to the plea, this leads to a practice of impunity and diminished constitutional seriousness since such offenses are treated as regular crimes.

The petition argues that the Union government has acknowledged the issue in legislative reply, citing past cases such as Nido Taniam's death in 2014 and multiple attacks on workers and students in northeastern cities. However, it asserts that there isn't a specific institutional or regulatory structure in place to deal with



violence motivated by race. The petition notes that there is no legal acknowledgment of hate crimes or racial offenses in either the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023,

or the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. There are no specific investigative procedures or victim-protection measures in place, and police are not obliged

to document bias motivation when filing FIRs. This legislative gap violates Articles 14, 15, 19, and 21 of the Constitution and undermines the constitutional value of fraternity, the petition submits. The petition requests the court to formulate comprehensive guidelines until appropriate legislation is enacted, including recognition of racial slurs as a distinct category of hate crime with prescribed punishments. It also calls for establishing a nodal agency at the Central and state levels to register and address racial crimes, alongside dedicated special police units in every district and metropolitan area. Additionally, the plea seeks directions for organising workshops, seminars, and debates in educational institutions to raise awareness and promote social harmony amongst diverse communities.

40 acres of poppy fields in the Churachandpur hills of Manipur were destroyed

Imphal, Jan 04: On December 30, 40 acres of illegal poppy farming in the Mongken area of the Thangjing hill range under Henglep Sub-Division in Manipur's Churachandpur district were destroyed as a result of a joint security and civil administration operation. In the presence of an Executive Magistrate, a team of Manipur Police, the Forest Department, and the Central Reserve Police Force conducted the operation. During the drill, six poppy pods were found at the location, according to officials. The move came after authorities demolished 35 acres of poppy farms in the hill ranges of Langkhong (Saisijang) in Kangpokpi district on December 29. One of the largest illicit cultivation sites found in the area this year was the target of that operation. During the Kangpokpi crackdown, security forces demolished 12 makeshift huts allegedly used by cultivators and destroyed materials sustaining the operation. Officials confiscated and burnt 13 bags of fertilisers, 19 bottles of Roundup herbicide and 16 bags of salt. Cultivation equipment, including spray pumps, irrigation pipes and addition-



al herbicides, was also seized and destroyed on site. No arrests were made in either operation, as the cultivators had reportedly abandoned the fields before the raids. Authorities said investigations are underway to identify those behind the plantations, while surveillance has been stepped up to prevent fresh poppy cultivation in the hill areas. Officials described the consecutive operations as a significant push against illegal opium cultivation, which continues to feed drug trafficking networks across Manipur and the wider northeastern region.

Several police officers were detained in an extortion and fictitious meth trade scheme in Aizawl

Aizawl, Jan 04: In order to extort money from drug buyers during staged raids, Aizawl police have discovered a significant criminal scheme involving serving police officials and civilians posing as Crime Investigation Department (CID) officers. The cases, which were filed at the Aizawl and Kulikawn police stations, indicate criminal conspiracy, extortion, impersonation, and continuous misuse of official position. Police claim that after receiving information from the Special Narcotics Police Station on an illicit methamphetamine sale scheduled for December 15 at the New Capital Complex graveyard road, Aizawl Police Station Case No. 559/25 was filed. In response to the information, police launched an operation and made three arrests, including two active police officers. Constables RL Remlalnghaka, Vanlalringa, and Andrew Lahremruata are among

those detained in the case, as is Lalrinngathi (35) of Venghlui, who investigators have identified as the racket's mastermind. Later on in the same case, Constable Alex Lalnunfela, another active police officer, was taken into custody. According to police investigations, the accused frequently pretended to be CID officials, carried out fictitious searches, took money from suspected drug traffickers by force, and divided the earnings among themselves. The accused allegedly acknowledged committing such things on several times while being questioned. All of the implicated police officers were suspended at away, and a number of civilian accomplices were also taken into custody. Every defendant has been placed under judicial custody. Police are investigating the alleged extortion of ₹17.4 lakh from individuals involved in an attempted drug trade near Trinity Hospital in

November in a related case filed at Kulikawn Police Station as Case No. 137/25. James Zoliana, the complainant, was also taken into custody for giving the police false information. There are five more suspects in the case, but they were granted interim bail and could not be detained. Aizawl Police Station Case No. 561/25, another related case, concerns a fictitious detonator transaction in which ₹5 lakh was purportedly extorted after the victims were apprehended by individuals pretending to be CID investigators. Police officials said the accused will face criminal prosecution under multiple sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. In addition to criminal proceedings, departmental action will be initiated against all police personnel involved. Investigations are continuing to identify any other individuals who may be linked to the racket, police added.

District Administration Concerns Road safety guidelines prior to picnic season



Guwahati, Jan 04: With the beginning of the picnic season in Assam, the District Administration has implemented a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to enhance road safety and reduce accidents during this period. Authorities have issued an advisory emphasizing the necessity of adhering to safety protocols, stressing that compliance is crucial to prevent fatalities. The SOP outlines strict measures against over-speeding by picnic-bound vehicles, leveraging speed monitoring and penalties, and enforces a zero-tolerance stance on drunk driving, including regular breath-analyzer tests and legal repercussions for offenders. Only roadworthy vehicles with valid documentation will be allowed to operate, with fitness checks conducted at key points. The SOP requires adherence to seat belt and helmet regulations enforced under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and aims to prevent overcrowding in vehicles. Drivers must receive proper warnings regarding the risks of reckless and drunken driving prior to their trips. To further minimize risks, vehicular movement will be restricted during nighttime hours and adverse weather conditions, with citizens encouraged to travel only during daylight. The administration has also announced special parking arrangements at picnic sites, ensuring vehicles are only parked in safe designated areas and preventing unauthorized parking through signage and barriers. Additional strategies include deploying mobile patrols, installing warning signs on accident-prone roads, ensuring proper lighting at vulnerable locations, and conducting regular inspections of roadside establishments to combat illicit liquor sales.

Crimes and communal violence undermine BJP government in Odisha during the tenure of Chief Minister Mohan Majhi

Bhubaneswar, Jan 04: Within eighteen months of chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi taking office, the initial excitement surrounding the establishment of the BJP's first government in Odisha after its victory in the 2024 Assembly elections has mostly subsided. A rise in crimes against women and community violence has damaged the government's reputation, revealing political and administrative weaknesses. On December 22, right-wing protesters heckled sellers selling Christmas-themed goods in Puri and demanded that they leave the temple town, which they said was exclusively



Hindu because it was Lord Jagannath's seat. This was the most recent instance of communal unrest. A few days later, on December 24, a migrant worker from Murshidabad was beaten to death in Sambalpur. On December 26, Arshad Mallik, 35, of Bengal, near Bhadrak, was attacked once more. The government hardly ever makes statements or steps in, and the majority of cases remain unregistered.

By default, the Majhi government came to power. Rebuilding public trust is its biggest problem in 2026, according to seasoned journalist Prabhu Kalyan Mohapatra. Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the swearing-in ceremony in June 2024, marking the beginning of Majhi's tenure. He later returned to introduce programs like the Subhadra Yojana for women and host important events like the Pravasi Bhara-

tiya Sammelan and Utkarsh Odisha conclave on January 28, 2025, with the goal of drawing in investment. However, this momentum was soon lost as the state reported a surge in communal violence and crimes against women. Two women were assaulted in Balasore for allegedly attempting religious conversion — an accusation that could not be proven. Churches came under attack, Muslim youths were reportedly forced to chant "Jai Shri Ram" by suspected Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal members, and even a nun was targeted in Jatni, Khurda.

Jackson Gate will be restored by the Tripura government

Agartala, Jan 04: Chief Minister Prof. Dr. Manik Saha said on December 30 that the state government has started restoring the ancient Jackson Gate, a landmark connected to the state's former royal era, in an effort to preserve Tripura's royal legacy. When the Chief Minister visited the planned gate location in Agartala, he made the announcement. Dr. Saha emphasized its historical significance and stated that the restoration project is a part of a larger endeavor to honor and revitalize Tripura's rich cultural and regal heritage. Named for Sir Francis Stanley Jackson, the governor of the Bengal Province at the time, Jackson Gate was first built in 1927 by contractor Srinivas Saha. In-



spired by the architecture of Hyderabad's Charminar, the gate was constructed over the Akhaura Canal to greet Sir Jackson at the coronation of Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur, the final Maharaja of Tripura. According to Dr. Saha, "the Jackson Gate was a symbol of royal grandeur and remains a cherished memory of Tripura's past." He pointed out that the building was destroyed in 1981 while

the Left Front was in power, supposedly to make room for bigger cars. "Unfortunately, a number of priceless memories of our royal era were lost in that process," he continued. The Chief Minister said the present government is committed to reviving not only the gate but also the historical narrative of Tripura's royal family, which ruled the state for decades and played a crucial role in its overall development.

Illegal encroachment on a cemetery next to Shahi Jama Masjid is reported by the Sambhal authorities

Lucknow, Jan 04: On Tuesday, the Sambhal administration asserted that more than two dozen unlawfully constructed homes and businesses had appeared on a Muslim cemetery next to the Shahi Jama Masjid. In response to a complaint from a Hindutva group, the district government measured the graveyard, which spans 4,780 square meters of public land, on Tuesday. Sri Kalki Sena leader Subhas Chandra Tyagi said in his complaint to Sambhal district magistrate (DM) Rajendra Pensiya that during a court-mandated survey of the mosque on November 24, 2024, the rioters threw stones at the police from these buildings. In response to a complaint, we measured



4,780 square meters of the graveyard's grounds today. Encroachment was discovered in all three of its corners. Over two dozen stores and homes have been illegally constructed on the property,

Pensiya told reporters on Tuesday. "The intruders are receiving notices from us. The case will be heard by a tehsildar's court. If the court is not pleased with their responses, we'll start a demolition campaign," he continued. During the survey, more than 1,000 police and paramilitary personnel were stationed at the location. Sambhal superintendent of police Krishna Kumar Bishnoi said: "The administration had received a complaint that some people had encroached on the graveyard land. Over 1,000 square metres of the area is in the possession of encroachers. Shops and houses are standing on the land meant exclusively for use as a graveyard in the revenue department

records." Mashhoor Mohammad, owner of a grocery shop on the graveyard land, said: "My family has owned the shop for the last 100 years. We have every detail to prove our ownership of the land where my shop is located. We hope the administration will allow us to prove our claims." Large-scale violence had broken out in front of the Shahi Jama Masjid on November 24 last year during the local court-ordered survey. The survey was meant to evaluate Hindu petitioners' claim that Mughal emperor Aurangzeb had built the mosque after demolishing a temple, and the site should therefore be handed over to Hindus. Four people had died during a clash with the police.

India disputes China's assertion that it is mediating a truce with Pakistan

New Delhi, Jan 04: Reiterating that no third party was engaged in the ceasefire decision, India has vehemently denied China's allegations that it acted as a mediator between New Delhi and Islamabad during the armed war earlier this year. India has continuously insisted that bilateral discussions between the two nations' Director General of Military Operations (DGMOs) led to the May 10 ceasefire that followed Operation Sindoor. "We have already denied such allegations. A third party has no place in bilateral disputes between India and Pakistan. The source told , "Our position has been made clear on multiple occasions in the past that the ceasefire between India and Pakistan was directly agreed upon between the DGMOs of the two countries." The move follows Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's Donald Trump-like assertion that Beijing resolved a number of international disputes, including the May stalemate between India and Pakistan. At a Tuesday event, Wang Yi stated, "Local wars and



cross-border conflicts flared up more often this year than at any time since the end of WWII." He added that China has adopted an impartial and objective approach while concentrating on treating both the symptoms and the underlying causes in an effort to "build peace that lasts." "Following this Chinese approach to

settling hotspot issues, we mediated in northern Myanmar, the Iranian nuclear issue, the tensions between Pakistan and India, the issues between Palestine and Israel, and the recent conflict between Cambodia and Thailand," stated the Chinese foreign minister. Following US President Donald Trump, China is the most recent

to assert that it put an end to India and Pakistan's military confrontation this year. Although this was China's first such assertion, Trump has made it a hundred times at press conferences, international forums, and even during meetings with foreign leaders. However, China's claim only exposes its hypocrisy as it firm-

ly backed Pakistan and allegedly provided military assistance during the three-day hostilities. It is a different matter that Chinese air defence systems came a cropper as India struck 11 military bases deep inside Pakistan at the height of the conflict. China's role has also come under scrutiny after top Army general Rahul R Singh said Beijing used the confrontation as a "live lab" and gave real-time inputs to Pakistan. "Pakistan was at the front. China was providing all possible support... In the last five years, 81% of the military hardware that Pakistan is getting is all Chinese. China is able to test its weapons against other weapons, so it's like a live lab available to them," he said at an event in Delhi. India and Pakistan were locked in a brief but intense military confrontation in May, triggered by a terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22, which claimed 26 innocent lives. India responded with Operation Sindoor, destroying nine terror camps in Pakistan.

White Owl Literature Festival 2026 in Nagaland

Kohima, Jan 04: The White Owl Literature Festival & Book Fair, which celebrates the rich literary and storytelling traditions of the Northeast from ancient oral histories to modern literature, will take place in Nagaland starting on February 5.



The White Owl, a literary institute, and Penguin Random House India are organizing the three-day festival with the theme "Celebrating Stories, Inspiring Minds." It will take place at Zone Niathu beside The Park in Chümoukedima, Nagaland, and end on February 7, 2026. Renowned author Daribha Lyndem, Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar awardee Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, actor Merenla Imsong of Paatal Lok Season 2 fame, and well-known musician Alobo Naga are just a few of the speakers on the festival's varied lineup, which aims to acknowledge the Northeast's contribution to India's literary and cultural landscape.

According to festival director Viketuno Rio, the event is still expanding as a Northeastern-based platform that welcomes viewpoints from throughout the world. "With its blend of local and national perspectives, this edition is the best representation of who we are to date," he declared. The programme will cover a wide range of subjects such as children's

reading habits, fiction and non-fiction storytelling, translation, cultural identity, mental health, podcasting, social media economies, media literacy and fake news, entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, and legacy building. One of the key highlights will be Penguin's flagship writing mentorship initiative, 'The Perfect Pitch', which invites unpublished writers from across India to submit fiction inspired by the Northeast.

Submissions will be accepted until January 10, 2026. Programme Director Deepthi Talwar, who is also Executive Editor at Penguin Random House India, said the festival brings together storytellers, translators, podcasters, academics, illustrators, and entrepreneurs, making it one of the most thoughtfully curated literary events in the region.

Tickets for the festival are available online, while school and college students will be allowed free entry upon presentation of valid identification.

Gujarat's Rs 2.36 crore job fraud led to the arrest of a bogus police officer

Gandhinagar, Jan 04: After a guy acting as a senior IPS officer was arrested for allegedly defrauding several families of Rs 2.36 crore by promising government jobs, what appeared to be a quick route into the police force in Gujarat evolved into an expensive scam. Vivek Dave has been taken into custody by the Gujarat Crime Branch in relation to the Rajkot scam, which comprised extensive impersonation, bogus assurances, and staged confidence-building techniques. According to the police, Dave collaborated with Hari Gamara, an accomplice who is presently at large. The issue was discovered after a complainant went to the police and claimed that Dave and Gamara had offered to pay Rs 50 lakh to get his son a job as a Police Sub Inspector. The family sought their money back when the son's name did not show up on the list. Dave kept Rs 1 lakh and gave back Rs 14 lakh. The complaint was contacted again a few months later with a more ambitious request. He was informed that for Rs 2.36 crore, his son may be made Deputy Superintendent of Police. The family paid Rs 1.89 crore in installments since they trusted the deal.



There was no appointment order. The family filed a police case after repeated demands resulted in the release of Rs 88 lakh, but the remaining sum was never given back. Dave went to

considerable measures to present himself as a senior police officer, according to investigators. He presented himself as a high-ranking official at social gatherings while donning a khaki outfit like that of an IPS officer. He gained credibility and attracted families to the plan because to his outfit and self-assured manner. Police suspect that a number of young people and their families were singled out with similar promises of DSP and PSI appointments, with money gathered gradually. After authorities acquired a video purportedly showing money being given to the accused, the inquiry gained impetus. The Crime Branch set up a trap and took Dave into custody based on this evidence. He is currently being questioned, with investigators examining financial trails and possible links to other victims. Efforts are ongoing to trace and arrest Hari Gamara, who is believed to have played a key role in negotiating deals and collecting funds. Police said the probe remains open, warning people against falling for claims of guaranteed government jobs in exchange for money.

Arunachal CM launches 5-day Sunrise Festival

Itanagar, Jan 04: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu inaugurated the first-ever five-day Sunrise Festival at Dong Valley on December 29. Dong, located in Anjaw district near the India-China border, is recognized as the easternmost point in India, where the first rays of sunlight hit the country. Khandu, along with Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, Arunachal East MP Tapir Gao, and local officials, highlighted the festival as a celebration of Dong's unique identity, aiming to showcase its natural beauty, indigenous culture, and potential for adventure tourism. The festival is designed



to promote sustainable tourism and generate new livelihood opportunities for the local community,

positioning Dong as a significant landmark on the global tourism map. Events during the festival

will include cultural performances, local cuisine, and various nature-based activities, all aimed at in-

creasing national and international awareness of this remote yet important region.

Assam police seize psychotropic capsules

Guwahati, Jan 04: During an overnight operation in Dhubri on December 30, Assam police detained a 24-year-old man and confiscated a shipment of psychotropic capsules, striking a blow to the region's illicit drug trade. Around 7:40 p.m., a squad from the Bislaspura Police Station conducted a raid at Gatapara (Ward No. 8) in response to a particular tip. 23 units of SENSPAS+ capsules—a drug that is frequently abused as a drug substitute—were found when officers apprehended a suspect. Police claim that all legal



procedures were followed during the search and confiscation, which took place in front of witnesses. The accused has been identified as Firdus Hoque (24), son of Nur Alom Hoque, a resident of Botertol in Dhubri district. A case has been regis-

tered under relevant sections of the law, and the accused has been taken into custody. Investigators are now probing the source of the capsules and examining whether the arrest is linked to a wider distribution network operating in the district.

Sati Sadhani



Assam Government has paid a heartfelt tribute to the legendary 16th-century Chutia queen, Birangana Sati Sadhani, celebrating her unparalleled courage, personal resolve, and ultimate sacrifice while resisting invaders, symbolizing the highest form of valor and commitment to defending Assam’s autonomy, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma emphasizing that her life exemplifies leadership, patriotism, and unwavering dedication to her people, as the queen, daughter of King Dharmadhwaipal and wife of Nitipal, emerged as a beacon of courage during a critical period of political transition in Assam’s history, steering the ancient Chutia kingdom, known for its advanced administration, cultural richness, and patronage of arts, through immense challenges with exceptional wisdom and strategic acumen, demonstrating remarkable governance, formation of a dedicated warrior squad, and effective defense tactics to protect her kingdom, while ultimately choosing the path of sacrifice over dishonor, cementing her legacy as an eternal inspiration for courage, loyalty, and feminine strength, a narrative the Assam Government has actively revived and celebrated through multiple initiatives, including the installation of grand statues such as the iconic 31-feet tall monument in Sarupathar, lifesized statues at Sati Sadhani Kalakshetra in Golaghat and other key locations, all crafted by eminent sculptors, serving as enduring reminders of her heroism and dedication, while further institutional recognition has been given through the establishment of Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya, a state university named in her honor, offering multidisciplinary courses that integrate modern educational policies with the rich cultural heritage of Assam, aiming to inspire future generations to imbibe the values of leadership, courage, and patriotism exemplified by the queen, alongside the creation of the prestigious Sati Sadhani Award for outstanding contributions in art, culture, and literature, and the observance of Sati Sadhani Divas as a state holiday, fostering awareness, community engagement, and collective pride in Assam’s historical legacy, with the Chief Minister’s #TalesOfAssam initiative highlighting lesser-known regional legends, including Sadhani’s extraordinary journey, thereby integrating the stories of Assam’s heroes into the contemporary cultural consciousness, promoting historical knowledge and civic pride, while simultaneously supporting indigenous communities through focused development funds, educational reservations, and inclusive growth policies, reflecting a holistic strategy of cultural revival and socio-economic advancement, as Sati Sadhani’s life illustrates the profound interconnection between governance, ethical leadership, and societal responsibility, with her example being invoked to educate the youth, nurture a sense of identity, and inspire resilience in the face of adversity, demonstrating how historical figures continue to shape contemporary societal values, and the tribute underscores Assam’s commitment to preserving its heritage, encouraging scholarly research, artistic expression, and public engagement in cultural narratives, ensuring that Sati Sadhani’s legacy is not only commemorated through monuments and institutional recognition but also embedded in the social, educational, and moral fabric of the state, fostering a culture of respect for past sacrifices while guiding present and future generations toward collective prosperity, unity, and an enduring appreciation of Assam’s rich historical and cultural heritage, thereby making the remembrance of Birangana Sati Sadhani a living, dynamic source of inspiration for leadership, patriotism, and the celebration of Assamese identity across all spheres of society. Assam Government’s tribute to Birangana Sati Sadhani continues to resonate deeply across the state, reflecting not only on her extraordinary valor and unwavering commitment to the Chutia kingdom but also on the broader importance of preserving Assam’s historical and cultural legacy, as Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma reiterated that Sati Sadhani’s life offers timeless lessons in leadership, ethical governance, and civic responsibility, emphasizing that her strategic foresight, personal sacrifice, and dedication to her people represent an ideal for contemporary leaders and citizens alike, while the government’s proactive initiatives, including the grand statues, educational institutions like Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya, and the Sati Sadhani Award, have collectively created a multifaceted framework that integrates history, education, culture, and social awareness into a cohesive celebration of Assam’s heritage, with these efforts further amplified through the #TalesOfAssam series, which seeks to revive and highlight regional heroes and legends, ensuring that young generations are informed of the rich historical tapestry that has shaped the state, thereby fostering a deep sense of pride, identity, and belonging, and this cultural revival is complemented by initiatives aimed at inclusive development, such as dedicated funds and educational opportunities for indigenous communities, demonstrating a holistic approach to honoring historical figures while simultaneously promoting social equity, economic progress, and cultural enrichment, as Sati Sadhani’s story exemplifies the interweaving of bravery, wisdom, and selfless service, providing a model for civic engagement, ethical decision-making, and the cultivation of resilience in facing contemporary challenges, while her iconic status continues to inspire artistic, literary, and scholarly work that explores themes of sovereignty, female empowerment, and strategic leadership, with the visual representation through statues, ceremonies, and educational programs serving as tangible reminders of her enduring influence, reinforcing the narrative that historical figures like Sati Sadhani are not mere subjects of study but living symbols of courage, morality, and vision, shaping Assam’s collective consciousness.

China ruled over Tibet and East Turkestan for 76 years

October 1 marks 76 years since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). While China showcases its power during this anniversary, regions like East Turkestan, Tibet, and Southern Mongolia endure severe oppression under what can be described as systemic colonization and genocide. The PRC’s claims of these areas being “ethnic minority regions” are dismissed as propaganda, obscuring the violent history of occupation and the denial of non-Chinese peoples’ identity and sovereignty. The so-called autonomy granted to these regions, such as the “Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region” and the

“Tibet Autonomous Region,” is a myth, imposed by force and designed to legitimize ongoing oppressive practices. In East Turkestan, millions of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples face genocide through imprisonment, enslavement, forced sterilizations, and even organ harvesting. Tibetans have similarly experienced cultural suppression, including the forced separation of children from their families to erase their identity through state-run boarding schools. Southern Mongolia suffers from forced assimilation and cultural erasure, illustrating

a pattern of manipulation and demographic control. Recent visits by Chinese President Xi Jinping to commemorate autonomy anniversaries in Tibet and East Turkestan underscored policies of “social stability,” cloaked in terms like “progress” and “modernization,” which ultimately serve to maintain the PRC’s colonial grip. In these regions, development benefits only Chinese colonists, while the local populations are marginalized and their resources siphoned off to fuel China’s military and economic ambitions.

The historical context illustrates that the PRC’s oppressive actions trace back to its inception. Following its declaration in 1949, the People’s Liberation Army invaded East Turkestan and Tibet, processes marked by coercive treaties and the dismantling of local governance. The threats posed by Chinese control extend beyond these regions, potentially destabilizing neighboring countries. International law identifies the actions of the PRC as violations, with a clear consensus that the local populations have not consented to Chinese governance, constituting crimes against humanity.

The global response has been largely passive,

with the PRC appearing confident in its continued domination. The narrative perpetuated by China about these regions’ autonomy obscures their status as occupied territories, necessitating a reframing in international discussions. It is crucial for global actors to recognize these areas as occupied nations and challenge the PRC’s framework of “autonomy,” advocating instead for the rights of the East Turkestan, Tibetan, and Southern Mongolian peoples to self-determination and independent representation. Countries neighboring these territories must recognize the implications of Chinese hegemony, as the regional security landscape is at stake. The systematic oppression occurring in these regions is not merely a domestic issue; it poses significant threats to broader global stability. As we reflect on 76 years of the PRC, the call to action is clear: the international community must denounce the practices of colonization and support the liberation of these occupied nations. The future of East Turkestan, Tibet, and Southern Mongolia depends on collective international effort towards justice and restoration of independence, ensuring that the PRC’s oppressive narrative does not go unchecked.

Poverty consumes Pakistan while generals gain weight

Pakistan’s economy is dominated by the military, which controls resources and exacerbates poverty. Recently, the World Bank reported that the poverty rate has reached 25%, revealing a crisis fueled by corruption and military excess at the expense of civilian welfare. Historically, poverty in Pakistan decreased from over 64% in 2001 to just below 22% by 2018, largely due to remittances and external aid. However, this progress has dramatically reversed in the past three years, with rising poverty attributed to inflation, natural disasters, and inadequate reforms. Militarization is evident in the national budget, where defense spending has surged, consuming nearly 15% of the federal budget, while health and education expenditures remain alarmingly low, often below 2% of GDP. This imbalance has dire consequences: nearly 40% of children suffer from malnutrition, a quarter are out of school, and those attending often fail basic literacy standards. Essential services like clean water and sanitation are lacking for many households, reflecting the deliberate neglect of citizens’ needs. Employment opportunities are predominantly informal, with severe gender and youth disparities in labor participation. This systemic neglect prioritizes military expenditures over essential services, highlighting Pakistan as a military state that prioritizes the interests of the armed forces over the populace. Pakistan’s economic difficulties are primarily attributed to misallocation of resources, with funds diverted from critical areas such as small businesses, vocational training, and rural infrastructure, instead being channeled into maintaining a vast military apparatus. The military’s commercial enterprises dominate the economy, stifling private initiative and concentrating wealth among a few elite officers, combating the notion that the extensive military presence is essential for national security. This establishment has often been implicated in harboring terrorist groups, exacerbating instability both domestically and regionally. The tragic consequences are far-reaching: funds that could improve education and healthcare are instead used to sustain networks of militancy, particularly impacting rural areas where poverty levels are significantly higher than in urban centers. Infrastructure deficits in rural Pakistan persist while government resources are allocated to military housing developments in major cities. The stark contrast between the needs of the general populace and military expenditures highlights systemic inequities, likened to modern feudalism characterized by military greed. During catastrophic events like the 2022 floods, which displaced millions, the humanitarian response was severely lacking due to corruption and mismanagement. Although substantial international aid was pledged, much of it failed to reach the needy, highlighting the military’s unchanging procurement processes amid national suffering. Additionally, reliance on foreign loans for economic sustenance has become entwined with military interests, leading to critiques that financial aid is misused to support military projects rather than fortifying the economy. The population faces the brunt of these misallocations through increasing debt, inflation, and a deteriorating financial state, compounded by a rapidly growing youth demographic that remains largely unattended, amplifying the urgency for economic reform and equitable resource distribution. Millions of young individuals in Pakistan find themselves idle and susceptible to recruitment by extremist groups or compelled to pursue perilous work abroad. The country’s brightest talents emigrate, leading to a drain of skills and ambition, which perpetuates a cycle of dependency, resentment, and instability. Social inequality is deteriorating, exemplified by the stark contrast between the privileged army and political elite, who enjoy uninterrupted electricity, private healthcare, and international education, and the majority of citizens who suffer from power outages, dysfunctional hospitals, and collapsing schools. This divide reveals that Pakistan effectively comprises two nations: one affluent and insulated, the other impoverished and marginalized. Corruption exacerbates this disparity, as the military presents itself as a patriotic entity while engaged in activities such as land grabs, dubious contracts, and industry monopolies that enrich those in uniform. Accountability is virtually absent, and civilian governments that challenge this status quo face either overthrow or coercion. Intimidation plagues judges, journalists, and activists who dare to speak out, stifling any potential for reform. The tragic reality is that Pakistan possesses fertile land, dedicated people, and significant potential, but this potential goes untapped as the state’s structure is designed to benefit the military at the expense of the populace. As long as the army dominates the budget, engages in political maneuvering, and fosters terrorism rather than countering it, poverty will only deepen. Current statistics highlight an urgent crisis: one in four citizens is impoverished, nearly 40 percent of children are malnourished, and women are excluded from economic participation. The prevalence of informal work, inflation, and crippling national debt only add to the dire situation, while the military’s power expands with land, factories, and privileges. This systemic design perpetuates a scenario where Pakistan resembles an army with an attached state rather than a state with a military. The World Bank warns that poverty is escalating in Pakistan, inequality is widening, and a social collapse is on the horizon. Without significant transformation, the downward spiral will persist. True change cannot emerge from a system entrenched in military dominance, and until Pakistan loosens the military’s grip, no reform, international aid, or developmental promises will genuinely benefit the population.

Afghan foreign minister’s Delhi visit

Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Afghan foreign minister, visited India on October 9-10, 2025, marking the first ministerial-level dialogue between the Taliban government and India since the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. This visit, coinciding with Muttaqi’s talks in Russia, is pivotal in the context of India’s diplomatic engagement with the Taliban. Although India does not officially recognize the Taliban regime, it has been engaging with Kabul for humanitarian aid and trade since 2021, including previous meetings between Indian and Taliban officials.

The significance of Muttaqi’s visit can be analyzed through several key lenses:

- **Diplomatic Ties:**** This meeting is emblematic of India’s cautious steps toward strengthening its relationship with the Taliban-led administration, signifying a potential normalization of diplomatic interactions.
- **Regional Rivalry:**** India aims to reassert its influence in Afghanistan amidst the growing presence of regional rivals, notably China and Pakistan, who are also seeking strong ties with the Taliban. By engaging diplomatically, India intends to safeguard its interests and mitigate the influence of its rivals.
- **Geopolitical and Trade Interests:**** Discussions during the visit are expected to cover significant trade agreements, particularly leveraging Iran’s Chabahar port to open a sea route for trade that circumvents Pakistan. This initiative would reduce Afghanistan’s economic dependency on Pakistan and bolster Afghanistan’s trade.
- **Security Cooperation:**** A major agenda item will be counter-terrorism efforts to ensure Afghanistan does not become a base for anti-India operations. India is particularly focused on securing guarantees from the Taliban that such activities will be prevented, especially in light of fears regarding groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).
- **Humanitarian and Developmental Assistance:**** The visit is set to enhance ongoing Indian humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, with a focus on health, food security, and education. India has been actively involved in providing scholarships and supporting various assistance programs for the Afghan populace, which gives the Taliban a pragmatic reason to cooperate in counter-terrorism efforts. Additionally, during his visit, Muttaqi is expected to address several critical security concerns from India’s perspective. These include dismantling Pakistan-based militant infrastructure within Afghanistan, ensuring Afghan territory is not used for attacks against India, and taking action against specific terrorists recognized by India and international bodies. Furthermore, India seeks assurance of intelligence cooperation to monitor and mitigate threats from militant groups. A critical aspect of India’s strategy is to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a source of “strategic depth” for Pakistan, wherein Pakistan uses Afghan territory to counter Indian influence. India is pressing for an independent foreign policy from the Taliban that does not lean towards Pakistan, reflecting a paradigm shift in the geopolitical dynamics of the region. In summary, Amir Khan Muttaqi’s visit to India embodies a significant shift in diplomatic engagement and a renewed focus on security and cooperative relations, marking an evolution in India’s approach towards the Taliban compared to its earlier stance during the 1990s. This visit symbolizes a more pragmatic and security-focused strategy aimed at navigating the complexities of regional influence and terrorism in Afghanistan.

The consequences of the H-1B visa: When collaboration and populism collide

Amid ongoing tariff disputes between the US and India, the Trump administration announced significant new restrictions and fees for H-1B visas on September 19. The administration’s rationale is that the H-1B visa program is being exploited to displace American workers by hiring lower-paid foreign labor, particularly in STEM fields within the IT sector.

This results in adverse effects on American workers’ wages and job opportunities, particularly for entry-level positions. The administration has introduced a \$100,000 annual fee for H-1B-sponsored jobs, aiming to protect American jobs and enhance national security. These changes are likely to have profound repercussions for India, the largest source of H-1B visa holders, many of whom work in prominent tech companies. The Indian government expressed concerns about the humanitarian implications for the thousands of Indian professionals and their families affected. The new rules may disrupt families, impose

high costs on employers, and create uncertainty for many professionals and students. Economically, the change could destabilize global supply chains and R&D networks, causing further challenges for the IT sector that depends on the mobility of skilled workers.

This decision aligns with Trump’s MAGA agenda but ignores the complexities of US-India long-term strategic partnerships. While it may satisfy domestic nationalist sentiments, it risks damaging bilateral relations which have been built on economic cooperation and defense technology partnerships. India, recognizing the potential disruption from these changes, seeks to maintain its sovereignty while balancing its relationships with both the US and other global powers like Russia and China.

As Beijing and Moscow strengthen ties, India’s H-1B visa issue may push it to enhance technical and trade collaborations with nations that do not align

strictly with US policies. The situation presents an opportunity for India to focus on domestic skill development and industrial reforms. Diplomatically, India might leverage public response to bolster diaspora influence in the US and reaffirm its security cooperation with Washington, despite the visa complications. However, the barriers imposed may drive talent away from the US to more inviting locations, diminishing America’s competitive edge and granting India increased diplomatic leverage. In conclusion, while the US aims to enforce stricter immigration policies, the repercussions could inadvertently weaken its strategic relations with India, a partnership pivotal to American interests in Asia. The evolving diplomatic landscape suggests India may adopt a more transactional approach to its foreign relations, emphasizing economic sovereignty and diversified partnerships where interests align and distancing itself where they do not.

ECGC encourages exporters to target a variety of markets

New Delhi: In order to shield exporters from the negative effects of US tariffs and encourage them to diversify in other markets, the state-run export credit agency ECGC Ltd. has upgraded the risk rankings of two dozen countries, significantly lowering insurance costs for Indian exporters in these regions, according to two officials. Following a review, 24 countries’ country risk ratings under short-term exports were upgraded, according to authorities who wished to remain anonymous. Short-term exports frequently require the order amount to be realized within a year. Formerly known as the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India, ECGC Ltd. sponsored exports totaling ₹8.55 lakh crore in 2024–2025, an annualized rise of more than 16.3%. Its net profit decreased 3.8% from ₹2,159 crore in FY24 to ₹2,077 crore in FY25. The development was verified by a commerce ministry’s year-end. “ECGC has undertaken a strategic review of country ratings to liberalize underwriting and encourage market diversification amid the global economic uncertainty and the likely trade disruption caused by the US tariff hike,” the statement stated. India’s merchandise exports increased by roughly 2.62% annually to \$292 billion between April and November 2025 thanks to its trade diversification policy, as exporters braved a 50% tariff in the US market. It continued, “This would help exporters, especially MSEs [micro and small enterprises], de-risk their business and explore new export destinations like Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, East Asia, and other emerging markets, thereby reducing over-exposure to markets affected by tariffs, protectionist policies, or restrictive market access.” The ECGC review has analysed those countries that are affected by the recent geopolitical events,



along with those having high potential for a mutually beneficial trade relationship with India, the officials said. Countries assessed include India’s strategic partners as well as countries with potential for trade growth, they said. The review upgraded Bhutan, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ghana, Honduras, Kenya, Liberia, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, Uruguay, Venezuela and Zambia. “In view of the increased uncertainty in the global trade landscape, it is imperative for the Indian export sector to explore and develop alternative markets, including new market destination countries... Post the upgradation in country ratings, the premium rates applicable for various ECGC policies will proportionally reduce, as the premium rates depend primarily on the country rating of the country of destination of goods,” one

of the officials said. Higher risks involve higher insurance premiums. While A1 denotes a minimal or “insignificant” risk category, A2 is low risk, B1 (moderately low risk), B2 (moderate risk), C1 (moderately high risk), C2 (high risk) and D is very high risk. According to the recent review, Malaysia, Sweden, and Uruguay have been upgraded from A2 to A1. Bhutan, Panama, Peru, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago have been classified from B1 to A2. Upgradation is two notches up in the case of Turkey, from B2 to A2. Cape Verde, Honduras, Nicaragua, Nigeria and Uganda have been moved up from B2 to B1. While Kenya and Liberia have been moved from C1 to the higher category of B2, El Salvador, Ghana, Sri Lanka and Venezuela moved up from C2 to C1. A two-notch jump from D to C1 is seen in two cases – Zambia and Eritrea. Similarly, Cameroon also moved up from the very high-risk category (D) to C2.

Hyundai India enters commercial mobility segment



Mumbai: With the introduction of its taxi offerings Prime HB (hatchback) and Prime SD (sedan) on Tuesday, Hyundai Motor India Limited (HML) expanded beyond its customary concentration on private passenger vehicles (PVs) and entered the commercial mobility category. The South Korean automaker is predicted to lose its second place by the end of 2025, and the trend coincides with increased competition in the home market. According to Vahan registrations, the carmaker is expected to fall to fourth place after Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra. Maruti Suzuki is in first place. With a focus on low operating costs, predictable maintenance, and high vehicle uptime, the Prime taxi line was created especially for fleet operators and taxi entrepreneurs. Hyundai’s 1.2-liter Kappa four-cylinder engine powers both models, with factory-installed CNG and gasoline choices. The Prime HB and Prime SD are priced by the firm at ₹5.99 lakh and ₹6.89 lakh (ex-showroom), respectively. Dealerships are accepting reservations for a nominal ₹5,000. HML said the new range combines competitive pricing with features aimed at commercial usage, including a company-fitted speed-limiting function capped at 80 kmph, six airbags, rear AC vents, power windows, rear parking sensors, and steering-mounted controls. Optional accessories such as a 9-inch touchscreen infotainment system with wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, a rear camera, and a vehicle location tracking device with panic buttons have also been introduced to meet regulatory and operational requirements for taxis. The launch assumes significance as HML looks to diversify volumes and tap into a price-sensitive, high-usage segment at a time when competition in the private PV market continues to intensify.

Vipin Kapooria, CFO of Blinkit, resigns due to increased competition in Qcom

New Delhi: One year after joining the company, Vipin Kapooria, Chief Financial Officer of Eternal-owned rapid commerce giant Blinkit, quit, according to sources on Tuesday.

According to those familiar with the situation, Kapooria, a former Flipkart executive, has “moved on” from Blinkit. Neither Blinkit nor its parent company Eternal made an official announcement about the development.

Kapooria’s resignation coincides with an increase in competitiveness in India’s e-commerce business and a few days after rival Zepto submitted preliminary documents to markets regulator



Sebi in order to raise Rs 11,000 crore through a confidential initial public offering (IPO). According to reports, Flipkart, his previous workplace, is preparing for a possible listing next year.

According to reports, Flipkart, his previous workplace, is preparing for a possible listing next year.

Five simple personal finance strategies to improve money management

New Delhi: Many people consider new beginnings and improved habits as the New Year approaches. One of the most prevalent concerns is money, but with a little preparation, it’s also one of the simplest things to improve. Complex instruments or specialized knowledge are not required. You can maintain control and feel more assured about your finances in 2026 by following a few straightforward guidelines. Instead of frightening you, a budget should direct you. Instead than keeping track of every penny, concentrate on broad categories like expenditures, savings, and necessities. Prioritize paying your fundamental expenses, such as rent, food, and bills. Maintaining a straightforward and adaptable budget is crucial. A monthly plan that you can stick to is much better than a rigid one that you quickly give up on. Your financial safety net is an emergency fund. Without taking out loans or jeopardizing long-term savings, it assists you in handling unforeseen costs like medical bills, job loss, or necessary repairs.

Aim to set aside three to six months’ worth of your typical spending in a secure account that is easily accessible. Although it might not yield large returns, it offers comfort and safeguards your other financial objectives. Debt can quietly damage your finances if left unchecked. High-interest loans and credit card dues should be cleared as early as possible. Paying only the minimum amount each month can keep you stuck in a long cycle of interest. Instead, paying more than the minimum amount can shorten the loan period and lower interest costs. Once debt is under control, your money can work better for savings and investments. You do not need large sums to start investing. Regular investing, even in small amounts, helps build wealth over time. Choose options that match your goals and comfort with risk. Avoid chasing quick returns or reacting to daily market news. Consistency and patience usually bring better results than frequent changes. Insurance is often ignored until something



goes wrong. Make sure you have adequate health and life insurance cover for your family’s needs. Check policy terms, coverage limits and renewal dates. Also, review nominee details for your bank accounts, investments and insurance policies. Keeping this information updated avoids confusion and stress for your family later. In other words, personal finance is not about being perfect. It is about making steady, sensible choices that support your life and goals. As 2026 begins, following these simple rules can help you feel more secure, reduce stress and build a stronger financial future.

India inflation likely to remain low in 2026



New Delhi: In order to target retail inflation in 2026, India is getting ready to change its CPI calculation methodology and monetary policy mandate following a year of benign price conditions brought on by lower food prices and a cut in the GST. Retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) stayed within the Reserve Bank’s comfort zone (2–6%) and is probably going to remain there for the upcoming year as well, leaving open the potential of at least one additional rate cut by the central bank in the months to come. In addition to lowering food prices, the government’s September decision to lower GST rates on roughly 400 commodities contributed to the nation’s price situation getting better. The wholesale price index (WPI), too, showed clear signs of easing of inflationary pressures through 2025. Early months recorded positive but declining WPI inflation, reflecting softening price pressures especially in food and fuel categories. By June, WPI entered deflation and the downward trend continued with negative prints in July and October. CPI, or headline inflation, started declining in November 2024, and since then it has remained in the Reserve Bank’s comfort zone (2–4 per cent) till June 2025. Thereafter, it has slipped below 2 per cent. Food inflation, which constitutes about 48 per cent of the CPI, started declining from about 6 per cent in January and entered the negative territory in June. It was at (-) 3.91 in November, according to the latest data.

Bulls are leading Copper to its longest rise since 2017

New Delhi: In a December surge driven by the possibility of increased supply chain stress, copper was poised for its longest winning streak since 2017. With optimistic sentiment demonstrating tenacity, the metal increased as much as 2.2% to \$12,493 per ton, setting it up for a tenth day of gains. Bulls predict that in order to avoid possible tariffs, more metal will be brought into the US, driving up prices for consumers. In an end-of-year rally on Monday, copper prices reached a record slightly under \$13,000 a tonne before declining. This year, futures have increased by almost 40%, marking the largest yearly increase since 2009. The increases have also been bolstered by a declining US dollar, which makes metals less expensive for buyers in other currencies. The increases have also been supported by a declining US dollar, which lowers the price of metals for buyers in other currencies. In 2025, a gauge of the US currency lost around 8%. This year, supply problems have dominated the met-



als industry, with mishaps occurring in copper mines from Chile and Indonesia to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Zinc mines have also been interrupted, and increased energy costs and supply constraints in China pose a danger to aluminum production. For copper, it’s

the threat of US import tariffs that remain the major driver, with traders shipping big volumes into American ports to get ahead of any levies. Mercuria Energy Group Ltd. warned in November that there would be an extreme shortage of the metal in the rest of the world in 2026. Copper was up 2.2% at \$12,489 a ton on the London Metal Exchange at 11:23 am in Shanghai. All other metals on the exchange rose, with nickel leading gainers on the day with a 4.1% climb to \$16,455 a ton. Iron ore futures were steady at \$105.60 a ton on the Singapore Exchange, up about 5% this year. The steel-making staple has gained ground in 2025 despite lower steel production in China and rising mine supplies.

The property market in Mumbai is performing at its best level in fourteen years

Mumbai: According to Knight Frank India, Mumbai’s housing industry performed its best in 14 years in 2025, with property registrations reaching 150,254 due to consistent end-user demand and a favorable supply-side ecosystem.

This increase was reflected in stamp duty collections, which brought in Rs 13,487 crore for the Maharashtra government, a 14-year high that highlighted high transaction volumes and rising property values. While stamp duty revenue climbed by 11%, registrations increased by 6% year over year (Yo-Y). Both new sales and resale transactions involving residential and commercial properties are included in the statistics. Through the end of the year, market momentum continued to be strong. 14,447 properties were registered in December 2025, generating stamp duty income of Rs 1,263 crore. Eighty percent of registrations during the month were for residential properties. This resulted in an 11% increase in stamp duty collections and a 16% year-over-year increase in registrations. Sequentially, stamp duty revenue jumped by 22% and registrations increased by 18% in December.



Registrations exceeded 15,000 units in December, making it the second-strongest month of the year after March and demonstrating the city’s steady housing demand. Shishir Bajjal, international partner, chairperson and managing director, Knight Frank India, said 2025 marked a steady and mature phase for Mumbai’s housing market, reflecting its resilience and depth. He noted that sustained end-user demand and a more supportive supply-side ecosystem were the key drivers, while higher stamp duty collections pointed to a gradual improvement in per-unit transaction values. Amit Jain, chairperson and managing director, Arkade Developers, noted that new construction happening across the city has led to an increase in supply, and the city has validated the same with a parallel increase in demand.

Reliance’s AI manifesto aims to increase worker productivity by ten times



dia’s economy and society. This occurs just one month after RIL, US-based Digital Realty, and Canadian joint venture partner Brookfield committed \$11 billion over five years to build one gigawatt of AI data capacity in Andhra Pradesh.

Additionally, RIL recently established AI alliances with key international tech companies like Google and Meta and established its new division, Reliance Intelligence, to develop AI solutions targeted at India.

The group’s stated resolve is to deliver “affordable AI for every Indian, to transform every aspect of the economy and life in India”, embedding AI across businesses while ensuring safety, trust and accountability. “At Reliance, we have embarked on a path to transform ourselves into an AI-native deep-tech company with advanced manufacturing capabilities,” Ambani said. He added that this draft is a guide to an action plan. The manifesto is in two parts. While the first part focuses on internal transformation, positioning AI not as a technology project but as a new way of working, the second part extends the vision to India’s broader AI transformation. The company plans to reorganise operations around

outcomes and end-to-end workflows, supported by common digital platforms and strong governance. This will have four pillars: outcomes, workflows, platforms, and governance. “I believe that just as we can drive 10x improvement in velocity, efficiency, quality, and outcomes by AI transforming our workflow, we can also achieve a 10x impact on India through our businesses and philanthropic initiatives,” Ambani pointed out. RIL employees have been invited to contribute ideas on using AI across businesses - from Jio’s 500-million-plus subscriber base and India’s largest retail network, to energy, materials, life sciences, financial services, media and philanthropy. Describing the document as a draft action guide rather than a slogan, Ambani called on all employees to submit ideas between January 10 and 26, saying the manifesto would become a shared commitment to “build a New Reliance and a New India.”

Following the Trump phone controversy, the CIA concludes that Ukraine did not target Putin’s house

Russia: According to US authorities, the CIA has concluded that Ukraine did not strike Russian President Vladimir V. Putin or one of his homes this week, refuting a claim Putin made to President Donald Trump over the phone on Monday. According to a person familiar with the situation, Trump was briefed on the discovery by CIA Director John Ratcliffe. Trump has not acknowledged the intelligence directly, but on Wednesday he shared on social media a link to an editorial in the New York Post that questioned the accuracy of his claim that he was the target of an attempt and accused Putin of obstructing a peace agreement with Ukraine. The CIA declined to comment, and the White House referred questions to Trump’s social media post. As difficult issues already seem to be impeding talks to end the war, Russia had exploited the claim to threaten to stiffen its position in



discussions. However, it has not provided any concrete proof of the alleged drone strike, which it claimed was directed at Putin’s home in the country’s rural Novgorod area. Rather, the Wall Street Journal’s earlier story on US intelligence officials’ findings supports the Ukrainians’ steadfast denial of the Russians’ accusations. In a post on social media, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine called the claim “a complete fabrication intended to justify additional attacks against Ukraine, including Kyiv, as well as Russia’s own

refusal to take necessary steps to end the war”. On Monday, even as Trump said he was angry about the purported attack, he conceded that he had no independent confirmation and that it was “possible” it had not happened. “It’s a delicate period of time,” he said. “This is not the right time. It’s one thing to be offensive because they’re offensive. It’s another thing to attack his house.” The episode came shortly after Trump and Zelensky met at Mar-a-Lago, the President’s private club and residence in Florida. The two lead-

ers appeared upbeat on Sunday after meeting, though they appeared to make little progress on two of the biggest obstacles to lasting peace: security guarantees for Ukraine against future Russian aggression and Russia’s demands for Ukraine to cede significant amounts of territory. Steve Witkoff, Trump’s special envoy, said on Wednesday that he and other senior administration officials had spoken with Rustem Umerov, a top Ukrainian national security official, and other European national security officials about their efforts to end the war. “We focused on how to move the discussions forward in a practical way on behalf of @POTUS’ peace process, including strengthening security guarantees and developing effective deconfliction mechanisms to help end the war and ensure it does not restart,” he wrote on social media, referring to Trump.

US citizens are detained in Venezuela



New Delhi: Venezuelan authorities have detained several American citizens amid increased US military operations and economic pressure against Nicolas Maduro’s government, as reported by The New York Times. The detentions, which began in September, include three dual nationals holding both Venezuelan and US passports and two Americans without direct ties to Venezuela. A US official stated that the circumstances of the arrests vary, with potential legitimate criminal charges against some detainees, while the US administration considers formally designating at least two of them as wrongfully detained. Investigations into the activities of these US citizens in Venezuela are ongoing, with some cases involving drug smuggling allegations. President Trump has justified the military escalation as essential to combat drug trafficking, defining it as part of an “armed conflict” with drug cartels, while Maduro faces narco-terrorism charges. Over recent months, the US has conducted over 30 military strikes on vessels accused of drug trafficking in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific. In a separate context, Venezuela’s government has recently released 88 individuals detained during protests following the July 2024 elections, marking a total of 187 releases in the past two weeks, which the government attributed to a comprehensive review process ordered by Maduro.

Baloch chieftain alerts S Jaishankar to a grave danger

New Delhi: In an open letter to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Baloch lawmaker Mir Yar Baloch warned that China would send military troops into Balochistan in the upcoming months, posing a “serious and imminent threat” to both India and the area. Mir Yar Baloch, a Baloch lawmaker for the Republic of Balochistan, said in a letter dated January 1, 2026, that if the “defence and freedom forces” in the area are not heeded, China may send troops there. He called such a move a “unimaginable threat” to Balochistan’s and Bharat’s future.

The letter stated that “it is conceivable that China could deploy its military forces in Balochistan within a few months if the capabilities of Balochistan’s defense and freedom forces are not further bolstered and if they continue to be overlooked as per longstanding patterns.” “The futures of both Bharat and Balochistan would be unimaginably threatened and challenged by the presence of Chinese boots on Balochistani soil without the consent of the 60 million Baloch people.” Raising concerns over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, he warned that the strategic alliance between Pakistan and China has reached what he described as the final phases of CPEC, making the situation more dangerous. He called for “tangible, reciprocal cooperation” between Bharat and Balochistan, arguing that the threats faced by both are “genuine and imminent.” Baloch highlighted what he described as centuries-old historical and cultural ties between Bharat and Balochistan. He cited sacred sites such as the Hinglaj Mata Temple (Nani Mandir) as symbols of shared heritage. The letter concluded by expressing hope for stronger collaboration between what Mir Yar Baloch described as “our two great nations.”



Trump’s 24-hour peace promise for Ukraine falls apart: Inside discussions & halted actions

Washington: Even before he took office, President Donald Trump made at least 83 promises to negotiate a 24-hour ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine during his campaign for reelection. Trump would eventually accept a harsh truth following nearly a year of agonizing on-again, off-again conversations.

“This is not a one-day process deal,” he stated on Sunday during his meeting at Mar-a-Lago with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. This is extremely difficult material. After hearing Trump’s campaign pledge, leaders in Europe and West Asia offered to mediate talks with Vladimir V. Putin, the president of Russia. Trump was keen to act quickly, but his advisors were concerned that our previous years would be repeated: A significant portion of Trump’s first term was clouded by the Russia inquiry, which included revelations that several of his advisors had communications with the Russians during the transition. Michael Waltz, Trump’s choice for national security advisor, contacted Biden aides to request a covert letter from the President allowing Trump and his team to start negotiations during the transition in order to prevent such a result. However, Biden declined, informing aides that he did not want to support a deal that Trump might negotiate with Russia at the expense of Ukraine. Steve Witkoff, a longstanding friend of Trump’s, was named Middle East ambassador. The Saudi crown prince of-



ferred to put Witkoff in touch with Kirill Dmitriev, the head of Russia’s sovereign wealth fund, as a covert intermediary to start negotiations with the Russians when he traveled to Riyadh to address the conflict in Gaza. One of Trump’s longest-serving aides, Keith Kellogg, had already been appointed special envoy for Russia and Ukraine. Trump advisers reacted negatively to Kellogg’s nomination because they thought his strategy would prolong the conflict.

Kellogg was an outspoken opponent of Putin and an advocate for Ukraine. During the transition, J.D. Vance, the Vice-President, had seeded the Pentagon with like-minded officials who believed that Ukraine was a sinking ship, that after nearly four years of war America could no longer afford to support it.

They wanted to redirect support to what they saw as a higher priority — confronting China.

Trump cautions Iran not to use violence against demonstrators

Washington: US President Donald Trump issued a warning to Iran not to use force against protesters, stating that if nonviolent demonstrators were shot and killed, the US would be “locked and loaded and ready to go.” “The United States of America will come to their rescue if Iran shoots and violently kills peaceful protesters, which is their custom,” Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social. We’re loaded, locked, and prepared to go. I appreciate you taking the time to consider this. Donald J. Trump, President Trump’s warning coincides with escalating violence during Iran’s largest protests in three years, which were brought on by deteriorating economic conditions and a precipitous decline in the value of the rial. As rioting expanded over numerous provinces, several people were killed, according to Iranian media and rights organizations. Ali Larijani, a senior adviser to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, retaliated to the warning on Friday, stating that any US meddling in Iranian rallies would cause turmoil throughout the region. His comments followed Trump’s threat that if Iran employed deadly force against peaceful protesters, Washington would step in. Iran’s largest economic hardship protests in three years have descended into violence in a number of provinces, killing numerous people. In the western province of Lorestan, protesters attacked a police station, resulting in three deaths and seventeen injuries, according to the semi-official Fars news agency. According to Fars, “the rioters entered the police headquarters around 1800 (local time), clashed with police forces, and set fire to several police cars.” Earlier, Fars and rights group Hengaw reported deaths in Lordegan city in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province. Authorities confirmed one death in the western city of Kuhdasht, while Hengaw reported another death in the central province of Isfahan. Hengaw also said a protester was shot dead on Wednesday in Isfahan province. Reuters said it could not immediately verify the reports. A separate demonstration on Wednesday night reportedly led to the death of a 21-year-old vol-



unteer in the Revolutionary Guard’s Basij force. The state-run IRNA reported the Guard member’s death without elaborating. Student News Network, which is believed to be close to the Basij, blamed demonstrators, citing comments from Saeed Pourali, a deputy governor in Lorestan province. The protests took place in the city of Kouhdasht, about 400 kilometres southwest of Tehran. Local prosecutor Kazem Nazari said 20 people were arrested after the protests and that calm had returned to the city, according to the judiciary’s Mizan news agency.

The clashes marked a significant escalation in unrest that began on Sunday, when shopkeepers protested against the government’s handling of a sharp currency slide and rapidly rising prices. Demonstrations were reported in Tehran and other major cities, as well as in provinces including Lorestan, Fars, Kermanshah, Khuzestan and Hamedan, with reports of detentions. State television said Mohammad Reza Farzin, head of Iran’s Central Bank, stepped down as protests intensified. Traders and shopkeepers rallied along Saadi Street in downtown Tehran and near the capital’s Grand Bazaar, a historic hub of political mobilisation, the Associated Press reported. The latest unrest echoes the nationwide protests of 2022 following the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Jina Amini in police custody after her detention

by Iran’s morality police over hijab rules. Iran’s civilian government under reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian has tried to signal it is open to dialogue with protesters, though Pezeshkian has acknowledged there is little he can do as the rial continues to depreciate, with one US dollar costing about 1.4 million rials. State television also reported the arrest of seven people, including five described as monarchists and two allegedly linked to European-based groups. It said security forces separately seized 100 smuggled pistols, without providing details. Authorities declared Wednesday a public holiday across much of the country, citing cold weather, a move seen as an attempt to reduce gatherings. Iran’s economy has struggled for years under US and Western sanctions, particularly since 2018, when Trump withdrew from an international nuclear agreement during his first term. Regional tensions have compounded the strain, including a 12-day air war with Israel in June, during which the United States also bombed Iranian nuclear sites. Iran has said it is no longer enriching uranium at any site, signalling openness to negotiations to ease sanctions. However, talks have yet to take place as Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have warned Tehran against reconstituting its atomic programme.

Zohran Mamdani is getting ready to become mayor of New York

New York: Zohran Mamdani, a little-known mayoral candidate, spent New Year’s Day diving into the freezing waters of Coney Island in an attempt to leverage the social media gimmick to promote his rent-freeze vow. He was so keen to increase his profile at this time last year. He undoubtedly has New York’s attention as the calendar turns again this week. Up to 40,000 people—the largest inauguration throng in decades—are anticipated to swarm City Hall on Thursday to witness his swearing in as New York’s next mayor. The city’s history books already bear witness to the unlikely ascent. The 34-year-old Democrat overthrew a Democratic dynasty by uniting youthful transplants, middle-aged bodega owners, and many others behind an ambitious affordability message with a disarming smile. His triumph quickly made him a global celebrity, as adored by fellow South Asians in Bangladesh as he was in Brooklyn, and as divisive to Jews in Tel Aviv as he was in Manhattan. Following a two-month transition sprint, he will formally become the first South Asian and Muslim mayor of America’s largest city on



Thursday. He will also be the city’s youngest mayor in almost a century and the first democratic socialist to head the center of global capitalism in decades. Even if the swearing of office will undoubtedly be accompanied by only-in-New York boosterism and fanfare, what happens next will determine whether Mamdani is remembered as a failed idealist who was quickly forgotten or as the start for a new era. He has an exceptionally clear mandate. His pledges to alleviate the escalating affordability issue that has become one of the most expensive cities in the world practically uninhabitable for many working people were a

major factor in the votes of over 1.1 million New Yorkers. Since the 1960s, no mayor has received more votes. Nevertheless, almost a million New Yorkers voted against him, and it is uncommon for a mayor to be elected who promised to accomplish so much with so few guarantees of necessary collaboration.

Mamdani, a soon-to-be former assemblyman from Queens, will be reliant on governor Kathy Hochul, a moderate from Buffalo, and the State Legislature to generate the billions of dollars in new revenue needed to fund free buses, universal government-funded child care and other promises — all at a time when Washington is slashing funding to the city and state. And as some of his predecessors have found, New York City with its eight million unruly people can sometimes seem almost ungovernable. “Until you are in one of those jobs, you don’t understand the enormity of the day-to-day needs, and the complexity of the system,” said Steven M. Cohen, a longtime ally of and former state official under former governor Andrew M. Cuomo, Mamdani’s chief election rival.

Kim Jong Un’s daughter visits the mausoleum for the first time

Pyeongyang: According to official media images released on Friday, Ju Ae, the daughter of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who is probably being trained to succeed him, went with her parents on her first public visit to the Kumsusan tomb to honor prior leaders. Over the past three years, Ju Ae has appeared more frequently in state media, which has led analysts and South Korea’s spy service to speculate that she might be the nation’s fourth-generation leader. Ju Ae’s first visit to the Kumsusan palace was seen by Cheong Seong-chang, vice president of the Sejong Institute think tank, as her father’s deliberate move ahead of the forthcoming governing party Congress, where her succession may be formalized. On January 1, Kim visited the Kumsusan Palace of the



Sun’s main hall with his wife, Ri Sol Ju, and high-ranking officials. Photos from the state news agency KCNA showed Ju Ae between her parents.

According to Hong Min, a North Korea researcher at the state-run Korea Institute for National Unification, North Korea has been depicting Kim’s “stable family” by in-

cluding Kim’s wife and daughter at significant occasions.

According to official media on Thursday, Kim Ju Ae, who is thought to have been born in the early 2010s, was present at the New Year’s festivities this year. Her first public international trip took her and her father to Beijing in September. Kim visits Kumsusan to honour

his grandfather and state founder, Kim Il Sung, and father Kim Jong Il on key dates and anniversaries in a gesture affirming the dynastic heritage of the nuclear-armed country. North Korea has never confirmed Ju Ae’s age. South Korea’s Unification Ministry spokesperson declined to comment on Ju Ae’s appearance. An official told reporters the government’s view is it is too early to say she is a successor, given her age and she does not hold an official position. Hong said potential roles of Kim’s other children have left room for caution in drawing conclusions about Ju Ae’s succession. “It’s practically impossible to publicly designate Kim Ju Ae, who is believed to have just turned 13, as the successor when she’s not even old enough to join the (Workers’) Party,” Hong said.

Ladies, use these five chic winter coat styles to increase your style ante

One of the simplest ways to transform any ordinary combination into a gorgeous one that exudes confidence and charm is with a winter coat. Even the most basic layers can be elevated with a nice coat, making you stand out. Investing in a few essential coat types may quickly update your cold-weather wardrobe, regardless of your preference for modern silhouettes or traditional tailoring. These five winter coats are practical and stylish, and they should be in your closet this year.

1. The Classic Wool Overcoat
A well-cut wool overcoat is winter’s most reliable style ally. Clean lines, structured shoulders and a



tailored fit make it suitable for workdays, evenings out, and everything in between. Neutral shades like camel, grey, black or navy ensure maximum versatility. Styling tip: Wear it over suits, dresses or even jeans and a knit — it always looks intentional

2. The Trench-Style Winter Coat
A heavier, winterised version of the trench coat offers polish without bulk. Often lined or quilted for warmth, this style balances elegance with practicality. It’s ideal for transitional weather when you want coverage without committing to a heavy puffer.

3. The Statement Puffer Coat
Once purely functional, the puffer has evolved into a fashion-forward essential. From oversized silhouettes to cropped cuts and glossy finishes, modern

puffers bring drama to winter dressing. They’re perfect for travel, casual days and unpredictable weather.

4. The Teddy or Faux-Fur Coat
Soft, cosy and undeniably stylish, teddy coats add texture and warmth without feeling heavy. They work particularly well with minimalist outfits, instantly making them look intentional and winter-ready.

5. The Longline Belted Coat
A longline belted coat creates a streamlined silhouette while offering excellent insulation. Its length adds drama and practicality, making it ideal for colder climates. This style flatters most body types and transitions seamlessly from day to night.

How even ‘home-cooked meals’ can upset your gut

Even the freshest, most carefully prepared meals can occasionally cause digestive issues, despite the fact that home-cooked meals are frequently regarded as the gold standard for healthful eating. Your digestive system may be quietly responding to anything from minor timing mistakes to obscure combinations and neglected routines.

In her November 28 Instagram post, Kolkata-based dietitian Nikita Bardia discusses frequent eating errors that could be seriously harming your digestive system, even if you only eat home-cooked meals. “I’m sorry to break it to you, but your everyday habits—the ones you believe to be “healthy”—are the source of your digestive problems, not external food,” Nikita adds. However, “80% of the clients I work with struggle because of mistakes happening inside their own kitchen,” claims Bardia.

1. Eating 3 bowls of raw salad at night
“Raw veggies at night cause bloating, gas, and morning heaviness,” says Bardia. “Your gut is least active after

sunset.”
Fix: Switch to lightly sautéed vegetables or cooked sabzi.

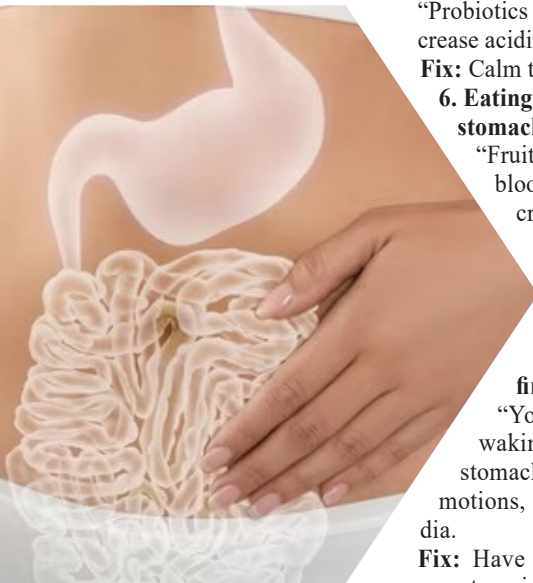
2. Eating dal, rajma, or chhole without proper soaking“Phytic acid and oligosaccharides can lead to gas and acidity,” warns Bardia. “Even homemade dal can upset digestion if prepared incorrectly.”

Fix: Soak for eight to twelve hours, discard the first boiling water, and cook with ajwain or hing.

3. Drinking water with meals
“Water dilutes digestive enzymes, which can weaken digestion and cause gas,” she explains.

Fix: Drink water twenty minutes before meals or thirty to forty-five minutes after.

4. Eating too much healthy millet
“Jowar, bajra, and ragi are great, but too



much can lead to constipation and bloating,” says Bardia. “They expand in the gut and slow digestion.”

Fix: Limit millet to two or three meals per week instead of eating it daily.

5. Overloading curd or chass when your gut is inflamed

“Probiotics on an inflamed gut can increase acidity and bloating,” she notes.

Fix: Calm the gut first, then add curd.

6. Eating fruit or oats on an empty stomach in the morning

“Fruit or oats alone can cause a blood sugar spike, digestion crash, and bloating,” says Bardia.

Fix: Pair with protein or fat, such as curd, seeds, or nuts.

7. Drinking chai or coffee first thing in the morning

“Your gut lining is delicate on waking. Caffeine on an empty stomach can lead to acidity, loose motions, and nausea,” warns Bardia.

Fix: Have a small snack first, such as nuts, raisins, or warm water with a pinch of salt.

8. Very low-fat diets

“Your gut needs fats to absorb nutrients. Low-fat can slow digestion and affect hormones,” explains Bardia.

Fix: Add one tablespoon of ghee, nuts, or seeds daily.

Hacks to manage migraine symptoms

As Christmas parties roll into New Year celebrations, the festive season brings late nights, rich food, dehydration, loud music and flashing lights - a joyful mix that can quickly turn moments of cheer into lingering discomfort for those with migraine patterns. Often dismissed as “just a bad headache”, migraines tend to flare up around this time of year, making it especially important to recognise triggers early and plan ahead to keep the celebrations pain-free. Dr. Anshu Rohatgi, Vice Chairman and Senior Consultant Neurologist at Sir Gangaram Hospital, Old Rajendra Nagar, New Delhi, with 37 years of experience in the practice, told HT Lifestyle, “The last few months of the year can be especially tough for those with migraines because several triggers overlap - stress, sleep disruption, dehydration, and sensory overload. We often see an uptick in migraine attacks around this time. Small lifestyle adjustments like staying hydrated, eating balanced meals, and taking quiet breaks between events can make a big difference in keeping symptoms under control. For those who continue to experience frequent or severe migraines, newer treatment options and preventive therapies can help reduce both the intensity and frequency of attacks.” Dr Rohatgi notes that the festive season often leads to sensory overload, exposing the body to multiple migraine triggers at the same time - including “irregular sleep schedules, skipped meals, sugary and oily foods, dehydration, flashing lights, and loud music.”According to Dr Rohatgi, even mild dehydration can spark or worsen a migraine The neurologist’s advice is to avoid skipping meals, because long gaps between meals cause blood sugar to dip, which is one of the most common migraine triggers. He highlights that sleep disruption or deprivation - whether due to late-night parties or erratic schedules - can disturb the brain’s migraine. Overstimulation due to bright lights, loud music and crowds can intensify migraine symptoms. According to the neurologist, both caffeine and alcohol act as double-edged swords for people prone to migraines, offering temporary relief in some cases while triggering or worsening symptoms in others.

Dermatologist shares things to avoid indoors for healthy skin and hair

Taking care of our skin and hair is a full-time job, especially in a world where pollution levels are always on the rise. While there are steps to take to protect ourselves before stepping outside, staying at home is not completely risk-free, according to Dr Surbhi Balani, a board-certified dermatologist and cosmetologist based in Ahmedabad. Taking to Instagram on 21 December, Dr Balani stated that our home environment “quietly affects” our skin and hair far more than any products that we may use. Even while appearing harmless, they can trigger acne, dermatitis, dullness, as well as hair fall. To avoid such consequences, she provided a checklist of nine things to completely avoid while staying indoors.

1. Fragrance-heavy room sprays and incense near skincare

Fragrance droplets settle on the products, brushes and pillowcases. This can lead to irritation, contact dermatitis and unexplained breakouts.

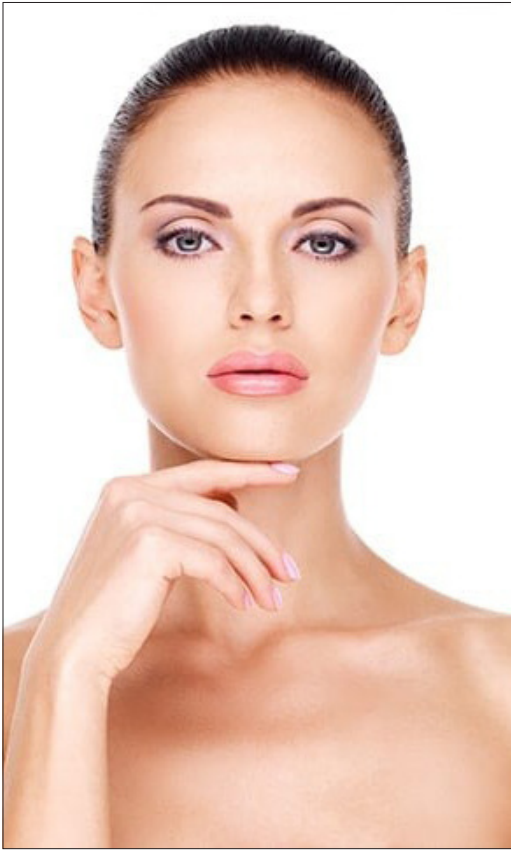
2. Bar soaps for face
The high pH value of bar soaps strips the skin barrier, worsens eczema and causes tightness. It can also trigger micro-inflammation that shows up as dull skin and body acne.

3. Extremely hot showers
Very hot showers overheat the scalp and damage the keratin in hair. This results in dandruff, frizz, increased shedding and moisture loss from head to toe.

4. DIY scrubs (sugar, salt, coffee)
They create micro-tears, worsen pigmentation and slow healing, especially around the nose, chin and arms.

5. Essential oils used directly on skin
When brought in direct contact with the skin, essential oils can cause chemical burns, allergic reactions and flare-ups in acne, rosacea or dermatitis.

7. Expired, oxidised or long-open skincare
Old Vitamin C, sunscreen or actives become ineffective or irritating and can introduce bacteria. This further causes rashes and fungal acne.



8. Rarely-washed cotton pillowcases
Pillowcases trap oil, sweat and dust. Not washing them regularly can cause acne on the cheeks, jawline and even scalp irritation.

9. Shared razors
A razor is a personal and intimate tool. Sharing the same blades spreads bacteria, fungi and viruses, causing folliculitis, razor bumps, stubborn dark spots and ingrown hair. Old or uncontrolled heating hair tools. They overheat unevenly and burn the hair cuticle, causing split ends, breakage and permanent dullness.

Why mindful parenting is the strategy that modern parents must use

Raising the most intelligent, well-behaved, and gifted child has long been a silent race. We didn’t notice it as children. However, as we become parents as adults, we start to feel the weight of that unsaid pressure. The burden of parenting a “well-rounded” child frequently results in weariness, stress, and guilt. You witness other parents planning playdates, hosting extravagant birthday celebrations, or commemorating each minor achievement. Additionally, there’s the need to offer only organic food, choose the best school, and do it all with a grin for social media. What starts out as an exciting adventure swiftly devolves into physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion, frequently leaving you agitated. The relationship you have with your child is the one that suffers the most during this process. You lose sight of the true nature of parenting when you are preoccupied with making everything flawless. Because of this, a growing number of young parents are adopting mindful parenting, which substitutes presence for pressure and connection for perfection. The concept of mindfulness—being present in the moment and conscious of your feelings without passing judgment on them—is the foundation of mindful parenting, as the name implies. When you engage with your child, mindful parenting entails being completely present and conscious, free from distraction or judgment. Instead of reacting with tension or rage, it assists parents in responding calmly. According to the doctor, this approach teaches parents to listen carefully, understand their child’s feelings, and handle challenges with patience. Further, Mimansa Singh Tanwar, clinical psychologist, Fortis Healthcare, Gurugram, adds, “It also involves developing self-awareness and self-regulation as a parent; controlling your emotions, avoiding the urge to immediately shout or react, and staying aware of how you feel in a situation. This awareness helps parents maintain emotional balance while dealing with their children’s challenges.” This is why more and more parents are turning to mindful parenting, as it helps create stronger emotional bonds, reduces conflicts, and improves communication at home. In today’s fast-paced, often stressful world, this approach allows both parents and children to stay calm, connected, and emotionally grounded. It helps kids feel more secure, confident, and understood while encouraging a home environment built on empathy, love, and respect.

The result? A more peaceful and balanced family life. Dr Shree mentions that traditional parenting styles are failing for modern families because today’s world and children are very different from the past. Earlier, strict discipline and obedience worked when life was simpler and children had fewer distractions. But now, kids are more aware, independent, and influenced by technology and social media. They need understanding, emotional support, and open communication rather than just rules and punishment. “Families now also face more stress, busy schedules, and changing roles of parents. So, if an authoritative or rigid approach is adopted, it often leads to conflict, anxiety, or rebellion. No wonder parents today are moving towards more flexible, empathetic, and mindful approaches that focus on trust, respect, and connection instead of control. On the other hand, Tanwar feels that traditional parenting styles are not failing. “What’s important to understand is that parents often use a mix of styles, and each parent brings their own personality into their approach. However, with changing times, we need to adapt and modify these styles. These shifts encourage better communication and understanding between parents and children,” she shares.

Rewriting parenting
Mindfulness is transforming the way people parent by helping them manage stress, stay emotionally balanced, and build stronger family connections. “When parents practice mindfulness, they become more aware of their thoughts and emotions, which helps them stay calm during difficult moments. This reduces shouting, anger, and guilt. Mindfulness also teaches parents to listen and respond with patience instead of reacting quickly,” explains Dr Shree. As a result, children feel more loved, respected, and safe to express their feelings. Families that practice mindfulness often experience fewer conflicts and greater understanding.

Taking a pause matters
Mindfulness encourages parents to



pause before reacting, a small but powerful habit that makes a big difference. When a child misbehaves or situations get tense, parents often respond out of anger or frustration. Taking a moment to breathe, as per Dr Shree, helps them calm down, understand their emotions, and respond more thoughtfully. This pause creates space for patience and kindness instead of yelling or punishment. It also teaches children that it’s okay to stop, breathe, and manage emotions in a healthy way. Emotional regulation is an important part of mindfulness, Tanwar goes on to add. In our fast-paced lives, where we’re constantly juggling responsibilities, it becomes essential to consciously slow down. This helps us approach daily interactions, whether in relationships or parenting, with more attention.

How mindful parenting works in real life

Dr Shree tells us, “Mindful parenting in real life means being fully present with your child, listening carefully, understanding their feelings, and responding calmly instead of reacting in anger. It looks like putting away the phone during family time, talking with patience, and showing empathy when a child is upset.” Parents who practice mindfulness try to guide, not control, their children. This approach helps children feel seen, heard, and valued. As a result, it reduces their anxiety, builds confidence, and improves emotional strength. Children learn to express their emotions better and handle stress calmly. Mindful parenting creates a safe, loving environment that supports good mental health and strengthens the emotional bond between parents and children. Mindful parenting shapes the future by raising emotionally strong, kind, and confident children. This approach also teaches problem-solving, emotional balance, and self-control, important life skills. Children who grow up in such an environment are more likely to become thoughtful adults, and better partners.

Getting it right
To get mindful parenting right, parents need to slow down and be fully present with their children. It means listening carefully, understanding emotions, and responding with patience instead of reacting quickly. Taking deep breaths or short pauses during stressful moments helps parents stay calm. Practising empathy and kindness, even when children misbehave, strengthens trust. Spending quality time without phones or distractions also builds connection. Parents should accept that mistakes will happen and focus on learning, not perfection.

Takeaway
The main idea of mindful parenting is to just be present. When you’re with your child, make sure they feel your attention, that you’re really listening, talking, and enjoying the moment together. Whether you’re playing or chatting, try not to get distracted by calls or notifications. Just focus on that time with them. It’s these moments that build a stronger bond. When you slow down and stay aware, you start to enjoy life’s little moments more, and that’s where the magic of mindful parenting really shows.

ENTERTAINMENT

Why 2026 is expected to be a pivotal year for Hindi cinema

New Delhi: 2026 is one of the most competitive years for Hindi film in recent memory thanks to a full schedule of releases, big-name actors, and a variety of mythological epics, war dramas, and franchise sequels. Trade analysts predict a robust theatrical push, with studios wagering on scale, well-known brands, and pan-Indian appeal to entice moviegoers to return. King, Ramayana, and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Love and War are a few of the films that are already generating buzz in the business, along with a number of action-packed, franchise-driven films that will be released throughout the year. King, which is directed by Siddharth Anand, has Shah Rukh Khan returning to the action genre and Suhana Khan, his daughter, making her big-screen debut. The movie, which reunites Khan and Anand following Pathaan, is produced by Red Chillies Entertainment in collaboration with Marflix Pictures and is anticipated to blend "high-octane action with emotional depth." Ramayana, which stars Yash as Ravana, Sai Pallavi as Sita, and Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Rama, is hailed as one of the biggest productions in Indian film. The movie, which is supported by Prime Focus Studios, DNEG, and Monster Mind Creations, will be released in two parts: Part 1 on Diwali 2026 and Part 2 on Diwali 2027. Hans Zimmer and A R Rahman compose the music.

“Southies invasion” into Bollywood was repelled by “Dhurandhar” Ram Gopal Varma



New Delhi: Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma praised the box office success of Aditya Dhar's spy thriller Dhurandhar, which became the highest-grossing Indian film of 2025, on Monday, saying that it had prevented the “invasion” of Bollywood by southern film studios. Varma also predicted that Dhurandhar's second installment would be an even greater success. “@adityadharfilms’ left foot, #Dhurandhar, has kicked back the fireball of the Southies invasion into Bollywood, and his right foot is already preparing #Dhurandhar 2. The Satya director wrote on Monday, “From what I saw of the second part, if the first scared them, the second will terrify them.” Jio Studios

and B62 Studios collaborated to produce Dhurandhar, which is directed by Lokesh Dhar. Since its December 5 release, the spy thriller has made more than Rs 690 crore nett in India. With this, Dhurandhar has surpassed the lifetime domestic collection of successful films, including L2: Empuraan, Coolie, Kantara: Chapter 1, and Lokah Chapter 1: Chandra. “The industry people will want to ignore a path-breaking and monstrous hit like #dhurandhar because they feel threatened by it because they can't match its standards.”As a result, they will perceive it as a nightmare that will end when they awaken in their own movies, Varma wrote on X.

The biggest box office failures of 2025 were “Sikandar” & “War 2”

New Delhi: Even though 2025 produced some incredible hits like Dhurandhar and Saiyaara, some of the biggest names in the business, like Salman Khan and Hrithik Roshan, had a terrible year. Some of the biggest movies of the year were ruined by poor storylines, excessive violence, and subpar cinematography. Look at it. Sikandar had high hopes for it. Following two unimpressive box office performances, Salman Khan's fame had suffered. For the first time since Ghajini in 2008, A.R. Murugadoss was directing a Hindi action film with a “Khan.” The production scale was also massive. All the buzz, and a holiday release during Eid ensured the film gets a decent opening. But Sikandar soon lost momentum as mixed reviews and weak word of mouth caught up with it. Reportedly made on a Rs 200 crore budget, the film even failed to break even. Kangana Ranaut's Emergency was mired in controversy from the very beginning. The film's release was postponed several times, Kangana's controversial comments about the farmer's protests riled up sections of the society in the run up to the release. And when the film finally reached theatres, it hardly had any takers. Despite Kangana wearing multiple hats and tackling a politically-charged subject, audiences stayed away. With collections failing to even recover half its budget, Emergency proved once again that controversy alone cannot sustain a film at



the box office. War 2, one of the most anticipated movies of 2025, had all the makings of a successful movie. A fantastic cast, a director fresh off another successful movie, and a beloved property. But the audience's expectations were not fulfilled by War 2. The sequel failed to replicate the cultural and commercial impact of its predecessor, despite well-executed action spectacles. Viewers remarked that the lengthy runtime was draining, the plot was extremely shallow, and the majority of the scenes seemed staged and produced in front of a green screen. Sequels frequently attempt to capitalize on nostalgia when they have little to offer a series. Son of Sardaar 2

was an example of this. The movie's formulaic plot, weak comedy, and widespread misogyny made it difficult for viewers to relate to it, and they had little incentive to spend money on a sequel that lacked the original's novelty. Since the third installment, the Baaghi franchise has been displaying signs of weariness, and Baaghi 4 confirmed this. Despite the franchise's well-known fast-paced action and Tiger Shroff's physical skills, viewers appeared to have moved on. Some spectators even expressed dissatisfaction over the movie's attempt to profit from the animal frenzy (i.e., gore and violence) without providing much in return.

Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna decide to get married in Udaipur

New Delhi: Two well-known stars from the Telugu cinema industry, Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda, are getting ready for their February 2026 wedding. The ceremony is scheduled for February 26 at a heritage palace in Udaipur, Rajasthan. Following months of unverified allegations and a private engagement earlier in the year, there has been growing conjecture. According to reports, the couple decided to have their wedding at a remote, traditional royal location in Udaipur. Their preference for privacy is maintained by the expectation that only close family members and loved ones will be present. Plans for a celebration in Hyderabad or a reception for friends from the film business have not been officially announced. A day af-



ter Dasara, on October 3, the pair allegedly get engaged at Vijay's Hyderabad home. Neither Rashmika nor Vijay made any public remarks or published any pictures from the engagement ceremony, which was kept completely secret. Instead of making a statement on their own, news of their engagement came via media outlets. In an interview with The Hollywood Reporter India,

Rashmika Mandanna was questioned regarding the persistent rumors of her impending marriage. “I don't want to confirm or deny the marriage,” she stated. I'll just say that we will talk about it when it's appropriate. Since they initially collaborated on the movie Geetha Govindam and then Dear Comrade, the couple's relationship has been closely watched by the public. Over

time, their bond has strengthened, though they have largely chosen to keep their personal lives away from media attention. Rashmika publicly acknowledged Vijay's support during the success meet of her recently released film The Girlfriend in Hyderabad. She stated, “Viju, you've been a part of this film since the beginning... and you're a part of the success of the film... You've been a part of this whole journey so personally. I can just hope that everyone has a Vijay Deverakonda in their lives because that's a blessing.” To date, there has been no official statement from either family con- firming the wedding, and both families have maintained a low profile. Fans and media continue to rely on reports for information regarding the upcoming wedding ceremony.

According to Forbes, Beyonce becomes a billionaire and enters the most exclusive group in music

New Delhi: There are a ton of reasons to celebrate Beyonce's official entry into the most elite club in music. The worldwide celebrity is now the fifth musician in history to reach the billionaire status, according to Forbes. She is now on the same exclusive list as Rihanna, Bruce Springsteen, Taylor Swift, and her husband, Jay-Z. The accomplishment is proof of Beyonce's long game, which is based on ownership, vision, and unrelenting reinvention in addition to chart-topping successes. Her domination has been particularly difficult to overlook in recent years. Her 2024 country album Cowboy Carter served as the foundation for what eventually became the highest-grossing concert tour in history, and the Renaissance World Tour alone brought in about \$600 million in 2023. Beyonce created Parkwood Entertainment in 2008, and it has



been a significant factor in her financial success. In order to maintain more control over earnings, Parkwood frequently fronts production costs while managing her career and producing her songs, documentaries, and live performances, as Forbes points out. According to Forbes estimates, Parkwood produced the Cowboy Carter Tour, which brought in over \$400 million from ticket sales and an extra \$50 million from merchandising. Beyonce was able to negotiate far larger

margins by producing the tour internally. Forbes predicts that she earned \$148 million before taxes in 2025 from her music catalogue and brand agreements, making her the third-highest paid singer globally. Touring, however, is just one piece of Beyonce's billion-dollar puzzle. The singer reportedly earned around \$60 million for her 2019 Netflix documentary Homecoming: A Film by Beyonce. In 2024, she also bagged an estimated \$50 million for her headline-making halftime performance during Netflix's first-ever Christmas Day NFL game. Her business acumen extends to cinema as well. Beyonce produced a concert film of her Renaissance World Tour and chose to distribute it directly through AMC. The move paid off, with the film earning nearly half of its \$44 million global box office gross directly for her.

Performers who returned to prominence this year
Rajat Bedi, Gaurav Gera and more

New Delhi: Bollywood has an odd tendency to write off stars far too soon. They are everywhere one minute and disappear the next—not because their talent dried up, but rather because the spotlight shifted. Even though these performers occasionally make spectacular comebacks, many of them returned in 2025 with significant roles. Strong roles that inform viewers of exactly what they were lacking—no frantic reinventions. These actors demonstrated that time away from the spotlight can occasionally sharpen the art through modest, impactful turns and scene-stealing performances. Here are few performers that made a comeback to the entertainment industry with dhamaakedar roles as we get ready to say goodbye to 2025. After the early 2000s, **Rajat Bedi** (The Ba****ds of Bollywood) Rajat Bedi mainly disappeared from mainstream cinema, however he was always recognized as Hrithik Roshan's vicious nemesis in Koi Mil Gaya. His current role in the Bollywood thriller The Ba****ds of Bollywood, directed by Aryan Khan, has solidified his return to prominence. Bedi's performance was notable for his powerful on-screen presence rather than being a nostalgic comeback. His commanding physique brought back memories of his previous parts, but it was his understated but powerful performance that won him international acclaim and solidified his position on screen. **Gaurav Gera** (Dhurandhar) Comedian-actor Gaurav Gera, who is well-known to millions for creating the viral character Shopkeeper, stunned many with his most recent role in the Ranveer Singh film Dhurandhar. Everything about him was amazing, from his unrecognizable appearance to his acting. Social media often overshadowed his acting roots. However, Dhurandhar gave him a chance to show his best. After a brief dull period, his return through a layered role in the film proved he is far more than just a punchline generator. **Genelia D'Souza** (Sitaare Zameen Par) With her absence from mainstream cinema for some time, Genelia D'Souza's return was anything



but loud, and that's precisely what worked. With her performance alongside Aamir Khan in Sitaare Zameen Par, she added an emotional quotient to her character, which simply worked in her favour. Genelia played the crucial role of Sunita, a strong woman in a troubled marriage with the protagonist Gulshan (Aamir). Her character demanded depth and a mature perspective, and it provided a refreshing contrast to Gulshan. The film marked her return to Hindi cinema after a 13-year hiatus, and she was pleasantly surprised by the immense love and positive response from audiences for her performance. **Bhasha Sumbli** (Baramulla) It is worth mentioning Bhasha Sumbli's comeback after years out of the public eye. The actor gave yet another masterful performance in the Netflix movie Baramulla alongside Manav Kaul, following her stirring role in Vivek Agnihotri's The Kashmir Files. In the compelling movie, Sumbli plays Gulnar Sayyed, a distressed wife and mother in a story set in Kashmir that reveals historical tragedy and family secrets. The role, which was deeply ingrained in her own history, turned out to be a really intimate

and rewarding creative experience for the performer. Her performance of Gulnar, a Kashmiri woman, has received a lot of praise for her quiet intensity and emotional depth. It serves as the focal point of a movie that combines politics, criminality, and mystical elements against the backdrop of Baramulla. **Ram Kapoor** (Jolly LLB 3) It would be unimaginable to exclude Ram Kapoor while discussing actors who had a significant comeback. Ram Kapoor's comeback in a strong role has been nothing short of a revelation for his devoted fan base. After being stereotyped as the dependable TV hero, Kapoor shocked viewers by radically changing his appearance and career. His advocacy role in Jolly LLB 3 was outstanding. Not only did his recent performances demonstrate dramatic weight, but they also demonstrated a willingness to challenge his perception as a small-screen actor. Their comeback amply demonstrates that these actors trusted their art and waited for the perfect roles rather than chasing trends or power. Their experiences show that moving forward doesn't automatically equate to falling behind.

Sunidhi Chauhan: How India's Beyonce Era is being driven by a music star from the 1990s

New Delhi: Sunidhi Chauhan continues to be the defining voice behind all of these Desi Girls, both then and now, even if Aishwarya Rai will always be hailed as the golden girl of Crazy Kiya Re and Katrina Kaif will always be Bollywood's perennially seductive Sheela. Maybe more so now than in the past. Sunidhi is experiencing an intriguing, potent comeback after recording her debut Hindi playback song with Ruki Ruki Thi Zindagi (Mast) in 1999. She may be found everywhere: in news headlines, in your Instagram feed, in a friend's viral YouTube video, and—above all—in public discourse. It has an indisputably joyous quality: a hint of the familiar that all of a sudden feels completely new, like rediscovering a music that you were unaware had influenced you as a child. The extent to which Sunidhi Chauhan has taken over the Indian live music scene is remarkable. This is not to downplay the fact that the nation has produced and still produces singers that are incredibly successful, some of whom are even more well-known abroad. However, Sunidhi's current live performance seems unique. Beyond your typical success, this is authorship. At a time when the business itself is gradually shifting toward a concert economy, she is redefining what an Indian concert may look and feel like while looking for futures beyond playback singing. If you will, this is Sunidhi's moment in the making. She doesn't use any theatrics, forced banter, or audience interaction gimmicks when she takes the stage because she knows exactly who she is. Just conviction, command, and voice. Emotion and talent working together. She has always been a vocalist with incredible range and instinct, an institution of technique. But today, her presence also exudes a clear authority. If the comparison is to be drawn, it has taken her more than 20 years to reach this point as a rock star in the purest sense and to usher in India's Beyonce era—not as imitation, but as equality in control, endurance, and self-belief. What makes this moment particularly resonant is who Sunidhi is allowed to be on stage



now. In an industry that has long framed female performers through youth, novelty, or nostalgia, her concerts resist easy categorisation. She isn't being reintroduced or rebranded. Nearly three decades into her career, Sunidhi is not being remembered or celebrated as the Goddess who shaped up Bollywood music scene of the late '90s or the 2000s. Her success is being curated live -- being designed in her 40s. What is she doing exactly? She's simply exercising power -- over her voice, her body, her audience, and the space she occupies. There's no apology in that dominance. She's not afraid to look bold, no need to soften her presence. The authority feels earned and unapologetically present. Earlier this month, when Sunidhi brought the house down in Mumbai, comedian and writer Rohan Joshi, who attended the concert, summed up the experience in a widely shared social media post. “Some performers show up, others perform. Sunidhi Chauhan straight up unleashed the hounds,” he wrote, adding, “This wasn't a greatest hits show from an artist resting on her laurels. It was an electrifying romp through a career by a master operating at peak performance.”

In the Cleanest City of Indore, three people die & over sixty become ill after drinking tainted water

Indore, Jan 04: In Indore, recognized as the cleanest city in India, a serious public health incident occurred when three individuals died and over 60 were hospitalized due to contaminated drinking water in the Bhagirathpura area during the past week. This situation has instigated widespread panic among residents and elicited an urgent response from both district administration and health authorities. Notably, a 70-year-old man, Nandlal Pal, was admitted to Verma Hospital on December 28 with acute symptoms of severe vomiting and diarrhoea, eventually suffering a cardiac arrest. Family members and residents believe his condition worsened following the consumption of contaminated water sourced for the area. Reports indicate that by Tuesday evening, around 20 patients remained hospitalized at Verma Hospital, with additional patients receiving care at Triveni Hospital. In just one week, nearly 150 residents of Bhagirathpura reported distressing symptoms including vomiting, loose motions, and abdominal pain. In response to this health crisis, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav promptly took notice and mandated an investigation into the contamination source, alongside ensuring medical treatment for those affected. Local MLA Kailash Vijayvargiya visited the hospital to meet patients, offering assurances that treatment costs would be covered by the government and costs already borne would be reimbursed. Early investigations pointed to possible contamination stemming from ongoing excavation activities in the area, which could have caused leakage in the water supply lines or introduced pollutants from an overhead tank. The locality receives its water from the Narmada River. The incident has prompted protests led by the Congress party. In a follow-up, Indore Municipal Corporation Commissioner Dilip Kumar Yadav surveyed the impacted area and convened a meeting with Public Health Engineering Department officials to assess the crisis.

Man United falters against Wolves, who are in last place, while Arsenal finishes 2025 on top

New Delhi: In the race for the Premier League title, Arsenal sent a clear statement on Tuesday night when they destroyed third-place Aston Villa 4-1 at the Emirates Stadium to secure the top spot at the end of 2025. Villa entered the match on an 11-match winning streak across all competitions, thus the Gunners were behind in momentum. However, Arsenal’s performance drew attention and demonstrated their title credentials. After a close first half, the scoring surge began with a well-timed goal by Gabriel Magalhes early in the second half. A few minutes later, Martin Zubimendi extended the lead, giving Arsenal more momentum. Just minutes after taking the field, substitute Gabriel Jesus added a fourth goal, highlighting Arsenal’s depth and attacking flexibility. Leandro Trossard’s calm goal made it 3-0. Ollie Watkins gave Villa a late consolation, but it was essentially a footnote to the hosts’ overwhelming evening. There is much more to the victory than just the score. As the year came to a finish, Arsenal led the Premier League by five points, five points ahead of second-place Manchester City and six ahead of Villa. Importantly, this outcome



the emphatic nature of Arsenal’s victory will likely resonate across the title race discussions over the winter period. While Arsenal were celebrating, Manchester United endured another frustrating evening at Old Trafford, drawing 1-1 with bottom-placed Wolverhampton Wanderers. What should have been a straightforward home victory instead quickly became a statistic United will want to forget, days after a 1-0 win over Newcastle. The result was particularly embarrassing given Wolves’ position; the Midlands side are at rock-bottom of the Premier League and had managed only a handful of points all season. That they could take a point from Old Trafford not only denied United valuable ground in the race for Champions League qualification but also sparked discontent from supporters, with boos heard at full time.

Jack Draper withdraws from the 2026 Australian Open

New Delhi: Due to a prolonged ailment to his left arm, British tennis star Jack Draper has decided not to compete in the 2025 Australian Open. The 22-year-old disappointed his supporters and left a berth free in the men’s singles draw by announcing the decision in a statement prior to his planned first-round encounter in Melbourne. Due to injuries, Draper has only participated in one game since Wimbledon. He chose to stop his season early after withdrawing from his August US Open second-round match. He lost to Marin Cilic at Wimbledon in July, which was his most recent court appearance. Draper’s preparation for the Australian Open has been hampered by the injury, which initially happened in 2024 and has affected his left shoulder and arm. The young British man tried his hardest to get back to full fitness, but he was unable to do it in time for the competition. “I’m gutted to announce that I’ll be unable to compete in this year’s Australian Open,” Draper wrote on social media. I’ve been making a lot of effort to return to the court following my injury, but after talking with my team and physicians, we’ve determined that it’s best to give myself enough time



to heal. My health comes first, but I was incredibly excited to compete in Melbourne. Draper’s withdrawal is a significant setback for both the player and his supporters. The rising star had been expected to make a strong showing at the Australian Open, where he reached the second round in 2024. His absence will also impact the tournament, as Draper had become one of the most promising young talents in men’s tennis following impressive wins over higher-ranked opponents last season. His team has emphasized the importance of focusing on recovery, with plans for a potential return later in the season, possibly targeting the clay courts in Europe. The Australian Open begins on January 18.

Jagdeep Dhankhar is still awaiting formal housing months after leaving his position as Veep

New Delhi, Jan 04: People close to Jagdeep Dhankhar, who resigned as vice president in July, stated on Tuesday that he had yet to receive an official housing. On July 21, the opening day of this year’s Monsoon Session of Parliament, Dhankhar resigned as vice president, citing health concerns. A few weeks later, in September, he moved to a private farmhouse in the Chhatapur neighborhood of south Delhi, leaving the vice president’s official residence, the Vice President’s Enclave. INLD leader Abhay Chautala owns the farmhouse in Chhatapur’s Gadaiapur neighborhood. Dhankhar requested an official housing for previous vice presidents in a letter to the Secretary

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

of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on August 22. “But so far, he has not been provided with an accommodation he is entitled to,” someone close to him noted. In addition to a type VIII house, one personal secretary, one supplemental personal secretary, one personal assistant, one doctor, one nursing



officer, and four personal attendants, Dhankhar is entitled to a pension of over Rs 2 lakh per month as a former

vice president. A former vice president’s spouse is eligible for a smaller type VII home upon their death.

NHRC requests a report from Uttarakhand regarding the murder of Tripura youth Anjel Chakma in Dehradun

Dehradun, Jan 04: Anjel Chakma, a 24-year-old student from Tripura who was allegedly beaten by a racist crowd in Dehradun on December 9, was killed. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sent a notice to the Uttarakhand government for an action-taken report. NHRC member Priyank Kanoongo stated that the commission had sent notices to the Dehradun SSP and the district magistrate to look into the allegations and request an action-taken report within seven days, as well as to ensure the safety of the northeastern region’s students throughout the state, in response to the brutal murder that has caused outrage throughout the Northeast. “We have looked for information regarding the arrests, the incident’s circumstances, and other details. Kanoongo added, “We have also sent notices to the chief secretary of the state and the DGP to investigate the in-



cident. “The chief secretary and the DGP have been directed to ensure, on the highest priority, the safety of students from the Northeast across the state,” he continued. Anjel Chakma was a final-year MBA student at a Dehradun-based private university. He and his brother were shopping for home goods in Selakui on December 9 when a bunch of drunk guys started in-

sulting them based on their caste. They became aggressive and attacked Chakma with knives and rods when he disagreed with their comments. After battling for his life for 17 days in a Dehradun hospital, he passed away on December 26. His father, a BSF jawan who is currently stationed in Tangeng, Manipur, claimed that his son was “brutally attacked” when

he attempted to protect his brother, who was the subject of racial epithets from the assailants. Anjel told them that he “was also Indian, not Chinese”, but they attacked him with knives and blunt objects, the father said. On Monday, Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh, however, said that “prima facie, there was no evidence of racial violence in the case”. Anjel had suffered injuries to his head and spine, which proved fatal. Uttarakhand police have sent a team to nab one of the accused, who is on the run and believed to be in Nepal. So far, three men have been arrested and are in judicial custody, and two juveniles, aged 15 and 17, have been sent to correctional homes in connection with the case. According to the proceedings, a bench of the NHRC, presided by Kanoongo, took cognisance under Section 12 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

Robert Lewandowski reveals Barcelona’s strategies for avoiding paying Bayern bonuses

New Delhi: In an incredible behind-the-scenes look at last season’s La Liga campaign, Robert Lewandowski said that FC Barcelona begged him to refrain from scoring late in the championship run-in in order to avoid paying Bayern Munich a bonus. The disclosure provides an honest glimpse into the club’s financial struggles, despite winning the league title. In an interview with Polish writer Bogdan Rymanowski, Lewandowski acknowledged the unusual request and clarified that it had more to do with Barcelona’s financial circumstances than athletic ambitions. In the last weeks of the season, financial calculations became more important because the title was already assured. “I don’t want to discuss some topics. “I have a great deal of respect for Barcelona and its employees,” Lewandowski remarked. “I knew the club’s predicament. For the benefit of the club, numerous oth-

Robert Lewandowski has revealed a surprising request from Barcelona during last season’s La Liga run-in. The striker said financial concerns led the club to ask him to avoid scoring and triggering a bonus payment.

er issues needed to be rectified. He continued, “To put it briefly, it was a bonus, and it is known that Barcelona looked to save every euro at that time.” It wasn’t a minor issue. It didn’t bother me, but it lingered in my mind and made me question whether or not to score a goal. Lewandowski had concluded the league season with 23 goals, and according to a provision in his transfer contract, Bayern Munich would have received an extra 2.5 million euros if he had scored two more goals. Barcelona was eager to avoid any additional outgoing expenses, even those directly related to performance incentives, given



the club’s severe financial difficulty at the time. Lewandowski’s admission lends credence to how cautiously Barcelona handled their finances during that time, even if the scenario first aroused concerns. Even while it didn’t change his professional approach, the thought of holding back presented an uncommon mental struggle for a striker whose career has been defined by

goals. The comments also arrive amid growing speculation surrounding Lewandowski’s future at Camp Nou. With his current contract set to expire at the end of the season, interest has reportedly emerged from the Saudi Pro League and Major League Soccer. Clubs outside Europe are said to be monitoring the situation closely, with exploratory discussions already having taken place.

Loco trains collide inside the Chamoli hydropower tunnel, injuring 65 people

Dehradun, Jan 04: At least 65 workers sustained injuries from a collision between two loco trains within a tunnel at the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation (THDC) hydroelectric project site in the Pipalkoti area of Uttarakhand’s Chamoli district. The accident, which occurred around 8:30 PM in a 4.5-km-long tunnel during a shift change, involved one loco train transporting workers and materials colliding with another stationary train. At the time of the incident, approximately 108 workers were on board the two trains, resulting in the derailment of two coaches and causing panic among those inside the tunnel. A source involved in the rescue operations described the scene as chaotic, stating, “The sound was deafening, and the immediate confusion inside the tunnel



was terrifying.” In response to the emergency, District Magistrate Gaurav Kumar and Superintendent of Police Surjeet Singh Panwar quickly arrived at the district hospital in Gopeshwar to oversee the medical assistance provided to the injured workers, all of whom were reported to be in stable condition. Kumar emphasized that the primary focus was on providing medical care and preventing any fatalities. He also announced that a high-level inquiry would investigate the circumstances leading to both trains being on the same track within the tunnel. The THDC’s

444-MW hydroelectric project, situated on the Alaknanda River, is anticipated to be completed by next year. Loco trains are essential for the transport of workers and materials during tunnelling operations. The incident has prompted serious concerns regarding safety protocols implemented at the project site, especially during shift changes. Authorities have indicated that corrective measures will be enforced once the investigation identifies any lapses, with accountability likely to follow as further investigations progress.

Ajit Pawar declares the NCP–NCP(SP) alliance for the Pimpri-Chinchwad elections

Mumbai, Jan 04: Ajit Pawar, the deputy chief minister of Maharashtra, confirmed an agreement between his side and the NCP (SP) led by his uncle Sharad Pawar for the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation polls on Sunday by announcing



municipal corporation will be defeated. Although Pimpri-Chinchwad’s partnership has been confirmed, negotiations between the two groups for a like agreement in the Pune Municipal Corporation are still ongoing. “Anyone can come together, brothers or family, but politics of just surnames will not work here, only politics of performance will matter,” stated Shiv Sena leader Shaina NC on Monday. Voters in Maharashtra are astute; they can tell who is motivated by the desire for power and who truly wants to work.”

SPORTS

Mohammed Shami hopes to return to ODI

New Delhi: For the three-match series against New Zealand that starts on January 11, Mohammed Shami could return to the ODI team. Since the Champions Trophy in Dubai in March 2025, the Indian pacer has not been included in the team. He was left out of the Test squad for the England tour due to a poor IPL season and physical issues, and he hasn't been selected since. However, Shami, 35, has taken wickets on the home circuit. He has taken eight wickets at an economy of 5.53 in four Bengal games in the current Vijay Hazare Trophy. Shami has entered the picture following a solid domestic performance, as the Ajit Agarkar-led selection committee is almost certain to rest players like Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya in the ODI series against the Black Caps. There is also a possibility that Arshdeep Singh and Harshit Rana might not be considered for the ODIs, keeping in mind the five-match T20I series against New Zealand and the T20 World Cup in February-March. The uncertainty over Shreyas Iyer continues as the Centre of Excellence hasn't yet issued the necessary clearance for him to play in the Vijay Hazare meet. He is then unlikely to be considered for the ODI series. Iyer has been nursing a spleen injury suffered while fielding in Australia. With Yashasvi Jaiswal having turned out for Mumbai in their match against Goa on Wednesday, it is likely that he will be picked for the ODIs. The opener had been rested for the Vijay Hazare tournament because of acute gastroenteritis. The Agarkar-led panel is likely to meet on Saturday or Sunday to decide on the squad for the New Zealand series.



Todd Murphy wants to play Ashes in the SCG finale



New Delhi: Todd Murphy, an off-spinner from Australia, hopes to participate in the series' last Ashes Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground, a location that has traditionally favored spinners. Nathan Lyon has also only played a little part in the four Tests so far, while England has resisted the urge to unleash their top spinner, Shoaib Bashir. But with Lyon sidelined due to injury, Murphy has good cause to think he will play a significant part in a home Test. Murphy stated on Thursday, "I don't think there was ever that planning or idea that spin wouldn't play a role going into the series." "I believe it's just the way things have turned out. It will probably change every year. It can be quite different the following year. Murphy has already claimed 22 wickets in seven Test matches, all of which have taken place away from home. I probably knew it would never be linear for me when I made my debut. When Nathan returned, I would never be able to maintain my spot on the team; I would always need to return to Shield cricket and continue to grow. "At that stage I was only 23, so I still felt like I had a long way to go... I still feel like I'm trying to discover that as well and continuing to get better." Murphy is prepared to be a target for England. "I'd say it's a guarantee that if I play they will be attacking against me," said Murphy. "That's how they've been playing, it's been positive cricket. It will be no different if I'm playing and bowling. "You always have a chance when guys are coming after you — it does bring you into the game a little bit more. If that presents out there, no issues."

Vladimir Kramnik files a defamation lawsuit against FIDE following the Daniel Naroditsky scandal

New Delhi: In a Swiss civil court, Russian chess master Vladimir Kramnik has sued the World Chess Federation (FIDE) for defamation. Following the recent passing of American Grandmaster Daniel Naroditsky, Kramnik became the focus of an ethics investigation for reportedly pestering other players with what FIDE called "unsubstantiated" cheating allegations. Kramnik declared on "X" that he was compelled to take legal action due to what he called persistent attacks from FIDE and other players. Emil Sutovsky, the CEO of FIDE, called Kramnik's public accusations against Naroditsky "appalling and outright shameful," which intensified the issue. The impact of such charges on players' mental health has become a topic of discussion in the chess world due to the issue. The circumstances behind Naroditsky's death at the age of 29 are still unknown. However, Naroditsky candidly discussed how the accusations made by Kramnik were causing him a great deal of emotional anguish in

his last webinar. The fallout from Kramnik's conduct has also been publicly addressed by Czech Grandmaster David Navara, who said, "Czech Grandmaster David Navara has also claimed to have felt distressed and suicidal due to Kramnik's online cheating charge against him." Kramnik has continuously defended his actions, arguing that his claims are supported. "I have initiated formal legal proceedings against FIDE in accordance with Swiss law in the Court of Lausanne," he said, confirming the legal proceedings. There must first be an obligatory preliminary procedure in accordance with the relevant Swiss procedural regulations. This phase typically lasts 2-3 months," the former world champion said. Providing further details, Kramnik explained, "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." He also noted, "Additionally, a



formal request for the preservation of evidence has been personally delivered to the FIDE headquarters today," he added. Kramnik emphasised that all relevant evidence should be secured, stating that a request has been submitted to ensure all documents and communications are "properly preserved and not altered, deleted, destroyed, or otherwise made unavailable." He added, "I will provide further details in due course as the proceedings advance," he said. The Russian grandmaster was critical of other players who have publicly blamed him for Naroditsky's death, including world number one Magnus Carlsen and Indian players such as Nihal Sarin. Kramnik responded, "Several players have publicly named

and shamed me." He continued, "None have shown the integrity to apologise or retract their statements, instead ignoring the evidence that I provided in response." Kramnik clarified that his legal claim is independent of the ongoing FIDE ethics inquiry, stating, "Kramnik also asserted that his legal claim was not in response to the body's ethics inquiry against him." He further said, "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 had launched its ethics inquiry into Kramnik, citing a two-year "pattern of conduct" that allegedly harmed players' dignity.

Magnus Carlsen makes a stunning comeback to win a record eighth global blitz title

New Delhi: Ian cricket, highlighting both his achievements on the field and his impact off the field through the Usman Khawaja Foundation. At his retirement, Khawaja stands among only six players to have scored more Test runs after the age of 35, leaving a legacy as one of Australia's most stylish and resilient batters. With an uncertain future for the Australian batting lineup, especially at the opening position, Khawaja's departure raises questions about who will fill that role in the upcoming matches against Bangladesh. Magnus Carlsen demonstrated once more that he is a rare chess phenomenon. By earning a record-extending ninth World Blitz title on Tuesday and triumphing under trying circumstances, the world No. 1 emphasized that assertion. The 35-year-old Norwegian told reporters that his most difficult title victory came over Russian Sergey Karjakin in the 2016 World Chess Championship. "Winning the 2016 Classical World Chess Championship was my hardest title victory. If you're just talking about blitz titles, it's definitely this one and the one from 2017 when I had to pull myself out of a really, really deep hole after the first day. I don't believe I looked likely to win this tournament, but it feels wonderful. "But as long as I am not mathematically eliminated, you know, ruling me out is probably not a good idea." Carlsen struggled in the blitz championship qualifying round, losing several games, including one against Arjun Erigaisi of India, after winning the Rapid world title a few days prior. Carlsen played out a draw with Nodirbek Abdusattorov to earn a spot in the semi-finals, but it was tough and go. Additionally, he lost a match to Armenian general manager Haik Martirosyan in the 19th round. Carlsen defeated American Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana 3-1 in the semifinals. Uzbek Abdusattorov offered a draw in the final, but Carlsen rejected it and returned with a novel pawn play to win 2.5-1.5. Carlsen won his 20th world championship. Carlsen admitted that he was pushed to the brink due to his poor temperament and play, but enjoyed the return to his best. "This was definitely one of my tougher ones," Carlsen said. "I wasn't doing a lot of the right things in the first 14 rounds. My pace was



too slow and I generally could not keep my cool in time trouble, which is a pretty bad combination when you are playing slowly." "I had a few wins under my belt and I was starting to feel a bit better. Once we got to knockouts, I thought I should really try and enjoy this because I didn't necessarily expect to be there." It was very tough. As everybody saw, it could have gone differently, but nevertheless, I felt that I was playing with house money at that time. Incredibly tough, but the blitz championship is really important to me since it's one of my favourite formats to play. "I may not always look like that, but I really enjoy the challenge and since it's many rounds and now knockouts as well, it just makes it very very challenging. Very satisfying win. Very very tough event, but super happy that I managed to, at some point, defy the odds and come back. Asked if he had lost a bit of his mojo, Carlsen was quick to point out that he remains the best chess player in the world. "I don't think I am getting worse compared to my opponents," Carlsen said. "I think the rapid is a different kind of event because I don't expect to win it in the same way, but I did feel here that the blitz was mine to lose. "That, since it's a lot of rounds, 19, and four qualifiers, I felt I would really need to play subpar to not make it, which almost happened. But so the pressure I put on myself with that sometimes can make it difficult, but apart from that I don't think I have gotten remarkably worse at speed chess for sure."

The Premier League's boring start to 2026: Tottenham, Manchester City, and Liverpool all draw

The Premier League stumbled into 2026 as City, Liverpool and Tottenham failed to score on New Year's Day. Wasteful finishing, rigid defending and mounting pressure defined a flat afternoon that subtly shifted momentum elsewhere league.

New Delhi: Manchester City, Liverpool, and Tottenham Hotspur all began 2026 with goalless draws, an uncommon collective stall from three of the division's biggest names that highlighted how finely balanced and occasionally blunt the league has become. In terms of titles, Manchester City's afternoon at the Stadium of Light was the most expensive. In a 0-0 draw that gave Arsenal a four-point lead at the top of the league, Pep Guardiola's team dominated possession and territory against Sunderland but failed to convert dominance into goals. With the opportunity to tighten the title race, City came to the northeast on an eight-game winning streak across all competitions. Rather, they departed dissatisfied and wasteful. Despite having over two-thirds of the ball and 14 shots on goal, City was unable to overcome a determined Sunderland defense and a motivated Gianluigi Donnarumma. The blank was even more difficult to accept given their anticipated goals total of 2.25, which is their highest xG in a Premier League game without a goal since 2022. On his first visit to the Stadium of Light,



Erling Haaland was remarkably quiet, as he missed multiple opportunities inside the six-yard box. Guardiola did not hide his disappointment afterwards, pointing squarely at missed opportunities from point-blank range and admitting his team failed to execute the first-half plan. City improved after the break, but the damage in title-race terms was already done. If City were wasteful, Liverpool were laboured. At Anfield, Arne Slot's side were held to their first goalless draw under the Dutchman as Leeds United executed a disciplined low-block performance to frustrate the champions. Liverpool saw plenty of the ball but struggled to inject tempo or clarity into their attacking play, particularly in the final third. While

Hugo Ekitike and Florian Wirtz showed early promise, the momentum fizzled out, drawing boos from sections of the home crowd at full-time. Slot conceded that possession alone was meaningless without chance creation, a candid assessment after a performance that squandered a chance to gain ground on rivals in the race for the top four. In west London, Tottenham's stalemate with Brentford completed a dour New Year's Day sequence. Thomas Frank's return to the Gtech Community Stadium, this time as Spurs head coach, was warm in reception but cold in output. Tottenham lacked attacking imagination, Brentford were well organised, and clear chances were scarce, with a disallowed goal and a late Richardson effort the only real moments of note.

Venus Williams returns to the Australian Open at the age of 46

New Delhi: Venus Williams will make one of the most incredible comebacks in contemporary tennis history when she returns to the Australian Open in January. Just days after getting married to Danish-born model and actor Andrea Preti, the seven-time Grand Slam singles winner has been granted a wildcard entrance for the 2026 tournament, which will start in Melbourne on January 18. This will be her first time competing in five years. Williams, who is 45 years old, will also be the oldest female competitor in the Australian Open main draw, breaking the previous record set by Kimiko Date of Japan, who played at Melbourne Park in 2015 at the age of 44. Williams' return to the competition, some thirty years after his initial appearance, is confirmed by the wildcard. Williams remarked, "I'm thrilled to be back in Australia and looking forward to competing during the Australian summer." "I'm thankful for the chance to return to a location that has been so important to my career, and I've had so many amazing memories there." Williams will return 28 years after making her debut at the Australian Open in 1998, according to the tournament organizers. She lost to fellow American Lindsay Davenport in the quarterfinals



that year after defeating her younger sister Serena in the second round. Melbourne Park has continued to be an important, if incomplete, part of her career ever since. Williams has twice reached the Australian Open singles final, finishing runner-up to Serena in 2003 and again in 2017. Her overall record at the tournament stands at 54 wins and 21 losses, and the upcoming edition will mark her 22nd appearance in the main draw. She last competed in Melbourne in 2021, before stepping away from regular tour action.

Khawaja will leave international cricket following the SCG Ashes final

New Delhi: Usman Khawaja has announced his retirement from international cricket, effective after the final match of the ongoing Ashes series in Sydney. At 39 years old, Khawaja will conclude his Test career with 87 caps and 6206 runs, including 16 centuries. He shared that he had considered retirement for some time, specifically mentioning discussions with his wife and coach Andrew McDonald. Although there were moments he felt he might retire earlier, he decided to continue playing until this series, where he was thankful to end on his own terms at the SCG, a venue significant to his career. Khawaja's future plans include playing in the Big Bash League (BBL) for Brisbane Heat and potentially continuing in Sheffield Shield cricket for Queensland. His Test career began and flourished at the SCG, making his debut in 2010-11 and experiencing a resurgence after being recalled in the 2021-22 Ashes series, where he scored two centuries. Despite facing career challenges, including periods of being dropped, he made a formidable comeback that showcased his talent and resilience, with notable performances against various teams, including a career-best 232 in Galle. As he



reflects on his time, Cricket Australia's CEO Todd Greenberg acknowledged Khawaja's significant contributions to Australian cricket, highlighting both his achievements on the field and his impact off the field through the Usman Khawaja Foundation. At his retirement, Khawaja stands among only six players to have

scored more Test runs after the age of 35, leaving a legacy as one of Australia's most stylish and resilient batters. With an uncertain future for the Australian batting lineup, especially at the opening position, Khawaja's departure raises questions about who will fill that role in the upcoming matches against Bangladesh.