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TOP OF THE WORLD



Mauro Morandi, NYT

Mauro Morandi, Italy's Robinson Crusoe, dies

Rome: Mauro Morandi, whose 32-year sojourn on an uninhabited Mediterranean island led to his being known as Italy's Robinson Crusoe, died January 3 in Modena, Italy. He was 85. The cause was a brain hemorrhage, said Antonio Rinaldis, who wrote a 2023 book with Morandi about his life on the island. Unlike Daniel Defoe's hero, who was shipwrecked and fervently hoped to be rescued, Morandi chose his life of solitude. He said he had fallen in love at first sight with Budelli, a pristine, undeveloped island off the northern tip of Sardinia. He arrived in 1989 he said. He left — against his will — in 2021, writing on social media that he was tired of “fighting against those who want to send me away.” NYT

ITALY  
Vatican allows gay men to train to be priests

Rome: The Vatican has approved new guidelines for Italy that say that an applicant for the seminary cannot be rejected simply because he is gay, as long as he remains celibate. The guidelines say that seminary directors should consider sexual orientation as only one aspect of a candidate's personality. They do not change the Catholic Church's teaching that “homosexual tendencies” are “intrinsically disordered,” and that men with “deep-seated” gay tendencies should not become priests. But they clarify that if a candidate remains chaste, his sexual orientation should not disqualify him from entering priesthood. NYT

THAILAND  
Suspected killer of ex-Cambodia lawmaker held

Bangkok: A suspected hit-man accused of killing a Cambodian former opposition lawmaker in a brazen attack in Bangkok was handed over to Thai authorities on Saturday from Cambodia, where he had been arrested after crossing the border. Thai national Ekkalak Paenoi, 41, faces charges including premeditated murder in the Tuesday shooting death of Lim Kimya, 74, in the Thai capital. REUTERS

WATERWAY WILL REMAIN IN PANAMANIAN HANDS: ADMINISTRATOR

Will remain open to all: Panama canal admin rejects Trump claims on Chinese meddling

Says canal can't give special treatment to US ships because of a neutrality treaty

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
PANAMA CITY, JANUARY 11

THE ADMINISTRATOR of the Panama Canal said Friday that the vital waterway will remain in Panamanian hands and open to commerce from all countries, rejecting claims by President-elect Donald Trump that the United States should take it over.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Ricaurte Vásquez denied Trump's claims that China was controlling the canal's operations, and said making exceptions to current rules concerning its operation would lead to “chaos.”

Black boxes in crashed South Korea plane failed to record final 4 minutes

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
SEOUL, JANUARY 11

THE BLACK boxes of a Boeing jetliner that crashed in South Korea last month stopped recording about four minutes before the accident, South Korean officials said on Saturday, possibly complicating investigations into the cause of the disaster that killed 179 people.

After analysing the devices, the US National Transportation Safety Board concluded that both the flight data and cockpit voice recorders stopped working about four minutes before the crash, the South Korean Transportation Ministry said.

The Boeing 737-800 operated by Jeju Air skidded off a runway in the South Korean town of Mu-an on December 29 after its landing gear failed to deploy, slamming into a concrete structure and bursting into flames, killing all but two of the 181 people on board.

After initially analysing the black boxes, South Korean officials sent the devices to the NTSB for closer examination after discovering that some of the data was missing. The transportation ministry said it wasn't immediately clear why the devices failed to record data in the last four minutes.

Amid peace talks, Trump envoy to meet Netanyahu

Jerusalem: US President-elect Donald Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff will meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday following his visit to Doha, an Israeli official said, amid efforts to secure a hostage deal and ceasefire in Gaza.

A second Israeli official said some progress had been made in the talks between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas, mediated by Egypt, Qatar and the US, to reach a deal in Gaza.



He said Chinese companies operating in the ports on either end of the canal were part of a Hong Kong consortium that won a bidding process in 1997. He added that US and Taiwanese companies are operating other ports along the canal as well.

Trump has gone so far as to suggest the US should take back control of the canal and he would

not rule out using military might to do so. The Panama Canal is vital to our country,” he had said. Trump has characterised the fees for transiting the canal that connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans as “ridiculous.”

Panama President José Raúl Mulino has said unequivocally that the canal will remain in Panamanian hands.



Administrator of Panama Canal Ricaurte Vásquez says making exceptions to current rules concerning its operation would lead to chaos

Responding to the suggestion that the US could try to retake control of the canal, Vásquez said there was “no foundation for that sort of hope. That is the only thing I can say.”

Vasquez stressed that the Panama Canal was open to the commerce of all countries.

The canal can't give special treatment to US-flagged ships be-

cause of a neutrality treaty, Vasquez added. “The most sensible and efficient way to do this is to maintain the established rules.” Requests for exceptions are routinely rejected, because the process is clear and there mustn't be arbitrary variations, he said. The only exception in the neutrality treaty is for American warships, which receive expedited passage. Some 70% of the sea traffic that crosses the Panama Canal leaves or goes to US ports.

The US built the canal in the early 1900s as it looked for ways to facilitate the transit of commercial and military vessels between its coasts. Washington relinquished control of the waterway to Panama on Dec 31, 1999, under a treaty signed in 1977 by President Jimmy Carter.

Regarding the fees for using the canal, Vasquez said a planned series of increases had concluded with one this month.

“There's no discrimination in the fees,” he said.



A helicopter makes a drop as smoke billows in the Brentwood area of Los Angeles, California, on Saturday. Reuters

Los Angeles wildfire switches direction, posing new threat despite winds easing  
Toll at 11; over 10,000 structures burnt; health emergency declared over smoke

REUTERS  
LOS ANGELES, JANUARY 11

THE LARGEST of the raging wildfires that have devastated parts of Los Angeles this week was reported to have shifted direction on Saturday, triggering more evacuation orders and posing a new challenge to exhausted firefighters. Six simultaneous blazes

that have ripped across Los Angeles County neighborhoods since Tuesday have killed at least 11 people and damaged or destroyed 10,000 structures. The fierce Santa Ana winds that fanned the infernos eased on Friday night. But the Palisades Fire on the city's western edge was heading in a new direction, prompting another evacuation order as it

edged towards the Brentwood neighborhood and the San Fernando Valley foothills, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Before the latest flare-up, firefighters had reported progress in subduing the Palisades Fire.

On Friday night, the Palisades Fire was 8% contained and the Eaton Fire 3%, state agency Cal Fire said.

The two big fires combined had consumed 35,000 acres, or 54 square miles — 2-1/2 times the land area of Manhattan.

Some 153,000 people remained under evacuation orders and another 166,800 faced evacuation warnings with a curfew in place for all evacuation zones. Officials have declared a public health emergency due to the thick, toxic smoke.

Chinese FM makes surprise visit to Maldives, holds talks with President

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BEIJING/MALE, JAN 11

CHINESE FOREIGN Minister Wang Yi made a surprise visit to the Maldives, during which he held talks with President Mohamed Muizzu and discussed the state of bilateral relations, amid Male's recent warming up to India. Wang, who is also a member of the powerful Political Bureau of the Communist Party,

met Muizzu during his stopover in Male on Friday while on his way back from a tour, official media reported.

This was the first major visit by a Chinese official to Maldives after Muizzu visited China in January last year, months after his election.

In his meeting with Wang, Muizzu stressed the importance of fast-tracking key infrastructure projects outlined in the agreements and MOUs between the

two countries, Maldives media reported.

On Wednesday, Maldivian Defence Minister Mohammed Ghassan Maumoon visited New Delhi and held talks with his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh.

They discussed boosting the defence preparedness of the Indian Ocean archipelago. During Ghassan's visit, India donated USD 4 million worth of military equipment to the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDFF).

Ukraine captured two North Korean soldiers in Kursk, says Zelenskyy

REUTERS  
KYIV, JANUARY 11

UKRAINE HAS captured two North Korean soldiers in Russia's Kursk region, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday, the first time Ukraine has announced the capture of North Korean soldiers since their entry into the war last autumn.

North Korean regular troops entered the war on Russia's side in October, according to Kyiv and its western allies, who initially estimated their numbers at 10,000 or more. In a post on X, Zelenskyy said that the soldiers had been brought to Kyiv and were communicating with the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), the country's domestic intelligence agency. “As with all prisoners of war, these two North Korean soldiers are receiving the necessary medical assistance,” Zelenskyy said. He said journalists would be given access to speak to them.

Kyiv says that North Korean troops are fighting in the Kursk region, where Ukraine launched an incursion in August.

Russia has neither confirmed nor denied the presence of North Korean troops in Kursk, and there was no immediate reaction from Moscow or Pyongyang to the latest report. Ukraine had previously said it captured North Korean soldiers in combat, but that they had been badly wounded and died shortly afterwards.

Zelenskyy said in a later video address that the troops had been captured by Ukraine's special



A North Korean soldier captured by Kyiv, a picture shared by Zelenskyy on X

forces working alongside paratroopers. A video posted by the SBU appeared to show the two captured men. One had his jaw bandaged due to an apparent wound, while the other was drinking through a straw. A doctor interviewed for the SBU's video, who was not named and had his face blurred, said one of the soldiers had a facial wound and would be treated by a dentist, while the other had an open wound and a lower leg fracture.

The SBU said the North Koreans had been transferred to Kyiv for questioning, and that because they could not speak Ukrainian, Russian or English, their questioning was being done in Korean with the help of South Korea's NIS intelligence agency.

The SBU said one of the soldiers had been captured with a Russian military document with the name of another person registered in Russia, while the other did not have any papers. The agency said the soldiers had been born in 2005 and 1999, and had been serving in the North Korean forces since 2021 and 2016 respectively.

VENEZUELA  
As Maduro sworn in, Opp grapples with hope, and despair; US raises reward for his capture

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
CARACAS, JANUARY 11

THE INAUGURATION of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro left his opponents to grapple with conflicting feelings of hope and disappointment on Saturday, pondering why the self-described socialist leader could not be stopped despite credible evidence that he had lost the election last year.

Many expressed cautious optimism, finding a measure of comfort in the social media videos released by two opposition leaders — popular former lawmaker María Corina Machado and Edmundo Gonzalez, the opposition's candidate in the vote — who had promised to topple Maduro.

Maduro compared himself to a biblical David fighting Goliath and accused his opponents and their supporters in the US of trying to turn his inauguration into a “world war.”

Machado, in a message on social media Friday, said she was confident that the country's “freedom is near”.

A day earlier, Machado had emerged from months of hiding to join a protest in Caracas.

Underscoring Maduro's

EXPLAINED

Election fraud charges

OPPOSITION FACTION accuse Maduro of ballot fraud. Their proof: tally sheets collected from 85% of voting machines that show González won. Nevertheless, electoral authorities declared Maduro the winner hours after polls closed on July 28 but, unlike in previous contests, they did not provide detailed vote counts.

growing isolation, the US, Canada, Britain and the European Union announced new sanctions Friday on more than 20 Venezuelan officials.

The outgoing Biden administration increased its reward for information leading to the arrest or conviction of Maduro on drug trafficking charges to \$25 million, from a previous \$15 million.

Meanwhile, Gonzalez, who had left the country, in his video message, told supporters that Maduro's government will end “soon, very soon”. “I am ready for safe entry at the right time,” he said.

‘THE STRENGTH OF SAM & DAVE WAS THAT WE WOULD DO ANYTHING TO PLEASE THE AUDIENCE’

Sam Moore, who sang ‘Soul Man’, ‘I Thank You’ in Sam & Dave duo, dies at 89

BILL MORRIS  
FLORIDA, JANUARY 11

SAM MOORE, the tenor half of the scorching soul duo Sam & Dave, known for indelible hits such as “Soul Man,” “Hold On, I’m Comin’” and “I Thank You,” died Friday. He was 89.

His death, after surgery at a hospital in Coral Gables, Florida, was confirmed by his wife and longtime manager, Joyce. The exact cause was unclear, she said.

At their peak in the 1960s, Sam & Dave churned out R&B hits with a regularity rivaled by few other performers. When “Soul Man”

topped the R&B charts and crossed over to No. 2 on the pop charts in 1967 (it also won a Grammy), its success helped open doors for other Black acts to connect with white audiences.

“The strength of Sam & Dave,” Moore said, “was that we would do anything to please the audience.” Moore and Dave Prater, a baritone, met at an amateur night at the King of Hearts, a nightclub in Miami, in the early 1960s.

Both men had started out singing in church. One night in 1964, Ahmet Ertegun, Jerry Wexler and Tom Dowd of Atlantic Records came to see them perform. Impressed, they offered the

duo a contract.

Working with producers and songwriters Isaac Hayes and David Porter, the house band Booker T. & the M.G.'s and the crisp horns of the Mar-Keys, Sam & Dave were soon enjoying the benefits of stardom.

Samuel David Moore's life can be divided into three almost implausibly tidy acts. Act 1 began with his birth in Miami on Oct. 12, 1935. His mother, Louise Robinson, was a teacher, and he described his father, John Richard Hicks, as “a street hustler,” a tireless womaniser whose son was soon following in his footsteps. (When his mother married a man



Singer Sam Moore performs at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington on Jan 19, 2017. AP

named Charlie Moore, the boy took his stepfather's surname.)

While still in high school, Sam was shot in the leg by the jealous husband of a married woman he was seeing.

He later served 18 months in prison for procuring prostitutes. But music lifted him. He sang in a Miami Baptist church, then with an a cappella group called the Majestics and a gospel group called the Mellonaires, before teaming up with Prater.

Act 2 began with Sam & Dave's first breakup in 1970, as their popularity waned. When their solo careers failed to take flight, they reunited and broke up several

times. The two were never personally close.

Sam & Dave toured in the United States, Europe and Turkey, but their drug abuse had begun to take its toll. Their downward spiral was briefly slowed when John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd, as the Blues Brothers, recorded a hit version of “Soul Man” in late 1970s, bringing new attention to the original.

Moore and Prater performed together for the last time on New Year's Eve 1981 in San Francisco.

After walking offstage, they never spoke to each other again. Prater recruited a new partner, Sam Daniels, and they worked to-

gether, billed as Sam & Dave or the New Sam & Dave Revue — over Moore's objections — until Prater died in a car accident in 1988.

Act 3 opened the year after that final show, when Moore married Joyce McRae, a self-described “upper-middle-class Jewish girl from Chicago” who had first seen him perform in 1967. She helped him get sober, took over managing his career and guided him through a productive professional twilight.

Sam & Dave were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1992 and received a lifetime achievement Grammy Award in 2019. NYT

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2




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In this episode of *Express Conversations*, we talk about pressing challenges for India's economy to become a developed nation. We also discuss India's growth rate, unemployment, banking system, demographics and government spending

● At Kumbh, band strikes united note

communities will remain united)," says bandmaster Mohammad Shabbir.

Controversial statements from religious leaders had created a flutter over the past week. While Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi Bareilvi, president, All India Muslim Jamaat, had alleged that the Kumbh was "being held on 55 bighas of Waqf land", Swami Narendranath Saraswati of Varanasi's Sumeru math had said, "If Sanatani Hindus are not allowed to enter Mecca, why should those people be allowed entry into the fair?"

However, many of these leaders changed tack after UP CM Yogi Adityanath stepped in to say that "here (at the Kumbh), there is no distinction of sect or caste".

Following Adityanath's remarks on "people who perceive Sanatan Dharma with a narrow mindset", Akhil Bhartiya Akhada Parishad chief Mahant Ravindra Puri, who had earlier spoken out against traders from different communities, issued a plea for communal harmony. "If you see the labourers who work here, set up our ashrams, (they) are mostly non-Hindus... Many people who work in our akharas are Muslims. Take our bands for example, many of them are Muslims. We want those people to enter (Kumbh) who follow Sanatan Dharma," he said.

Iqbal Mohammad of Azad Band says "music has no religion". He says, "The Muslim community in Prayagraj mainly works as painters, scrap dealers, in the furniture market and plays in bands. My father also played at the Kumbh Mela. Our band is a hit among the sadhus."

The band is a kaleidoscope of talents: Mehraj Ali is the lead trumpeter; Chand, the brass maestro; Guddu, a bhajan singer in his 60s who has attended quite a few Kumbh melas; and Ameen, the drummer. Together, they create an infectious rhythm that makes them a favourite among the sadhus.

"We have been performing since December 2. This is our seventh peshwai (grand procession taken out by sadhus from their akhadas)," says Munna, a drummer whose father also played for the sadhus, adding that a peshwai is incomplete without music by bands like theirs.

● 'Terrace tourism'

Hemant Bhatt, a doctor based in Khadia and the secretary of the Khadia Itihaas Samiti (KIS), which promotes the heritage of the walled city, says only a few homes and havelis in the area used to be rented by corporates during Uttarayan. "Terrace tourism took off in a big way over the past two years. Thanks to this trend, old houses in *pol*s may now be conserved. People are now motivated to preserve their homes in *pol*s instead of selling them or turning them into a place of business," he says.

The demand for terrace rentals has spiked this year, says Modi. "There are around 400-500 good terraces in the walled city. I have already rented out all three of my terraces. I have received enquiries for 100 more terrace rentals. So far, I have helped 25 house owners rent out their spaces free of cost. I am functioning as a terrace bureau these days," he says, visibly

"*Babaji ko cassette nahi achha lagta. Unko band chahiye* (Sadhus don't like taped music. They want live bands)," explains Chand, referring to the increasing dominance of DJs in weddings and festivals.

For Azad Band, the Kumbh is both a spiritual and professional high point. During the processions, they play bhajans including '*Ram Teri Ganga Maali*' and '*Jai Ganesh*', songs that have become the soundtrack of devotion. If the sadhus are pleased, they reward the musicians with Rs 500-1,000; if not, the band must move on.

But making music is a grueling task. The musicians walk 12 km daily, escorting the sadhus from one point to another, often playing for 12 to 16 hours at a stretch. They take quick breaks to wolf down roti-sabzi, snatch a few hours of sleep and return to the mela at dawn. Despite the physical demands and precarious earnings, the band's camaraderie shines through as they bicker over warm up tunes and patch up over a cup of tea.

"We don't think in terms of Hindu-Muslim," says Lalli, a singer. "I am Hindu, but I don't think of my Muslim brothers as different. Most Hindu musicians have left this field. It's our Muslim brothers who are keeping this art alive."

Sadhu Bhavani Giri, who accompanied the band from Hanuman Mandir, says, "Hinduism takes everyone in its fold. The Sangam is for everyone. They (the band) are doing God's work. Music is God."

Though many in Azad Band think of music not just as a passion, but also a lifeline, the rise of DJs and recorded music threatens their livelihood. Marriage season brings sporadic work, but life is a struggle during the rest of the year. "Our fathers played for sadhus. We are doing the same now. But how much longer can this last?" Munna says.

Yet, the band persists, driven by its love for the craft and the bonds that have been forged over the years. "Azad Band is not just a name; it's our family," says Shabbir. "We've married into each other's families. Our children are growing up together. This is more than a business — it's our way of life."

pleased with the moniker he has coined for himself.

Listing reasons why people rent terraces in the walled city, Modi adds, "At times, terraces in western Ahmedabad have hurdles in the form of a mobile tower nearby or solar panels. Or there is a tree nearby, making it difficult to fly kites. So they prefer to come to the old city with their family. Then, there are NRIs or people from outside Gujarat who just wish to savour Uttarayan in the old city. Even corporates rent terraces to celebrate Uttarayan with their clients."

Bhupen Shah, 60, a Mumbai resident who had rented Vyas's terrace in Dariapur during Uttarayan last year, says, "I had heard a lot about Ahmedabad's *pol*s and the celebration of Uttarayan there. So I decided to rent a terrace for Uttarayan last year. It was a fantastic experience."

FROM PAGE ONE FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

# Cracks in MVA: Uddhav Sena says will go solo in local elections

Sena has controlled since the 1970s, the party believes that breaking away from Congress and NCP (SP) will provide a stronger platform to challenge both the BJP and the Shinde-led Shiv Sena, particularly in the high-stakes BMC race.

Elections to municipal corporations in Maharashtra's major cities have been delayed for the past two years with state-appointed administrators overseeing their operations in the interim.

Raut, however, clarified that the party was not breaking away from the MVA. "In both Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, our cadre was denied the opportunity to contest, which hindered the party's growth. We have now decided to independently contest Corporation, Zilla Parishad, and Council elections to strengthen our party base," Raut said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders largely supported the move with many pointing out that the demand to go solo had been raised by their grassroots supporters for quite some time now.

"Until we contest alone, we won't fully understand our strength. While there was a need for an alliance in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, our cadre suffered as they were unable to contest. Urban body elections offer us the chance to provide them with that opportunity. We must stand on our own feet. After the Assembly elections, several of our leaders expressed that if we had fought independently, we would have secured more than 20 seats, far beyond what we managed as part of the alliance," said Shiv Sena MP Arvind Sawant from South Mumbai.

The state unit of the Congress

● SpaDeX satellites 230 metres apart, ISRO may attempt docking today

but they were safe. Now, we are re-attempting the entire process. There are certain fixed hold points, the satellites would be brought to these hold points again, before we attempt docking again," an ISRO official had said at that time.

As per the docking plan, the Chaser satellite is supposed to be progressively brought closer to the Target satellite, holding positions at a distance of 5 km, 1.5 km, 500 metres, 225 metres, 15 metres and

3 metres, before joining together. SpaDeX is a technology demonstrator mission in which ISRO is attempting a docking manoeuvre for the first time. In-space docking is a critical capability for the more ambitious missions that ISRO has planned in the future, including the sample return mission, manned moon mission, and the building and operation of the Bharat Antariksh Station.

Only three other countries —

● Anti-Naxal, J&K veteran cop will be Delhi Police Special Commissioner

AGMUT (erstwhile J&K) cadre, Kumar was posted as Inspector General of Police, Kashmir in December, 2019, four months after the Centre abrogated J&K's special status and downgraded it into two Union Territories.

At the time, Kumar led operations against Naxals in Chhattisgarh and had already helped conduct an "incident-free" general election (2019) in Naxal-hit South Bastar.

Kumar was repatriated from Chhattisgarh to handle the post-Article 370 abrogation law-and-order situation in Kashmir valley.

As Kashmir police chief, he was key to the implementation

of the Centre's Kashmir policy on the ground.

During his tenure, Kumar led counter-terror operations in which several militants were killed and policemen received gallantry medals. In their wake, the number of local militants was down to 25 — the lowest ever.

Kumar also initiated Valley-wide police operations to bring down local recruitment by militant groups.

It was also under Kumar's leadership that the J&K Police crackdown came under criticism for "harsh high-handedness", as several underground workers, political workers, civil society ac-

● Nadda says '₹2,026 cr loss' from liquor policy, targets AAP

"This CAG report that the CM, the LG, the Speaker (of the Delhi Legislative Assembly) have not seen, nor is available on the website of the CAG... what such report have they received? This is the same sheet of paper that the BJP manufactures at its office... that has no credibility... the BJP manufactures fake papers and runs away after making accusations on their basis," Kakkar alleged.

According to the purported CAG report, the actual implementation of the policy was considered sub-optimal compared to its stated objectives. It is learnt to state that vends in non-conforming wards could not be opened and equitable distribution of retail vends could not be achieved — which was a major aim of the new policy.

It is also said to have flagged the issue and management of zonal licenses having major shortcomings including exclusivity arrangements between zonal licensees and wholesalers as well as brand pushing. In regards to issues related to the formulation of the policy, the purported report is said to flag lack of necessary permissions from the Council of Ministers in some decisions which had revenue implications.

According to the purported report, while liquor sale in Delhi from December 2021 to August 2022 under the new policy was an estimated 64 crore bottles, much more than around 58 crore bottles between December 2018 and August 2019, it did not result in higher revenues for the state government.

● Bumrah set to miss Champions Trophy group matches

of reserve players for the tournament. It is learnt that the BCCI will initially submit a provisional squad to the International Cricket Council. As changes to teams can be made till February 12, it gives selectors time to monitor Bumrah's progress closer to the tournament.

According to a BCCI source, Bumrah is expected to be fully fit

only by the first week of March. "He (Bumrah) will be going to NCA for his rehabilitation. The initial report says he doesn't have a fracture but has swelling on his back. So the NCA will monitor his recovery and he will be there for three weeks. But even after that, he will have to play a match or two, even if they are practice games organised to check his

match fitness," said the source.

While India's last group match, against New Zealand, is on March 2, it is unclear if Bumrah will be ready to play. Prior to this, India will play Bangladesh on February 20 and Pakistan on February 23. India will play all their matches in Dubai, as the team refused to travel to Pakistan citing security concerns and the

● Public Service Commission members must not be wedded to any ideology: V-P

I am reflecting on an aspect. (In) Public Service Commissions, the appointment cannot be driven by patronage, by favoritism. There are trends that are visible. I do not wish to reflect on them, but some of them are very painful. We must account ourselves to our conscience. We cannot have a Public Service Commission chairman or a member wedded to a particular ideology or an individual. That will be undoing the essence and spirit of the framework of the Constitution," he said.

"Extensions in service, extensions in any form for a particular post are a setback to those who are in line. It defies the logical principle of expectation. We have a doctrine of expectation. People devote decades to be in a particular groove. Extension indicates that some individual is indispensable. Indispensability is a myth. Talent abounds in this country. No one is indispensable. And therefore, it lies in the domain of PSCs at the state and the central level that when they have a role in such kinds of situations, they must be firm," he said.

"Post-retirement recruitment is a problem. In some states, it has been structured. Employees never retire, particularly those in premium services. They get a number of ad-hoc nomenclatures. This is not good. Everyone in the country must have due and that due is defined by law... Any largesse of this kind is antithetical to what was visualised by framers of the Constitution," he said.

Dhankhar urged political leaders to prioritise consensus-building and address national challenges without delay. "Our polity at the moment is too divisive, too polarised. Interaction is not taking place at the premium level in political organisations. When it comes to the nation, when the world is in a transformative phase, it is India's century. That century can be fully fructified for people's gain only when we have a calm

● Kerala teen athlete claims sexual abuse by 62 people over years

heads the Pathanamthitta Child Welfare Committee, said the matter came up before the committee in the second week of December. He claimed she has been facing sexual abuse from the age of 13.

"I told the girl to report before the committee along with her mother. She was given counselling, and she opened up before a psychologist, narrating the sexual abuse she has been facing since the age of 13," he said.

He said the girl's family was unaware of the alleged sexual abuse. "She hadn't shared anything with her mother. Since the girl is an athlete, she has attended various sports camps over the years," he said.

"Psychologists with the Nirbhaya scheme spoke to her to ascertain the credibility of her allegations. They also examined her father's mobile phone, which she had access to, to find out the names of the alleged abusers. Once the probe progresses, the chances of involvement of more people cannot be ruled out," he said, adding, "The girl has been

shifted to a shelter under the CWC, considering her protection."

Narrating the alleged chain of events, police said one of the arrested, aged 21, had sent obscene photos and text messages to the girl when she was aged 13 and also secured some nude photos. When the girl was 16, the man took her to a deserted rubber plantation and allegedly raped her, recording it on his mobile phone.

It is alleged that he and his friends gangraped her on another occasion, and the accused took her father's phone number.

Significantly, some of the suspects are already facing various criminal charges — from POCSO cases to culpable homicide.

The mobile phones of the arrested men have been seized, said police.

"A few of the arrested are from the victim's village. I spoke to the girl's father, who said he never knew about the incidents," said someone who knows the family.

PLUTUS IAS

**BOTANY**

OPTIONAL BATCH STARTING FROM 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2025

By Khushmeet Kaur, M.Sc. (Jamia Hamdard)

OPTIONAL SUBJECT CLASSES

- Mathematics
- Economics
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against New Zealand in Mumbai so he could stay fresh for the Test series in Australia.

In Australia, Bumrah bowled 151.2 overs in five Test matches with an average of 13.06 and a strike rate of 28.3. He was also the stand-in captain for the first Test in Perth as Rohit Sharma skipped the match. Bumrah also captained the side for the final Test in Sydney when Rohit decided to sit out.





AT JHUGGI BASTI PRADHAN SAMMELAN

You can liberate Delhi on February 5, Shah tells slum dwellers; promises them houses

SAMAN HUSAIN  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah on Saturday called upon slum dwellers to “liberate” Delhi from AAP rule in the February 5 Assembly polls.

Addressing the ‘Jhuggi Basti Pradhan Sammelan’ at JLN stadium, Shah promised that no welfare schemes for the poor will be stopped and every slum dweller will be provided a house if the BJP comes to power.

“I have come today to tell you that you can become the liberator of Delhi. You can liberate Dilli from this *aapda* (disaster)... on February 5, you have to get freedom from the insensitive government... lying government. Throwing out AAP is the only way to ensure welfare of slum dwellers of Delhi,” Shah said.

Citing shortage of drinking water and sewers, and heaps of garbage in the slum clusters of the city, he added, “If you open the tap, there is dirty water. If you open the window, there is foul smell. If you go out, there are broken roads.”

Repeatedly referring to the AAP government as ‘*aapda*’, he accused the party of turning Delhi into “hell”.

Shah greeted the gathering on the first anniversary of the consecration ceremony of Ram Lalla’s idol at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya with a loud chant of ‘Jai Shri Ram’.

“We promised to build a temple for Ram Lalla, and we fulfilled it. We built toilets, and (Prime Minister Narendra) Modiji has provided housing to the poor of the country. (AAP national convenor Arvind) Kejriwalji did not. And now this is Modiji’s guarantee – BJP will give houses to every slum dweller in the country,” he said.

Maintaining that no welfare scheme for the poor will be discontinued if BJP comes to power, Shah said, “The BJP does not stop any scheme for the welfare of the poor, it only increases them (in number).”

“I want to reiterate what Prime Minister Narendra Modi said earlier that no welfare schemes for the poor will be stopped,” he said, accusing Kejriwal of spreading “lies” that the BJP will demolish the city’s slums if it came to power.

Pointing to Union government health insurance schemes like Ayushman Bharat, Shah said that Kejriwal’s resistance towards the implementation of such schemes has made Delhi residents suffer.

Shah alleged that the AAP, which had come to power after the anti-corruption movement



The crowd at JNL stadium on Saturday. Praveen Khanna

led by Anna Hazare, has instead become synonymous with corruption. “Those who agitated against corruption, who came to power by putting forward a saint like Anna (Hazare), indulged in so much corruption that they broke records of all governments of the country,” he said.

Taking a jibe at Kejriwal, Shah said that the former chief minister prioritises power over public welfare.

“If there is only one chief minister who does not resign even after going to jail, it is Kejriwal. He will not leave power. We will have to make him leave power,” he told the gathering.

Shah concluded his address by again reiterating BJP’s commitment to welfare schemes. “I want to say it again, not even a single poor welfare scheme is going to be stopped, you should not fall prey to their deception... The BJP does what it says, and it says only what it can do.”

Under its ‘Redvi pe charcha’ campaign, AAP volunteers had visited areas across the Capital, informing residents that the BJP intends to discontinue their welfare schemes, if the party come to power.

Responding to Shah’s address, Kejriwal said, “Today, Amit Shahji abused me and the people of Delhi a lot. The people of Delhi will answer this in the elections. Amitiji told a lot of lies to the slum dwellers. Tomorrow morning, I will hold a press conference from a slum, which they (BJP) have planned to demolish after the elections. I will expose the dirty intentions of BJP with full evidence.”

The event was marked by grand preparations. The roads leading to the stadium were lined with life-size cut-outs of Shah, Modi, and BJP national president J P Nadda.

At the main entrance, men dressed in black kurtas played nagadas and bugles, while others beat dhols. Attendees entered the stadium after clicking photographs in front of a poster of the PM at a specially-arranged selfie booth.

Inside, women in sarees welcomed the attendees – slum pradhans and members of BJP’s Pooja Samiti – with chandan tilaks and party badges.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the event held at JNL stadium on Saturday. Praveen Khanna

After Atishi, Kejriwal says ‘Bidhuri BJP’s CM candidate’, party dismisses his claim

EXPRESS NEW SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

THE AAP and BJP on Saturday locked horns yet again over the issue of their respective chief ministerial faces.

AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal led the charge citing “sources” who had confirmed to his party that BJP’s Kalkaji candidate, Ramesh Bidhuri – whose statements against Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi last week triggered a furore – would be the BJP’s CM face and challenged the former South Delhi MP to a debate.

The BJP, meanwhile, accused Kejriwal of seeking to create “confusion” since he was sure that he was losing the February 5 elections.

“The Delhi elections are approaching. During elections, everyone wants to know who the chief ministerial candidate from each party is. From the AAP’s side, this has been clear from the beginning. The entire party had decided unanimously that I, Arvind Kejriwal, would be the chief ministerial candidate,” Kejriwal said, adding that this was not the case with the BJP.



Arvind Kejriwal addresses media. Gajendra Yadav

“Yesterday, their (BJP) Central Election Committee held a meeting. According to sources, it has been learnt that the BJP may have decided in that meeting to nominate Ramesh Bidhuri as its chief ministerial candidate. It is being said, as per sources, that an official announcement about Ramesh Bidhuri’s name will be made within a day or two,” he added.

After congratulating Bidhuri, the former Delhi CM urged him to explain what work he has done for Delhi in the last 10 years as a Member of Parliament.

The BJP had not fielded Bidhuri in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, replacing him by former Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, from the South Delhi seat.

“What is his vision for Delhi? What plans does he have for the city and its people if he becomes

the Chief Minister? He should clarify these to the people of Delhi,” Kejriwal said.

“Once his candidacy is officially announced, I propose that to strengthen democracy, there should be a public debate between the AAP candidate and the BJP candidate, Ramesh Bidhuri, in front of the people of Delhi, the nation, and the media. In this debate, people can assess who to vote for, based on what each has accomplished, their visions, and their plans for Delhi,” he added.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva termed Kejriwal’s claim about Bidhuri a “cooked up story”. “Kejriwal should know that BJP’s CM face will be decided by party MLAs and its national leadership. Arvind Kejriwal knows that he is losing the Delhi election to the BJP and so is trying to create confusion,” Sachdeva said.

“Kejriwal has sought to cite unknown sources to cite that Bidhuri might be our CM face but I challenge Arvind Kejriwal, who is promoting himself as CM candidate, to take legal opinion from an advocate and understand that he can’t ever be sworn in as CM in view of Supreme Court bindings,” he added.

Sachdeva further said that “all BJP candidates” for the Assembly elections “are chief ministerial candidates.” “Ours is a thoroughly democratic party where elected MLAs elect their party leader who lays claim to be the CM of Delhi,” he said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while addressing slum dwellers in Delhi on Saturday, also lashed out at Kejriwal over his claim that the BJP had finalised its Bidhuri as the CM face. “Can Kejriwal decide the BJP’s chief ministerial face,” he asked, adding that the AAP chief’s “manipulations” were understood by the people of Delhi.

Bidhuri will take on Atishi, who is seeking reelection from Kalkaji seat. He had recently said that Atishi “changed her father” by changing her surname from Marlena to Singh. His remark that he would make roads in Kalkaji smooth like “Priyanka Gandhi’s cheeks” had also drawn flak.

NEW DELHI ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY

BJP Union ministers and MPs fabricating fake votes, Kejriwal writes to CEC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

AAP NATIONAL convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday accused the BJP of “largescale voter list manipulations” in the New Delhi Assembly constituency.

In a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), he alleged that BJP Union ministers and MPs were “fabricating fake votes”. He cited 33 fraudulent entries allegedly registered at BJP candidate and his rival on the seat

Pravesh Verma’s address, demanding immediate action, including the lodging of an FIR and Verma’s disqualification if he was found complicit.

Alleging that applications for creating “40 new voter IDs have been filed from the homes of several BJP ministers and MPs during December and January”, Kejriwal asked, “How is it that so many people suddenly started living in BJP MPs’ houses? There are cases where a single-room slum has (sent) applications for 30 new voter IDs, or a small shop

has (sent) applications for 40 new voter IDs. Who are these people?”

“Gradually, the public is realising that BJP does not fight elections fairly. It relies solely on dishonesty during elections. Our workers have been vigilant and caught each of its misdeeds,” he added.

Kejriwal also alleged that BJP MPs staying in the New Delhi Assembly constituency were “transferring votes from across India to their residences on a large scale”.

“This is nothing less serious or

shocking than an attempt at largescale booth capturing that India has seen in the past... the BJP is engaging in backdoor tactics to hoodwink the people of Delhi and manipulate electoral rolls secretly,” he claimed.

“BJP... is transferring votes from across the country to the New Delhi Assembly constituency using the addresses of its own MPs and ministers who live in the... constituency. Shockingly, 33 new votes have been submitted for being transferred to BJP’s candidate Parvesh

Verma’s official residence. Are we expected to believe that overnight, 33 people from across India have shifted their residence to that of Mr Verma,” he asked.

Kejriwal annexed documents such as addresses of BJP leaders and premises to which “hundreds of votes were being transferred”, addresses of small homes, shops, and offices as well as “addresses that are nowhere to be found”.

“It appears that several BJP Union ministers and members of the Union Cabinet are involved in

this malpractice... It is inconceivable how such a high number of voters could have suddenly applied to be transferred to these properties without planning by the highest levels of BJP leadership,” he alleged.

Kejriwal demanded that these “suspicious vote transfers” be halted immediately and investigation be carried out into alleged involvement of “BJP MPs and ministers whose residences are being misused for this malpractice and register a criminal FIR against those responsible”.



BJP leaders at the launch of the campaign song in New Delhi on Saturday. Praveen Khanna

Khurana’s son Harish in BJP’s second list of 29, MLA makes way for Kapil Mishra

Party has declared 58 nominees so far

JATIN ANAND  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

THE BJP on Saturday released its second list of candidates for the Delhi Assembly elections, which includes a former Delhi chief minister’s son, five women candidates and almost all the leaders the party “imported” from the Congress ahead of the Lok Sabha elections last year.

With 29 names in this list, the BJP has thus declared 58 candidates out of Delhi’s 70 Assembly seats. Seven of the nominees so far are women – equalling the total number of women candidates the party had fielded in the 2020 polls.

According to BJP insiders, more women leaders are likely to figure in the party’s third and final list of candidates, which may, however, include less than 12 names so that the nominees from its NDA allies, such as the Janata Dal (United), Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) and Eknath Sinde-led Shiv Sena, could be accommodated.

“With the announcement of Harish Khurana, former Delhi CM Madan Lal Khurana’s son, as the BJP candidate from Moti Nagar, the party has now given tickets to two ex-CM’s sons including Sahib Singh Verma’s son Parvesh Verma against Arvind Kejriwal from New Delhi,” a senior party leader said.

“In addition to five women candidates on this list – which brings the total number of female leaders fielded so far to seven – more are likely to be accommodated in the final list. Councillors with a good public connect, such as Umang Bajaj who has been fielded from Rajinder Nagar and Manoj Kumar Jindal fielded from Sadar Bazar, have also made the cut among many other sitting or former BJP councillors,” a party source said.



Kapil Mishra, Harish Khurana

The BJP also dropped its sitting Karawal Nagar MLA Mohan Singh Bisht, who has represented the seat five times, for Kapil Mishra, marking the return of the latter to his former home turf from where he had been elected on an AAP ticket in 2015. Another AAP turncoat in this list is Priyanka Gautam, a former councillor who joined the BJP in December, who will contest from the Scheduled Caste-reserved Kondli seat.

Another senior BJP leader pointed out that all but one of the senior Congress leaders who had joined the BJP in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections have been given tickets.

While the names of leaders such as former Delhi Congress president Arvinder Singh Lovely, fielded from Gandhi Nagar, and Rajkumar Chauhan, pitched from Mangolpuri, figured in the BJP’s first list of 29 candidates last week, Neeraj Basoya, a former Congress MLA, has been given the BJP ticket from Kasturba Nagar now. Naseeb Singh, who had also joined the BJP last year, has not been fielded so far.

“The seriousness with which the BJP views the upcoming elections can be understood by the point that even sitting councillors have been fielded, reducing our numbers in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi House,” a source said.

The BJP’s Laxmi Nagar MLA Abhay Verma is among the party’s sitting legislators who have been named in the second list.

Corruption and open loot, say BJP and Cong on CAG report on liquor policy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

WITH A Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report purportedly saying that the state exchequer incurred a loss of Rs 2,026 crore due to the Delhi government’s now-retracted excise policy, the BJP and the Congress on Saturday took on the AAP, accusing it indulging in corruption and open loot.

The report, which is yet to be tabled before the Delhi Assembly, allegedly highlights lapses and violations under the leadership of former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy, Manish Sisodia.

“The new liquor policy implemented by Kejriwal government was not ratified by the Delhi Assembly and lacked transparency on several counts... Had BJP’s protest not forced Arvind Kejriwal to withdraw his new liquor policy, then by now the loss would have crossed at least Rs 10,000 crore,” Delhi BJP chief Virender Sachdeva said.

Joining the attack, Delhi

Congress chief Devender Yadav said, “It was the Delhi Congress that first complained to the Lt Governor about corruption in the implementation of the old liquor policy, as there was a huge scam in granting licenses, in direct violation of Delhi Excise Rule 2010... open loot was carried out to help benefit contractors in many ways.”

Responding to the attacks, AAP Spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar questioned the authenticity of the purported CAG report. “The BJP is presenting its office-manufactured documents as CAG reports instead of naming its CM face... BJP should discuss real CAG reports on irregularities in projects like Dwarka Expressway and Ayushman Bharat in Delhi,” she said.

According to the purported report, while liquor sale in Delhi from December 2021 to August 2022 under the new policy was an estimated 64 crore bottles, much more than around 58 crore bottles between December 2018 and August 2019, it did not result in higher revenues for the state government.

the lavish Sheesh Mahal.”

Addressing mediapersons, Sachdeva said, “Delhi is in turmoil. A person who came to manage and transform Delhi ended up changing his character, behavior, and conduct instead.”

“During the Mughal rule, people used to come to see the grandeur of their palaces. Today, Delhi’s so-called leader has built a Sheesh Mahal using the hard-earned money of its residents... a blot on Delhi’s pride,” he added. The ‘Aapda-e-Azam’ poster showed Kejriwal’s photo-shopped image in an imperial Mughal attire.

SONG RELEASE

BJP rolls out campaign song, attacks Kejriwal with song & poster on ‘Sheesh Mahal’

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

THE DELHI BJP on Saturday rolled out its election campaign song *Bahane Nahi Badlav Chahien, Delhi Mein BJP Sarkar Chahiye* (need change not excuses, Delhi requires BJP government), rendered by BJP’s three-time Northeast Delhi MP and popular singer-actor Manoj Tiwari.

While the song was officially launched during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Parivartan Rally last week in Rohini, it was on Saturday rolled out extensively

for the February 5 poll campaign. Tiwari claimed that the song has been viewed over 1.1 crore times on social media. “I have been composing campaign songs for many years now, and it’s immensely fulfilling to see how much Delhi’s people connect with them. This time, the song *Bahane Nahi, Badlav Chahiye* is resonating deeply with everyone.”

“The theme song summarises the manifesto,” said Tiwari humming a few lines at the press conference. The BJP is yet to announce its manifesto for the elections.

“The song was recorded late at night, around 2 am, at a Safdarjung studio, and such was the excitement that it was completed in a single take,” he added.

The song reflects the mood of the city to oust the government that “cheated” people with false promises and set record of corruption, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva told mediapersons.

“For the past 10 years, Delhi’s people have suffered under the ‘aapda (disaster)’ government, which has misused public funds for personal luxury. The time has come for Delhiites to seek accountability and usher in

change,” he added.

BJP media head Praveen Shankar Kapoor said, “Songs by MP Manoj Tiwari always energise party workers. When this song was played at the Prime Minister’s rally, the public’s overwhelming enthusiasm showed that it would be a catalyst for change in Delhi.”

The BJP, meanwhile, on Saturday also launched a song and poster on ‘Sheesh Mahal’, sharpening its attack on AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal on the issue of corruption.

The song *Sheesh mahal aapda failane walon ka adda* and a

poster titled ‘Aapda-e-Azam’ were released during a press conference by Sachdeva. According to the party, the song is meant to narrate the “story of corruption” and “loot” behind the 6, Flag Staff Road bungalow at Civil Lines – the official residence of the Delhi chief minister – which was being used by Kejriwal when he was the CM and allegedly revamped with taxpayers’ money.

In its statement to the press, the Delhi BJP said, “The song highlights Arvind Kejriwal’s corruption and how he misused Delhi taxpayers’ money to build

# Lawrence gang member killed as key accomplices thought he was running parallel outfit, say police

PRAGYNESH  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

WHEN SUNIL Yadav, an alleged drug smuggler from Punjab who ran the Lawrence Bishnoi gang's illegal narcotics business in the US, was killed at Stockton city in California on December 23, Lawrence's accomplices Rohit Godara and Goldy Brar had taken responsibility for his murder.

On why he got his own gang member killed, Brar had claimed on Facebook that it was to avenge Ankit Bhadu – a shooter of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang – because Sunil Yadav “had colluded with Punjab Police to orchestrate (his) encounter”. Bhadu, who was involved in multiple cases of murder, extortion and attempt to murder, was killed by a team of Punjab Police's Organised Crime Control Unit in Zirakpur in February 2019.

Delhi Police officers, however, claimed that Yadav was killed as Brar and Godara thought he was “creating a parallel organisation in Bhadu's name” even after his death and that too within the gang.

“Bhadu and Sunil (Yadav) were both active in Sri Ganganagar as members of Lawrence Bishnoi gang and were very close to each other. Godara became the main aide of Lawrence Bishnoi after Bhadu was killed. However, Sunil and few other gang members saw Bhadu as their leader even after his death,” a Delhi Police Special Cell officer said.

Around 2021, the officer added, relations between Brar, Godara and Yadav worsened. “Sunil had been operating



Sunil Yadav

the gang's illegal drug business and extortion in the name of Bhadu even after his death and not Brar and Godara who had taken over after Bhadu's

murder,” the officer said.

“Godara believed Sunil was creating a parallel organisation in Bhadu's name and that too within the gang itself. That's why they killed Sunil,” the officer added.

The officer further said, “...Godara also wanted to gain the support of Bhadu's supporters by showing them that Sunil was responsible for the killing of their idol (Bhadu) and now Godara has honored his memory by avenging him.” Yadav, who belonged to the Fazilka district in Punjab, had fled to the US two years ago, using a fake passport, the officer said.

Godara and Brar, both allegedly in the US, are key men of the gang, executing the orders of Lawrence Bishnoi, who is lodged at Sabarmati jail in Ahmedabad.

The gang was involved in a number of shootings and extortion call in the Capital in 2024, including the killing of alleged police informer and gym owner Nadir Shah in Greater Kailash.

The police said that after Bhadu's death in 2019, Godara and Brar had become even more central to the gang's operations in North India.

# Law student from Amity falls to death from high-rise, family suspects foul play, say police

Abetment to suicide case registered after father files complaint

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NOIDA, JANUARY 11

A LAW student from Amity University died on Saturday after falling from the seventh floor of a high-rise in Noida. Police said that the incident took place at the Supreme Tower Society in Noida's Sector 99, adding that his family has alleged foul play.

“The deceased was pursuing LLB,” said Manish Kumar Mishra, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police, Noida. Officials said the student had come to the residential society to visit his friends.

“Around 4.30 pm, he fell from the seventh floor of an eighteen-storey building under suspicious circumstances. He

Officials said the student had come to a residential society in Noida to visit his friends

was rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment where doctors declared him dead,” an officer said.

Around 10 pm, a case was registered under section 108 (abetting suicide) with the Noida Police after the student's father filed a complaint.

“The family suspects the involvement of his friends. All the angles are being thoroughly probed. We are questioning the people present at the gathering. Further investigation is under-

way,” DCP Rambadan Singh said. Sources mentioned that the family has also alleged in the complaint that the student was being harassed by a fellow female student.

The body was found in a secluded area, where construction had been going on for several months. Security officials at the society said that upon hearing a thud, they ran outside.

“There was no blood around. We thought he was only injured so we were taking him to the hospital but as we touched his head, we felt he had stopped breathing and we informed the police,” said a security official.

His body was taken for post-mortem at around 6 pm after the father of the deceased arrived.

# Two men forget to turn off gas stove at night, die

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NOIDA, JANUARY 11

TWO PERSONS died after allegedly inhaling carbon monoxide gas while they were asleep at their rented room in Noida's Sector 70 on Friday.

The deceased, Kapendra (22) and Shivam (23), had left the gas stove on at night and appear to have died from suffocation, the Noida district hospital said.

The police received information about the deaths from the Noida district hospital.

An official from the hospital said on Saturday that Kapendra and Shivam, both natives of Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal dis-

trict, lived in a 10 feet by 10 feet room and ran a food cart selling *chole-kulche*.

“It is believed that on the night of their death, the men were boiling peas on the gas stove and fell asleep without turning it off. The peas began to burn and the room filled with smoke and carbon monoxide,” the official added.

“People in the rooms nearby noticed the smoke and broke open the door, where the men had appeared to have died due to suffocation.”

The Station House Officer of Noida Phase 3 police station, Dhruv Bhusan Dubey, said: “We have not found any other injury marks on their bodies.”

The bodies have been sent for post-mortem, he added.



## OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ELECTION OFFICER, DISTRICT : SOUTH-EAST, DELHI

जिला निर्वाचन अधिकारी कार्यालय, जिला: दक्षिणपूर्व, दिल्ली  
OLD GARGI COLLEGE BUILDING LAJPAT NAGAR-IV:  
NEW DELHI-110024 PH.: 011-26476401, 26476402

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding appointment of Expenditure Observer, Delhi Legislative Assembly Election 2025 South East Delhi District:

This is for information of Political Parties and General Public/ Voters of Delhi Legislative Assembly Election 2025 of South East Delhi District, that the Election Commission of India has appointed the following officer as Expenditure Observers for Delhi Legislative Assembly Election 2025 for South East Delhi District:

Allotted AC Name	Name of Observer	Mobile no.	Observer Office Address
AC-41, Jangpura AC-42, Kasturba Nagar	Shri Vijay Sharma, IRAS	+91-9560712364	Room no. 12, Ground Floor, O/o District Magistrate South East, Lajpat Nagar IV, New Delhi.
AC-51 Kalkaji AC-53, Badarpur AC-54 Okhla	Shri Lakshmikantha D, IRS (C&CE)	+91-9560783240	Room no. 12, Ground Floor, O/o District Magistrate South East, Lajpat Nagar IV, New Delhi.
AC-49 Sangam Vihar AC-52 Tughlakabad	Sh. Braj Lal Meena, IRS (C&CE)	+91-9560738764	Room no. 12, Ground Floor, O/o District Magistrate South East, Lajpat Nagar IV, New Delhi.

The Expenditure Observers will be available to General Public on all working days from 17.01.2024 till completion of Election at the venue mentioned in aforesaid table. Any complaint with respect to malpractices in Election and violation of Model Code of Conduct may be reported at the contact number given above.

Sd/-

(ANIL BANKA)

DISTRICT ELECTION OFFICER  
DISTRICT: SOUTH EAST

DIP/Shabdarth/Classified/0364/24-25

# Man seen spitting on chapatti at hotel in viral video arrested: Cops

Ghaziabad: After a viral video showed a man spitting on a chapatti at a hotel while putting it in a tandoor, a 20-year-old — who worked as a cook at the hotel in the Khoda area — was arrested on Friday, said Ghaziabad Police.

“We registered a case against Irfaan, the accused, under sections 272 (malig-nant act likely to spread infection of dis-

ease dangerous to life), 274 (adulteration of food or drink intended for sale), and 275 (sale of noxious food or drink) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita,” said Assistant Commissioner of Police, Indirapuram, Swatantra Singh.

Singh said that Irfan is a resident of Bijnor in Uttar Pradesh. The video, he added, was apparently shot recently. **ENS**



## RESERVE BANK OF INDIA www.rbi.org.in

### Redressal of complaints against entities regulated by RBI

#### Reserve Bank – Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS)

- The Reserve Bank has mandated all its regulated entities to have a mechanism at their end to resolve the complaints received by them from their customers, which is considered as the Internal Grievance Redress Mechanism of regulated entities.
- The Reserve Bank has also put in place an expeditious and cost-free Alternate Grievance Redress Mechanism for resolution of customer complaints relating to deficiencies in services rendered by its regulated entities through the Reserve Bank – Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2021 (RB-IOS).
- Banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies, Payment System Participants and Credit Information Companies are considered as regulated entities under the Grievance Redress Mechanism.
- The RB-IOS adopts a “One Nation One Ombudsman” approach for all complaints against any regulated entities. It is therefore no longer necessary for a complainant to identify under which Ombudsman scheme/office, he/she should file a complaint with the Ombudsman.
- The complaints against regulated entities not covered under the RB-IOS are handled at Consumer Education and Protection Cells (CEPCs) for resolution.
- The list of regulated entities covered under the ambit of RB-IOS and CEPC can be accessed by visiting <https://cms.rbi.org.in>

#### What to do if you have a complaint?

You can lodge complaint against the regulated entity at its branch or through online in the grievance redressal portal or any other mode as mentioned in its website. Get acknowledgement or save the reference number of the complaint.

#### When to approach the RBI Ombudsman?

You can approach the RBI Ombudsman, in case:

- **No reply is received from the regulated entity within 30 days** - Anytime within one year and 30 days from the date of your complaint to regulated entity.
- **Reply received from the regulated entity is unsatisfactory** - Anytime within one year of receipt of reply from the concerned regulated entity.

**Note:**

- The complaint should contain all requisite details / information as per the complaint form prescribed in the RB-IOS.
- The complaint should not have been dealt with / pending with any other forum (like Courts) or dealt earlier by the RBI Ombudsman.
- **Filing complaint directly with RBI Ombudsman, without approaching the RE, may lead to its rejection.**

#### How to lodge a complaint with RBI?

Complaint against the regulated entity can be filed through any of the following modes:

- Online through the Complaint Management System (CMS) portal of RBI at <https://cms.rbi.org.in>
- Physical complaint (letter / post) in the form as specified in Annexure in the RB-IOS to “Centralized Receipt and Processing Centre, 4th floor, Reserve Bank of India, Sector-17, Central Vista, Chandigarh – 160017”

#### How to know more about lodging a complaint with RBI?

For more information, you can approach RBI Contact Centre facility with Toll-free Number: 14448. The contact center with Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) is available 24x7, while the facility to connect to Contact Centre personnel is available from Monday to Friday except National Holidays, between 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM for English, Hindi and ten regional languages (Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Telugu and Tamil).

#### For more information

Please Visit:

FAQs on RB-IOS, 2021 - [https://www.rbi.org.in/scripts/FS\\_FAQs.aspx?fn=2745](https://www.rbi.org.in/scripts/FS_FAQs.aspx?fn=2745)  
Or CMS Portal - <https://cms.rbi.org.in/>

(For complaints against DICGC, members of public can lodge the complaint at following address/ e-mail Id)

**Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation**  
The General Manager  
DICGC, Complaint Redressal Cell,  
Reserve Bank of India, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Opp. Mumbai Central Railway Station,  
Byculla, Mumbai – 400008  
E-mail: [dicgc.complaints@rbi.org.in](mailto:dicgc.complaints@rbi.org.in)  
Contact No. 022-23028000, Ext No- 8000,

# 6 GOVT & POLITICS

## Rijiju embarks on five-day visit to Saudi, to sign agreement for Hajj pilgrimage

New Delhi: Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju Saturday embarked on a five-day visit to Saudi Arabia to sign a bilateral agreement for the Hajj pilgrimage of 2025, where India is seeking an additional quota for 10,000 pilgrims.

Rijiju is scheduled to meet Saudi Arabian Minister Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al Rabiah Monday when the two leaders are expected to sign the bilateral agreement.

"I look forward to visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to sign the bilateral agreement on Hajj 2025 and strengthen the people-to-people ties between our two great nations," Rijiju said on X.

Rijiju will also meet Saleh Al Jasser, the Saudi Minister of Transport and Logistic Services and discuss Hajj flight operations and the pilgrimage-related bus and train services with him.

Rijiju will also visit the Jeddah Haj Terminal, used by Indian pilgrims, where the government has dedicated an office space for facilitation. India's Hajj quota for 2025 is fixed by Saudi Arabia at 1,75,025 pilgrims and the government is seeking an additional 10,000 quota for this year.

Rijiju will also visit Madina, where he will visit the mosques at Quba and Qublatana.

He will also meet Prince Khalid Al Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Advisor to King Salman, the governor of Makkah Region and the chairman of Central Hajj Committee and Prince Salman bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz al Saud, the Governor of Madina. **PTI**



Union Home Minister Amit Shah and NCB chief Anurag Garg in New Delhi on Saturday. *ANI*

## Shah: 7-fold increase in drug seizure... drones, dark web still challenge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah Saturday asked all states/UTs and agencies to take legal action against illegal, clandestine labs with ruthless approach.

"Narcotics worth ₹16,914 crore were seized in 2024, the highest recorded since Independence... Dark web, cryptocurrency, online marketplace and drones continue to be a challenge for the country and these have to be checked by strict measures," said Shah while chairing a regional conference on 'Drug Trafficking and National Security'. "All states should destroy illegal clandestine laboratories with rigour and take legal action against them with a ruthless approach," he said.

"In the last 10 years, there has been a seven-fold increase in the

## As BJP holds organisational elections, why not to expect changes in power structure

LIZ MATHEW  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

THE WORLD'S "largest political party", as it calls itself, the BJP is aiming higher in seeking to take its membership to 10 crore by the end of an ongoing drive. However, as it becomes the dominant dispensation across large swathes of the country, the BJP's other definition of itself, as "the party with a difference", has seen moderation.

It earned that distinction for both its cadre-based structure and internal discipline, as well as strong leaders at all levels and the absence of a centralised command.

While the BJP retains a lot of that character, especially in its strong grassroots network, say leaders, there is little doubt that all power in the party now flows from the top in Delhi.

More than six months after the 18th Lok Sabha was formed, the BJP Parliamentary Party has not met once. With many articulate stalwarts in the ranks, this forum once saw vibrant interactions. The only such meeting of BJP MPs was in June, when they met under the umbrella of the NDA – short of a minority in the Lok Sabha now, the BJP is dependent on NDA partners at the Centre.

Even meetings of the BJP Parliamentary Board, the apex decision-making body that used to meet for every crucial decision, including to pick chief ministers, have become rare. The CMs are now chosen by the top leadership, and the decision communicated to the legislative party. This was

on display after the BJP's Assembly wins in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh last year, when the party picked absolute surprises to hold the top posts.

Lately, even the BJP's Central Election Committee (CEC), the top body that selects candidates for polls, has not been meeting often. The first list of 29 names for Delhi was announced without the CEC meeting even once. Sources said that in "a departure from procedure", a file of names was rotated among CEC members instead, with the list rushed out in time for Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually launching the BJP campaign in Delhi.

For Jharkhand and Maharashtra Assembly polls, the CEC met only once, unlike the usual practice of a meeting before the release of every list. Party insiders say that instead of CEC meetings, there were multiple "internal meetings" before the list went to Modi for "final clearance".

Party leaders say the final call is Modi's, while crucial appointees to organisational posts also carry Union Home Minister Amit Shah's stamp.

With Modi's popularity still the BJP's trump card across elections, party cadres don't have a reason to complain. However, certain quarters feel that, in the long run, the "concentration" of power is hurting the party – apart from depriving the BJP of its core strength of influential leaders at every rung.

Modi himself is one example, having risen to the top after long years as Gujarat CM. His contemporaries at that time included names such as Shivraj Singh



The meetings of BJP Parliamentary Board that used to meet for every crucial decision, including to pick CMs, have become rare.

Chouhan in Madhya Pradesh, Vasundhara Raje in Rajasthan, Raman Singh in Chhattisgarh and B S Yediyurappa in Karnataka.

Of the new crop of CMs, most take their cue from the Centre, say party leaders. "They simply follow directives from Delhi," a leader said, adding that the few BJP CMs now with an independent standing of their own are Yogi Adityanath (Uttar Pradesh), Himanta Biswa Sarma (Assam) and Devendra Fadnavis (Maharashtra).

In the BJP organisational polls, which are currently on, the emphasis is on "consensus". As per the BJP constitution, the party president is elected by an electoral college consisting of BJP National Council members and members of state councils, with elections prescribed for everything from local committees to mandal and district panels.

But, senior BJP leader Satish Punia, the in-charge of elections in Haryana for the BJP, told *The Indian Express* that consensus was

"preferred" when it came to mandal, booth and zilla committees. That didn't mean there was no choice, he said. "We have an internal democratic pattern, where the choice is by common consensus."

The process is not without hiccups, though. In Goa, a section of the BJP leaders recently protested that most of the chosen mandal presidents were either protégés of ministers or MLAs, or backed by them.

In Madhya Pradesh, the process of selection of zilla presidents, which was expected to be completed by December, has been delayed reportedly due to the lack of consensus among leaders. Senior party leaders had a meeting with probable candidates for district presidents recently to break the stalemate.

In Kerala, mandal committee presidents were chosen on "group basis" and Pathanamthitta and Kollam districts witnessed tension as a section of the leaders accused the official faction of deciding unilaterally. "The fight in these districts became public and the local media reported them. It was embarrassing for the party," a state leader said, adding that this showed the failure to "exercise a proper democratic process".

To many BJP leaders, the worry is that the party's course has started mirroring the Congress's. "The Congress started disintegrating when its high command in New Delhi became extremely powerful, leaving the state leadership hand-capped... In the 1970s and 1980s, the Congress relied solely on its central leadership, India

or Rajiv Gandhi, to win," a party leader said, pointing out that the Congress fortunes have been sliding since their passing.

Another leader said: "Earlier we used to identify such issues as Congress issues. But now we realise it's related to power, not with any individual or parties."

At the same time, the BJP's talent-spotting process remains robust in a way that the Congress has struggled to nurture, particularly when it comes to the grassroots and ordinary workers who don't have any political legacy.

"No other party has the kind of cadre movement that happens in the BJP. The Left too could claim grassroot democracy, but its presence is minuscule now," said a party leader.

Even if the booth committees and presidents are picked without elections and by consensus, the leader added, "the presence of multiple booths and committees is a testimony to the democratic process, because it involves many... The constitution of the committees itself enhances democracy and inclusivity, as it has social, gender, and economic diversities. Is Modi dictating who is going to head a booth?"

The leader pointed out that in the BJP, there is another restraining factor against a unipolar power centre – the RSS. With the Sangh kept in the loop on major decisions and appointments, the interests that need to be accommodated are much more.

The leader added: "Of course, centralisation happens, but at the top level. At the bottom, despite all the problems, it is still vibrant."

### INAUGURATES AUDITORIUM AT FTII, PUNE



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw invites students on stage to inaugurate a modern cinema theatre-cum-auditorium at FTII, Pune, on Saturday. *Express*

## Vaishnaw: Our legacy provides firm foundation for further excellence

ALISTER AUGUSTINE  
PUNE, JANUARY 11

UNION I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw inaugurated a modern cinema theatre-cum-auditorium at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) Pune, in his maiden visit to the institution. FTII celebrated the inauguration with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and lamp-lighting event in the presence of students and faculty.

Addressing the students and faculty at an open forum, Vaishnaw shared his vision for elevating FTII's standing in the global stage. "Our legacy and heritage provide a firm foundation

to embark on the journey of further excellence," he said. The Minister fielded questions on various topics, including the proposed deemed university status for FTII, and assured the gathering of the government's commitment to advancing cinema education in the country.

Vaishnaw invited students to inaugurate the auditorium by cutting the ribbon to the venue and lighting the lamps on stage at the event.

The newly inaugurated 586-seat auditorium boasts state-of-the-art facilities, including a cinema projector, a public address system for stage performances, and a Dolby Atmos surround

sound system. A standout feature is the innovative horizontally movable screen, measuring 50 ft in width and 20 ft in height, which can be adjusted seamlessly via remote control. This unique design allows the auditorium to transform effortlessly into a cinema theatre, making it a first-of-its-kind innovation. FTII has filed a patent for this pioneering feature.

Commenting on the significance of the auditorium, the minister said, "The new auditorium will not only be an invaluable strength for FTII's pedagogy but will also become a key presence in Pune's rich cultural landscape."

## In 2nd phase, Genome India project to focus on diseases

ANONNA DUTT  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

AFTER COMPLETING India's baseline map by sequencing 10,000 genomes, the Genome India project is set to move into its second phase during which samples of individuals with specific diseases would also be sequenced.

"Now that we have released the data of healthy individuals, the second phase of the project would involve sequencing the genomes of diseased persons. There are ongoing discussions with experts to finalise what diseases should be included and how many samples for them need to be sequenced to give meaningful insights," Dr Suchita Ninawe, senior scientist at the Department of Biotechnology, told *The Indian Express*.

Genome India is a government-backed project to collect and catalogue the genetic variations specific to Indian populations. India-specific genetic information is not very well reflected in global human genome databases. Such information is valuable for a number of reasons, including diagnosis and treatment of several gene-related diseases.

Launched in 2020, 10,000 sequences from healthy individuals were collected in the first phase of the project. The second phase seeks to expand the database to one million sequences, including genetic information of people with specific diseases.

A comparison of the healthy and diseased genome can help researchers identify targets for developing treatments and diagnostic tests. It is the first step towards personalised treatment and medicine, which is supposed to be the future of healthcare.

The diseases that would most likely be included in the list would be different types of cancers, chronic conditions such as diabetes, and various neurological or neurodegenerative diseases. Rare diseases that are found in Indian populations are also likely to be included in the list of diseases to be studied for the next phase of Genome India project.

"This data will also help us understand why certain diseases happen, especially when it comes to rare diseases that are

EXPLAINED

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Multiple benefits

BESIDES UNDERSTANDING the susceptibility of people to specific diseases, which can lead to personalised and precision medicine, genome mapping has several other benefits – tracing ancestry and evolutionary history of people, advancing scientific research, and preparing for Covid-like pandemics in future.

not yet extensively studied," said Dr Ninawe.

The second phase would also cover many more linguistic and ethnic groups. In the first phase, individuals from 99 population groups were included. But as many as 4,635 different population groups have been identified in India.

The next phase would have representation of all the states and UTs, most linguistic and ethnic groups, and rural populations, said Prof Y Narahari from the Indian Institute of Science, one of the lead scientists on this project. More than 20 major research institutions are participating in this project.

"This is just the beginning," Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary of Department of Biotechnology said. "The data from the first phase has set the standards, and it makes us feel very confident to expand the dataset to one million genomes of various kinds."

One million genomes would put India among a small group of countries that have managed to sequence a large number of genomes to understand genetic variation within their populations.

The first Human Genome Project, which was an international consortium funded by the US National Institutes of Health among others, published the world's first complete human genome in 2003. Since then, the '1,000 Genomes' project, again an international collaboration, published 1,092 sequences in 2012. A UK government project sequenced 100,000 genomes by 2018.

## ‘How long will they deceive us’: Vijay uses MGR movie lyrics to target DMK over NEET

ARUN JANARDHANAN  
CHENNAI, JANUARY 11

ACTOR-POLITICIAN Vijay has launched a scathing attack on the DMK government, accusing it of betraying public trust by failing to deliver on its promise to abolish the NEET. His statement came a day after CM M K Stalin, also the party president, admitted that only the Centre holds the authority to scrap the contentious exam – a political flash-point in the state.

In a sharply-worded social media post, Vijay invoked a famous lyric from an MGR film to criticise the DMK, writing, "How long will they deceive us in this land, in our own land, in our country? These song lyrics are highly relevant to the current rulers of Tamil Nadu. Their strategy seems to be to make false promises during elections, gain the people's trust to win, and then deceive them again after coming to power".

Vijay pointed to the 2021 Assembly election campaign, during which the DMK had assured voters that it would cancel NEET if elected. The actor alleged that the party made such promises to gain votes, claiming it knew "the secret to abolishing" the exam. "They convinced the people of Tamil Nadu with this assurance," Vijay said.

"However, now they have de-



Their strategy seems to be to make false promises, says Vijay

clared that the authority to cancel NEET lies with the central government and cannot be revoked by the state government. Isn't this an act of betrayal towards the people who voted for them?"

The state has been arguing for long that the national-level test disadvantages students from rural and economically weaker backgrounds who lack access to the same coaching facilities as their urban counterparts.

Vijay did not stop at criticising the ruling party's handling of the NEET issue. "The dream of the Tamil Nadu rulers to deceive the people with any lie they choose will no longer come true in the days to come," he said, signalling a sharper political tone as he continues to position himself as a critic of DMK.

"NEET did not enter Tamil Nadu as long as our leader Kalaignar (late CM M Karunanidhi) and late CM J Jayalalithaa were in power. The exam was introduced only during your regime," Stalin said, while replying to Opposition leader Edappadi K Palaniswami charge that the ruling dispensation had done nothing to abolish NEET.

## In Ayodhya-adjunct Milkipur, BJP, SP prepare for Duel 2.0

MAULSHREE SETH  
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 11

THE MUCH-AWAITED bypoll to the Milkipur Assembly seat, under the Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency, will finally be held on February 5, the Election Commission announced on January 7. Having lost the Faizabad seat in a shock defeat to the Samajwadi Party, the BJP is out for payback in kind, with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath taking charge of the Milkipur campaign himself.

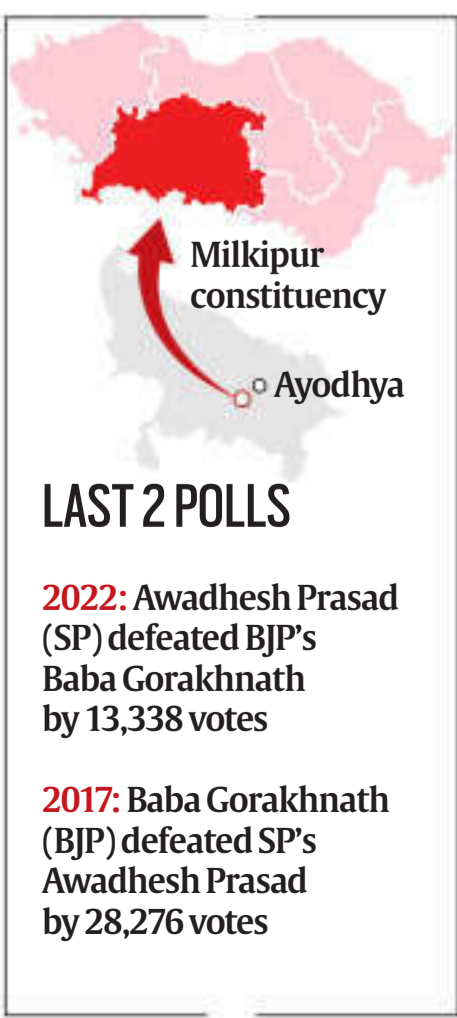
Apart from the sting of the Faizabad defeat in the Lok Sabha polls, months after the consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya – which also falls under the parliamentary constituency – there is another reason the BJP is sparing no effort in

Milkipur. The Assembly bypoll was necessitated because sitting SP MLA Awadhesh Prasad vacated the seat to contest the Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency, where he defeated sitting BJP MP Lallu Singh.

Awadhesh's son Ajeet is now set to get SP ticket from Milkipur, and defeating him would be as good as it gets for the BJP.

While the SP's Faizabad victory was part of its surprisingly strong showing in UP in the Lok Sabha polls, the BJP has bounced back since then, winning six of the nine Assembly seats for which bypolls were held in November; ally RLD won another. The SP ended up with only two constituencies, losing its bastion Kundarki and another sitting seat to the BJP.

This reversal has made Milkipur even more of a prestige



fight for the two parties, and could well set the tone for the 2027 Assembly polls. The SP, which made much of its Faizabad win, including giving Awadhesh the pride of place in Parliament, knows that a loss in Milkipur would dim the party's Ayodhya sparkle. The BJP realises this, as well as the fact that an opposite result would put a new spring in the SP's steps.

Winning Milkipur would also break the BJP's dry run in the seat, having won it only once in the past three decades. That was in 2017, when the party was at the height of its Modi wave in UP.

Adityanath has not just taken direct control of the Milkipur campaign, but also camped both his Deputy CMs and six of his ministers in the seat. Less than a month before the bypoll, on January 11, the CM will perform "abhishek" of Lord Ram at the

# Rise and fall of Suresh Chandrakar, key accused in Chhattisgarh journalist Mukesh Chandrakar’s murder

JAYPRAKASH SNAIDU  
RAIPUR, JANUARY 11

WHEN CONTRACTOR Suresh Chandrakar, the prime suspect in the murder of his relative and Chhattisgarh journalist Mukesh Chandrakar, got married in 2021, it became the talk of the town in the Maoist-hit Bijapur. It was a wedding the scale of which the town had never seen, with a private helicopter hired to transport Suresh’s bride from Jagdalpur and foreign dancers performing at the event.



From a private chopper to foreign dancers, Suresh Chandrakar’s wedding (right) in 2021 was a lavish affair.

Instagram @chandrakar1854

Kodoli-Mirtur-Gangalur road — the project that allegedly cost Mukesh his life. All three contracts now stand cancelled.

The murder allegedly took place on January 1 at a property that Suresh had allegedly built illegally on half an acre of land.

Located in Bijapur’s Chhattanpara, this property, police sources say, has 17 rooms and a badminton court, and was being used by Suresh’s employees.

Apart from Suresh, police have arrested his brothers Ritesh and Dinesh, and an employee, Mahendra Ramteke, for the murder. As per the sources, Suresh was hired as an SPO in the Salwa Judum, a government-



sponsored militia established to counter Maoists in Chhattisgarh, with the help of his father, a serving constable in Bijapur. Around the same time, Suresh, who was adept at cooking, also worked at the official residence of a senior police officer.

“He has always been close to some local policemen,” a close friend said. When the Salwa Judum was disbanded following a Supreme Court ruling in 2011, Suresh, a school dropout, began taking up small-scale building contracts. But it wasn’t until November 2015 that he got his major break. This came in the form of a government contract for a 32.4 km section of

the Nelsnar-Gangalur road. For Suresh, the project was a massive breakthrough given its cost — ₹54 crore.

“The road was first sanctioned in 2010 but no Class A contractor — those with no limit on contract value — was coming here due to the Maoist threat. This enabled Suresh and four others, who were Class B (contractors who could take up projects only up to ₹10 crore), to apply,” said a source.

According to sources from the state’s Public Works Department, the project was meant to be completed by July 2016 but its deadline kept getting extended, causing costs to inflate. By July 2021, its revised

cost had shot up to ₹141 crore.

“He has completed 24.9 km of the 32.4 km given to him,” a PWD official said. “Apart from this road, Suresh also had two more road contracts in Bijapur for which he has already been paid over ₹2 crore.”

Having joined the Congress in the early 2010s, he was also made an “election observer” in Maharashtra Assembly polls last year. On its part, the Congress has admitted he was a worker, but also claimed that he had “joined the BJP in December”. The Congress has not provided any proof to back this claim.

By late last year, Suresh, now a Class A contractor, had secured two more government contracts in Bijapur — the construction of an 11.20 km road between Jaigur and Tumnar at an estimated cost of ₹13 crore, and the widening of the 12.60 km Kutru-Farsegad road at an estimated cost of ₹19.50 crore.

The deadline for the first one, secured in December 2022, was January 2024, with a fourth finished so far, the second one, whose deadline was September 2025, was nearly complete — with advance payment partially made for both projects.

According to police sources, it

was Mukesh’s news report on the delay in the Nelsnar-Kodoli-Mirtur-Gangalur road that allegedly upset Suresh. The report, aired on NDTV on December 25, alleged corruption in the road project and prompted a government inquiry.

On January 3, days after the report, Mukesh’s body was found in a septic tank on Suresh’s Chhattanpara property. According to the police, it was Ritesh and Mahendra who allegedly killed him, while Suresh and his brother Dinesh allegedly helped dispose of the body and evidence.

Six of Suresh’s bank accounts have now been frozen, while the police have seized four of his vehicles — including a cement mixer allegedly used in the crime to concretise the open tank.

On January 4, Bijapur district authorities took a bulldozer to Suresh’s construction plant, claiming it had been illegally built on forest land.

Meanwhile, the PWD department has cancelled all three of his road projects and suspended his contractor licence after his arrest, officials said. The murder investigation has also prompted Goods and Services Tax raids at Suresh’s residence.

# SC: Wife can get maintenance even if she defies cohabit decree

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

IN A significant judgment, the Supreme Court has ruled that a woman can be given the right to maintenance even after she has not complied with the decree to cohabit if she has valid and sufficient reason to refuse to live with her spouse.

A bench of Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar settled the legal dispute over the question whether a husband, who secures a decree for restitution of conjugal rights, stands absolved of paying maintenance to his wife by virtue of law if she refuses to abide by the said decree and return to the matrimonial home.

It said the question as to whether noncompliance with a decree for restitution of conjugal rights by a wife would be sufficient in itself to deny her maintenance, owing to Section 125(4) of CrPc has been addressed by several high courts but no consistent view is forthcoming, due to varied and conflicting opinions. The bench said, “Thus, the preponderance of judicial thought weighs in favour of upholding the wife’s right to maintenance under Section 125 CrPc and the mere passing of a decree for restitution of conjugal rights at the husband’s behest and non-compliance therewith by the wife would not, by itself, be sufficient to attract the disqualification under Section 125(4) CrPc.”

It said it would depend on individual cases and would have to be decided on the evidence available, whether the wife still had valid reason to refuse to live with her spouse, despite such a decree.

“There can be no hard and fast rule in this regard and it must invariably depend on the distinctive facts and circumstances obtaining in each particular case... In any event, a decree for restitution of conjugal rights secured by a husband coupled with non-compliance therewith by the wife would not be determinative straightaway either of her right to maintenance or the applicability of the disqualification under Section 125(4) CrPc,” it said.

The bench gave the order, in

the case of an estranged couple from Jharkhand, who entered into the wedlock on May 1, 2014 but parted ways in August, 2015.

The husband moved the family court in Ranchi for restitution of conjugal rights claiming that she left her matrimonial home on August 21, 2015 and did not return despite repeated efforts to bring her back. His wife, in her written submission before the court, alleged that she was subjected to torture and mental agony by her husband, who demanded ₹5 lakh for purchasing a four wheeler. She also claimed he had extramarital relations and she suffered a miscarriage in January 1, 2015 but her husband did not come to see her.

The wife claimed that she was willing to return on the condition that she should be allowed to use the washroom in the house and should also be allowed to use an LPG stove to prepare food.

The family court on March 23, 2022, gave a decree for restitution of conjugal rights while noting that the husband wanted to live with her. The wife did not abide and instead filed a plea for maintenance with the family court.

The family court ordered maintenance of ₹10,000 per month to be paid to the wife. The husband challenged the order before the Jharkhand HC, which noted that his wife had not returned to the matrimonial home despite the decree for restitution of conjugal rights. The HC ruled that the wife was not entitled to maintenance. Aggrieved by the order, the wife challenged the order before the apex court, which ruled in its favour.

The top court said the high court ought not to have given such undue weightage to the said judgment and the findings therein.

It said the fact that she was not allowed to use the toilet in the house or avail proper facilities to cook food in the matrimonial home, facts which were accepted in the restitution proceedings, are further indications of her ill-treatment.

It said the order of family court order dated February 15, 2022 is upheld and restored and directed the husband to pay ₹10,000 to his estranged wife.

# Mass reforms: Bishop Bosco Puthur quits as administrator of Ernakulam archdiocese

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 11

THE DEADLOCK over liturgical reforms in the Kerala-based Syro-Malabar Church, one of the 23 eastern churches under Rome, Saturday took a new turn after Bishop Bosco Puthur quit as the administrator of the Ernakulam archdiocese.

The Synod of the Church, in an official release, said Puthur had submitted resignation in September, but the decision came Saturday, hours after a section of priests launched an agitation against Puthur at the bishop’s house in Ernakulam.

The governance of the archdiocese went back to the Church head, Major Archbishop Rapheal Thattil. He will be assisted by Archbishop Joseph Pamplany as Vicar in day-to-day matters.

Tension has been prevailing at the bishop’s house from the wee hours of Saturday after police entered the premises to remove 21 priests who were on a protest against Puthur, who had assumed office in December, 2023.

Both of Saturday developments pertain to the prevailing crisis in the archdiocese over introducing a unified form of offering the Mass. Most of the priests in the archdiocese, along a section of the faithful, have been on warpath for the last few years against the new reform in the Mass.

The warring priests had even defied the ultimatum served by Pope Francis, who wanted the entire Syro-Malabar Church to follow a uniform way of offering the Mass, which 34 other dioc-

eses under the Church implemented in recent years.

From Thursday, a section of priests has been on an indefinite protest at the bishop’s house even as the Church has its synod meeting. The situation came to a head on Saturday, when the police forcibly removed protesting priests. Subsequently, tension prevailed in the bishop’s house and its premises after the faithful clashed with the police. A section of the faithful also accused the police of having tortured the priests.

The Syro-Malabar Church Synod, a body of 50-odd bishops, meanwhile, suspended six priests and served show-cause notice to 15 others on Saturday, with regard to the agitation. This further agitated the priests and the faithful. In the evening, when Bishop Puthur’s resignation was announced, the rebel priests and faithful raised slogans rejoicing the decision.

Instead of Puthur, Thalassery archbishop Joseph Pamplany was appointed as the Vicar of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam.

An official release from the Church said Pamplany will also continue as the archbishop of Thalassery in Kannur district.

Over the years, the Catholic Church has been struggling to rein in the rebel priests of Ernakulam. Cardinal George Alenchery was forced to quit as the head of the archdiocese in the past after he lost the battle with the priests. Later CBCI president Archbishop Andrews Thazhathu, who was made the administrator of the Ernakulam archdiocese, stepped down due to rebellion.



## FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on the first anniversary of the consecration ceremony of Ram Lalla’s idol, on Saturday. *Express*

# Most of attacks on minorities ‘political’: Bangladesh police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DHAKA, JANUARY 11

A MAJORITY of incidents against the minority communities since August 4 last year were ‘political in nature’ and not ‘communal,’ Bangladesh government said Saturday quoting a police report.

Police have set up a WhatsApp number to directly receive complaints of communal violence and maintain contact with the minority community.

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus’ press wing said that the police investigation came after the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council recently claimed there were 2,010 inci-

dents of communal violence since a day before deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled the country on August 5 following a massive student-led protest that toppled her 16-year regime.

Of these, a total of 1,769 incidents were reported as attacks and vandalism; police have so far registered 62 cases on claims, and arrested at least 35 culprits based on the investigation, the CA office’s press wing statement said.

Claiming that it was found that “in the majority of the cases, the attacks were not communally motivated — rather, those were political in nature,” the statement said: “Police investigations found that 1,234 incidents were ‘political in nature’, 20 incidents were

communal and at least 161 claims were found to be false or untrue.” “According to the claims of the Council, 1,452 incidents — or 82.8 per cent of the total claims — took place on August 5, 2024, when Hasina was ousted from power.

“At least 65 incidents took place on August 4 and 70 incidents on August 6,” it said.

Apart from the Council claims, police also received 134 allegations of communal violence from August 5 through January 8, 2025, it said, adding, police responded to all those complaints and at least 53 cases were filed against those complaints and 65 offenders were held.

“In all, since August 4, a total of 115 cases have been registered

over complaints of communal attacks and at least 100 people have been arrested over the cases,” the statement said.

Before preparing the report, Bangladesh police collected the list of allegations prepared by the Council (and) communicated with the persons claimed to have been the targets of the violence, it said. The police also visited each and every place, establishment and met those mentioned in the Council’s report.

The press wing said the interim government maintained a zero-tolerance policy towards any communal attacks and ordered police to arrest the culprits. It also said it would compensate the victims.

# Mythology-themed gates, murals & sculptures to greet visitors at Kumbh

₹14.5 crore spent on four gates themed after revered Ganga, Yamuna & Saraswati rivers and Lord Shiva; 85 sub-stations installed to illuminate 4,000 hectares

MAULSHREE SETH & MANISH SAHU  
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 11

FOUR SPECIALLY designed large gates themed on the revered rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati and Lord Shiva, and other structures and sculptures themed on mythological symbols will greet the visitors at the Maha Kumbh starting January 13.

The Uttar Pradesh government has spent funds worth crores, including ₹14.5 crore on the four gates, and ₹1.5 crore each on sculptures themed after Nataraj, damroo (small two-headed drum of Lord Shiva) and Garuda (eagle-like bird who helped Lord Rama and his brother Lakshmana during their exile), to make the mela venue an immersive experience in

“sanatan culture”.

The 45-day event will culminate on February 26.

The four gates built with glass-fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC) have been designed by film director and artist Omung Kumar and might last beyond the next Maha Kumbh, officials said. While the gates developed on the theme of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers have been completed and inaugurated by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during his visit to the Maha Kumbh venue, the fourth gate built on the theme of Lord Shiva is under construction, it is learnt.

“These gates are not merely physical entry points to the city but they represent an intersection of spirituality, geography and cultural identity,” said an official.

Those arriving from Lucknow and Ayodhya will enter the city



Tents at the Sangam area for Mahakumbh 2025, in Prayagraj, on Saturday. *PTI*

from the ‘Ganga Dwar’ with a mural of Goddess Ganga over it. The gate, officials said, will be the “spiritual gateway” to the city as the river symbolises “purity and redemption”. Those arriving

from the Varanasi side will enter the city through the “Yamuna Dwar, The Entrance of Devotion and Sustenance”.

Also, those arriving from Chitrakoot and Rewa will enter

## VARANASI CIVIC BODY TELLS MEAT SHOPS IN 2-KM RADIUS OF TEMPLE TO SHUT DOWN

Lucknow: The Varanasi Municipal Corporation issued notices to the owners of 26 meat shops operating within a two-kilometre radius of the Vishwanath temple of the district, directing them to shut down as they are “violating rules”. Officials said the directive to close the shops was issued on the basis of the resolution regarding the same, which was passed by the civic body last year. Dr Santosh Pal, veterinary officer of the Municipal Corporation, said this is the second notice issued to them for not following the resolution passed by the civic body. Earlier, notices were issued to them in March. “In this drive, we have...issued notices to them for not complying with the order...,” said Pal. Meanwhile, shop owners alleged that they are being instructed to close their shops without any arrangements being made for them. **ENS**

Prayagraj through Saraswati Dwar, referred to as the “Entrance of Wisdom and Knowledge”.

The fourth gate, “Neelkanth Dwar”, being built on the theme

of Lord Shiva, is coming up on Mirzapur road.

These gates are about 15-20 km from the focal Sangam point. The murals have been developed as per the mythology. For in-

stance, the goddess Ganga is seen riding a crocodile, Yamuna a tortoise. The goddess Saraswati is seen seated on a lotus flower while Lord Shiva is sitting next to Nandi (bull).

Also, a bronze sculpture of Maratha queen Ahilya Bai Holkar has been made.

Each of these bronze sculptures is worth ₹1.3 to 1.5 crore, said officials. Meanwhile, eighty-five sub-stations have been installed to illuminate the Maha Kumbh area spread over more than 4,000 hectares, officials said.

The officials concerned have estimated the electricity consumption during the 45-day event at ₹30 crore. Nearly 2 lakh units of electricity will be consumed daily, they added.

As many as 52,000 electric poles, 70,000 LED lights and 2,016 solar hybrid lights have been installed in the area. The so-

lar hybrid lights, placed along the main roads, are programmed to automatically turn on in the evening and off in morning.

Besides illuminating the common area, the department will also provide lighting to makeshift residential set-ups and shops at the mela site.

Around 1.6 lakh tents and 50,000 shops will come up for the event, said an official.

“According to our estimate, electricity worth around Rs 30 crore will be consumed during the mega event,” said Maha Kumbh Superintendent Engineer Manoj Gupta. To ensure an uninterrupted power supply, more than 5,000 personnel, including executive engineers, sub-divisional officers, and junior engineers, from the electricity department and additional ad hoc staff have been deployed.

**Bengaluru:** The Udupi Town police in Karnataka have booked one Meenakshi Seshawat, who describes herself as cultural propagator on her Instagram profile, for allegedly causing public mischief through false statements in connection with a speech at an event in Udupi on January 4 where she had questioned the Mahatma Gandhi's contribution to India.

Seshawat was booked under sections 353 (2) and (3) of the BNS. The administrator of the Udupi Adanaru Mutt, Govinda Nagaraju, who had organised the event, was also booked. As per the FIR on January 5 based on a complaint by Sub-Inspector Punith Kumar of Udupi town police station, Seshawat during her speech on "Lessons from Bangla" questioned the title of 'Father of the Nation' accorded to Gandhi. She said that Gandhi advocated the principle of non-violence to weaken Hindus.

police sources said. **ENS**

epaper.indianexpress.com

BRIEFLY

**TELANGANA**  
5, including 2 brothers, drown in reservoir

*Hyderabad:* Five youth, including two brothers, drowned in Konda Pochamma Sagar reservoir in Siddipet district of Telangana on Saturday, police said. Seven people, including three minors, from Hyderabad, were visiting the reservoir on Saturday. All of them ventured into the reservoir, but only two returned to the bank. One of the five skidded off and the others tried to save him but all of them drowned, the police said. **PTI**

**RAJASTHAN**  
3 held in Barmer for thrashing Dalit man

*Jaipur:* Three people were arrested after a Dalit man was allegedly tied upside down from a tree and beaten up in Barmer district, police said on Saturday. A video of the incident surfaced online on Saturday following which a case was registered against five to six people under the SC/ST Act, 1989, a police officer said. Preliminary investigations suggest that the accused blamed the victim, Shrawan Meghwal, for being involved in theft. Meghwal has filed a complaint in the matter, said SHO Gudamalani Mukta Pareek. **ENS**

**MANIPUR**  
Hmar militant held, explosives recovered

*Imphal:* A team of Manipur police and 38 Assam Rifles arrested an active cadre of Hmar People's Convention (Democratic) along with explosives in the Jiribam district. Police said the cadre was arrested Thursday from Barak river bank under the jurisdiction of the Borobekra police station. The arrested cadre, Lalchuolio (48), is a resident of Lungthulien village, Pherzawl district. The forces recovered 20 explosive sticks, 11 detonators and 44 soap cases containing brown powder suspected to be a narcotic substance weighing 457 gm, police said. **ENS**

**MADHYA PRADESH**  
12-year-old girl gangraped in Damoh

*Damoh:* A 12-year-old girl was allegedly raped by three men while she was heading for a birthday party in Madhya Pradesh's Damoh district, police said on Saturday. The police are on the lookout for the accused involved in the assault that took place on Thursday evening, an official said. **PTI**

FIVE STILL TRAPPED IN RATHOLE MINE IN DIMA HASAO DISTRICT

Assam mine deaths: As three more bodies retrieved, a political war of words ensues

**SUKRITA BARUAH**  
GUWAHATI, JANUARY 11

THE BODIES of three more men were recovered from the flooded rathole mine in Assam's Dima Hasao district on Saturday, five days after they got trapped. A total of four bodies have been recovered in rescue operations since Tuesday, and at least five more miners continue to be trapped though chances of survival are slim.

The Dima Hasao police have arrested one more person in connection with the incident. On Tuesday, an individual named Punish Nunisa was arrested and on Thursday Abdul Ganan Laskar was taken into custody. Superintendent of Police, Dima Hasao, Mayank Kumar said the

arrested men were operators of this particular mine. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had first said that the mine "prima facie appears to be an illegal one". On Friday night, he said that the mine had been run by the state government's Assam Mineral Development Corporation (AMDC) and had been abandoned 12 years ago.

"It was not an illegal mine but an abandoned one," he said, adding that the mining operation during which the incident took place was being conducted illegally. Dima Hasao has widespread coal, limestone and granite quarrying activities, and the coal reserves of Umrangso have been leased by the AMDC.

Opposition parties questioned how illegal mining activities could

be conducted there without the knowledge of local authorities. Assam Congress leader and Lok Sabha MP Gaurav Gogoi Saturday wrote to the Prime Minister demanding the constitution of an SIT to probe the incident and the persistence of rathole mining despite being banned by the National Green Tribunal in 2014.

"The SIT should not only look into the illegal operation of the mine and identify those responsible for this tragedy, but it must also address the broader issues at play. This includes the failure to enforce the NGT's ban on rathole mining, and the complicity of local authorities — including the district administration and district police — who have enabled these illegal activities to persist... The investigation should expand its scope to identify and map out

other illegal mining sites across Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao and Upper Assam, where these activities continue unabated," Gogoi wrote.

The Congress has also alleged the involvement of Debolal Gorlosa, the Chief Executive Member of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council from the BJP, and his wife in illegal mining activities in the region. Dima Hasao district is a tribal majority district administered through provisions under the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution, with an autonomous council with limited powers. Gorlosa heads this autonomous council. Two members of the district Congress unit filed the police complaint.

SP Mayank Kumar said, "A case has already been registered

in connection with this particular incident in which two people have been arrested. An FIR has not been registered against this particular complaint, and it is currently in the enquiry stage."

Gorlosa called the allegations a "political attack." "The allegations are by Congress people, they are trying to target me and the BJP. The court had banned rathole mining so many years ago, if someone has gone and entered the mine illegally, what is the government's fault in this? The enquiry is happening, we are not stopping it," he told *The Indian Express*.

When Sarma was asked on Friday night about allegations of Gorlosa's involvement, he said, "It has not come up in the investigation. This is a human tragedy, we should not politicise it."



Security personnel near the Z-Morh tunnel on Saturday, ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to Jammu and Kashmir's Ganderbal district on January 13. **PTI**

PM to open Z-Morh tunnel, which provides all-weather access to Sonamarg, tomorrow

**BASHAARAT MASOOD**  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 11

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi is all set to inaugurate the Z-Morh tunnel Monday. The tunnel is a critical infrastructure project that will not only provide all-weather connectivity to the famous tourist resort of Sonamarg but will also help connect Kashmir and Ladakh throughout the year.

A 6.4-km bi-directional tunnel with an approach road of 5.6 km, Z-Morh joins Gagangir in Ganderbal with Sonamarg health resort, which will help to boost winter tourism.

Security has been beefed up throughout Kashmir, especially around the tunnel project and the Ganderbal district, for the PM's visit — his first since an elected government came to power in the Union Territory last October. The same month, militants struck the project site, killing seven workers.

Developed by National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), the Z-Morh is a 6.412 km-long tunnel that connects Sonamarg with Kangan town in the central Kashmir's Ganderbal district. Constructed near Gagangir village near Sonamarg, a famous tourist destination on the Srinagar-Leh highway, the tunnel will provide all-weather connectivity to it as well as Ladakh, which is important for strategic and military reasons.

Z-Morh has acquired its name for the Z-shaped road stretch that was previously at the place where the tunnel is being constructed.

The stretch was situated at an altitude of over 8,500 feet and was prone to snow avalanches in the winter, thus closing the Sonamarg road for most part of the winter.

Meanwhile, the construction of the Zoji-la Tunnel, which connects Sonamarg in Kashmir to Drass in Ladakh, is still underway and is expected to be completed by December 2026.

The Z-Morh project was originally started by the Border Roads Organisation in 2012. While the BRO awarded the construction contract to the Tunnelway Ltd, the project was later taken over by NHIDCL.

In 2019, the NHIDCL re-tendered the project and the contract was bagged by the APCO Infratech, which executed the project under APCO-Shri Amarnathji Tunnel Private Limited. While the project was expected to be completed by August 2023, it was delayed.

The soft-opening of the tunnel was carried out in February last year but the UT's Assembly elections delayed the project's official inauguration.

"Visited Sonamarg today to review preparations for PM Narendra Modi ji's visit on Monday. The inauguration of the Z-morh tunnel will open Sonmarg to tourism all year round, Sonmarg will now be developed as a great ski resort. The local population will not have to leave in winter & the travel time to Kargil/Leh from Srinagar will also reduce," Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said in his post on X.

In his response, the PM said he was "eagerly awaiting" his visit.

4 injured, 24 workers rescued after part of building collapses at Kannauj rly station

High-level panel to probe matter, says North Eastern Railway

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 11

A PORTION OF an under-construction building at the Kannauj railway station in Uttar Pradesh collapsed on Saturday afternoon, trapping around two dozen workers under the rubble, a senior official said. A rescue operation was launched swiftly to evacuate those trapped under the debris after a ceiling slab collapsed while work was underway on a two-storeyed building, the official said.

By Saturday evening, at least 24 of the trapped workers were rescued and taken to hospital. "We have rescued 24 people so far, including four who suffered injuries. The rescue operation is still ongoing," said District Magistrate (DM) Shubhshant Kumar Shukla.

"Our first priority is to rescue the workers who are trapped. We are using all resources at our disposal for the rescue," Shukla, who



Rescue operation underway at the construction site at Kannauj railway station, Saturday. **PTI**

reached the spot along with other senior officials to oversee the rescue operation, added.

The four injured persons are undergoing treatment at the hospital, and doctors said that their condition is stable. The others were discharged after medical aid.

A Railway official said the injured are receiving "proper medical treatment". In a statement, the North Eastern Railway said that the ex gratia compensation for the injured workers has been increased to ₹50,000 for those

with minor injuries and ₹2.5 lakh for those with serious injuries.

A three-member high-level committee to investigate the incident, said Pankaj Kumar Singh, Chief Public Relation Officer (North Eastern Railway).

The inquiry team will comprise Chief Engineer (Planning & Design), the Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Izzatnagar) and the Chief Security Commissioner (Railway Protection Force). "It will be part of the investigation to check under which plan the construction

at the railway station was going on and also how the incident occurred," said Singh.

Soon after being informed of the incident, local MLA and state minister Asim Arun reached the spot and supervised the rescue operation.

DM Shukla said the incident occurred when the lintel of the under-construction two-storey building suddenly collapsed. He added that since the area was open, it is believed that several labourers managed to escape when the structure gave way.

DEFAMATORY REMARKS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Kerala actor says will take legal action against activist

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
KOCHI, JANUARY 11

AMALAYALAM actress, who accused businessman Boby Chemmanur of sexual harassment, Saturday said she will take legal action against activist Rahul Easwar for his allegedly defamatory and intimidatory remarks against her on social media.

The actor said that she and her family were under immense mental pressure and one of the persons responsible for it was Easwar. She accused him of creating an "organised crime operation" in the cyber domain to

water down the seriousness of her complaint to the police against Chemmanur and to turn public opinion against her.

The actor, in a Facebook post, claimed that Easwar's repeated acts against her were responsible for the instances of cyber-bullying as well as defamatory and intimidatory remarks she was facing.

She alleged that his actions were not only causing her emotional distress, they were an attempt to push her towards suicide and amounted to encroaching upon her fundamental rights.

Easwar had recently made some remarks about the manner in which she dressed in public.

Court relaxes Allu Arjun's bail norms, grants permission to travel abroad

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
HYDERABAD, JANUARY 11

IN A major relief to actor Allu Arjun, a court here has relaxed the conditions of his bail in the *Pushpa 2* stampede case, exempting him from appearing before the investigating officer every Sunday.

The court also permitted him to travel abroad to specified countries, with the condition that he must undertake to appear before the SHO of the Chikkadpally police station as and when required.

He has been directed to inform the SHO of his travel schedule for each trip and provide details of his place of stay in the country until the chargesheet is filed.



Pushpa 2 actor also exempted from appearing before IO every Sunday

The other bail conditions remain unchanged, the court noted in its order dated January 10.

The court's decision followed a petition filed by the actor seeking relaxation of the bail conditions. Previously, while granting

regular bail to Allu Arjun on January 3, the court had instructed him to appear before the investigating officer every Sunday between 10 am and 1 pm for two months or until the filing of the chargesheet, whichever is earlier.

He was also barred from leaving the country without prior court permission. Additionally, the court had directed the actor to cooperate with the inquiry and refrain from interfering with the ongoing investigation.

Allu Arjun was arrested on December 13 in connection with the stampede case and released on bail on December 14. A 35-year-old woman died, and her eight-year-old son was injured in the stampede on December 4.

‘Shocking’: Tharoor slams Nitesh Rane’s EVM remark

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
PUNE, JANUARY 11

A DAY after Maharashtra Minister Nitesh Rane stoked controversy by saying that the full form of EVM is "every vote against mullah", Congress MP Shashi Tharoor condemned it saying Rane's statement was "quite shocking".

Speaking to news agency ANI, Tharoor said, "This kind of thing is quite shocking... I must say that people picking on any one community, whether it's against Muslims, Hindus, Christians, or any caste, that is all wrong. We are all equal individual citizens of India, and that is the only basis on

which our country can progress..."

Rane, while speaking at an event in Sangli on Friday, had said, "The Opposition is blaming the EVMs (for the defeat in Maharashtra Assembly elections). But we have won on EVMs. Our EVM means every vote against mullah... Our responsibility is to protect those who brought the saffron government to power in Maharashtra. The state has Hindutva government in place." "This is the land of Hindus... Words like 'Bhaichara' should be used in Pakistan... I have become an MLA on Hindu votes," Rane said.

Not new to controversies, Rane had called Kerala "mini Pakistan" at a rally in Pune last December.

APPOINTMENT OF UNIVERSITY VICE-CHANCELLORS

Pass resolution against draft UGC regulations, Cong tells Kerala CM

**SHAJU PHILIP**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JANUARY 11

KERALA'S CONGRESS-LED Opposition Saturday urged the Pinarayi Vijayan government to pass a resolution against the draft University Grants Commission regulations, 2025, which envisages — among other things — supreme power for governors in the selection of university vice-chancellors.

In a letter to the chief minister, Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan said the draft regulations of the UGC were revised with the purpose of misusing the universities for political agenda. "The draft shows that V-Cs cannot be selected independently and impartially," he said. This comes days after Vijayan's own criticism of the draft regulations.

"Kerala should explore alternative measures to select V-Cs as



Leader of Opposition V D Satheesan

part of the fight against any move that will adversely affect the higher education sector. It would be fitting if the state assembly passed a resolution against the draft regulations of the UGC. I request you to take the initiative," the letter said.

"There is no doubt that giving excessive powers to the chancellor in the formation of the search committee will pave the way for appointment of nominees of the BJP-ruled Centre as V-Cs in Kerala. This will

aggravate the prevailing crisis in the state's higher education sector," the Congress leader said.

The UGC, the letter said, had revised the draft regulations with the agenda of misusing the universities, which should be independent, for political interest. On January 9, Vijayan said the regulations were part of an "agenda to totally abolish the rights of states in the field of higher education".

This row comes two years after the Kerala Assembly passed a Bill that envisaged removing the governor as the chancellor of universities in Kerala in the wake of recurring clashes with the then governor Arif Mohammed Khan. The Bill, which is yet to get the assent of the President, wanted eminent academicians to be made chancellors. The Congress had backed the Bill but wanted retired judges of the Supreme Court or the high court to be made the chancellor. Government did not heed to the demand.

‘UGC draft rules are dictatorial...destroys federalism’

AMID THE row over the University Grants Commission (UGC)'s draft regulations 2025, the Tamil Nadu Assembly has unanimously passed a resolution, urging the BJP-led Central government to withdraw it. The resolution, moved by Chief Minister MK Stalin, charged that the UGC's draft rules, which propose to give the Governor broader powers to appoint Vice-Chancellors in universities in states, are against federalism and the interest of the state's higher education sector.

Tamil Nadu Higher Education Minister **GOVI CHEZIAN**, in an interview with **NIKHILA HENRY**, says that if the Centre does not roll back the UGC regulations, the DMK dispensation would take "legal recourse" and hold "people's protests". Excerpts:

**Why is Tamil Nadu opposed to the UGC's draft regulations for appointment of leaders in higher education?**

Tamil Nadu ranks first in India in higher education. Its steps such as reservation for rural students, government spending for educa-

tion of first generation graduates, banning of entrance examinations — all these contributed to Tamil Nadu's good performance in higher education. The new UGC guidelines is an affront to the strides that Tamil Nadu has made in the education field. The UGC... it is true that we have to abide by their rules, it is the duty of the state to abide by its rules and laws... but to impose it is wrong.

**What are the points in the draft regulations that you find contentious?**

The UGC says it will give an additional member to the already existing three-member committee to select a Vice-Chancellor and that this member will be nominated by the Chancellor or the Governor. The Tamil Nadu government knows it is a stumbling block. The UGC wants to vest more powers with the Governor.

On the other hand, the UGC has proposed entrance exams to even study BA, BSc, BCom, or MA, MSC, MCom courses. These steps are equal to breaking the infrastructure of a state that has a proper set-up in place. The Tamil



Nadu syllabus under the leadership of our Chief Minister will improve higher education, but UGC's rules or policies will be against our students who study as per state syllabus. This is a dictatorial imposition, against democracy, which destroys federalism. So Tamil

Nadu condemns and opposes it.

**But there are those who say the state is opposing the UGC move because it is ruled by an Opposition party (DMK).**

We are not against it (UGC regulations) for the sake of opposing it. We go by the comments and feedback of experts in this field and have passed a resolution in the state Assembly against the imposition of new rules by the UGC.

**How different is Tamil Nadu's education system from the rest of the country?**

As far as higher education is concerned, the state's present syllabus is strong and takes students in the right direction. For that reason, universities like Anna University are doing well. By higher education we don't mean only arts and science or engineering. Even in medicine, Tamil Nadu has high standards. That is because the basic educational infrastructure is right.

**Is Tamil Nadu against any other policy of the UGC?**

If the UGC gives us something

better than what we have, we will definitely follow it. But the UGC is imposing rules that are meant to take us back in terms of progress — and issues threats saying it wouldn't give us UGC courses if we don't abide by it. This is dictatorial. Even in Assembly, all parties except the BJP supported the resolution. BJP walked out. This gives room to doubts that UGC is under the BJP.

**Why is TN against Governor's role in higher education?**

In Tamil Nadu, the government does everything for appointment of V-Cs including appointing a committee for it. But the Governor doesn't approve them. Today, there's a situation where several universities do not have V-Cs. That is why we are in consultation with experts including legal experts to see what can be done. We are planning to take action. The resolution passed by the TN Assembly exhorts the Centre to withdraw it (UGC regulations) when it's still a draft proposal. If not, this will turn into a people's protest. We will even pursue a legal route against it.



# 11 ECONOMY

## AMID MOSCOW'S HIGH DOMESTIC DEMAND

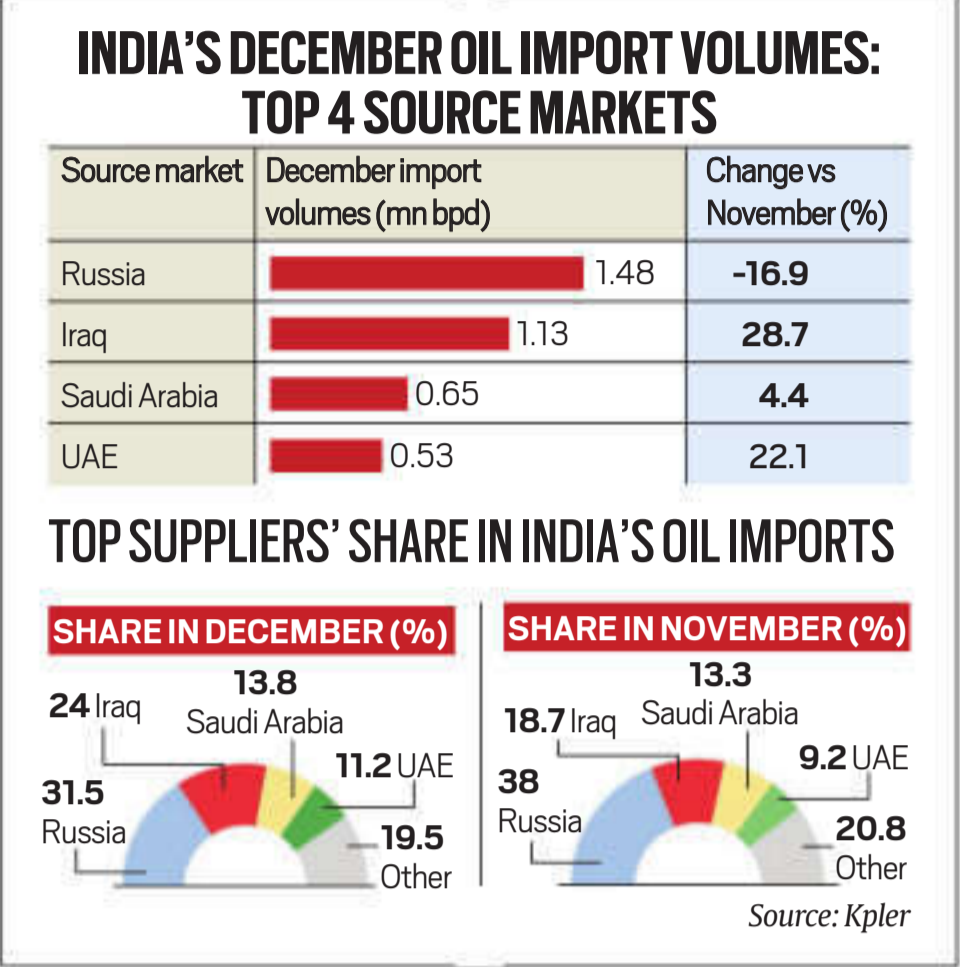
# Iraq, UAE gain as India's Russian oil imports slip to 12-month low in Dec

SUKALP SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

INDIA'S CRUDE oil imports from West Asia—specifically Iraq and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—surged in December with Indian refiners looking to replace the shortfall in supplies from their largest source market Russia, which cut exports to meet heightened oil demand from its domestic refineries, shows an analysis of oil tanker data. Saudi Arabia, however, was unable to capitalise on the opportunity due to its barrels being priced higher than Iraqi and Emirati oil.

According to industry watchers, domestic oil demand in Russia jumps towards the end of the year as the country's refineries come out of the autumn refinery maintenance season and start clocking high capacity utilisation levels. The seasonally high demand for crude in Russia is expected to continue in January and a couple of subsequent months, which is likely to cap Russian oil exports and push India towards other key suppliers to bridge the supply gap.

In December, India's imports of Russian crude dropped nearly 17 per cent sequentially to 1.48 million barrels per day (bpd), the lowest monthly level in 2024, per vessel tracking data from commodity market analytics firm Kpler. Russia's market share in India's import basket in December contracted to 31.5 per



cent from 38 per cent in November. India's total oil imports in December were at 4.71 million bpd, up 0.5 per cent month-on-month.

"The lack of Russian medium sour (crude) grades has been a boon for Iraq as India needed to find grades that would be similar in quality to Urals (Russia's flagship crude grade) and could be tapped into relatively quickly. As a consequence, Iraqi imports hit their highest since March," said Viktor Katona, head of crude analysis at Kpler.

India's Iraqi oil imports jumped nearly 29 per cent sequentially in December to 1.13 million bpd, accounting for 24

per cent of India's overall oil imports during the month. In November, Iraq's market share was 18.7 per cent, the data shows.

The other big winner was the UAE with oil imports from the country at almost 530,000 bpd, the highest in as many as 32 months. UAE oil flows to India grew throughout 2024, with imports in December up 22.1 per cent from November levels. Abu Dhabi's share in New Delhi's oil imports in December grew to 11.2 per cent from November's 9.2 per cent.

"Interestingly, the fact that Russia preferred to keep its crude at home for refining didn't help

Saudi Arabia, which posted another lukewarm monthly number, fairly in line with October-November. The relatively higher price of Saudi crudes versus Iraqi crudes has kept (India's) incremental demand at bay (for Saudi Arabia)," Katona said.

Indian refiners cumulatively imported nearly 649,000 bpd of Saudi Arabian crude in December, up 4.4 per cent sequentially. Riyadh's market share in New Delhi's oil imports for the month expanded slightly to 13.8 per cent from November's 13.3 per cent.

Trade sources indicated that the average landed price of Saudi Arabia's key Arab Light grade of crude at India's west coast was around \$2.5 per barrel higher than the regional benchmark Dubai crude, while Russia's Urals was priced \$3 per barrel lower than Dubai. This suggests that Urals was cheaper by \$5.5 per barrel than Arab Light. On the other hand, the price gap between Urals and Iraq's comparable grade Basrah Medium was significantly lower as the latter's landed price at India's west coast was just around \$0.80 higher than Dubai crude.

Industry insiders and experts expect India's Russian oil imports to continue to be relatively weak in January and even beyond as Moscow's domestic demand is expected to constrain its oil exports in the immediate-to-near term.

Consequently, Indian refiners are likely to persist with

higher purchases from suppliers in the Middle East, and even some other geographies.

"Compared to October when Russian seaborne exports were 3.6 million bpd, in December they only shipped 3.15 million bpd. So, there is no upside from the Russian side and Indian refiners would need to buy more Middle Eastern barrels in the interim. Come March-April when the Russians hit spring refinery maintenance season, the previous 2 million bpd pace of buying (by India) could resume. But until then, Russian refiners would concentrate on their domestic refining more than on crude exports," Katona said.

Prior to the war in Ukraine, Iraq and Saudi Arabia were the top two suppliers of crude oil to India. But as the West started weaning itself off Russian energy supplies following Moscow's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russia started offering discounts on its crude and Indian refiners started snapping up the discounted barrels.

As the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil with a high import dependency level of over 85 per cent, India is extremely sensitive to oil prices. Although trade sources have indicated that discounts on Russian crude have shrunk over time, Indian refiners have evidently remained keen on buying Russian oil as given the high import volumes, even lower discount levels lead to significant savings.

## India joins UN committee on big data for official statistics

*New Delhi:* India has joined the UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics (UN-CEBD), which underscores the country's growing stature in the global statistical community and highlights its commitment to leveraging data and technology for informed decision-making. The UN-CEBD was created to further investigate the benefits and challenges of Big Data, including the potential for monitoring and reporting on sustainable development goals. India will contribute to shaping global standards and practices in harnessing Big Data and data science for official statistical purposes, the statement by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) said. India's engagement will highlight its pioneering initiatives, including the establishment of the Data Innovation Lab. **PTI**

idential TriZetto information from QNXT.

## Did hiring of Infy officials add to tension?

Raising tension between the two companies, Cognizant had appointed former Infosys executive Rajesh Varrier as its global head of operations and India chairman and managing director. This followed the resignation of Rajesh Nambiar, who left Cognizant to become the president of Nasscom. Cognizant's CEO, Ravi Kumar, also previously held prominent roles at Infosys, including president and deputy COO.

Infosys had earlier raised concerns about Cognizant's recruitment of its key personnel, highlighting the competitive intensity between the companies.

spite all the efforts they are making, are in a position when any new shock can affect them quite negatively," Georgieva said.

"What we expect in 2025 is to have quite a lot of uncertainty, especially in terms of economic policies. Not surprisingly, given the size and role of the US economy, there is keen interest globally in the policy directions of the incoming administration, in particular

on tariffs, taxes, deregulation and government efficiency," Georgieva said.

"This uncertainty is particularly high around the path for trade policy going forward, adding to the headwinds facing the global economy, especially for countries and regions that are more integrated in global supply chains, medium-sized economies, (and) Asia as a region," she said. **PTI**



Customs department at several airports seized drugs worth crores of rupees. *Delhi Customs*

from the female passenger. The estimated value of the seizure was ₹20.98 crore, officials said in a statement.

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Filipino national traveling from Bangkok via Addis Ababa on December 13. The individual had ingested 90 cocaine capsules, weighing 676 grams and valued

## CRUDE WATCH

## SPECULATORS RAISE BULLISH BETS ON BRENT

*Houston:* Money managers raised their net-long Brent crude futures and options positions in the week to January 7 to the highest level since early May last year, the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) said as investors eye-balled new sanctions and got optimistic on China's economy. **REUTERS**

# Microfinance delinquencies nearly double to over ₹28,000 crore in a year

## Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha account for 62% of incremental delinquency in September quarter

GEORGE MATHEW  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 11

INDIA'S MICROFINANCE sector is experiencing a notable rise in delinquencies, particularly in the top ten states, despite the banking sector's celebration of a 12-year low in non-performing assets (NPAs). Microfinance loans to low-income groups saw a significant surge in portfolio at risk (PAR) — loans with an overdue of 31-180 days — doubling to ₹28,154 crore by September 2024 from ₹14,617 crore a year ago.

The delinquencies in the 31-180 days overdue category work out to 6.8 per cent of the total portfolio of ₹4.14 lakh crore exposure of microfinance firms, including banks and NBFCs, as of September 2024 as against 3.8 per cent of ₹3.84 crore portfolio in September 2023, says a report.

The incremental rise in the 31-180 days PAR category of microfinance institutions stood at ₹8,117 crore for the quarter ended September, taking the overall incremental rise in PAR to ₹13,468 crore for the 12 months ended September, according to a CRIF High Mark report. PAR was 4.6 per cent of advances in June 2024.

MFIs also cut down their exposure from ₹4.32 lakh crore to ₹4.14 lakh crore during the three months ended September 2024, CRIF report said.

Bihar, UP, Tamil Nadu, and Odisha accounted for 62 per cent of the incremental delinquency, with Bihar reporting a ₹1,715 crore rise in delinquency for the three

months ended September 2024. Bihar was followed by UP with a rise of ₹1,441 crore in PAR, Tamil Nadu ₹1,009 crore and Orissa ₹995 crore, the report said.

Several factors contributed to this decline in portfolio quality. MFIs were lending to over-leveraged borrowers and they taking on too much debt, leading to repayment difficulties. Further debt-waiver campaigns by states and politicians to waive off debts have disrupted the repayment cycle. There was high field-staff attrition with frequent changes in field staff, affecting the quality of loan disbursement and collection. Elections and extreme weather conditions hindered loan recovery efforts. This rise in delinquencies may push up the credit cost for NBFC-MFIs, potentially impacting the microfinance sector's growth.

The slowdown in the economy has also contributed to the indebtedness and stress in the microfinance sector. The Reserve Bank of India has set a common household limit of ₹300,000 for loans to qualify as microfinance. This limit applies to all entities in the microfinance sector.

On the other hand, gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) declined to a 12-year low of 2.6 per cent of advances in September 2024, says the Reserve Bank of India.

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) recently revised the outlook on the microfinance (MFI) sector to deteriorating from neutral, while maintaining a 'Stable'

rating Outlook for FY26.

The agency says that there are multiple headwinds for the sector such as borrower overleveraging for both MFI loans and non-MFI loans, reduced centre attendance, high attrition at branch levels and instances of frauds, all leading to a higher operating and credit cost for the sector in the medium term.

"Ind-Ra has revised the sector outlook on MFIs to deteriorating from neutral, while maintaining a Stable rating outlook for FY26. Near-term challenges are likely to continue to play out with a recovery expected in 2HFY26. The Stable rating Outlook factors in adequate capitalisation and liquidity buffers and sufficient PPop (pre-provision operating profit) margins which will help absorb the current asset quality downturn," said Karan Gupta, Head and Director Financial Institutions, Ind-Ra.

The asset quality challenges faced by the sector and covenant breaches by players could lead to tighter funding from lenders. This could also lead to lenders assessing their incremental disbursements, thereby requiring monitoring of the rollover of the existing debt. This could impact the growth outlook for the sector in the medium term, it said.

Furthermore, the recent regulatory actions on some entities, including an embargo on disbursements amid concerns regarding loan pricing and increase in risk weighted assets (for banks), have added to the concerns of lenders to the sector.

# Before Trump inauguration, Meta platforms, Amazon scale back diversity programmes

KATIE PAUL & JUBY BABU  
JANUARY 11

FACEBOOK OWNER Meta Platforms and Amazon.com are winding down diversity programs ahead of Republican Donald Trump's return to the U.S. presidency as conservative opposition to such initiatives grows louder.

Some of America's biggest businesses have been scaling back their diversity initiatives, years after pushing for more inclusive policies in the wake of protests against the police killings of George Floyd and other Black Americans in 2020.

Meta is ending its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, including those for hiring, training and picking suppliers, it said in an internal memo to employees on Friday—the latest in a series of actions cheered by conservatives. In less than two weeks, Meta has scrapped its U.S. fact-checking program, elevated prominent Republican Joel Kaplan to be its chief global affairs officer and elected Dana White, CEO of Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) and close friend of Trump, to its board.

The Mark Zuckerberg-led social media giant has been attempting to mend relations with a leader who has railed against its political content policies and threatened its CEO with imprisonment. In a departure from its past practice, Meta in December announced a \$1 million contribution to Trump's inaugural fund, joining big companies from Wall Street to Silicon Valley that have pledged donations.

Amazon.com is "winding down outdated programs and materials" related to representation and inclusion, aiming to complete the process by the end of 2024, it said in a December memo to employees seen by Reuters on Friday. Conservative groups have denounced DEI programs and



Some of America's biggest businesses have been scaling back. *Reuters*

tempting to mend relations with a leader who has railed against its political content policies and threatened its CEO with imprisonment. In a departure from its past practice, Meta in December announced a \$1 million contribution to Trump's inaugural fund, joining big companies from Wall Street to Silicon Valley that have pledged donations.

Amazon.com is "winding down outdated programs and materials" related to representation and inclusion, aiming to complete the process by the end of 2024, it said in a December memo to employees seen by Reuters on Friday. Conservative groups have denounced DEI programs and

threatened to sue companies over them, emboldened by a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 2023 that struck down affirmative action in university admissions decisions. Just this week, Elon Musk and other Trump allies blamed DEI programs for hindering the response to raging wildfires in Los Angeles, without evidence.

"The legal and policy landscape surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in the United States is changing," Janelle Gale, Vice President of Human Resources at Meta, said in the memo, which was seen by Reuters and originally reported by Axios. Gale cited recent Supreme Court decisions "signaling a shift" in how U.S. courts will approach DEI programs going forward.

A U.S. appeals court in December ruled that Nasdaq could not impose rules designed to increase diversity in corporate America by requiring companies listed on the exchange to have women and minority directors on their boards or explain why they do not.

"The term 'DEI' has also become charged, in part because it is understood by some as a practice that suggests preferential treatment of some groups over others," Gale wrote. **REUTERS**

GEORGE MATHEW  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 11

THE LEGAL battle between tech blue chips Infosys and Cognizant has intensified.

Infosys has now filed a counter-lawsuit in a US court accusing the NASDAQ-listed Cognizant and its CEO, Ravi Kumar, of engaging in alleged anti-competitive practices, and misusing sensitive information to undermine Infosys Helix, its flagship healthcare platform.

The lawsuit, filed by Infosys in the Northern District of Texas of the US, comes months after Cognizant's subsidiary, Cognizant TriZetto, accused Infosys of stealing trade secrets related to its healthcare insurance software. Infosys had denied those allegations. In fact, the counterclaim not

only refutes Cognizant's accusations but also levels serious charges of monopolistic practices against its rival.

Here is all you need to know about the dispute.

## Infosys lawsuit

Infosys has sought a jury trial and requested that the court invalidate and rule unenforceable Cognizant's non-disclosure and access agreements (NDAAs). Additionally, Infosys is pursuing treble damages for alleged financial losses, reimbursement for attorneys' fees and related costs. Infosys has accused Cognizant of anti-competitive practices, including imposing restrictive contractual obligations, blocking Infosys from training programmes, hindering development of competing software products. Infosys claimed these

tactics have limited US healthcare customers' access to competitive pricing and innovative solutions.

## Charges levelled by Cognizant earlier

Cognizant sued Infosys in a US federal court in August 2024, alleging theft of trade secrets and proprietary information related to healthcare insurance software. The Texas court filing claimed Infosys illegally accessed data from TriZetto's Facets and QNXT software, using this information to develop a competing product. These software solutions automate tasks for healthcare insurance companies. Cognizant's lawsuit asserted Infosys misappropriated TriZetto's software, creating "Test Cases for Facets" by rebranding the data. Additionally, Infosys allegedly developed software to extract con-

fidential TriZetto information from QNXT.

## Did hiring of Infy officials add to tension?

Raising tension between the two companies, Cognizant had appointed former Infosys executive Rajesh Varrier as its global head of operations and India chairman and managing director. This followed the resignation of Rajesh Nambiar, who left Cognizant to become the president of Nasscom. Cognizant's CEO, Ravi Kumar, also previously held prominent roles at Infosys, including president and deputy COO.

Infosys had earlier raised concerns about Cognizant's recruitment of its key personnel, highlighting the competitive intensity between the companies.

# Indian economy likely to be ‘a little weaker’ in 2025: IMF MD

LALIT K JHA  
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 11

THE INDIAN economy is expected to be "a little weaker" in 2025 despite steady global growth, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has said.

Georgieva also said she expects quite a lot of uncertainty in the world this year mainly around

the trade policy of the US. In her annual media roundtable with a group of reporters on Friday, she said global growth is expected to be steady in 2025, but with regional divergence. Georgieva said she expects the Indian economy to be a little weaker in 2025. However, she did not explain it any further. The World Economy Outlook update week will have more details about it. In China, the



IMF MD Kristalina Georgieva

world's second-largest economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was seeing deflationary pressure and ongoing challenges with domestic demand, she said. "Low-income countries, de-

spite all the efforts they are making, are in a position when any new shock can affect them quite negatively," Georgieva said.

"What we expect in 2025 is to have quite a lot of uncertainty, especially in terms of economic policies. Not surprisingly, given the size and role of the US economy, there is keen interest globally in the policy directions of the incoming administration, in particular

on tariffs, taxes, deregulation and government efficiency," Georgieva said.

"This uncertainty is particularly high around the path for trade policy going forward, adding to the headwinds facing the global economy, especially for countries and regions that are more integrated in global supply chains, medium-sized economies, (and) Asia as a region," she said. **PTI**

# Spike in drug seizures at airports in metro cities during Christmas, New Year festivities

RAVI DUTTA MISHRA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

THE DETECTION and seizure of weed and cocaine by customs officials across Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and other zones surged during the run up to the Christmas and New Year celebrations, with cases even involving foreign nationals concealing crores worth of narcotics within their bodies.

Delhi customs reported nearly half a dozen cases in December alone involving foreign nationals arriving at Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) from Kenya, Brazil, the Philippines, and other countries hiding cocaine capsules worth over ₹50 crore inside their bodies.

Just a week before Christmas, Mumbai customs reported multiple large seizures of hydroponic

weed (marijuana) worth crores at Mumbai International Airport. The contraband was hidden in breakfast cereal boxes, passenger baggage, food packets, undergarments, and toys. Earlier last month, Mumbai customs destroyed narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (NDPS), such as heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and charas worth ₹410 crore, weighing nearly 55 kg, at the Common Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage & Disposal Facility in Navi Mumbai.

Meanwhile in Chennai, customs reported that the Air Intelligence Unit seized cocaine worth ₹14.2 crore, weighing 1,424 grams, from a Kenyan woman traveling from Addis Ababa on December 7.

## Modus operandi

In what could suggest the in-

volvement of organised crime networks, traffickers could be using identical methods to smuggle cocaine into the country since a number of cases emerged where capsules were inserted into human bodies and required medical extraction at Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital. In one such case, Delhi customs intercepted two passengers, a man and a woman, traveling from Sao Paulo, Brazil, via Paris on December 24. Both passengers exhibited "unusual behaviour" after crossing the green channel and "voluntarily" admitted to carrying illicit goods.

Under medical supervision at Safdarjung Hospital, a total of 105 capsules containing 937 grams of cocaine were recovered from the male passenger, while 58 capsules containing 462 grams of cocaine were recovered



Customs department at several airports seized drugs worth crores of rupees. *Delhi Customs*

from the female passenger. The estimated value of the seizure was ₹20.98 crore, officials said in a statement.

Another case involved a

Filipino national traveling from Bangkok via Addis Ababa on December 13. The individual had ingested 90 cocaine capsules, weighing 676 grams and valued

at Rs 10.14 crore, which were extracted through medical procedures.

## Intelligence input

While vigilance and "cutting-edge profiling techniques" are being used to prevent the entry of illicit products into the country, customs officials are also relying on intelligence inputs to identify perpetrators.

For instance, on December 19, Mumbai customs intercepted a passenger arriving from Bangkok and seized hydroponic marijuana worth ₹11.32 crore. The contraband, weighing 11,322 kilograms, was hidden in vacuum-sealed plastic pouches inside the passenger's trolley bag.

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), in its 2023-24 report, said that India has witnessed a marked increase in the

availability and use of both traditional drugs, such as cocaine, heroin, cannabis, and opium, and synthetic substances like methamphetamine, MDMA, and other new psychoactive substances (NPS).

The report said that there is also an increase in the illicit export of "Indian-manufactured pharmaceutical products" that can substitute for narcotic substances. The rise in cocaine smuggling is particularly notable, with trafficking routes extending from South America via Africa and the Middle East.

## Global cocaine production on rise

Global cocaine production reached a record high in 2022, with over 2,700 tonnes produced and 355,000 hectares under coca bush cultivation—a 20

per cent increase from the previous year, according to the United Nations World Drug Report 2024.

Cocaine trafficking has expanded eastwards over the past decade, with several Asian countries reporting large seizures and increasing demand in emerging markets. In Oceania, trafficking continued to rise in 2022.

The illicit supply and use of ketamine are also growing in East and South-East Asia, as well as in new markets across Europe, Oceania, and North America. Illicitly produced ketamine is marketed in visually appealing mixtures such as "pink cocaine" and "happy water." Global seizures of ketamine reached a record high in 2022, with a 70 per cent increase in East and South-East Asia and notable rises in other regions, the report said.

BRIDGE

While an ordinary player is more worried about picture cards or hours, an expert watches the spots as well. The spot cards often lead to correct line of play. This was the case in the problem posed to you last week.

Dealer: West Vulnerable: East/West

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ A54	♥ K63	♠ 7632	♥ A87
♦ K8742	♣ 94	♦ AQ	♣ AK53

SOUTH WEST	NORTH	EAST
pass	pass	pass
INT	pass	3NT
pass	pass	pass

West leads the spade king. Plan the play. Declarer, with eight sure tricks, should begin by ducking the first two leads of spades (in the hope that spades divide three-three, or that West has only two spades and will not be able to knock out dummy's ace-of-spades entry by leading spades a third time). This duck is good technique, but does not affect the result once we see East and West's hands.

The West hand: S-KQJ10 H-Q92 D-109 C-Q1076  
The East hand: S-98 H-J1054 D-J653 C-J82

After taking the ace of spades, South should start diamonds by cashing the ace and leading the queen. When West plays the nine and ten on the first two leads, declarer can make sure of the contract by overtaking the diamond queen with dummy's king and leading the seven or eight from dummy. Good defence can defeat all other lines of play.

Dealer: East Vulnerable: None

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ K54	♥ 87	♠ AQJ3	♥ AKJ1094
♦ K1086	♣ K765	♦ -	♣ 432

SOUTH WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	pass	INT
3♠	pass	4♠
pass	pass	pass

West leads the queen of clubs, which holds, then the jack of clubs, which also holds, and the ten of clubs: king, ace, small. East switches to the queen of diamonds. Plan the play.

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2512

QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- Because of (7)
- Bold (7)
- Kingdom (5)
- Manacles (9)
- Chief Hindu philosophy (7)
- Sheep's wool (6)
- An appeal for sympathy (4,4,5)
- Isolated (3,3)
- Blotto (3-4)
- Tenor Luciano (9)
- Funereal chant (5)
- Easy targets (7)
- Collects or piles up (7)

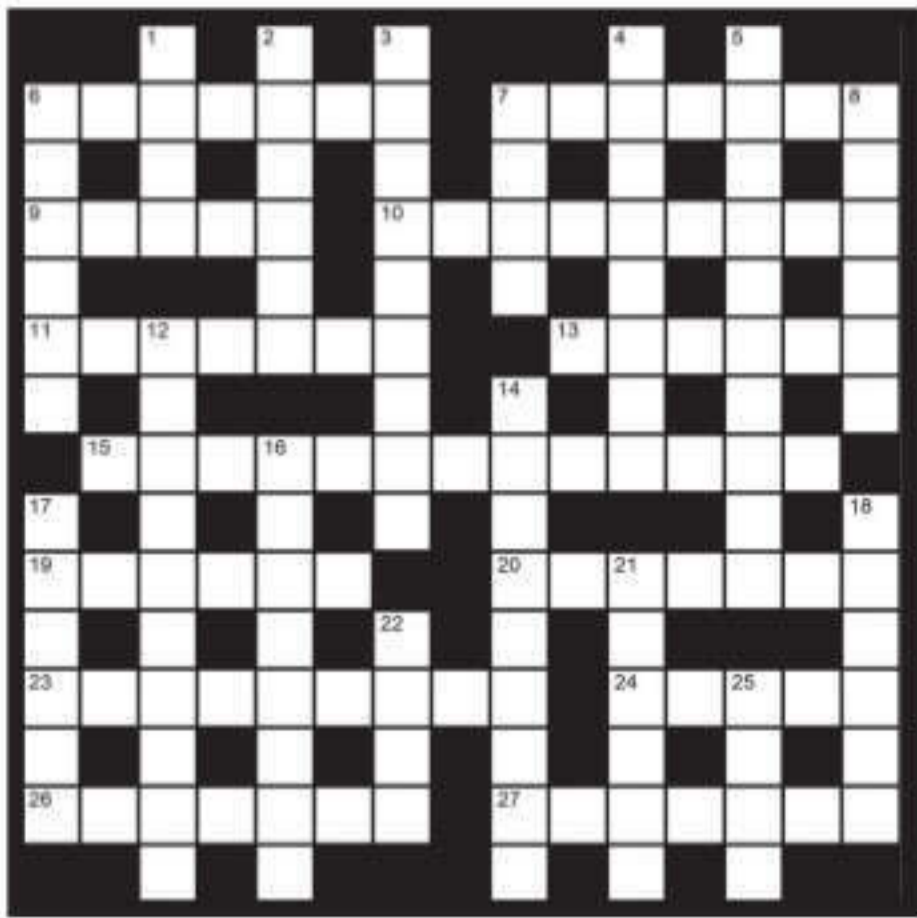
DOWN

- Extent of space (4)
- Call or send for (6)
- Very small dog (9)
- Item of jewellery (8)
- Once every six months ? (4,6)
- Prosper (6)
- Keen on; indulgent (4)
- Scatter (6)
- Put out of action (10)
- Unbelieving (9)
- Put off or prevented (8)
- Ranges or extents (6)
- Snakes (6)
- Make beloved (6)
- Lift inventor (4)
- Over-hasty (4)

CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- Legend of trick encasing prone individual (7)
- Chilly start, and the most senior are the most unfriendly (7)
- Put two and two together (5)
- One responsible for directions to a raving crackpot (9)
- They beat up rum and eggs, perhaps (7)
- The rings sound like a girl's (6)
- Complete part of swing (6-7)
- How's the base of the Stuarts see why it's Haute Savoie's capital? (6)
- Russian writer sadly lost fiddle (7)
- They're seamen or they're crooks and all suckers (9)
- Taxmen leave after V-sign (5)
- Be discouraging about me



being a goddess (7)  
27. A fifties item adapted to be up to date (3-4)

DOWN

- Ran and grasped the last few (4)
- Bird that is pleasing on the course (6)
- How you may live if single-minded ? (2,4,3)
- Get connected with card game in far-off place (4,4)
- Try out when the England team goes to Australia, may be (10)
- Mollusc top and bottom may be unpleasantly damp (6)
- A male inlet (4)
- Three eggheads leave tree, birch (6)
- After pass, don seems remarkably gracious (8,2)
- Team's opening bowlers stumped when in? End of story! (5,4)

- Cut fine fabric with speed (8)
- Article in paper is a hoax (6)
- Exclamation from an old god ! (2,4)
- Evilly disposed and active (6)
- Sounds like two fruit (4)
- Never ending trouble for a bird (4)

Solutions to 2511

QUICK CLUES Across: 1 Gender, 4 Baltic, 9 Snag, 10 Clap eyes on, 11 Shiver, 12 Unctuous, 13 Small-time, 15 Home, 16 Site, 17 Bloodshed, 21 Mona Lisa, 22 Yanked, 24 Slightness, 25 Digs, 26 Decade, 27 Hybrid  
Down: 1 Gingham, 2 Negev, 3 Excerpt, 5 Agency, 6 Tremulous, 7 Closure, 8 Vacuum cleaner, 14 Lethargic, 16 Spoiled, 18 Odyssey, 19 Emerged, 20 Lifted, 23 Nadir  
CRYPTIC CLUES Across: 1 Bourne, 4 Abbas, 9 Ujji, 10 Abominable, 11 Catnap, 12 King lear, 13 Very light, 15 Bras, 16 Cock, 17 Pot-boiler, 21 Mantissa, 22 Gibbet, 24 Willynilly, 25 Iris, 26 Lobbed, 27 Eddie's Down: 1 Baggage, 2 Union, 3 Shar Pei, 5 Balm, 6 Charleroi, 7 Sahara, 8 Work the wangle, 14 Yacht-club, 16 Cranial, 18 Bug-eyed, 19 Elegies, 20 Usance, 23 Bili

If it's your Birthday

Sunday January 12

Finish consulting close partners and making final plans, and then switch your focus to family and home affairs. Your strongest asset will be your ability to empathise with other people.

Monday January 13

Your solar chart is beginning to look relaxed. If you have any lingering problems, they will be caused by last month's difficulties.

Tuesday January 14

Home and family come first. Even if you are pursuing professional hopes, the love of people close to you is necessary to sustain you in your dreams.

Wednesday January 15

Your stars are at a minor crossroads. You can either give in and go under, or you can meet challenges head-on and set yourself up for eventual triumph.

Thursday January 16

It's time to take centre stage. You have earned your position in the Sun, no matter whether it's at home, at work, or in the midst of your social network.

Friday January 17

You might conjure up the perfect way to solve your current questions and achieve the perfect relationship and improve your life.

Saturday January 18

Move forward with hope and remember the importance of taking one practical step at a time. Take care of all those minor details and the big picture will take care of itself.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)



The time is rapidly approaching when you will simply have to agree to an important settlement because it is right for all concerned, not necessarily because it's just in your own interests. You should press ahead with travel plans, partly because it's time to broaden your horizons.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)



The financial sectors of your horoscope also have deep psychological implications, so ask yourself whether or not you are buying things to secure happiness, or as a substitute for it. This is a subtle distinction but it's an important one for all that.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)



Professionally, the sky is the limit just as long as you realise that what matters now is personal relationships with colleagues. Do your best to get on with people and see to it that they like you. At home you should get practical repairs done.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)



You may now have no alternative but to come to terms with enforced changes in relationships. Indeed, the more you accept that current conditions are there to stay, the sooner you can get on and make the most of marvellous emotional possibilities. A professional plan could be postponed, but not for long.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)



Professional matters are important and, even if you're not at work, you should give top priority to fulfilling your worldly ambitions. In your private life, get in touch with old friends or ex-lovers. A trip to the past could prove entertaining.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)



All the indications are that passionate relationships are now subject to uncertain influences. Your instincts and hunches should be urging you to delay important decisions for a little while longer. Wait until you know what is happening. When you have all the information at your fingertips, make your move.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)



You should be sure that you are offloading only what has become stale. The danger is that you will throw away the good with the bad, the useful with the useless! You should think long and hard before speaking on vital matters.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)



At work, you have now entered a short but crucial and demanding phase when so much you take for granted is up for grabs. It's important that you are able to distinguish your own changes of attitude from your responses to events beyond your control.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)



Powerful planets are now definitely on your side, so you can afford to hope for the best. At long last you are able to assert your primacy in all emotional relationships, whether at home, in love or work. Project yourself in the right way and people will look to you as a figure always to be relied upon.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)



You will almost certainly resent anyone who tries to peer into your secret world or private life. You can probably get away with giving other people the impression that they are being kept up to date, while actually telling them nothing.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)



You appear to have cut quite a dash over the past few weeks but, with Mars about to adjust its position, you must realise that you can no longer go on as before. It's important to consolidate all personal gains rather than taking on fresh activities, otherwise you may over-commit yourself.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)



Not all your stars are on your wavelength. If you are slightly irritable, it's because other people appear to be standing in your way. You sense an imminent change in your energy level, emotional mood and personal affairs, while for some reason you also feel as if you are being held back.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given clue.

— is prejudice made plausible - H.L. Mencken (9)

ADIIR	IKPUCT
HKWIS	IILUCM

SOLUTION: RADICAL, WHISK, PLAUSTRUM, CHILDISM is prejudice made plausible - H.L. Mencken

SUDOKU 5833

Difficulty Level 5s

Instructions

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

			3			8
		2	7			3
		4		8	9	6
9	3			8		
	5				1	
		8			7	5
1	2	8		5		
	6			9	7	
3				6		

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5832

3	2	4	6	9	5	8	7	1
7	6	9	2	8	1	4	3	5
1	5	8	4	3	7	6	2	9
5	9	7	8	4	2	1	6	3
2	8	1	5	6	3	9	4	7
6	4	3	1	7	9	5	8	2
4	3	2	9	1	6	7	5	8
9	7	6	3	5	8	2	1	4
8	1	5	7	2	4	3	9	6

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. P. C.

Whereas a complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Aman Chauhan S/o Gyanender Singh Chauhan R/O A-1, Amar jyoti colony, Sec-17, Rohini, Shahbad Dairy, Outer North, Delhi** have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under **FIR. No. 537/2021, U/s 33/58 Delhi Excise Act**, has been registered at **P.S. KNK Marg, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said, **Aman Chauhan** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, **Aman Chauhan** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant) Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused, **Aman Chauhan** of under **FIR. No. 537/2021, U/s 33/58 Delhi Excise Act, registered at P.S. KNK Marg, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **21.03.2025**.

By Order  
Ms. Himanshu Sehloth, JMFC-03,  
ND Room No.213, Rohini Court, Delhi

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused 1. **Jyoti, W/o Sunny, R/o H. No. C-153, Sector 20, Rohini, Delhi, 2. Bhawna, D/o Prem Kumar Gaur, R/o Flat No. 1643, Pocket-2, Jyoti Kunj, Sector 16B, Dwarka, Delhi** has committed (or are suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 299/21, U/s 269/394/34 IPC, P.S. Rajouri Garden, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said 1. **Jyoti, 2. Bhawna** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said 1. **Jyoti, 2. Bhawna** has absconded (or are concealing themselves to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said 1. **Jyoti, 2. Bhawna** accused of **FIR No. 299/21, U/s 269/394/34 IPC, P.S. Rajouri Garden, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **12.02.2025**.

By Order  
Sh. Shashank Nandan Bhatt  
Judicial Magistrate First Class-02  
West  
Tis Hazari Court, Delhi

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person **Jai Parkash @ Jai, S/o Om Prakash, R/o H.No. 378, Gali No. 5, Mukundpur, Delhi** has committed the offences (or is suspected to have committed) in case **FIR No. 48/2018, U/s 394/411/468/420 IPC, P.S. KN Katju Marg, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Jai Parkash @ Jai** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Jai Parkash @ Jai** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Jai Parkash @ Jai** accused of **FIR No. 48/2018, U/s 394/411/468/420 IPC, P.S. KN Katju Marg, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **17.02.2025**.

By Order  
Sh. Himanshu Sehloth  
LD. JMFC - 03  
North Dist, Room No. 213,  
Rohini Courts, Delhi

WANTED PERSON



Wanted

General public is hereby informed that Two male person are wanted (Depicted in the Photo) in Connection with a Robbery of a women's Jewelry in front of Gate no. 2, Dr. RML Hospital, Delhi on Dt. 04.11.2024. in this regard **FIR No 67/24, Dt. 05.11.2024, U/s: 318 (4) B.N.S.** has been lodged at the suspected Person is as under.

**(1)Sex: Male, Age: About 25 years, Height: 5'6" Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Thin Face: Round, Wearing: (1) Blue Colour Check Shirt & Blue Colour Jeans (2)Sex: Male, Age: About 25 years, Height: 5'7" Complexion: Shallow, Built: Thin Face: Long, Wearing: Badami Colour Check Shirt & Light Badami Colour Pant.** If anyone has any information about these wanted person's please inform **P.S.: North Avenue, Delhi S.H.O Ph No. 011-23093040, 011-23093294, 9910479765, 7827166909**

DP/336/NDD/2025



पीएम श्री केन्द्रीय विद्यालय  
सेक्टर 08 रोहिणी, दिल्ली



नीलामी सूचना

पीएम श्री केन्द्रीय विद्यालय सेक्टर 08 रोहिणी दिल्ली में पुराने एवं अनुपयोगी सामानों जैसे कंप्यूटर, यूपीएस, प्रोजेक्टर, प्रिंटर, एसी, इलेक्ट्रॉनिक सामग्री, फर्नीचर, खेलकूद सामग्री, प्रयोगशाला सामग्री, संगीत सामग्री, विद्यालय मरम्मत सामग्री की "जैसे है जहाँ है" की स्थिति में सार्वजनिक नीलामी दिनांक 18.01.2025 को दोपहर 2:00 बजे होना सुनिश्चित हुआ है. कंप्यूटर एवं इलेक्ट्रॉनिक वस्तुओं के क्रेताओं के पास भारत सरकार या राज्य सरकार से मान्यता प्राप्त E-Waste Management प्रमाणपत्र होना आवश्यक है

विस्तृत जानकारी के लिए विद्यालय की website **https:// rohinisec8.kvs.ac.in** में संपर्क करें



POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH CHANDIGARH

Global Tender Enquiry Notice No. PI(EP)/24-25/G/MoHFW/02 Phone No. 0172-2756469  
Tender applications are invited for purchase of various items against tender No. 1-6 from the Manufacturers or their sole authorized distributors/agents. The bidders can place their bids as per terms & conditions contained on **https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app**.

S. No	Equipment/ Item Name	Qty.	EMD (Rs.)	Bid submission Date	Bid Opening Date	Dept Name
Non-Pre Bid case						
1.	Advanced ICU Ventilator with Intelligent Technology	02Nos.	1,80,000/-	03-02-2025	04-02-2025	Pulmonary Medicine
2.	Vacuum Concentrator	01No.	40,000/-	-do-	-do-	Biochemistry
3.	Air Abrasion Units	02Nos.	20,000/-	-do-	-do-	OHSC
4.	Dual Action Lithotripsy (Ultrasonic and mechanical)	01No.	80,000/-	05-02-2025	06-02-2025	Urology
Pre Bid case						
5.	Inhaled Nitric Oxide System	01No.	2,20,000/-	-do-	-do-	Pediatrics
6.	ICU Ventilator	02Nos.	2,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	Pediatrics

Tender document can also be downloaded from website **www.pgimer.edu.in** and can be applied on website **www.eprocure.gov.in**. Bid Security (EMD) should be for the amount as per tender documents either in the form of Account Payee Demand Draft, or Fixed Deposit Receipts (FDR), Banker's Cheque or Bank Guarantee Form issued by Scheduled Commercial Bank having its validity at least for one year & duly pledged in favour of Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh. The tenders will be opened on the dates given above at 12:00 P.M. in the presence of the authorized intending tenderers. Tenders not submitted on the prescribed form, not accompanied with Bid Security shall be summarily rejected. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders received without assigning any reason thereof. "PRE-BID CONFERENCE" WITH INTENDING BIDDERS FOR ITEM Sr. No. 05 to 06 shall be held on 17.01.2025 from 03:00 P.M. ONWARDS in the PI(EP), OFFICE, PGIMER, CHANDIGARH. The intending bidders are free to join Pre bid Conference through video conference. For more details contact: 0172-2756469 at Procurement Branch (Import).

NOTE 1. The terms and Conditions of the original Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) available on PGIMER Website will remain same. However on switching over to e-tendering on e-Procurement, the bids will be received in electronic form on e-Procurement website and no bid will be received in Physical form. The EMD will be received in Physical form in Procurement Branch (Import) and scan copy is to be uploaded in electronic form on e-Procurement website, CPPP Portal (Central Public Procurement Portal).

NOTE 2. If any of the tender opening dates happens to be a holiday in PGIMER, Chandigarh, then the same shall be opened on next full working day.

Additional Terms and Conditions

- The Institute has adopted amended Notice Inviting Tenders (NIT) which is available on e-Procurement website (**https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app**) and Website: **www.pgimer.edu.in**. Therefore the bidders are requested to go through the Instructions Carefully before submitting bids.
- The above items are relaxed to invite Global Tender Enquiry under rule 161 (IV) of G.F.R rules 2017, therefore Para 5 of NIT will not be applicable in these cases.

Professor In-Charge (EP)

Rajasthan Council of School Education

S. Radha Krishnan Shiksha Sankul, 5th Block, IInd & IIIRD Floor, JLN Marg, Jaipur - 17  
Ph.: 0141-2700366, 2715590, 2715550

No. P. 6 ( ) /RCSce/Jai./STARS/IATL/2024-25/12954325 Date : 11.01.2025

Regarding extension of e-BID (NIB: 18/2024-25)

Tender No. 18/2024-25 (UBN No. RSE2425GLOB01923) issued for supply, installation and commissioning of ATL and Robotic Lab in 614 government schools of Rajasthan is extended till 11:30AM of 17 January, 2025. Other details can be seen in the bid document on State Public Procurement Portal website **www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in** or **www.rajsmsa.nic.in** or **www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in**.

Raj.Samwad/C/24/10208

State Project Director



SOUTH EASTERN COALFIELDS LIMITED  
"A MINI RATNA COMPANY"

NOTICE

All the tenders issued by SECL for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of SECL **http://www.secl-cil.in**, CIL e-procurement portal **http://coalindiatenders.nic.in** and Central Public Procurement Portal **http://eprocure.gov.in** In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal **http://gem.gov.in**. SECL's mining services tenders are also now available on GeM portal **http://gem.gov.in**



TAMIL NADU MEDICINAL PLANT FARMS & HERBAL MEDICINE CORPORATION LTD.,

(A Government of Tamil Nadu Undertaking)  
Regd. Office

## Classifieds

### PERSONAL

I, Venktesh S/o Rajendra Sharma R/O Apartment no.0402, 4th floor, Tower no. B12, M3M Woodshire, Sector-107, Dharampur, Gurgaon, Haryana-122006, have changed my minor daughter's name aged about 12 years from Shree Radha to Sakshi Kumari

0130048069-1

I Aashish Ahlawat S/o Ramesh Kumar R/O M-258 U/G-Floor Guru Harkishan Nagar, Paschim Vihar, West-Delhi, Delhi- 110087, have changed my name to Aashish.

0040768337-2

I Ravindra Poddar S/o Sita Ram Poddar R/O B-15, 1st Floor, B-Block, Jy Colony, Near Ambey Mandir, Inderpuri, Central Delhi-110012, have changed my name to Ravi Kumar

0070944800-1

I Suman Gupta W/o Manoj Gupta R/O House No-1749/7, Gali No.-9, A V R School, Rajeev Nagar, Gurgaon, Po-Gurgaon, Dist-Gurgaon, Haryana-120001, have changed my name to Santosh Gupta.

0070944721-1

I, BRAHM SINGH SHARMA S/O SH. SHREE PAL SHARMAR/O B-142, GALI NO. 2, EAST MOTI BAGH, KISHAN GANJ, DELHI-07, I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME BRAHM SINGHTO BRAHM SINGH SHARMA FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES.

0040768294-1

I, Chandra Bhushan Kumar Singh S/o Bhup Naryan Singh R/o Plot no-6, Flat no-FF-2, Nayag Khand-1 Ami Care Indirapuram Ghaziabad U.P-201014 have changed my name to Chandere Bhushan for all future purposes

0070944787-1

**My-Minor Daughter's** and wife Actual/Correct names is Lavanya Upadhyay and Kumkum Upadhyay respectively Instead-of Lavanya and Kumkum are wrongly-written in Daughter's School-Record, Surjeet Upadhyay Father and husband of Lavanaya Upadhyay and Kumkum Upadhyay respectively, R/o, Flat.No.210-A5B, Shanti Kunj, Paschim Vihar, New-Delhi-110063.

0040768312-10

I, Kartika, W/O Manpreet Singh, R/O B-39, Rajan Babu-Road Adarsh-Nagar Delhi-110033, have changed my name after-marriage kartika to kartika kaur, for future purpose.

0040768337-7

I, MEHUL DHAR, S/O SH.VIJAY KUMAR DHAR, R/O FLAT.NO.K-1203, PRATEEK LAUREL, SECTOR-120, NOIDA, G.B. NAGAR, U.P.-201301, have changed my, son's name, form REYANSH DHAR TO REYAANSH DHAR, for all, future purposes.

0040768312-8

I, Mahesh kumar@ Mahesh Chaudhary, S/o, Sh. Jodh Singh, R/o, H.no-409, gali.no-9, jagatpur, burari north-delli, Delhi-110084, declare, that Mahesh kumar and Mahesh Chaudhary are, same person, and both, names are, mine.

0040768321-1

I, NEHA DHAWAN, W/O JANIT DHAWAN, R/O -FLAT NO-1203, TOWER-21, LOTUS BOULEVARD SEC-120, NOIDA, GAUTAM BUDH NAGAR, U.P.-201304, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO NEHA SHARMA.

0040768314-2

I, PRATIBHA GAUTAM, W/O GOPAL SINGH, R/O 94-A, LIG-FLATS, PKT-D, DEEP ENCLAVE, ASHOK VIHAR PHASE-3, DELHI-110052, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO PRATIBHA THAKUR.

0040768308-7

I, PREETI W/O-SHUBHAM R/O, A-1/201, THE PRINTER-APARTMENT, SECTOR-13, ROHINI, DELHI-110085, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO PREETI SINGLA, FOR ALL PURPOSES.

0040768308-3

I, PREM KUMAR, S/O HANS RAJ, RESIDENT 1570, SECTOR-15, HOUSING BOARD COLONY, SONIPAT, HARYANA HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO PREM KUMAR SHARMA.

0040768314-6

I, Purshotam Keshwani, S/o Chetan Dass, R/O C-699, B C Lane, New-Friends Colony, Delhi-25, have changed my name to Purshotam Kumar Keshwani.

0040768312-6

I, RAJA RATHNAM, mother of, V SIVA VARA PRASAD KANCHI, Presently, residing at Peravali palern, Guntur (Dist), Andhra Pradesh-522261, have changed my name, from RAJA RATHNAM to KANCHI RAJARATNAM, vide affidavit, date-10.01.2025.

0040768314-9

I, Shahanwaj Khan, S/o Samiullah Khan R/o Tower-7, 108, Pyramid Urban Homes, Sector-70A, Gurgaon (Haryana)-122001, have changed my name to Shah Nawaj Khan for all Purposes.

0040768308-1

I, Baljit Singh S/o Satpal Singh Bhatia, R/O C-16, Second Floor, New Moti Nagar, New Delhi-110015, have changed my name to Baljeet Singh Bhatia.

0040768302-1

I, Cheshta Marwah D/o Sanjay Kumar R/o F-107, DDA-Flats, New Ranjit-Nagar, New Delhi-110008, have changed my name to Srishta Marwah.

0040768337-1

I, Timple Jana alias Timple Jana Bhatnagar, D/o, Tara Pada Jana, W/o, Sumet Bhatnagar R/o, H.No.D-185, FF, Ramprastha-Colony, Chander-Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201011, have changed my name to Timple Jana Bhatnagar.

0040768337-4

I, TEJASVI KAU RANA D/O IKBAL SINGH RANA, R/O P-R-184 1ST.FLOOR GREATER KAILASH PART-1 DELHI-110048, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO TEJASVI KAUR

0040768314-1

I, Swati Raghav, W/o Sudhir Kumar, R/O A151/A, Shri Ram Enclave, Sohna-Road Maruti-Kunj, Bhondsi (168), Gurgaon (Haryana)-122102, have changed my name to Swati Chauhan.

0040768308-2

I, Sakshi goel w/o Naman Jain, R/O D-38, bhagat Singh road Adarsh nagar Delhi-33, have changed my name to Sakshi Jain

0040768312-2

I, Jagdish Lal, S/o, Krishan Lal R/O, CB-100-C, Second Floor, Janta Flat, G-8 Area Rajouri Garden Delhi-110064 have changed my name to Jagdish Kapoor.

0040768312-1

I, Ishu Sahni, S/o, Late Girish Sahni, R/O-B1/403, Ground-Floor, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058, that my-father's name is wrongly-written as Girish Chandra Sahni in my-Passport. The actual-name of my-father is Girish Sahni.

0040768337-3

I, INDRA RANI SEHGAL/INDRA SEHGAL, W/O JUGAL KISHORE SEHGAL R/O 206-C, LIG-FLATS, DDA-COMPLEX MOTIA-KHAN PAHAR-GANJ, DELHI-110055, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO INDU RANI.

0040768308-4

I, Hridansh Anand, S/o Manpreet Singh Anand R/o-Flat.No.45, Akash Ganga near, Huda Market, Sector-56, Gurgaon Haryana-122011, have changed my name to Hridansh Singh Anand.

0040768312-9

I, Hitherto known as Sofiyan, S/o Abdul Hasan, R/o-Haidravad Kheri, UP-262802, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Shamsul Hasan.

0040768312-5

I, Gurpreet Singh Gill S/o H.No.4 Block-JP Pitampura Delhi-110034, have changed my name to Gurpreet Singh.

0040768314-3

I, GOPAL SINGH R/O 94-A, LIG-FLATS, PKT-D, DEEP ENCLAVE, ASHOK VIHAR PHASE-3, DELHI-110052, HAVE CHANGED MY CHILD NAME SARTHA THAKUR TO SAARTHA THAKUR.

0040768308-6

I, Bimla W/O Rishi Pal R/O 8236, B-11, Vasant Kunj Delhi-110070 Have Changed my Name to Bimla Devi.

0040768314-4

I, Anil Pratap Singh Chauhan, S/o shiv Charan Chauhan, R/O C-217, gali no-8, Majlis park, Delhi-33, have changed my name to Anil Chauhan.

0040768312-3

I, Akshay Kumar, S/o Ashok Kumar Gupta, R/o-Q-2, Top Floor, Naveen Shahdara, Delhi-110032, have changed my name to Akshay Kumar Gupta, for all purposes.

0040768312-4

I, ANUPAMA, W/o MED SINGH, R/o H.No.150-B/2, Chirag Delhi, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-110017, have changed my name, from ANU KALKALWAL to ANUPAMA for all future purpose.

0040768312-7

I, Yogesh S/o Late M.B. Johari R/O G-470, Street No.13, Gamma-2, Greater Noida, U.P. have changed my name to Yogesh Johari for all future purposes.

0070944802-1

I, Shivitya D/o Saurabh Choudhary R/o 602, Imperial Block, Supertech Estate, Sector-9, Vaishali, Ghaziabad, UP-201010 have changed my name to SHIVYA CHOUDHARY for all future purposes.

0070944791-1

I, Rajender Singh S/o Dunga Singh Negi R/o Flat No-A-91, Dayal Bagh, Surajkund, Faridabad-121009 have changed my name to Rajender Singh Negi

0070944794-1

I, Rajinder Singh, S/O, Hari Singh, R/o RZ 26C/39, Gali no-38, Indira park, Palam-Colony, New Delhi-110045, declare that, my son name written in his school record is Devansh Negi Now I intend to, change my son's name, as "Devansh Singh" vide, Certificate. No IN-DL09974882475965W dated-28.Dec.2024.

0040768321-3

I, Rajinder Singh S/O, Hari Singh, R/ORZ 26C/39, Gali, no-38, Indira-park Palam-Colony, New-Delhi-110045, declare that my son name written in, his school record, is Adarsh Negi Now I, intend to, change, my son's name as Adarsh Singh vide, Certificate. No IN-DL09976882676858W dated 28.Dec.2024.

0040768321-2

I, RADHA RANI D/O VIJAY KUMAR W/O VIVEK MAHESHWARI R/O 4480-A/10, JAI MATA MARKET, TRI NAGAR, DELHI-110035 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO RADHIKA MAHESHWARI FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES.

0070944796-1

I, Prafful Chandr Sriwastav S/o Nand Kishor Prasad R/o D-278 Sector-Omicron-2, Greater Noida U.P. have change my Name to Prafful Chandr Shrivastwa For All future Purposes

0070944544-1

I, Nidhi Mittal W/O Vineet Shokeen R/o H.No. 401, Mangol pur Kalan, Po.Rohini Sector-7, Delhi-110085 have declare that Both names NIDHI MITTAL & NIDHI ONE AND THE SAME PERSON.

0070944703-1

I, MAYANK GUPTA S/o Kapil Gupta R/O E-15, District Combined Hospital Campus, Sector-23, Sanjay Nagar, Ghaziabad (U.P) confirm that in my educational documents my father name has been wrongly written as Kapil Kumar instead of Kapil Gupta. The name Kapil Gupta is registered in my Aadhar, PAN card and other documents, so the correct name of my father is Kapil Gupta.

0070944786-1

I, Gautam Singh S/o Uttam Singh R/O A-58, Vasant Vihar, Vasant Vihar-1, Delhi-110057 have changed my name to Gautam Singh

0070944792-1

I, Charu Sharma W/o Vimlesh Mishra R/O B-382 1st floor Avantika Sector-1 Rohini Delhi-110085 have changed my name to Charu for all future purposes

0070944789-1

I, Sandhya W/O Virendra Kumar Tripathi, R/O C-14-15, First Floor, Front Side, Vashishth Park, Delhi-110046, have changed my name to Sandhya Tripathi, for all Purposes.

0040768314-5

### LOST & FOUND

Lost My Original Certificates Of Class-10th, Roll No-14111376, Year-2020 and 12th, Roll No-17969692, Year-2022 from CBSE Delhi. Finder May Contact Khyati :9205150403

0070944799-1

### MATRIMONIAL



### CASTE NO BAR

### MATRIMONIAL

Hindu, U.S. based professional Keralite parents invite alliance for their U.S. born and raised M. Arct., pretty daughter, skilled dancer, singer, 31.5', professional, presently working in the Southern U.S. from professionals settled/ raised or did higher studies in the U.S. Caste no bar.

Interested parties, please respond with specifics and a latest photo to mail on

bejeweledsnow@hotmail.com

### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the public at large that my client ICICI Bank is advancing a loan to Mr. Vivek Ranjha for purchasing the Residential House No. A-70, Area 233.33 sq. yds. situated at Shyam Park Extension, Sahibabad Teshil & Dist. - Ghazabad (U.P.) ("said property") from Mr. Rajesh Kumar Saraswat. Mr. Vivek Ranjha is purchasing the property from Mr. Rajesh Kumar Saraswat, who has claimed/represented to be the owner of the property and acquired a complete interest in the property pursuant to the demise of Mr. Banshi Dhar Saraswat, who in his WILL dated 16.07.2004 had bequeathed the said property, in case of his death, to his wife Mrs. Radha Rani, and upon her demise, to his son namely Mr. Rajesh Kumar Saraswat. It is pertinent to mention here that Mr. Banshi Dhar Saraswat and Mrs. Radha Rani died on 29.08.2004 and 20.02.2011 respectively, and Mr. Rajesh Kumar Saraswat has become the owner of the said property by the virtue of the same WILL. If anybody has any claim or objection upon the said property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession legal heirs, pawns, encumbrances or otherwise, the same is required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice with supporting documents. After the expiration of notice period, the claim, if any of such person shall be treated as null and void and be treated as waived.

TAPAN RAGHAV (Advocate)  
Ch. No. G-220, Kirti Karama Court,  
Delhi-110032. (M - 880096522)

### PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that my client Rajesh Kaur, R/o A-114, Block-A, Shanti Nagar, North West Delhi, Delhi, have seized his relations with son Abhishek Kashi due to his misconduct and misbehaving activities towards my client therefore, my client has disowned and disbarred him from all his movable and immovable property(s). Any one dealing with him may do so with their own risk and in this regard my client will not be responsible.

Sd/-  
USHA RANI  
Advocate  
CHAMBER NO. 1005,  
Baital Court,  
Delhi-110085

### PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby informed that my client Smt. DALJIT KAUR W/O LAL S. SURINDER SINGH, R/O. C-2/28 SECOND FLOOR, JANAK PURI, NEW DELHI-110058, have severed/disowned all their relations from their son, (1) S. KANWALDEEP SINGH S/O LAL S. SURINDER SINGH HIS WIFE (2) SMT. GURPREET KAUR (MY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW) and (3) S. KANWALDEEP SINGH ALL ARE R/O AUSTRALIA due to their misbehavior and hereby disowned and disbarred from all my movable and immovable properties and assets present and in future. I will not be responsible for any person dealing with them shall be doing so at their own risk and responsibility in future my client will not be responsible for any act and deeds done.

Sd/-B.N. DEO, Advocate  
S.R.Ind.B Compus, Janak Puri, NO-58

मैं अलोक शर्मा पुत्र गंगा प्रसाद वर्तमान निवास ए-३ फरद कोर आचार्य अपार्टमेंट, अशोक नगर, जिला-गाजियाबाद, (उ.प्र.) 201001 है। खसरा संख्या नं- 908 रकबा नं- 0.21608 हे० नगर-अलोक कुमार पुत्र गंगा प्रसाद ग्राम - खिन्दीवा, तहसील - मोदीनगर, जिला-गाजियाबाद, (उ.प्र.) के मूल बंनमा के दस्तावेज खो गये हैं। जो काफी प्रयास के बाद भी नहीं मिल रहे हैं। जिसकी फाइल दर्ज कर दी है।

### PUBLIC NOTICE

My client, Mr. Satish Kumar S/o Mr. Ramesh Chand and Smt. Sarita W/o Satish Kumar both R/o House No. 254, Tarta Mohalla, Near Bada Kuan, Ghitorni Village, New Delhi-110036 have discovered their son namely Mr. Dinesh S/o Mr. Satish Kumar from all their moveable and immovable properties and assets and also severed all their relations with him due to his misbehavior/misconduct towards my clients. Hence, not under the control of my clients. Hence, my clients shall not be responsible for any acts, deeds or things done by him.

Rakesh Malviya (Advocate)  
A-10, LGF, Capt. Garg Marg,  
East Of Kailash, New Delhi-65

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the general public that the document bearing Original Allotment Letter & Original Possession Letter of Flat No. B-4/11, Azad Apartments, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110016 has been misplaced/lost and not traceable by our client Mr. Sabir Zaman S/o Late Mr. Badruzzaman R/o Flat No. B-4/11, Azad Apartments, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110016, Contact No. 705190462. If the said original documents are found, kindly inform our client at the aforesaid address.

Sd/-  
Mayank Gupta  
Advocate  
Enroll No. ID7063/21  
D/1644, Gandhi Nagar,  
Delhi-110031

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Ms. Sonia Gosain D/o Late Sh. Radha Krishan Gosain R/o 835, Arun Vihar, Sector-37, Noida Distt. Gautam Buddh Nagar (U.P.) have applied for "Marriage ability Certificate" for her, objections, if any to the issuance may be filed on any day upto 20-01-2025 in the office of the undersigned.

Sd/-  
City Magistrate/  
Marriage Officer Noida  
Gautam Budh Nagar  
(U.P.) INDIA

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to general public at large that my client Mrs. Ruma Chaudhary who is the owner of Plot No. 746, area measuring 900 sq. yards, Sector-14, Urban Estate, Faridabad, Haryana by virtue of Sale Deed dated 10.01.2001 executed by Mrs. Venus Luthra in the favour of Mr. Satpal Singh and Mrs. Ruma Chaudhary vide Doc. No. 10058. All Original documents in respect of the property including the Conveyance Deed executed by HUDA and Sale Deed dated 10.01.2001 Doc. No. 10058 in the favour of my client have been lost and the Complaint has been lodged in Sector-17, Faridabad Police Station. Vide Application No. 1322504/2001-158, if any one finds the said document, please send back to the above-mentioned address. House of the same may attract legal action. Now, my client intends to sell the said property to intended purchaser. Any person, institution, having any claim and/or objection in respect of the said property shall communicate the same to the undersigned at our address within 10 days from the publication of this notice with documentary evidence in support thereof, failing which all the claims of such persons/institutions shall not be binding upon the said property or purchaser.

Md. K. Hussain (Advocate)  
2/34, Ground Floor, Jangpura Extension  
Near Kirti Karama Park, New Delhi-110014

### PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given to the General Public that our client has agreed to purchase the Entire freehold plot of land bearing no. C-2144, Safdarjung Development Area, New Delhi-110016, admeasuring 300 square yards, and the residential building constructed thereupon, from the stated lawful joint owners, (Dr.) Mr. Sanjeev Arora and Mr. Sanjay Arora, both sons of (Late) Dr. Ram Rakha Arora. Any person(s), including an individual, Hindu Undivided Family, Company, Bank(s), Financial Institution(s), Non-banking Financial Institution(s), firm, lenders and/or creditors having any objections, claim, right, title, share and/or interest in respect of the above-said Property or any part thereof, by way of sale, mortgage, gift, trust, will, inheritance, succession, possession, lease, tenancy, easement, agreement, or any liability/commitment or otherwise whatsoever, should make the same known in writing, by registered post, along with supporting documentary evidence in respect thereof, to the undersigned, within a period of 10 days from the date of publication of this Notice, failing which shall be deemed that there is no claim for all intents and purposes and that the above-said Property is free from all encumbrances.

(Shivom Asthana)  
Perfect Legal Group  
Advocates & Solicitors  
R-278, LGF, Greater Kailash-I  
New Delhi-110048

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	<b>SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES [See proviso to Rule – 8(6)]</b> E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property(ies) mortgaged/charged to <b>UCO Bank Firozabad Secured Creditor</b> , the possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of <b>UCO Bank Firozabad Secured Creditor</b> , will be sold on <b>"As is Where is"</b> , <b>"As is what is"</b> and <b>"Whatever there is"</b> basis on <b>30.01.2025</b> for recovery of Bank's Dues from Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) to <b>UCO Bank Firozabad Secured Creditor</b> . The details are described as below:																											
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Mr. Shankey Kumar S/o Late Mr. Raj Kumar (minor)</td> <td>10.11.2023  17.02.2024 (Symbolic Possession)</td> <td>All that part and parcel of the property consists of Land &amp; Building Measuring <b>600.00 Sq Ft (55.80 Square Meter)</b> as per Bahi No 01, Zild No <b>8585</b> Page No <b>31 to 66</b>, Sr. No. <b>12399</b> Registered on <b>28-12-2011</b> At Sub Registrar -1 Firozabad, Situated at <b>Mauza - deedamai, Mausuma Mohalla Ambey Nagar City &amp; District Firozabad</b> standing in the Name of <b>Shri Raj Kumar S/o Mr. Valister Singh</b> resident of <b>Ambe Nagar Colony Deedamai Tehsil and District Firozabad</b>. <b>Details of Boundaries (As per Deed)</b> East: Rasta Gali, West: House of Vijay Kumar, North: House Ram Naresh, South: House of Asharfi Lal Known Encumbrances, if any - Nil</td> <td><b>Rs. 8,36,390.17</b> (Rupees Eight Lac Thirty Six Thousand Three Hundred Ninety &amp; paise Seventeen Only) as on 09.11.2023 (inclusive of Interest Upto 31.03.2023) plus further interest thereon at the contractual rate, costs, charges and Expenses etc. till date of Payment.</td> <td><b>Rs. 11,58,000/-</b>  <b>Rs. 1,15,800/-</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="6">Branch:- Firozabad, District -Firozabad; Contact Number(s):- +91-9870950490, +91-8789356663; Email Id:- firoza@ucobank.co.in, zokanpur.rec@ucobank.co.in</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td><b>Borrower(s):</b> Shri Sateesh Chand S/o Shri Ramsaroop Rathore Address:- House No. 346/4, Mahabeer Nagar Gali No. 7 Tehsil &amp; Distt. 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# Shami returns for T20I series against England; no space for Pant

DEVENDRA PANDEY  
JANUARY 11

FAST BOWLER Mohammed Shami made a comeback to the Indian team, named for the five-match T20I series against England that begins on January 22 in Kolkata. Shami last played for India in the 2023 World Cup final against Australia in Ahmedabad, after which he was sidelined because of an ankle injury that needed surgery.

The 34-year-old made a return to cricket for the Ranji Trophy and also played in the T20 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and is playing the ongoing 50-over Vijay Hazare Trophy for Bengal. However, he didn't make it for India's disastrous tour of Australia because of swelling of the knee on his return to domestic cricket. The national selectors met in Mumbai on Saturday and after receiving a fit-

ness update on Shami picked the fast bowler for the shortest format, The Indian Express understands.

In Shami's absence, the team didn't have a second fast bowler other than pace spearhead and stand-in skipper Jasprit Bumrah to consistently put pressure on the Australian batsmen. Bumrah was named player of the series after picking 32 wickets but missed the third and final day of the fifth Test in Sydney because of an injury. Without Bumrah, Australian batsmen found it easier as they chased down a 162-run target with six wickets to spare. The pace spearhead is also absent from the T20I squad as he deals with a back injury.

Though the selectors didn't pick Shami initially for the tour of Australia, there was talk of him travelling to Australia at some point in time. Captain Rohit Sharma fielded questions about Shami's potential availability



Mohammed Shami was deemed unfit for India's Test tour to Australia. *File*

after Australia beat India by 10-wickets in the second Test match in Adelaide.

"We are just monitoring him because while playing Syed Mushtaq Ali, he got some swelling in his knee, which hampers his preparation to come and play a Test match. We want to be very careful, we don't want to bring him here, he pulls up sore or something happens. We want to be more than 100% sure with him because it has been a long time. We don't want to put pressure on him to come here and do the job for the team. There are some professionals monitoring, we will take a call based on what those guys feel," Rohit had said.

However, the swelling in his knee took time to heal and Shami played no part in the Test series.

ABCCI release on December 23, head of the Boxing Day Test match, had stated: "Based on the current medical assessment, the BCCI

medical team has determined that his knee requires more time for controlled exposure to bowling loads. Consequently, he has not been deemed fit for consideration for the remaining two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy."

For the T20 series at home against England, Shami will join a squad that has Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Nitish Reddy and Hardik Pandya as the other seamers.

**No place for Pant**

The selectors have also opted for Dhruv Jurel as the second wicketkeeper in the squad with the in-form Sanju Samson being the first choice as Rishabh Pant misses out on a spot. Jurel comes in place for Jitesh Sharma. The find of the Test tour to Australia, allrounder, Nitish too is part of the T20 squad.

Samson's batting has flourished since he moved to the opening slot in T20 Internationals. He has scored three centuries

in his last five matches, one against Bangladesh at home — his maiden ton — and two against South Africa in Durban and Johannesburg.

Reddy has played three times for India in the shortest format with a top score of 74 off just 34 balls versus Bangladesh in Delhi. Post the Test tour of Australia, he has gained the reputation as an all-format player by scoring two 40s and also a 104 in Melbourne in addition to being a handy medium pacer. Middle-order batsman Riyan Parag is not part of the squad that will play England because of an injury.

**INDIA T20 SQUAD:** Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Sanju Samson, Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Nitish Reddy, Mohd Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Harisht Rana, Dhruv Jurel, Rinku Singh, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi, Varun Chakrabarthi and Washington Sundar.

## AUSTRALIAN OPEN

# Swiatek seeks normalcy

World No 2 comes to Melbourne with a subdued personality, patchy form while Sabalenka, Gauff chase Oz crown

NAMIT KUMAR  
JANUARY 11

A DAY after he had won the Cincinnati Masters title, news dropped of Jannik Sinner's failed dope tests and suspicions swirled regarding his immediate exoneration. Despite the enormous media interest and raised eyebrows from peers in the locker room, a few weeks later he won the US Open and ended the year as World No. 1 after one of the most successful ATP seasons.

A similar task lies ahead for Iga Swiatek, the women's World No. 2 and five-time Major winner, who arrives at the Australian Open, starting Sunday, for her first major event since being banned for one month for testing positive for the banned substance trimetazidine, which she, like Sinner, successfully appealed was a case of accidental contamination with her sleeping medication.

With a different personality and coming into the year in patchy form, Swiatek, who has not always been immune to tempestuousness, must find the resolve that Sinner found to block out the noise and succeed on the big stage in what will be the most daunting challenge of the Polish 23-year-old's career so far.

Already facing accusations of a lack of transparency and favoritism regarding anti-doping controls, Swiatek's case heightened the scrutiny for tennis's governing bodies even more. In November, it was announced that Swiatek had accepted the month-long ban — essentially a plea bargain — retroactively between September and October, meaning her absences from tournaments in that time for 'fatigue' and 'personal matters' were really due to a doping violation that had been concealed from the public.

Sceptics of the system, having already raised concerns during the Sinner case, spoke out against what seemed like another case of preferential treatment, when lower-ranked players have had year-long bans despite testing positive due to accidental contamination.

Swiatek believes herself to be fortunate to avoiding becoming one of the symbols of her fellow colleagues' mistrust of the system.

"For sure, it wasn't easy; it was probably, like, the worst time in my life," she was quoted as saying at the pre-tournament press conference by Reuters.

"I always worked hard to be a good example, to show my integrity, show good behaviour. Having no control over this case really freaked me out a bit," the Pole said. "But in the locker room, the girls are great... They're worried this can happen to them, as well. There are many top players that are supportive. I appreciate that, because it made me feel better when I came back and didn't know how it was going to be."

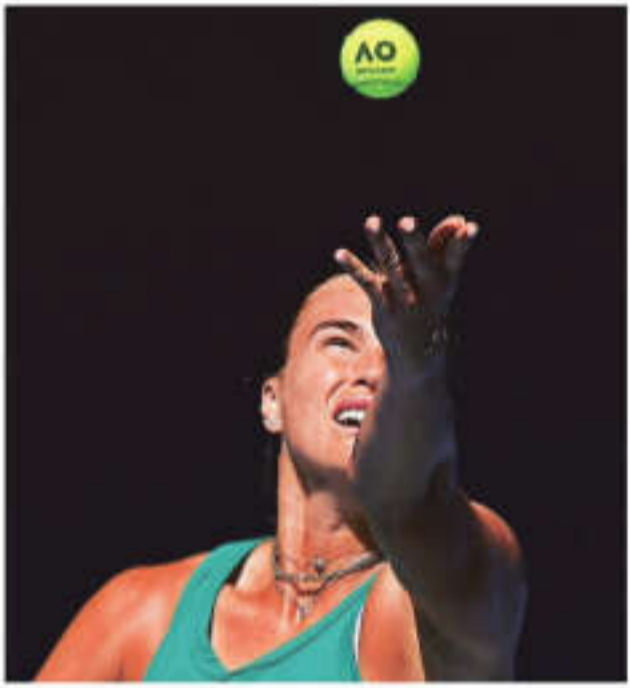
But the scale of negative attention, for a player that travels with a psychologist in acknowledgement of the need for mental steadiness during the testing grind of Grand Slam tennis, will prove to be a huge mental hurdle.

Swiatek's dominance on the tour between 2022-23 faded last year; her performances away from her favoured surface slumped, the competition caught up, and she lost her grip on the top spot of the rankings after having already spent 125 weeks as World No. 1 (seventh-most in WTA history).

Even before the doping setback, she had acknowledged the need for technical changes — in particular in the way in which power-hitters test her game on hard courts by rushing her groundstrokes, testing her extreme western grip. A new coach, Wim Fissette, who previously worked with Naomi Osaka, has been hired too. After a couple of brutal assignments in recent tournaments, the draw has been kind to the second seed in Melbourne. No sleeping giants lay lurking in her path to the second week. But as has been the case before, and now more than ever, the challenge for Swiatek may be within as opposed to who is on the other side of the net.



Iga Swiatek goes into the Australian Open with patchy form while Aryna Sabalenka and Coco Gauff start as favourites. *Reuters & AP*



## Key Round 1 battles

**MEN'S SINGLES:**  
[1] Jannik Sinner vs Nicolas Jarry  
Gael Monfils vs [30] Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard  
[7] Novak Djokovic vs [WC] Nishesh Basavareddy  
Matteo Berrettini vs Cameron Norrie  
**WOMEN'S SINGLES:**  
[1] Aryna Sabalenka vs Sloane Stephens  
[3] Coco Gauff vs Sofia Kenin  
Naomi Osaka vs Caroline Garcia  
[16] Jelena Ostapenko vs Belinda Bencic

## Coaches merry-go-round

World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka and third seed Coco Gauff, the best hard court players of the past two years and the form players on tour, start as favourites, with a potential semifinal encounter. After struggling through most of 2024, Gauff turned things around after she left coach Brad Gilbert at the end of the season and began working on more technical issues. Titles at the WTA Finals and United Cup have worked as perfect preparation.

If the Novak Djokovic-Andy Murray partnership is the one making headlines, the coaches merry-go-round in the women's section is likely to create plenty of intrigue.

Swiatek has roped in Fissette, while Osaka has replaced him with Serena Williams's former coach Patrick Mouratoglou.

Now ranked 50th, Osaka has shown signs of a spark since her post-pregnancy return to the game, but a big comeback awaits. A sleeping giant in the draw after a run to the final in Auckland this week, but she will have to do it the hard way with plenty of top names and form players in her section.

Meanwhile, Djokovic's former coach Goran Ivanisevic has been hired by sixth seed Elena Rybakina. The Kazakh, a former Wimbledon champion and finalist at Melbourne in 2023, has flown under the radar after illnesses and injuries have taken their toll, but the big-serving steady baseliner makes for a good match with Ivanisevic, and, in Swiatek's half, the sixth seed could do some damage.

If she can keep the distractions away, that is. Rybakina has announced the return of her former coach, Stefano Vukov, only for the WTA to reveal that he is unavailable due to an ongoing investigation into a breach of code of conduct. A storm of questions surround her now, but the churn is consuming all — other than heavy favourite and and two-time defending champion Sabalenka — as the tone is set for 2025 down under.

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Now ranked 50th, Osaka has shown signs of a spark since her post-pregnancy return to the game, but a big comeback awaits. A sleeping giant in the draw after a run to the final in Auckland this week, but she will have to do it the hard way with plenty of top names and form players in her section.

Meanwhile, Djokovic's former coach Goran Ivanisevic has been hired by sixth seed Elena Rybakina. The Kazakh, a former Wimbledon champion and finalist at Melbourne in 2023, has flown under the radar after illnesses and injuries have taken their toll, but the big-serving steady baseliner makes for a good match with Ivanisevic, and, in Swiatek's half, the sixth seed could do some damage.

If she can keep the distractions away, that is. Rybakina has announced the return of her former coach, Stefano Vukov, only for the WTA to reveal that he is unavailable due to an ongoing investigation into a breach of code of conduct. A storm of questions surround her now, but the churn is consuming all — other than heavy favourite and and two-time defending champion Sabalenka — as the tone is set for 2025 down under.

# Rybakina says she didn't complain about ex-coach before suspension

REUTERS  
MELBOURNE, JANUARY 11

FORMER WIMBLEDON champion Elena Rybakina said on Saturday she had not complained about her former coach Stefano Vukov before his provisional suspension by the governing body of women's tennis for a potential code of conduct breach.

Rybakina split with Vukov in August, just days ahead of the U.S. Open, before appointing Goran Ivanisevic in November but added her long-time coach back into her team this month.

Vukov, who is currently being investigated by the WTA and cannot obtain a credential to its tournaments, denies wrongdoing and told The Athletic he "never abused anyone" after the outlet first reported the provisional ban.

"I don't agree with a lot of things the WTA do in the sense of my relationship with Stefano," Rybakina told reporters ahead of the Australian Open, which begins on Sunday.

"I have never made any complaints or any of these things. I always said that he never mistreated me. I don't really want to speak about this any more. I want to focus on my matches here."

Rybakina, who won the 2022 Wimbledon title under Vukov, did not specify his role in her team and said that it was unfair of the tennis community to be commenting on the situation.

"I'm not happy with the whole situation, especially when still some coaches are making some comments and the people who aren't so close to the tennis world, they see the comments and they're picking it up, making even more of a show out of this," she added. "I don't think it's fair. But as I said, my goal is here to focus on the matches. This is what I'm going to do."

The 2023 Melbourne Park runner-up begins her campaign against 16-year-old Australian Emerson Jones.



Elena Rybakina had split with coach Stefano Vukov but brought him back into her team this month. *Reuters*

# Collins glad to be back at Australian Open

**DANIELLE COLLINS** had no intention of being at this year's Australian Open but the former finalist is glad to be back at Melbourne Park and taking comfort in the routines of tennis after personal setbacks. The American former world number seven had planned to retire at the end of 2024 to start a family but said in October she had changed her mind and would play on in 2025. Collins, who suffers from endometriosis, said starting a family was proving more complicated than she hoped due to her health issues, paving the way for a return to the court. "I was looking forward to trying to start a family right away and to start a new chapter," the 31-year-old told reporters at Melbourne Park on Saturday. "But sometimes these things get thrown at you, different curve balls. Now it's just kind of like, well, I can enjoy some more time on tour, which is a bonus. "It's been nice being back on tour and having, you know, the time to be around my friends on tour and having that support system." **REUTERS**

# Coach Menezes returns to happy hunting ground as women's HIL starts

VINAYAKK MOHANARANGAN  
JANUARY 11

LAST TIME he was in Ranchi, Jude Menezes enjoyed a momentous high in his coaching career. The former India goalkeeper, who played more than 100 international matches and represented the country at the Sydney Olympics, masterminded Japan's third-place finish at the Olympic qualifiers as a coach. And at the cost of India, his team booked its tickets to Paris 2024.

He is now back in the city, this time as the coach of Soorma Hockey Club as the inaugural edition of Hockey India League for women begins on Sunday. "It brings back pleasant memories here for me," Menezes told *The Indian Express*. "It's a happy hunting ground. But oh, it was a nerve-wracking tournament. You go through some dark places. When you're winning, everything is great. But when you're not, there's apprehension about what might happen. It really tests your composure and puts a lot of pressure on you. I was fortunate to be on the right side of the equation."

The Mumbai-born Menezes began his

coaching journey in New Zealand, where he has lived with his family since 2002. The stint in Japan saw him ascend to the role of head coach. Now finally he gets to coach Indian internationals in the four-team league. He is the only former India international in a head coach capacity across the eight teams in the men's HIL and four in the women's.

"I'm privileged and grateful for the opportunity. I watched the last few editions in the previous version (men's) and wanted to be a part of it," he said.

Menezes is convinced HIL won't just be a boost for Indian women's hockey but for the global game. When it comes to Indian sport, franchise leagues for women are still not widely prevalent — the Women's Premier League for cricket started only three years back but has already shown encouraging signs in terms of investment and popularity.

"It's a huge step for the future of women's hockey. Like the IPL, which became a mega event, this could be the start of something massive. It will boost Indian and world hockey. It will make the sport more exciting, hopefully draw more crowds, and attract more sponsorship. I hope it skyrockets from here," he said.

Working with Indian youngsters will have a special meaning. "Absolutely gold. These opportunities are rare, I'm fortunate to have this chance and I've worked hard for it. It's not just about coaching hockey; it's about life," he said.

"We've got three or four young under-21s with exceptional talent. It's a great learning opportunity for them, working with someone like Maria Verschoor, a double Olympic gold



Captains ahead of Women's HIL in Ranchi. (L) Former India goalie Jude Menezes. *HIL*



medalist. She already gels well with the young athletes. The overseas girls have been fantastic with the whole group and the young Indians will benefit the most."

And as a goalkeeper himself, he will be working with India's best, Savita Punia. "She is a fantastic leader, works harder than most people I know. Just a lot of respect between us. She's had a fantastic career, a real rock in the Indian defense. I have had a few losses against

## Rudras arrest slide

*New Delhi:* UP Rudras arrested their slide with an important 3-1 win against Delhi SG Pipers in the men's Hockey India League on Saturday. Goals by Floris Wortelboer (30'), Kane Russell (43') and Tanguy Cosyns (54') helped them move back to No 2 on the table. Jake Whetton (29') scored for Delhi SG Pipers. In the earlier match, Hyderabad Toofans bagged shootout bonus against Soorma Hockey Club after a 1-1 draw. Nicolas Della Torre (8') gave Soorma the lead in the first quarter but Amandeep Lakra (40') levelled it up. Soorma's captain Harmanpreet Singh limped off late in the match and didn't take part in the shootout. **ENS**

India, and Savita has always been key in guarding that goal. It's great that she's on my side now," he said.

For Menezes, one of the challenges work-

# To tackle doping menace, AFI to target coaches, identify ‘hideouts’

NIHAL KOSHIE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

IDENTIFYING COACHES involved in doping rackets, drawing up a list of training centres across the country that are 'hideouts' for dope cheats and sharing this intelligence with watchdogs like the Monaco-based Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) and the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA). These are the key functions of an Anti-Doping Cell to be created by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI), which is alarmed by the rise in doping cases in track and field and wants to tackle the menace head on.

All coaches have been asked to mandatorily register on the AFI portal and athletes will have to mention the name of the coach when they file entry for competitions, a move that is proposed as a deterrent to doping. The AFI is also discussing venturing into uncharted territory of collecting samples for dope testing and storing and transporting them to an

accredited laboratory to reduce the workload of NADA and catch more dope cheats.

The AFI's major push to weed out athletes comes on the heels of the recommendations of a six-member committee, constituted because of the surge in positive cases. The committee was headed by Special CP (Delhi Police) Sagar Preet Hooda and included chief national coach Radhakrishnan Nair. The proposals of the committee were tabled at AFI's AGM in Chandigarh last week.

"The rise in doping cases in athletics was the reason for the formation of the committee and the AFI had sought its recommendations," Parth Goswami, a special invitee of the committee and a member of the Disciplinary and Appeals Panel for World Athletics, said.

Among countries which tested over 2,000 samples, India recorded the highest percentage of failed dope tests - 3.2% or 125 positive cases out of 3,865 - according to the 2022 Testing Figures Report, the latest figures released by the World Anti-Doping Agency in



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

April last year. AIU's latest list of ineligible athletes has 108 Indians in a total of 481.

The AFI's crackdown on coaches is aimed at stopping them from cajoling young athletes to use banned substances for quick gains. This malpractice is prevalent among teenage athletes and if unchecked, it can re-

sult in wheels coming off a seemingly promising career when the athlete progresses to the senior level.

"The committee was of the unanimous view that only in rare cases does a coach not know that an athlete is doping. Coaches know, therefore it is important that coaches are the main focus. It is happening at the grassroots and with minor athletes. There is a recommendation to register all coaches with the AFI. And athletes when registering for an event will write their coach's name also. We have in the past seen certain cases where athletes have refused to name their coaches even after getting caught. They had been prepared in such a manner that they did not reveal who their coach was," Goswami, a senior sports lawyer, said.

Coaches involved in doping will not be part of junior or senior teams and will be blacklisted. The Anti-Doping Cell will also prepare a list of coaches involved in doping to be shared with top AFI officials who in turn will handover the names to NADA and AIU.

It has also come to the notice of the AFI that certain training centres in the country have become safe havens for dope cheats. A top AFI official has warned those in-charge of these centres that the malpractice must end else there could be major consequences, including unofficially banning their athletes when squads are named for major events.

"A list of hideouts is being prepared. There are reports that there are certain centres where athletes go and train and they are out of the visibility of anti-doping watchdogs," Goswami said. AFI's outgoing president Adille Sumariwalla had spoken about the menace of doping on the sidelines of the recent AGM.

"Doping is a very, very serious problem, we are fighting it tooth and nail. There is zero tolerance, even some of the biggest names have undergone (extensive testing). The AFI can do two things, educate and police. We are doing both. Now, it has to be done at the state and district level where the problem is," Sumariwalla had said.

## Javelin event in India in May: ‘Longstanding’ dream for Neeraj

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
JANUARY 11

A CONTINENTAL Tour javelin-only competition in India, headlined by Neeraj Chopra, will be held in May, it was confirmed on Saturday. The venue and list of athletes are yet to be finalised, but among the best male and female javelin throwers from around the world are set to compete on Indian soil in a first-of-its-kind event.

"It has been a longstanding dream of mine to organise and bring a world-class javelin competition to India," Neeraj Chopra said. "With the help of JSW Sports and the Athletics Federation of India, we are making this happen. I am sure that my fellow athletes and the fans in India will both create an experience that will be spoken about for a long time. I am excited to see how big we can make this."

According to the statement, Neeraj and JSW Sports are keen to make the event an annual fixture in the world athletics calendar, with an eye on adding more track and field disciplines to the meeting.

The Indian Express had reported this week that AFI's outgoing president Adille Sumariwalla said on the sidelines of the Annual General Body Meeting of the AFI, it makes sense to conduct the invitational competition comprising the world's best athletes because of the popularity of javelin in the country post Neeraj's Tokyo Olympics gold.

Sumariwalla said: "We could not have a better role model than Neeraj Chopra to inspire the next generation of Indian athletes. 2025 will be an exciting year for Indian athletics with two Continental Tour meetings being held in our country."

A bronze-level Continental Tour event in Bhubaneswar on August 10 is on the AFI's calendar and it has also submitted a letter of intent to host the Under-20 World Championships in 2028.

Lord Sebastian Coe, World Athletics President: "World Athletics is delighted to support this new event that will allow fans in India to see their heroes on home soil and that will also showcase to the world India's ability to stage gold standard events."

"When Neeraj brought the idea to us of staging a world-class athletics meeting in India, we jumped at the opportunity to help make it happen," Parth Jindal, Founder of JSW Sports said.

Neeraj, who largely competes internationally, had thrown in Odisha last year.

"I have a strong desire to compete in India. I really want India to host a big international event and the federation is also trying. Everyone is keen on seeing India host a big-ticket event. I hope it happens in the future and I am really looking forward to competing in India against international athletes in front of fans," Neeraj had said during an Indian Express Idea Exchange.

# Reboot still a work in progress

Satwik and Chirag, in a state of post-Paris flux, stumble onto Seo Seung-jae in 21-10, 21-15 flattening

SHIVANI NAIK  
JANUARY 11

SATWIKSAIRAJ RANKIREDDY and Chirag Shetty find themselves in a flux that's occurred but never quite made headlines: missing making finals at All England, World Championship and the ultimate coup de grace, the Olympics.

The lessons for 2025 are straightforward: soak up losses, not panic, but not be deluded that everything will fall into place immediately. It's literally starting from scratch, with coach Tan Kim Her.

The semis loss at Malaysia Super 1000 was still early days, against Korean Seo Seung-jae and Kim Won-ho. A final and semis appearance in the two tournaments on their return from a five-month break, when they are clearly very off-the-boil, points to their calibre.

But the 21-10, 21-15 flattening, in 40 minutes, might be their shortest loss, their briefest fight in other words. And Satwik knew he could cop a part of the blame.

"We were prepared but they played really well. I should've followed a bit of the game plan, but I played random strokes," he would tell BWF.

It would be naive to believe that the Indians got uncharacteristically thrashed solely because they were off their normal levels. For Seo Seung-jae, easily the finest Men's Doubles player of the generation, was prancing right in front of them, and looking strangely happy too. Even in his sulky modes, he's quite a handful for opponents with his southpaw surgical game.

But having a gala time with new partner Kim Won-ho, the newly-rustled-up pairing left the Indians utterly bewildered with their game. Satwik would read it perfectly: "They both are playing like mixed doubles now. It's getting tougher. They don't give easy points, that's their best quality. And we have to work hard for every point. We were working very hard and they were taking very easy points. So there was no pressure on them."

The 'mixed doubles game' is a straight up ungrudging compliment. Seung-jae is the 2023 World Champion in men's doubles, but also in mixed.

Won-ho is the Olympic silver medallist in mixed from Paris.

It would suffice to say that Korea is the land of Lee Yong-dae, one of the most creative mixed doubles players to ever walk the court. But Seung-jae, despite missing an Olympic medal, takes the skill-set higher, with his left-handed angles and tremendous foot speed.

Unlike traditional men's doubles - slam bang and mono-chromed at any rate - mixed doubles takes into account that women won't settle for humdrum monotony of either fast flat exchanges or smash-fests. They open up the game much more, and both Koreans carry the creative fervour and flexibility into their men's doubles gigs. To add to that, Kuala Lumpur courts at Axiata have been deadly slow, completely



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty in action at the Malaysia Open. BWF: Badminton Photo

neutralizing the Indian attacking game.

As such the Indians did well to reach semis. But they will need to counter Korean sorcery on slow shuttle days.

Satwik-Chirag picked the first few points, but as early as 4-4, the Koreans were running rings around them. Famous commentator Gillian Clarke had just about settled into declaring that Kim Won-ho was manning the front court as designated net player, when Seung-jae made her guffaw that she was having a rethink.

Truth was Koreans, with the expanse that great defensive qualities and their right-left combination gives them in covering the court, and their speed, simply follow no pattern. Thinking on their feet, like mixed doubles is accustomed to, they go searching for gaps on court and have the skills to place the shuttle there, without designated roles.

Indians looking to be versatile

It's the sort of versatility Indians are trying to imbibe too, which saw Satwik cut across to the front court early in the rally - something

that Chirag does, though he stayed back to allow his partner time to find his footing. The understanding was there, but the repetition drills that perfect this choreography of movements and strokes to go with it, wasn't. Hence, Satwik's mea culpa on "random strokes."

The Koreans pretty much broke away at 5-5 and had the opener wrapped up with Seung-jae being everything everywhere all at once, to riff off Malaysia's greatest action heroine, the Academy Award winner Michelle Yeoh. Seung-jae's speed in deception as he buzzes around the court is a wondrous wheel within a wheel of strokeplay. Not only did the Koreans guard every inch of court defensively, but they made the other half of the court appear bigger and unguardable for the tall Indians.

In the second, the Indians started calmly and had a semblance of a gameplan going. But the only difference was the Koreans 'at will' broke away at 12-12, and cruised to the win. Unable to dictate either pace or patterns, and with slow courts taking the sting out of their game, the Indians got a few points in with body-attacks.

It's what prompted Satwik to say, "My game didn't work. We thought if we stayed calm it would work. But maybe we should've shown some attitude on court. Played with a little more fire."

Chirag also pointed out that the Koreans won the serve-battle. "We started being a little bit calmer from the second. Right from the first point. But credit to them. We gave a few easy points from 11-8. But they were serving quite well," he told BWF. Former coach Mathias Boe set a lot of store on the first three strokes and wrestling control, but the Korean serve is a mystery-box and the Indians were too frazzled by Seung-jae's overall brilliance to be in any position to counter snappily.

Satwik-Chirag next play in Delhi, where they start against fellow losing semi-finalists Man Wei Chong and Kai Wun Tee, of Malaysia in Round 1. Man-Tee lost a decider 24-26 against Chinese Liu-Chen at Axiata on Saturday, so life's not about to get easy or comforting at home for Satwik-Chirag. Knowing they're some way off from ideal, is half the battle covered.

Radical move

An out-of-the-box move the AFI is discussing is a plan to collect samples of athletes for dope testing at a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accredited laboratory. WADA coordinates implementation of anti-doping rules and athletes' samples are currently collected by the NADA and AIU.

"AFI is also looking at an option where, at times, when NADA's capacity to collect samples is limited, it can step in. The AFI is contemplating whether with the approval of World Athletics, it can conduct out-of-competition tests for certain athletes. The AFI's six-member committee discussed a system where samples are collected and sent to a accredited lab so there are checks in place besides NADA. We are exploring certain provisions in the World Athletics constitution which gives powers to national federations," Goswami said.

The AFI is prepared to pay for Doping-Control Officers, testing kits and a storage facility.

## VIJAY HAZARE



Teenager Arshin Kulkarni scored a ton for Maharashtra.

## Maharashtra and Karnataka in semis

Vadodara: Four-time champions Karnataka held their nerves to edge out hosts Baroda by five runs, while Maharashtra outplayed Punjab by 70 runs to enter the Vijay Hazare Trophy semifinals here on Saturday. Teenager Arshin Kulkarni struck a composed maiden List A century, while wicket-keeper-batter Nitin Naik hit an explosive unbeaten fifty to power Maharashtra to a handsome win over Punjab at Kotambi Stadium. Kulkarni made a 137-ball 107 in a century-plus partnership with Ankit Bawne (60; 85 balls) before Naik's belligerent knock of 52 not out (29b) at No. 7 lifted them to 275/6. Punjab never posed any threat to the total, losing wickets at regular intervals. Arshdeep Singh was the top-scorer with his 39-ball 49 batting at No. 9 but it was just a matter of time before the innings folded for 205 in 44.4 overs. **Brief scores:** Maharashtra 275/6; 50 overs (A Kulkarni 107, A Bawne 60, N Naik 52 not out; A Singh 3/56, N Dhir 2/29) bt Punjab 205; 44.4 overs (A 49, A Singh 48; M Choudhary 3/44, P Dadhe 2/31) by 70 runs.

Padikkal back in style

Opener Devdutt Padikkal marked his return to domestic cricket with a scintillating century before Prasidh Krishna's game-changing spell in the death overs propelled Karnataka to a thrilling win over Baroda.

Opting to bowl, Baroda, led by Krunal Pandya, faced an in-form Padikkal, who anchored the Karnataka innings with a superb 102 off 99 balls. Supported by KV Aneesh's solid 52 off 64 balls, Karnataka posted a challenging total of 281/8 in their 50 overs.

Baroda, in reply, seemed well on course to chase the target as opener Shashwat Rawat led the charge with a composed century.

**Brief scores:** Karnataka 281/8; 50 overs (D Padikkal 102, KV Aneesh 52; A Sheth 3/41, R Limbani 3/47) bt Baroda 276; 49.5 overs (S Rawat 104, A Sheth 56; Vasuki Koushik 2/39, Prasidh Krishna 2/60, Abhilash Shetty 2/70, Shreyas Gopal 2/38) by five runs.

## SPORTSBAR

### FA Cup: Liverpool on course for quadruple with 4-0 victory

**Liverpool:** Liverpool's bid to win an unprecedented quadruple is still on after a 4-0 victory over Accrington Stanley in the FA Cup on Saturday. The Premier League and Champions League leader is also into the semifinals of the English League Cup. And fourth-division Accrington was never expected to prevent Arne Slot's team from advancing to the fourth round of soccer's oldest knockout competition. Diogo Jota, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Jayden Danns and Federico Chiesa scored for Liverpool at Anfield, with 16-year-old Rio Ngunmoha becoming the Merseyside club's second-youngest debutant. The third round of the FA Cup is traditionally one of the most antic-

pated weekends in English soccer as Premier League clubs enter the competition. Top-flight Leicester routed Queens Park Rangers 6-2 for only its second win under manager Ruud van Nistelrooy. The relegation-fighting team hadn't won since Van Nistelrooy's first game in charge against West Ham at the start of December. James Justin scored two goals and Jamie Vardy converted a second-half penalty. Wolverhampton also advanced with a 1-0 win at second-division Bristol City. Later Saturday four-time defending league champion Manchester City was hosting fourth-division Salford City and Chelsea was facing Morecambe — also from the fourth division. Meanwhile, Atalanta were held 0-0 at Udinese in Serie A as they missed the chance to move level on points with leaders Napoli but they were fortunate to escape with a draw thanks to the woodwork and alert goal-keeping of Marco Carnesecchi. **REUTERS**



16-year-old Rio Ngunmoha became club's second-youngest debutant. **Reuters**

### Mohun Bagan SG pip East Bengal FC

**Kolkata:** Riding on Jamie Maclaren's record second-minute goal, Mohun Bagan Super Giant extended their dominance in the Kolkata derby with a 1-0 win over traditional rivals East Bengal FC in their Indian Super League match here on Saturday. The match was moved to the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium after the Bidhannagar Police, under whose jurisdiction the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata falls, cited concerns over inadequate security because of the ongoing Gangasagar Mela. Jamie Maclaren scored the fastest goal of the Kolkata derby in ISL and it was enough for the reigning champions to see out their arch-rivals, while going eight points clear (35) at the top of the table, compared to the second-placed Bengaluru FC (27). The Mariners have now won nine times and drawn once in their 10 derby clashes against East Bengal FC in the ISL. **PTI**

### Kasimov late strike seals win for Mohammedan

**Bengaluru:** Mirjalol Kasimov's stunning 88th-minute free-kick secured Mohammedan SC's 1-0 victory over former champions Bengaluru FC, marking their second win of the Indian Super League, here on Saturday. Bengaluru FC dominated possession with 65.8 per cent and created several early chances, but Mohammedan SC's defense, led by goalkeeper Padam Chhetri, held firm, making key saves to hand the Blues their second successive defeat. This was Bengaluru FC's fourth defeat from 15 matches, leaving them with 27 points in second place, while Mohammedan SC remain in 12th spot with 10 points. BFC's initial attacking move saw Alberto Noguera pulling off a right footed shot from the centre of the box through a delivery that he received through a headed pass from Rahul Bheke in the third minute. **PTI**

### Boxing Nationals: Shiva, Siwach in last 8

**Bareilly:** Himachal Pradesh's Abhinash Jamwal pulled off a major upset, knocking out former Youth World champion Vanshaj Kumar, while Shiva Thapa and Sachin Siwach continued their dominant run to sail into the quarterfinals of the 8th Elite Men's National Boxing Championship here on Saturday. Jamwal defeated the 2022 youth champion Vanshaj of the Services with a decisive 5-0 victory in the 63.5kg category. Representing Assam, the former World Championship bronze medalist, Thapa, showcased his skills as he eliminated Himanshu Sangwan with a clean 5-0 win in the 60-65kg category. Former World Youth Champion Sachin Siwach delivered another stellar performance, defeating Kingson Pukhrambam of Manipur by the same margin. **PTI**

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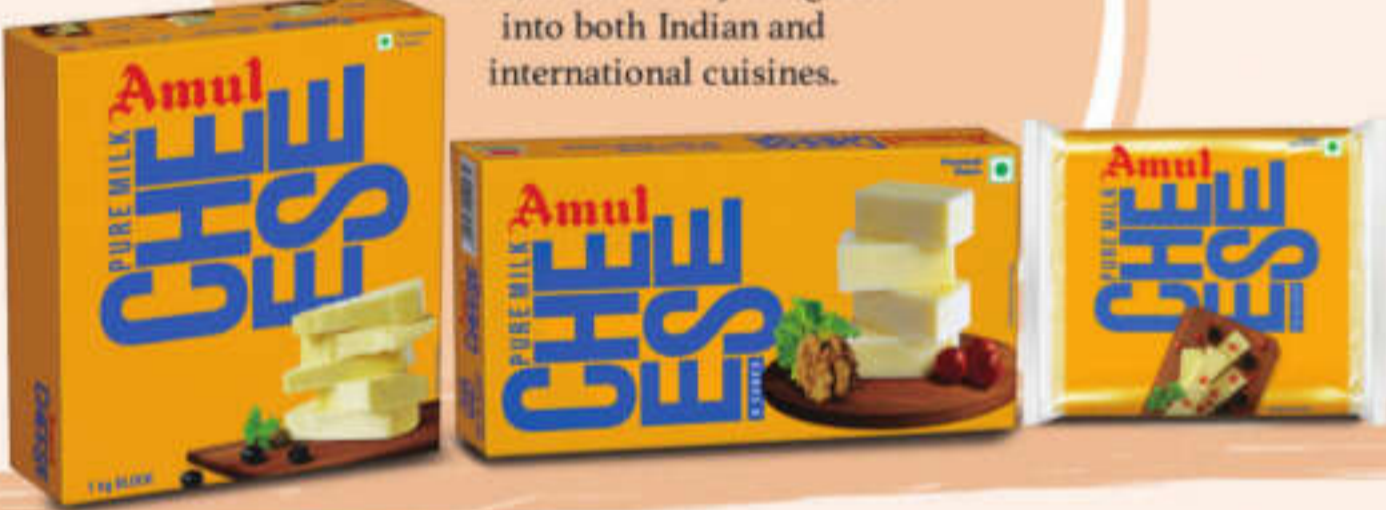


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## POINT OF VIEW, PAGE 2

## Toast of the Town

India's only two-Michelin-starred woman chef Garima Arora on launching Banng and why ten lifetimes aren't enough to know Indian food



## SCREEN, PAGE 3

## Stories from a Prison

Director Vikramaditya Motwane and former jailer Sunil Gupta on the making of *Black Warrant*, a new Netflix series set in Tihar Jail

## eye

## THE FIVE BROTHERS AND THEIR WIFE

English theatre-film director Peter Brook broke the rules of the game when he staged *The Mahabharata* more than three decades ago. As the restored version of the film releases, MALLIKA SARABHAI looks back at essaying Draupadi in the epic that travelled the world

OUT OF the blue, an email arrived from Peter Brook's son Simon on September 1, 2024. "I believe you are in Udine, Italy? What a stroke of luck. Please come to the Venice Film Festival on the 5th of September for the re-release of an improved restored film. I shall make all arrangements." Destiny? Chance? Serendipity? I was in Italy because the director with whom I was working couldn't come to India, and the work had to start. And I was an hour from Venice. A reunion after 35 years?

Simon had mentioned that he was gathering all those who could come. So many had passed away. Who would be there? How would we react to each other? A few days later, with friends of Simon and Peter, we arrived in Venice by a water taxi. We descended at the Red Carpet gate. Who has not seen the descent of the stars there? There were no stars in sight. We walked into the Hotel Excelsior on Lido Isle.

As I stood slightly lost, recognising no one, a gruff voice said, "*Salut, Mallika*". I spun around. Towering over me, but with a face that I instantly recognised, was Antona, one of the little boys who alternated as Janmejaya, the child that anchors the play in its telling by Vyasa, last seen as a 10-year-old. And then one by one there were others, Ken, another of the little boys; Chloe Obelansky, the remarkable costume designer; Corinne Jaber, Amba and Sikhandi, whom I hardly knew, and my dear friend Georges Corraface, the Duryodhana of the film. There was Simon, of course, looking like a splitting image of Peter, even with the pink shirt he wore, someone I knew not at all. But it was a thin crowd. I learnt of more people having passed.

So many memories. *The Mahabharata* (1990), an international production of the epic by Peter, toured for four years globally and was turned into a film and a TV series in 1990. Its restored version will be released worldwide after January 2025.

Seeing the restored film was interesting and thrilling. Simon spoke of how he had spent the last few years retrieving the reels of film from the many places where they had been stuck as payments were due, how he had gone to the best lab to restore it to 8K, and how it was the first European film to be thus restored. He also mentioned that it was exactly 35 years earlier that the film had been released at this very festival. A moving evening filled with nostalgia.



In March 1984, I was pregnant with my first child and in bed with a bad case of jaundice. In the local English newspapers, such as *The Indian Express* and *The Times of India*, I followed the path Peter and his entourage, being led by Pupil Jayakar, then considered the czarina of culture, took in his search for Krishna or Draupadi for his international production of the epic. He did the usual circuit of metro cities. The newspaper listed the film stars and theatre bigwigs who auditioned. Then the news went cold. At the end of March, my doctors gave me permission to travel. I was headed for New York, still yellow from the jaundice. One morning, four days before my trip, I received a telegram from my friend, the cultural attaché at the French embassy. Are you in Ahmedabad, it asked. Peter wants to fly there tomorrow to meet you. Meet me? What on earth for? I wasn't a professional theatre actor. Maybe some small part. Amma made me say yes.

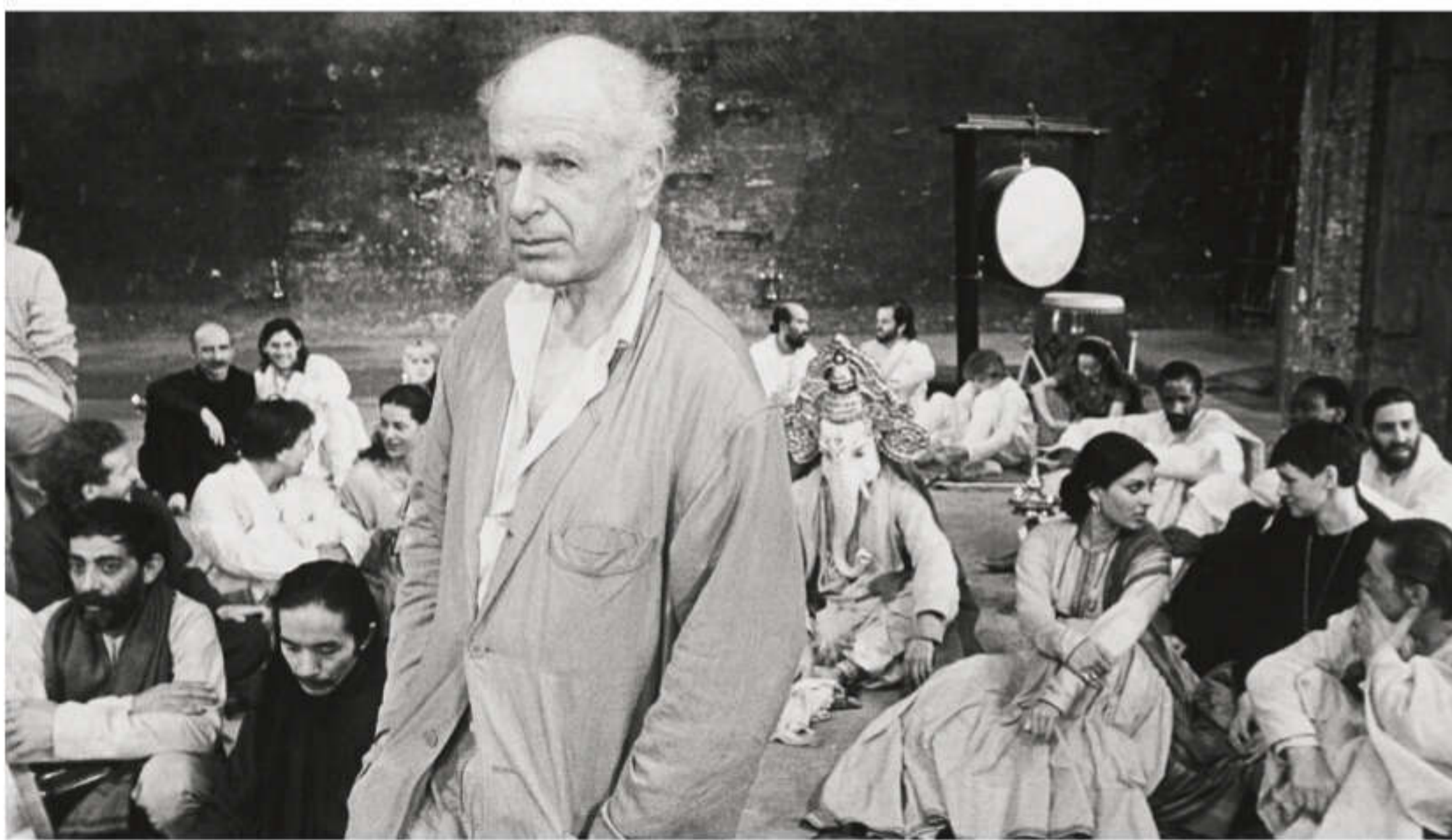
They arrived early next morning, five of them — Peter and his assistant Marie-Hélène Estienne, writer Jean-Claude Carrière, designer Chole and her assistant Pippa. Amma sat them down in my living room. Five months pregnant, thin as a rake, yellow, in a green Kutchhi embroidery dress, hair down to my thighs, I walked in, awkward and intimidated. Five minutes of polite conversation.

Did I speak French? No. Had I done theatre? Yes, a lot in school and college. When was I due? The beginning of September. Pause. Looks exchanged. Then Peter: "We would like you to audition for Draupadi". Draupadi? What? How? And I was about to leave for NYC. "That is fine. My assistant is looking after my Carmen production at the Lincoln Center and he can audition you."

A flurry of activities. Doubts. Temptation to accept. Anxiousness. More doubts. What



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about the baby? What about the publishing house I had just launched with my then-husband? What about my blossoming dance career? To cut a long story short, I accepted. A two-year contract to play Draupadi in French. Which I did not speak.

Revanta was born September 2, the day the rehearsals started in Paris. I joined five weeks later, having organised and completed the biggest-ever international folk festival in India, in Ahmedabad, Mahotsav 84.

I had never lived without my family. Even living in the hostel at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, meant being four km from home. And here I was, going off to live in a country whose language I didn't speak, with a baby, to manage a home alone, and deal with five husbands, all of whom were great actors from their own country. I was petrified.

For a few months before I left, I had been working on Jean Claude's script with Achille Forier, dear friend and founder, Alliance Française d'A Ahmedabad. I had managed to memorise bits of my role. Feeling rather

## A PAUSE IN TIME

(Top) Mallika Sarabhai in a still from the 1990 film, *The Mahabharata*; Director Peter Brook surrounded by his cast on the set of the Brooklyn Academy of Music production of the play *The Mahabharata*

pleased with myself, I arrived at the first rehearsal, walking up eight floors in a cold and unfinished building in Paris. To be told that the script I had had been changed. The next few months were a nightmare. I hated working with Peter and the actors. I was treated as some exotica, resented for being Indian, envied, looked down upon for not being a professional actor, not wanting to be a Peter groupie. I was breast-feeding Revanta and would disappear every couple of hours to an ante-room, also freezing, where he and his nanny stayed during the 14-hour rehearsals.

Soon, I began to find other actors also crooning over the baby, a break from being frowned upon. As a result, Revu's first nursery rhyme was in Polish, (Duryodhana and Dhritarashtra had issues with Peter or Marie-Hélène and often went to the baby) and the second in a nomadic African language. After five years of touring the world with the company, being with every skin tone, every shade of hair and every sound in the spectrum, Revanta could not understand why all the

people at home had black hair.

Peter and I got off to a bad start. Perhaps, I believed that he would be some kind of a shield, that knowing I was in foreign territory, literally and figuratively, he would provide some warmth. But I found him an exceedingly cold man. We argued vociferously on interpretations of Draupadi and other women characters. Once, he asked me not to sound like a shrew. My cold response, "We don't have shrews in India, only *Shaktis*." He didn't like one disagreeing with him in public. If I wanted something said, it had to be in private. Then if he was convinced, he would inform the group. He once said to me, "Working with you is like working with Princess Margaret." To which my response was, "I didn't know you had worked with her." He was not amused. He did, however, think that I had the potential to speak perfect French and sent me off to the laboratory of this extraordinary linguistic trainer, Tomatis. And accent-less French, I certainly speak. Every time he thought he had gone too far, or that I was about to up and quit,

Simon (Brook's son) spoke of how he had spent the last few years retrieving the reels of film from the many places where they had been stuck as payments were due, how he had gone to the best lab to restore it to 8K



he would arrive with a gift for Revanta! Once the play was on, and he and I both realised that I did, in fact, bring something special that held the play together, our relationship changed. It became cordial, warm and teasing. And it remained so till his death.

Amma was my thesaurus, my Google, my AI. Every time I wanted to underline with written proof something I was arguing about, I booked a call to Amma. Three days later, I would get through. She would procure the paper or book and send it by post. Two weeks later, it would arrive. And I would wave it in front of Peter and Claude, who was my saviour. Every time I wanted to quit — and that was at least twice a week in the first few months — I would run to him. Rant, weep, all but bang my head. He would calm me, explain Peter's ways, tell me how important having me there was for the play, and envelop me in a hug. Every few months, he would send a smoke signal to Amma to pay a visit. And I survived. Five years of living with Draupadi, with the husbands, with the cast, with myself. All umbilical cords ripped. All cultural landscapes bare.

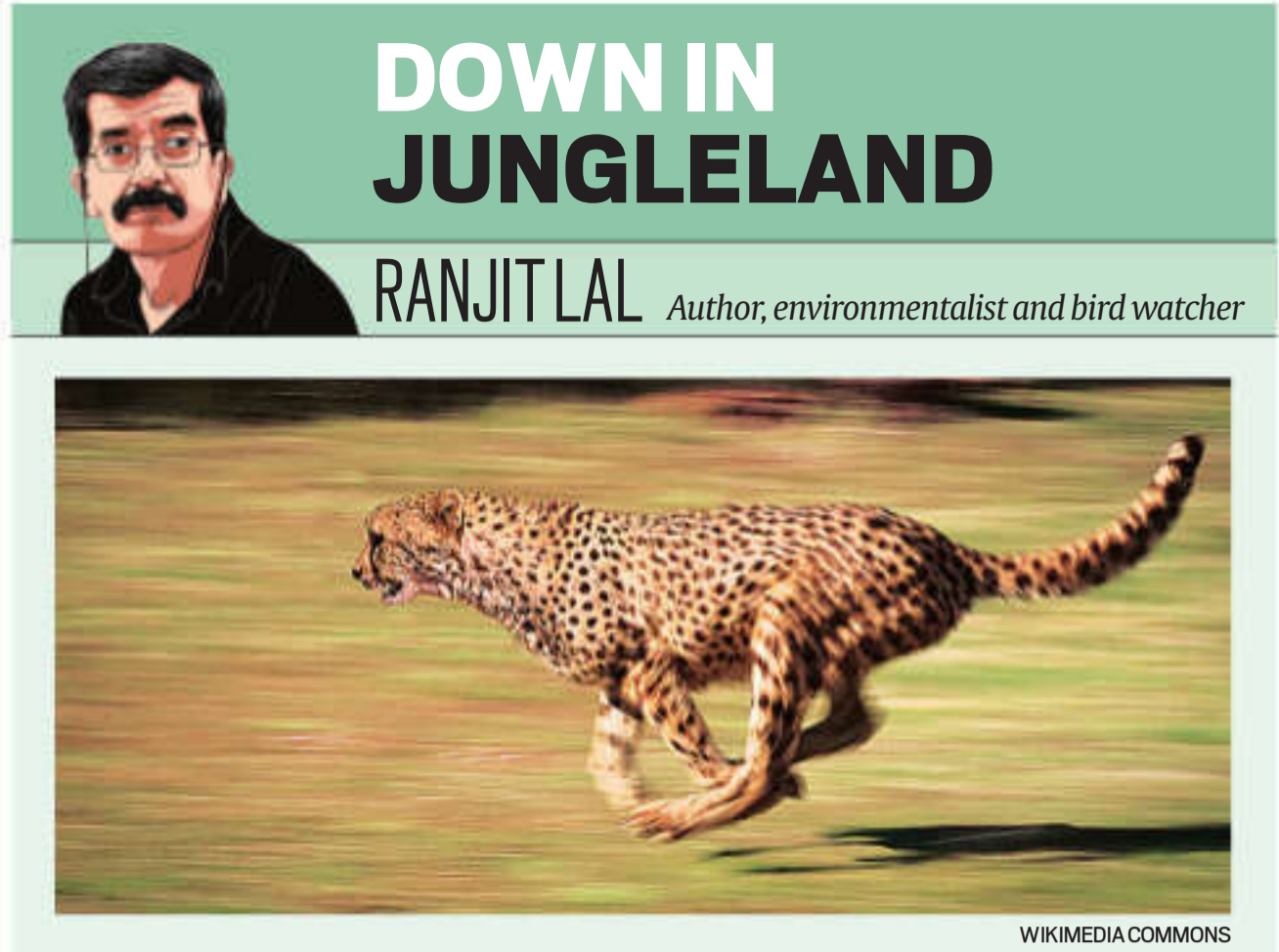
No common scape to share with anyone. That was when I discovered our affinity as Indians to the two groups of people we all but ignore. The Africans and the Asians. As time passed, I realised that our sense of self and family, our sense of the sacred, of respect, of being connected to nature and to spirituality and a larger belief, was reflected in my fellow actors from these areas. Most Whites looked with disdain and incomprehension when I explained why we must not sit with our feet stuck out towards the Daggar Brothers. Or why paper represented Saraswati and one didn't stamp on it. (I speak of 40 years ago. Today, most young Indians would probably also look at me with incomprehension).

I became myself during those years of anguish, self exploration, loneliness, being at the edge, facing the world's audience, defenceless except for what I offered in my interpretation of my favourite woman. I truly became the woman and the person I am. I watched as women who had little in common with each other reacted to my Draupadi. Fat mamas in Harlem, sexy 20-somethings from the Sorbonne, aboriginal women in Perth. Draupadi touched them. They understood they wanted to be like her. What was I doing right? I came out of *The Mahabharata* five years older, light years more experienced and resilient, with the knowledge that I had to create my own material to touch lives, that our myths were a treasure to be reinterpreted. That if I wanted to give people courage to live their own truths, to find their own truths through my work, I now had the courage and tools to do it. Peter had taught me how to peel a character like an onion, till you find the *shunya* at the centre. And much of my work in the last 40 years has solidified that belief.

Twenty years after we played at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York, I walked out of a department store in the city, now with closely cropped hair. Behind me I heard a shout, Madame Draupadi. A woman dropped the packages in her hand and gave me a long hug. "I have never been the same since I saw you. And I would have recognised you anywhere". The hearts and minds that were touched, remain touched. And *The Mahabharata* lives on.

Mallika is an activist, Indian classical dancer and actor from Ahmedabad

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DOWN IN JUNGLELAND

RANJIT LAL

Author, environmentalist and bird watcher

IN FLIGHT

The cheetah, with a 110 kmph top speed, has quicker acceleration than a Ferrari

# All That Legwork

Our wheels may speed us over our smooth roads but over a rugged terrain, animals beat us hands down

WE INVENTED the wheel but Mother Nature evolved legs. No living creature evolved wheels because for all of them (excepting us) legs were perfect for the purpose for which they were designed and better than any 4WD we might have designed. Elephants may weigh up to five or six tons yet can charge at you at 40 kmph, faster than you can run! Their legs are solid, column-like and are said to have a four-leg-drive in that both their fore and hind legs provide thrust and brakes. Most other animals have only 'rear leg-drive' the rear legs providing thrust and the front ones braking. Elephants can move in near silence (no 4WD can) because their feet have in-built shock absorbers. Most of their weight is borne and cushioned by the tips of their toes and the fibrous fatty pads under their heels. For additional grip, the sides of their feet are pitted and ridged enabling them to be very good climbers over rough terrain – and each elephant is thought to have its own custom design of ridges – much like our fingerprints.

A rhino has much thinner legs than an elephant, yet can move with all the delicacy of a ballerina

That other heavyweight, the rhino (weighing over 3.5 tons), has by contrast much thinner legs than the elephant yet can move with all the delicacy of a very big ballerina and they can swivel on a dime. Their feet are more like those of horses and amazingly, their weight is distributed in such a way that their three-ridged toes only feel a peak pressure of 75 pounds per square inch (psi), not much different from ours. The pads on their feet splay out as they land. We're still trying to figure out how rhinos manage to move with the grace and speed they do, in spite of their clumsy bulk. Depending on your point of view (researchers seem divided over this) kangaroos may have either three or five legs – but never four! There are, of course, the two massively powerful hind legs with which they hop – at more than 48 kmph. Then there's the tail, which some count as the third leg because it is used for propulsion when the kangaroo grazes, as well as the two small front legs (which some consider to be 'hands') on which it rests while feeding, while pushing itself forward. The massive hind legs, which serve as launch pads, are also used in kick-boxing and a swipe from that muscle-

packed tail can cause serious damage. Ibex, bharal, big-horn sheep and their ilk who spend their lives on near vertical, rugged mountain slopes are the envy of any climber – and no 4WD vehicle can come anywhere close to them. They are 'cloven-hoofed' which enables them to get their tenacious grip on near vertical slopes. Antelope, buffalo, impala and gazelle have four toes on each foot, but stand tiptoe on the two central toes – their hooves – which give them speed and the ability to stand taller, the easier to spot predators. A hoof is really just a hard protective covering (like a nail) for the animal's toes. Springbok antelopes often do consecutive pogo-stick take-offs of up to two metres, an exercise called 'prinking', with their backs arched and heads lowered. We haven't figured out exactly why but can only imagine the kind of energy (and maybe joie-de-vivre!) it takes to pull this off! Horses are mainly 'rear-leg' drive, with the hind legs providing power and thrust and the front legs braking and bearing the weight of the animal. They have what is called a 'suspensory apparatus' which bears the weight, prevents over-extension of the joints and absorbs shock, as well as a 'stay' apparatus which locks the major joints in the limbs enabling horses to stand for hours on end and even sleep standing.

The cheetah – with a 110 kmph top speed and quicker acceleration than a Ferrari – is the fastest land mammal and is built for speed. Small, streamlined, lightweight, its long legs, feet and spine are flexible, the legs containing spring-like ligaments. Like a horse, the cheetah can race with all four feet off the ground – either stretched ahead and behind it or crossed under it, as it races after prey, and in full flight is for the most part airborne. It has a quick response 'twitch', muscle fibres to provide it with the instant burst of power it needs (20 per cent more than those of greyhounds or race-horses) but these exhaust quickly and the burst is all but over in 300 metres. The cheetah has semi-retractable claws, which provide grip like those of spiked shoes and the ridges on its pads act like the grooves in a tyre.

Our wheels may speed us over specialised smooth surfaces (we call them roads!) but over natural, especially rugged terrain, most animals will beat our vehicles hands down. There are many other species, with specialised legs and feet, some of which we shall meet in the following column. So far, it's Legs 1, Wheels 0!



# 'We still don't know the boundaries of Indian food'

India's only two-Michelin-starred woman chef Garima Arora on Banng, why discipline triumphs passion and how ten lifetimes aren't enough to know Indian food

Heena Khandelwal

CHEF GARIMA Arora initially studied to be a journalist. She describes her childhood in Vashi, Navi Mumbai, as "tasty," enriched by a Marwari neighbour and Mallu and Gujju best friends. Halfway through journalism, she realised that cooking was her true calling. She moved to Paris to begin her culinary journey, training at Le Cordon Bleu and later working with culinary masters such as chefs Gordon Ramsay, René Redzepi and Gaggan Anand. A short trip to Bangkok in 2016 hooked her to the unique blend of modernity and tradition she found in the local cuisine. A year later, Arora opened her debut restaurant, Gaa. "For me, Gaa has been about finding my way back home – finding my roots, culinary traditions, redefining them, and thinking about them." Within a year of its launch, Arora became the first Indian female chef to earn a Michelin star. Many awards and accolades later, by 2023, she debuted as the first female judge on *MasterChef India*. That year also marked a personal milestone as she embraced motherhood and celebrated Gaa earning its second Michelin star, which it retained last year for the 2025 Michelin Guide. Naturally, the country awaited her return to open a restaurant in India. That wish was granted two weeks ago when, in partnership with seasoned restaurateur Riyaaz Amlani, she launched Banng in Gurugram and hopes to launch it later this year in Mumbai. In a virtual chat, a visibly pregnant Arora spoke about why consistency matters, flipping the narrative in Banng and how the world sees Indian cuisine. Edited excerpts:

## How is Banng different from Gaa?

With Gaa, it was about bringing a little bit of India to Bangkok. Now, I'm doing the reverse – bringing a piece of Bangkok back to India. Banng is about sharing the Bangkok I've come to love. The idea is to bring some

really good Thai food to India.

## Are we now going to see local produce blending with techniques from Thailand?

We will definitely be using a lot of local ingredients. But all our curry pastes will come directly from Bangkok. We will make them in the kitchen at Gaa and fly them twice a week to ensure the flavours are as real and authentic as they get.

The menu at Banng will still be fun. For appetisers, you'll see more experimentation, with a mishmash of cuisines. For instance, we're doing a tom kha soup – a coconut-based soup – but reimagining it as tom kha pani puri. We did trials in Bangkok and people loved it there. Let's see how Indians take to it!

## What's one essential skill for running a restaurant and leading its kitchen which is not spoken about as much as it should?

I believe the biggest investment you need to make in a restaurant isn't money – it's time. Your presence is crucial, especially when opening a new restaurant. If money alone could guarantee a successful restaurant, everyone would be doing it.

## The last decade has been career-defining for you. What did you do right that worked in your favour?

The success is not mine alone, really. Along the way, I also found good, hard working people with a moral compass. My entire core team has been with me since day one. Manav Khanna, who joined Gaa as an intern nearly nine years ago, is now heading Banng in India.

One of the key things we did right was not chase accolades or success. Of course, I always wanted to be successful, but I never had a fixed idea of what that success should look like. I've always stayed true to the craft and focused on doing what I love. I'm definitely grateful for all the accolades but that's not why we started this journey. The truth is,



## TOAST OF THE TOWN

(From top) Chef Garima Arora in Gurgaon; Banng menu surprises – Tom Kha Pani Puri, Turmeric Fried Rice, Grilled Chicken

the more you chase accolades, the more elusive they become.

## You are the only Indian woman to have two Michelin stars, and not only have you earned them, but you've also retained them for the second time this year. What does it demand from you personally?

When it comes to any kind of success – whether it's a Michelin star, running a busy restaurant, or opening multiple businesses – it's passion that drives it all. But passion and motivation can fade, and that's where discipline steps in. It's about knowing the right way to do things, being consistent and showing up. I'm at the restaurant every single day.

## You've always spoken about consistency and discipline. Did you always have these ingrained in you, or did you cultivate them over the years?

It's not something I had from day one, I'll be very honest. I wasn't that kind of person back then. When I first walked into the kitchen as an intern, I had this attitude that I was the best thing that ever happened to food or this industry. But I'm so glad my chef systematically brought me back down to earth and taught me the importance of hard work, humility, and the need to keep my head down and work. That first year I spent as an intern (working at Gordon Ramsay's restaurant), and later as a commis, taught me grit. It instilled perseverance in me. So no, I wasn't always like that. Over the years, through my experiences working in different kitchens, I learned the value of consistency and discipline.

## You're among the chefs who have led a movement spotlighting Indian ingredients and techniques. How does this world see Indian cuisine?

Chefs, both in India and abroad, are paying attention to micro-cuisines and indigenous ingredients. We're at a moment where Indian food is poised to take the next big leap on the global stage.

The cuisines of most countries have already been extensively explored. Indian cuisine, on the other hand, is like a deep well – even we, as Indians, don't fully know its boundaries. It's open to rediscovery, interpretation, modernisation, and cataloguing. The sheer scope of work we can do in this area is immense – perhaps, enough to fill ten lifetimes.

# The Art of Forgetting

Scars are markers of survival, they remind us not of the pain endured, but of the strength regained

IN THE stillness of the morning, my mother once told me something that danced on the edge of wisdom and simplicity. "I never let the bad stay in my memory," she said, a twinkle in her eyes that hinted at a life lived light, yet full. "I only keep the good. The rest? It's erased. That's how I enjoy life."

The weight of her words stayed with me. Could it be that the secret to joy was as simple as choosing what to hold on to and what to let go of? Could our memories be curated like a gallery – only the beautiful, the meaningful, the luminous framed and displayed, while the shadows are swept away?

I looked back on my own life, the winding corridors of memory where laughter echoed alongside grief, triumph beside defeat. I realised something startling. For all my sharp recollection and my elephantine memory, the bulk of what I carried was, like my mother's, humble and functional. Ordinary moments, often overlooked, were what shaped me: the smell of the first monsoon rain on dry earth, the hum of a ceiling fan in summer, the quiet joy of completing a task with care, the scoop of Dinshaw's ice cream that my parents treated us to as a reward for good behaviour



Suvir Saran

Suvir Saran is a chef, author, educator and world traveller

and to mark special occasions.

That doesn't mean I've been spared life's hardships. Far from it. I have known betrayal and heartbreak, suffered sleepless nights and gnawing self-doubt. But I have worked – consciously, deliberately – to let the sharp edges of those moments blur.

The lessons remain. The anguish does not. When I was held back in Grade VI at Modern School, Delhi, the shame was like second skin. Teasing and taunts became my new reality, and I bore them silently, ashamed for myself, perhaps even more for my family. But life, relentless and generous, offered me resilience. I grew stronger, my resolve hardening like steel tempered by fire. By the time I reached Grade X, I had built a cocoon of independence. The music room, the art room, the garden – these became my sanctuaries. My friendships deepened despite the wounds of earlier years, though I carried the scar of aloofness, my unspoken fear of being hurt again. Scars, however, are not blemishes to be hidden. They are stories in the language of skin, markers of survival and growth. They remind us not of the pain endured but of the strength gained. Mine are etched in laugh lines



## STAYING IN THE PRESENT

Life is an echo chamber – what we send out, hope or despair, returns to us amplified

and sleepless nights, in the toughened calluses of a heart once too tender.

The betrayal of a lover – the first man I dared to trust, to share a home with – might have hardened me irreparably. When he robbed me not just of material things but of trust itself, I felt as if the ground beneath me had crumbled. Yet it was my mother's voice, steady as the rhythm of a beating heart, that

pulled me back. "Learn to trust again," she urged. "If you let this break you, then he wins. And you, my child, cannot lose."

Life, after all, is an echo chamber. What we send out – kindness or cruelty, hope or despair – returns to us amplified. If we cling to the bad, we invite it to haunt us, to multiply. But if we file it away, we make space for the good to take root.

Forgetting, I've come to believe, is an art. It is not a passive act, but a deliberate choice – a pruning of the soul. Forgetting the sting of an insult, the ache of a failure, does not mean denying it happened. It means stripping it of its power to hurt us anew. It means remembering the lesson, not the pain.

This is not to say we should forget our responsibilities, our commitments to others, the humanity of those who cross our paths. Forgetting someone's time, slighting their efforts, ignoring their dignity – these are lapses we cannot afford. But when forgetting can heal and free us to live fully in the present, it becomes an act of grace.

I have learned, too, that we must forgive ourselves as much as we forgive others. I think back to my younger self, who mirrored the teasing he so despised, who built walls to protect himself but ended up shutting others out. I see him now with tenderness, not judgment. He was learning, as we all are, how to navigate a world that is often unkind.

Life has shown me that its treasures – the quiet joys, the unexpected kindnesses, the steady rhythm of love – can only be fully appreciated when we release what no longer serves us. To live mindfully, to stay present in the shimmer and hum of each moment, is to let the past be the past.

So here's to the art of forgetting – not the forgetfulness that neglects, but the forgetfulness that heals. May we all learn to carry our scars with pride, to let our memories be a gallery of the good and to live each day as it comes, unburdened and alive.



Alaka Sahani

DIRECTOR VIKRAMADITYA Motwane, who has made dabbling with different cinematic genres look like an adventure sport, has created a one-of-a-kind prison drama titled *Black Warrant*. The seven-episode series, which released Friday on Netflix, explores the fascinating, complex and dark world of Tihar Jail, one of India's high-profile prisons that's often hidden from public view.

Based on the book *Black Warrant: Confessions of a Tihar Jailer* (Roli; 2019), written by Sunil Gupta and Sunetra Choudhury, the series reveals the realities of Tihar Jail through the eyes of Gupta, when he joined there as a rookie jailer. Even as he struggles to find his foothold in prison, he is embroiled in the game of upmanship among the jail staff, clash between gangsters imprisoned there, and the disturbing realities of the jail. His character is essayed convincingly by Zahan Kapoor, who is supported by a stellar ensemble cast featuring Rahul Bhat, Paramvir Singh Cheema, Anurag Thakur and Sidhant Gupta.

Motwane was drawn to Gupta's behind-the-wall accounts of Tihar Jail since there was "something fascinating and voyeuristic" about it. "All the incidents and characters mentioned in the book are real. That provided the potential for it to be adapted as a drama series. Since we have not done this kind of prison drama in India before, working on this series was exciting," says Motwane, who shares the creator and showrunner credit with Satyanshu Singh.

# STORIES FROM A PRISON

Director Vikramaditya Motwane and former jailer Sunil Gupta talk about the making of *Black Warrant*, a new Netflix series set in Tihar Jail

After delivering a successful period drama *Jubilee* (2023, Prime Video) and an exploration of modern relationships through a screenlife thriller *CTRL* (2024, Netflix), Motwane helms *Black Warrant* that takes an incisive look at India in the '70s and the '80s through certain keys incidents that took place in Tihar Jail. The book and the series borrow their title from the term 'black warrant', that refers to a court's order authorising a jail officer to carry out the execution of a convicted prisoner.

Known to have an abiding interest in history, Motwane says, Gupta's book seemed quite relevant to him given the fact that it captures a crucial aspect of India. "I was born in the '70s. While growing up in the '80s, I had heard about Charles Sobhraj (a French serial killer and conman active in South Asia the '70s and '80s), the execution of Ranga-

## TOUGH GUYS

Actors Rahul Bhat (left) and Zahan Kapoor in a still from *Black Warrant*

Billa and several other incidents that the series touches upon," he says. The second episode of the series follows the tension within the jail over the hanging of Ranga (Kuljeet Singh) and Billa (Jasbir Singh) convicted in the kidnapping and subsequent murder of siblings Geeta and Sanjay Chopra.

The book is episodic and highlights certain incidents that took place inside the jail, including how nearly 200 students of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) staged a major jail-break. "Though the book covers nearly 35 years of Sunil's life at Tihar, it is much shorter in volume. For the series, we had to expand it and add details. We also added new characters. All the incidents, however, are real," says Motwane. Working on the script also involved extensive fact-checking and several rounds of conversations with Gupta. "Our team called him every second day to verify details. We also

visited the jail," he adds.

When the audience meets young Gupta in the show, he comes across as an unheroic hero. While building his role, says Motwane, they had to keep multiple factors in mind. "The protagonist's character is based on what's written in the book, how Sunil is in real life, the impact of Zahan's personality and how he conducts himself. That apart, we had to consider what we needed from a dramatic perspective. To tell a series, you can't have a hero in the very first episode. The character grows to become a hero," says Motwane. He believes that the series remains true to how Gupta must have felt when he started working at the jail. "We wanted his character to feel like a fish out of water," says the director, who was also involved in the making of *Sacred Games* (2018) and *Sacred Games 2* (2019).

During his tenure at Tihar Jail, Gupta has held different positions. "I was inducted as assistant superintendent of police and then promoted to the superintendent of police rank. Subsequently, I changed my job profile and was promoted to the post of legal advisor, which was an IG (inspector-general of police) rank post," says Gupta. He even handled applications from law students and scholars who wanted to study the psychology and condition of the inmates there. When the Central government stopped entertaining such applications, Gupta thought he should write about the prisoners in a book. He also wanted to document how the prison used to be run and its affairs were dealt with. "There are still many things that could not be incorporated into one book. I'm planning to write another soon," the former jailer says.



INSTAGRAM/@VIVEKOBEROI

# Different Strokes

Vivek Oberoi, who splits his time between acting and business, on not receiving offers after the success of *Shootout At Lokhandwala*, and his upcoming sex comedy *Masti 4*

Nawaz Kochra

ACTOR VIVEK Oberoi has been in the film industry for close to 26 years but shifted gears to business some time ago, today boasting a net worth of thousands of crores. Once a heartthrob, Oberoi tells what prompted him to put Bollywood on the back burner, the point in his career when lobbies started influencing the industry, and why he didn't want to "sell (my) soul" for fame.

"I have done about 67 projects in 22 years, but the industry is a very insecure place," he says. "You could be performing well, winning awards and doing your job as an actor but at the same time, you can get no work for other reasons. After 2007, when I did *Shootout At Lokhandwala*, the *Ganpat* song went viral. I won awards so I expected a lot of offers but I didn't get any. I sat at home for 14 to 15 months after the success of the film. It was only around 2009 when I decided I didn't want to be completely dependent on this and built my economic independence. I didn't want to be in a situation where a lobby could decide your future. Somebody could bully you into doing something because they controlled things."

That's when he thought of a plan B, business, into action: "I decided cinema would be my passion, but my livelihood should be my business. That helped me earn my independence and get out of that whole trap of lobbies, or having to sell your soul or suck up to somebody, that is no great way to live at least for me. Some people make a living out of it but for me, that's not the case."

Recalling his early days in Bollywood, Oberoi shared how director Ram Gopal Varma rejected him for his debut film *Company* (2002). Oberoi has always believed in bagging roles on merit instead of through industry connections, which is why he once rejected a rare opportunity. He says, "When my father wanted to launch me, I had a crisis of conscience. I didn't want him to invest the money to launch me... He was worried, but he respected me as a man that day. My father was making a film for me with (director) Abbas Mastan and I walked away from that opportunity. I struggled for 18 months after that and faced a lot of rejection, but I am proud of that choice."

Today, Oberoi juggles various businesses and lives in Dubai, having most recently launched a lab-grown diamond startup Solitario. On the film front, after starring as Joint Police Commissioner Vikram Bakshi in the Amazon Prime Video series *Indian Police Force*, he has started shooting for *Masti 4*, the latest in Indra Kumar's sex comedy series. He has two more unannounced films in the pipeline.

» FROM PAGE 1

# THE MANY MAHABHARATAS



WAR AND PEACE

Joy Maisnam's *Mahabharata*

Dipanita Nath

"HUMAN BEINGS are born for peace; they like to grow up in peace...Then, why are we always preparing for war?" asks theatre director and performer Anurupa Roy. She had turned to the story of the Pandavas and the Kauravas in 2017 and created an award-winning play, *Mahabharata*, which "explores the inner dilemma and backstories of 15 characters, each an archetype whose unquestioning loyalty to a belief leads to the inevitable conflict".

Theatre directors have, over generations, revisited the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The former gives us dutiful and divine protagonists; the latter flawed heroes caught in an internecine struggle.

Dharamvir Bharti captured the crisis in a drama in blank verse from 1953, *Andha Yug*. It is a story about the end and set on the last day of the battle when the palace learns of the crushing defeat suffered by the Kauravas. Satyadev Dubey first staged the play in 1960 and Ebrahim Alkazi presented it in the ruins of Ferozeshah Kotla in Delhi in 1963, following the India-China war. In 2017, Joy Maisnam from conflict-ridden Manipur, turned to *Andha Yug* to show grief in a new light.

Bhasa, the earliest known Sanskrit playwright, retold episodes from the Mahabharata in *Panch Ratna*, *Madhyamavyayoga*, *Dutavalkya*

*Dutaghatotkaca*, *Kamabhara* and *Urubhangam*. These inspired theatre directors across the country, with the late KN Panikkar from Kerala and Manipur's Ratan Thiyam presenting iconic productions of *Urubhangam*, a tragedy that ends with a dying Duryodhana saying, "Death has sent an aerial car, the wain of heroes, drawn by a thousand horses, to fetch me."

In *Draupadi* (1978), Mahasweta Devi tells the story of a rebel tribal woman in police custody. To theatre-goers, the story is owned by Heisnam Sabitri Devi, the Manipuri performer, who gave the play a shocking last scene. Few plays in India have depicted gender oppression so powerfully. Rabindranath Tagore wrote about another woman's struggle to accept her identity in *Chitrangada*, a dance drama from 1892 about a warrior princess who falls in love with Arjuna.

Girish Karnad gave us the myth in his first play, *Yayati* (1960), about a king cursed with old age and his youngest son, Puru, who gives him his own youth. Karnad wrote *Yayati* as a 22-year-old student of Oxford University. Another play, *Agni Mattu Malé*, or *The Fire and the Rain*, is based on the Yavakrita myth of the Mahabharata. The late KS Rajendran, who had directed the play, called it "a complex story with several threads of the plot working at various levels of consciousness and bringing about transformation in the minds of audiences".

Pooja Pillai

A CROWD of devotees presses in. The beat of the drums outside the temple gets louder and the dance of the *velichappadu* (medium), as he repeatedly hits his head with a sword, is frenzied. Heartbroken, with both his family and faith destroyed by the hypocrisies of "pious" society, the *velichappadu* races into the sanctum sanctorum. Then, a shocking gesture: He spits blood on the idol he has served all his life, before collapsing and dying.

Less than a week after the death of the man who wrote and directed this scene, Kerala erupted into a controversy over Sanatana Dharma. One couldn't help but wonder: If made today, would such a film — scathing in its indictment of the priggish and morally vacuous — survive the censors' scissors, let alone be feted? For MT Vasudevan Nair, who died on December 25 at the age of 91, *Nirmalyam* (1973) led to a slew of honours, both national and state, and a permanent place in the canon of Malayalam cinema.

Malayalis take politics very seriously. But they take literature and cinema even more seriously. MT had a hold on the ordinary Malayali's imagination that has few parallels, having moulded it for over half a century in his role as a popular storyteller — not just as a novelist and short story writer, but also a director and writer of films. Indeed, for someone who primarily saw himself as a literary figure, MT's influence on Malayalam cinema — and the sensibilities of the Malayali moviegoer — cannot be overstated. He brought layered narratives into mainstream cinema, adding complexity to the visual language of the medium with elements of mood and psychology and transforming the very craft of screenplay writing in Kerala.

Over the course of his 50-odd years in cinema, MT won numerous accolades, including seven National Film Awards and 21 Kerala State Film Awards. By any measure, popular or critical, it was an uncommonly successful career. His natural talent for the visual medium apart, some of his success can be attributed to the range of stories he told. Much like another recently deceased

# How He Spun a Tale

With his deep understanding of the visual medium, MT Vasudevan Nair was one of Kerala's most beloved storytellers in cinema



## MOVING IMAGES

(Clockwise from top) A still from *Nirmalyam*; *Oru Vadakkam Veeragatha*; director MT Vasudevan Nair

stalwart of Indian cinema, Shyam Benegal, MT never restricted himself at the level of the story. From the post-feudal decay of the once-distinguished *tharavadus* and the natural beauty of the north-central region of Kerala known as Vallavunada, to the folk-

lore and legends of the Malabar and frank exploration of envy, ego, frustration and lust, his oeuvre ranged over them all.

MT had already distinguished himself as a writer before debuting as a screenwriter with the A Vincent-directed *Murappennu*

(1965). A melodrama that, nonetheless, managed to sharply critique the overly-romanticised view of family, *Murappennu* won both commercial and critical acclaim. It was early evidence of his ability to write stories and characters with depth for the screen. In those initial years, gripped by the problems of a traditional agrarian society thrust into modernism, MT's films retained the "social drama" flavour that was *de rigueur* at the time, even as his eye for detail and ear for dialogue marked him out as a unique talent.

A shift became evident as the 1980s dawned, with films like *Oppol*, *Amrutham Gamaya* and *Manju*, that dwelt on the inner landscapes of regret and desire, as well as well as more "commercial" films like *Adiozhukkukal* and *Uyarangalil* that showed a preoccupation with themes of conflict and alienation. By this time, MT was an established figure in film, working with directors like IV Sasi and Hariharan, and writing roles in which Mammootty and Mohanlal would deliver some of the best performances of their own long and storied careers.

Indeed, MT's was the kind of name that would often be given top-billing, even above the stars — in other words, a creatively dangerous time when he could have easily stuck to a formula. That he avoided being categorised as a writer of a particular kind of film is perhaps a mark of his brilliance, as is the fact that even as some of the stories he wrote for the screen became grander, like *Oru Vadakkam Veeragatha* (1989), *Vaishali* (1988) or *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* (2009), he found new ways to question established conventions. Take *Oru Vadakkam Veeragatha*, which told the well-known Malabar legend of Chathiyann Chandu (Chandu the betrayer), from the perspective of the supposed "villain" — what works as a straightforward costume drama is also an instruction on the perils of not questioning received wisdom.

The climax of *Nirmalyam* hits as hard today as it did the day it was released. It is striking that MT, the consummate storyteller with a deep understanding of his medium, used not words but images alone to make his point in this scene. But that was his style: Just find the best way to spin a tale and watch the truth dawn on the audience.

# Why Winter Flu Returns with a Vengeance

Last week’s panic over HMPV virus was unwarranted but vulnerable people should stay cautious about winter infections

Anonna Dutt

WHILE MOST of us obsessed over whether a new virus had swamped China and would cross its shores, fact is every country goes through a wave of common respiratory infections in winter months. In fact, the flu has become a hydra-headed monster that mutates and evolves faster than we can fight it. Sometimes, it triggers secondary infection. This reality sunk in for 38-year-old Yash Mathur,\* who walked into the out-patient clinic of a Delhi hospital with symptoms of fever and cough, not expecting them to be indicative of pneumonia, a condition when the air sacs in the lungs fill up with fluid, making breathing difficult.

Since he did not have chronic illnesses like diabetes or hypertension and is a non-smoker, doctors assumed he had the seasonal flu. They thought he would get better with proper nutrition, hydration and rest. Except he didn’t. His fever did not abate despite paracetamol and with worsening symptoms, he had to be admitted to hospital. Yash was diagnosed with pneumonia caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and was put on antibiotics.

While usually viruses like influenza trigger most of the respiratory tract infections among the young and elderly during winter, every once in a while, doctors pick up bacterial infections too. Sometimes they are secondary infections following a viral one that can cause severe symptoms and distress across age groups.

Globally, there were 12.8 billion upper respiratory tract infections and 19,600 deaths in 2021, the highest among infectious diseases, according to a Global Burden of Disease analysis. Researchers at Duke University, US, found that influenza viruses have a genome that is not DNA (which is a storehouse of information of the organism) but is made up of RNA (which distributes this information as needed). They are able to

evolve very quickly — up to one million times faster than humans and other mammals. That’s why global surveillance to track the evolution of these viruses is as important as testing, something we tend to ignore.

**WHEN SHOULD YOU GET TESTED?**

“Most viral respiratory infections only cause mild symptoms such as cough, cold, sore throat and fever that gets better on its own. This is the reason not many people get tested — so we do not know whether it’s influenza or the human metapneumovirus (HMPV) that have caused the symptoms. However, people at a higher risk of severe disease should get tested,” says Dr Suranjit Chatterjee, internal medicine specialist at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, New Delhi. Those below the age of five years or above the age of 65 years should get tested whenever they have a respiratory tract infection. Those living with chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease, liver disease, or have undergone a transplant, should also be tested as they tend to have a weaker immune system and may get severe disease. People should be tested if their symptoms keep worsening after a couple of days. If patients do not respond to treatment, a secondary infection should be suspected and a sputum culture test should be carried out, suggests Dr Chatterjee.

When it comes to thoroughly testing for infections, Dr Ekta Gupta from the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences, Delhi, is no stranger. As a virologist at the institute that provides specialised care for patients with liver diseases, she routinely screens her patients for 22 respiratory infections before their treatment. “A patient cannot undergo a transplant surgery if they have an active infection. After the surgery, they are put on immunosuppressants that can lead to these infections spreading further. So, we follow something called the syndromic approach to testing, which essentially means that if they have respiratory symptoms, they get a respiratory panel test to identify a host of pathogens. If they have gastrointestinal

### When should you go to a doctor

-  You have difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
-  Pain in chest that worsens with breathing
-  High fever for more than three days
-  If you are over the age of 65 years, immuno-compromised, or have chronic conditions such as diabetes. If a child under the age of 5 gets sick



GETTY IMAGES

### LIFE POSITIVE



symptoms, they can get a GI panel test,” explains Dr Gupta.

The respiratory panel used by the institute tests for 22 respiratory viruses, including influenza A and B lineages, para influenza viruses, HMPV, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), rhinovirus, adenovirus and coronaviruses among others. An RT-PCR test is done using a single kit that can detect any of these infections. “These tests are expensive, costing at least Rs 8,000 per sample. This is the reason it is neither used, nor needed in most hospitals,” she said.

While the recent reports of a surge in respiratory infections brought HMPV to the fore, Dr Gupta explains that there is nothing new to it. “HMPV infection does pop up every once in a while. We have detected at least 33 HMPV infections between 2016 and 2022,” she said.

**WHY VIRAL INFECTIONS GO UP IN WINTER?**

There are a number of reasons. First, the



Scan the code to read more health special stories

## Exploring the World’s Most Unique Train Journeys



**Neil Patil**  
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A few months ago, I shared stories about some of the most incredible train journeys in India - experiences that showcase our country's diversity, history, and breathtaking landscapes. Trains like 'Palace on Wheels' and 'Deccan Odyssey' transport us not just across places but through time, offering a deep connection to the true spirit of India.

Today, let's broaden our horizons and step aboard some of the world's most iconic trains. These trains are experiences in themselves, filled with stories of innovation, adventure, and unparalleled beauty. So, let's embark on a virtual ride across continents, exploring the most extraordinary train journeys the world has to offer.

**Longest Railway: Trans-Siberian Railway (Russia):** Spanning an impressive 9,289 kilometres from Moscow to Vladivostok, the Trans-Siberian Railway holds the title of the longest railway line in the world. This epic journey across Russia is filled with vast landscapes and cultural depth, crossing 87 cities, 16 rivers, and 8 time zones.

The journey begins in the historical heart of Russia, Moscow, and stretches across the entire expanse of the country to reach Vladivostok on the Pacific coast. Travellers on the Trans-Siberian Railway witness a dramatic change in scenery as they move eastward. The train traces the edges of the majestic Ural Mountains, the natural boundary between Europe and Asia. Beyond this, the vast expanses of the Siberian Taiga unfold—a dense forest landscape that is both awe-inspiring and a reminder of the untamed wilderness that covers much of Russia.

The journey is punctuated with opportunities to explore deeper into Russia's heartland. Perhaps the most breathtaking of these detours is a visit to Lake Baikal. Known as the deepest

lake in the world, Lake Baikal is a natural wonder that captivates with its crystal-clear waters and picturesque surroundings.

During the railway's construction in the late 1800s, engineers faced immense challenges, including building across Siberia's frozen swamps. They used vodka as a reward for workers, a tradition that still lives on for travellers who toast their journey with local spirits onboard.

**Steepest Railway: Pilatus Railway (Switzerland):** Nestled in the heart of Switzerland, the Pilatus Railway is a true marvel of engineering. Operating since 1889, this cogwheel railway climbs an astonishing gradient of 48%, earning it the title of the steepest cogwheel railway in the world in figures. It offers a journey that is as exhilarating as it is scenic, ascending to the summit of Mount Pilatus at 2,128 meters (6,982 feet) above sea level.

The journey begins in Alpnachstad, a charming Swiss village on the shores of Lake Lucerne, and winds its way up to the majestic peak of Mount Pilatus. As the train makes its ascent, passengers are treated to panoramic views of the surrounding alpine landscape, including verdant meadows, sparkling lakes, and rugged mountain peaks.

At the top, visitors are rewarded with breathtaking views that stretch across the Swiss Alps and beyond. Mount Pilatus itself is steeped in local legends, often referred to as the 'Dragon Mountain' due to medieval tales of dragons that were said to live in its caves. The summit features a variety of attractions, including hiking trails, observation decks, and cosy alpine restaurants serving Swiss delicacies.

**Fastest Railway: Shanghai Maglev (China):** In the bustling metropolis of Shanghai, the Shanghai Maglev is the fastest commercial train in the world. Reaching speeds of up to 431 km/h (268 mph), this magnetic levitation (maglev) train, covers a distance of 30 kilometres in an astonishing 7 minutes and 20 seconds.

The journey connects Shanghai Pudong International Airport to Longyang Road Station in the city, providing passengers with an incredi-



bly smooth and efficient ride. Unlike traditional trains, the Shanghai Maglev operates without wheels. Instead, it uses powerful magnetic fields to levitate the train above the track, eliminating friction and allowing for extraordinary speeds. The result is a seamless glide that feels more like flying than riding a train.

The experience begins as the sleek, futuristic train departs from the station. Within seconds, passengers feel the acceleration as the Maglev reaches top speed. The countryside blurs into streaks of green and gray, and a digital speedometer inside the train showcases the breathtaking velocity.

The train's ride is so smooth that passengers are often treated to a fascinating demonstration: a coin balanced upright on a table remains perfectly still, even as the train hurtles along at over 400 km/h. This stunt, frequently performed by staff or seasoned travellers, never fails to astonish first-time passengers. It's a simple yet profound reminder of the precision and stability that magnetic levitation technology offers.

**Most Unique Train Accommodation: Shalati Train on the Bridge (South Africa):** Perched high above the Sabie River in South Africa's iconic Kruger National Park, the Shalati Train on the Bridge redefines luxury travel by combining history, innovation, and the beauty of the African wilderness. This one-of-a-kind experience offers guests the chance to stay in a refurbished train permanently stationed on the historic Selati Bridge, where the train carriages have been transformed into opulent suites.

Stepping aboard feels like entering a bygone era, as the train is a tribute to the adventurers who first visited Kruger by rail in the 1920s. The elevated position of the train provides breathtaking vistas of the Sabie River, where guests often wake up to the sight of elephants, hippos, and crocodiles in their natural habitat. At night, the distant roars of lions or the gentle calls of frogs create a symphony of the wild, adding an unforgettable dimension to the experience. The entire experience blends the intimacy of a safari with the nostalgia of luxury train travel, creating a truly unparalleled stay.

**Most Scenic Railway: Glacier Express (Switzerland):** Nicknamed the 'Slowest Express Train', the Glacier Express is a breathtaking journey through the heart of the Swiss Alps, offering passengers some of the most spectacular views on Earth. Spanning 291 kilometres, this iconic train connects Zermatt to St. Moritz, two of Switzerland's most famous mountain resorts, in a leisurely 8-hour journey that feels more like a curated alpine showcase than a commute.

Panoramic windows provide uninterrupted views of snow-dusted peaks, lush green valleys, and quaint Swiss villages tucked away in the mountains. Along the way, the train passes through 91 tunnels and over 291 bridges, including engineering marvels like the Landwasser Viaduct, which arches gracefully above a deep gorge, and the Oberalp Pass, the highest point on the route at 2,033 meters above sea level.

**The Indian Pacific: Australia's Coast-to-Coast Rail Experience:** Stretching across the vast expanse of Australia, the Indian Pacific offers one of the world's most remarkable rail journeys. Named after the two oceans it connects the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, this transcontinental adventure spans over 4,350 kilometres from Sydney to Perth. It's a four-day voyage that captures the essence of Australia's dramatic landscapes, cultural heritage, and pioneering spirit.

The journey begins in Sydney, with views of the city's iconic harbour and coastline. As the train heads west, it

mechanism to fight the infections is impaired during colder months. “The mucus secretion goes up during the winter months, so does the humidity in the environment, both conducive to the growth and survival of pathogens that cause respiratory infections. This leads to an increase in respiratory infections during winter months across temperate countries,” said Dr Gupta.

Second, several studies over the years - including ones during the pandemic — have established that exposure to pollution can lead to an increase in susceptibility to as well as severity of respiratory infections. Much of northern India experiences severe air pollution levels during the winter months.

Third, winter is also conducive to the survival and transmission of viruses. “The viruses are very sensitive to temperatures and cannot survive well in the hot summer months. Also, winter is a time when most people spend time indoors, where the closed environment makes transmission of these virus from one person to another easier,” says Dr Gupta. India usually sees two peaks in seasonal flu — one during the winter months between January and March and the second after the monsoon. “These seasonal trends are yet to emerge for Sars-CoV-2 that led to the Covid-19 pandemic,” she said.

**HOW TO PREVENT WINTER FLU**

Dr Chatterjee suggests following Covid-19-like measures — maintaining social distance, masking up whenever possible and washing hands frequently. There was, in fact, a decline in most respiratory infections during the pandemic owing to these protective measures. With most infections during this time of the year being caused by viruses, people should not take antibiotics that do not have any effect on viral infections. “Antibiotics may be needed only in some cases such as in people with a weakened immune system in order to prevent or treat a secondary bacterial infection. Other than that, antibiotics are of not much use. So, people should consult with their doctors before taking these medicines,” said Dr Chatterjee.

Another way that people can protect themselves is to take vaccines. Dr Chatterjee says that there is no need for additional Covid-19 vaccines but suggests that the elderly and those with chronic conditions take the pneumococcal and influenza vaccine as per their doctor's recommendation.

(Name changed to protect privacy)

### ADVERTORIAL

passes through the dramatic Blue Mountains, known for their cliffs, waterfalls, and eucalyptus forests, and the fertile vineyards of South Australia, showcasing the country's agricultural heritage.

The highlight of the trip is the Nullarbor Plain, a vast, treeless expanse featuring the world's longest straight stretch of railway track, a 478-kilometre line cutting through the heart of the desert. Here, passengers can step off to experience some of the best stargazing in the world, with the Milky Way stretching brilliantly across the unpolluted night sky. The journey culminates in Perth, where the Indian Ocean awaits, marking the end of an unforgettable coast-to-coast adventure.

**Most Luxurious Railway: Venice Simplon-Orient-Express (Europe):** Stepping aboard the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express is like travelling back to the glamour of the 1920s, with its meticulously restored Art Deco carriages redefining luxury. The train's most iconic route connects London to Venice, gliding through the English countryside, the French landscape, and the Swiss Alps, before arriving in the romantic canals of Venice. Other routes, including Paris, Prague, and Istanbul, showcase Europe's cultural richness in unparalleled style.

Each carriage, restored to its 1920's grandeur, offers opulence and breathtaking views. It's the train winds through the Alps or hugs the Adriatic coastline, passengers are immersed in scenery as captivating as the train itself. Long associated with royalty and intrigue, the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express has hosted European kings, queens, and spies, becoming a legendary symbol of elegance and mystery.

Each train journey we have explored is more than just a passage between destinations—it's a journey into the heart and soul of each place, offering unforgettable experiences and stories to cherish. So, where will your next train adventure take you? I would love to hear about it; write to me at neil@veenaworld.com. Until next time, keep celebrating life!

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