SATURDAY
January 3, 2026

KOLKATA
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SURCHARGE: Kolkata & onward: ₹ 4
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RNI No. WBENG/2009/49941

Vol. 18 • No. 3

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WATER CONTAMINATION

## Congress questions govt. over Indore toll

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ARAVALI'S FATE

## *An ancient range stands battered by machinery*

*And the people of the foothills bear the brunt*

GROUND ZERO » PAGE 7

JAISHANKAR ON PAKISTAN

## 'India has the right to guard itself against terrorism'

NEWS » PAGE 8

# U.S. 'locked and loaded' as Iran protests turn deadly

Trump's threat to intervene against protest crackdown drew sharp reactions from Iranian officials who warned that U.S. interference would 'destabilise' the region and 'destroy' America's interests

**Stanly Johny**
CHENNAI

U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday threatened to intervene if Iran used lethal force against protesters, drawing swift and angry responses from Iranian officials who warned that American troops and bases in West Asia would become legitimate targets if Washington interfered.

"If Iran shoots and violently kills peaceful protesters, which is their custom, the United States of America will come to their rescue. We are locked and loaded and ready to go," Mr. Trump wrote in a social media post.

Mr. Trump's threat came at a time when protests over poor economic conditions in Iran turned deadly on Thursday with multiple casualties. Iran's *Fars* news agency said at least five people were killed in clashes, including one security official.

Iran's security is not material for adventurist tweets, Ali Larijani warned President Donald Trump on Friday. AP

"With the statements by Israeli officials and Donald Trump, what has been going on behind the scenes is now clear," Ali Larijani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, wrote on social media in response to Mr. Trump's post. "We distinguish between the stance of the protesting shopkeepers and the actions of disruptive actors, and Trump should know that U.S. interference in this internal matter would mean destabilizing the entire region and destroying America's interests," he added.

The protests began last Sunday in Tehran when shopkeepers downed shutters over a sharp fall in the value of the rial. Iranian officials initially acknowledged the economic pressure and promised to address their grievances. But protests spread across the country in the following days leading to deadly clashes between the security personnel and protesters, whom state media and officials dubbed "rioters". On Thursday, *Fars* news agency reported that two people were killed in clashes in the city of Lordegan and three in Azna.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

# Centre directs X to check Grok misuse in morphing images

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on Friday directed social media platform X to undertake a "comprehensive technical, procedural and governance-level review" of its chatbot Grok, which allegedly has been responding to user requests to undress or alter clothing in women's photos. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi raised an alarm over the issue in a letter to Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw earlier in the day.

X did not have an immediate response. Grok operates as a separate Artificial Intelligence (AI) firm under X's holding firm, but maintains an account on the platform, interacting with users. Elon Musk, X's owner, has often praised Grok's relatively unfiltered responses, which incorporate few safeguards that other Big Tech firms have used on their large language models.

Elon Musk has frequently praised Grok's relatively unfiltered responses.

In a four-page letter to X's Chief Compliance Officer for India, the Ministry stated it has "been observed that [Grok] is being misused by users to create fake accounts" to generate or share obscene visuals of women.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

## *Under cover*

**Smokescreen:** A dense smog hangs over Kartavya Path as Republic Day Parade 2026 rehearsals are under way, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

## IN BRIEF

### Shah Rukh Khan targeted as KKR signs Mustafizur

**NEW DELHI**
Shah Rukh Khan found himself at the centre of a controversy over his IPL team, the Kolkata Knight Riders, signing Bangladeshi player Mustafizur Rahman, with some criticising the move while others said he was being targeted because of his Muslim identity. » Page 9

### Professor, 3 others booked for H.P. student's death

**CHANDIGARH**
Three students of a government college in Dharamshala have been booked for ragging while a professor from the same institute has been booked for sexual harassment in connection with the death of a 19-year-old girl student last month, the police said on Friday. » Page 3

# Assam tribal body rejects GoM proposal to grant ST status to six communities

**The Hindu Bureau**
GUWAHATI

The Coordination Committee of Tribal Organisations of Assam (CCTOA) has rejected the "illegal and unconstitutional" recommendations of the Group of Ministers to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities – Chutia, Koch-Rajbongshi, Matak, Moran, Tai Ahom, and "Tea Tribes" (Adivasis).

The CCTOA represents 14 tribes of Assam.

In its report submitted to the 126-member Assam Assembly in November 2025, the Group of Ministers suggested dividing the six communities into three categories – ST (Plain), ST (Hill), and ST (Valley).

**The CCTOA said Assam provides 59% reservation, which is already higher than the SC-stipulated 50%**

The Consultative Group of the CCTOA, chaired by New Delhi-based rights activist Suhas Chakma, on Friday said the recommendations, apart from being illegal and unconstitutional, would "affect and destroy the political rights" of the existing tribes at all levels from the panchayats to the Lok Sabha.

The CCTOA pointed out that while the Scheduled Castes are identified based on their status in the Hindu caste system, the STs are identified based on tribal characteristics – indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness for the community as laid down in the Lokur Committee report of 1965.

"The granting of ST status to these communities will destroy the political reservation of the existing STs in addition to affecting the reservation from the Central government's pool," CCTOA coordinator Tilak Doley said.

The tribal body said the existing reservation scheme in Assam is already "unconstitutional".

"A 1992 Supreme Court judgment stipulates that reservation must not exceed 50%. The Assam government provides 59% reservation [SC 7%, ST(P) 10%, ST(H) 5%, OBC/MOBC (including 'Tea Tribes' 3%, Adivasis 27%, and EWS 10%]. If 35 other Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Communities which are not yet included in the ST list get the same status, the reservation can go beyond 70%, which is absolutely unconstitutional," it said.

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

The Medical Superintendent & Head of Department, AGMC & GBP Hospital, Agartala invites e-Tender from Original Equipment Manufacturers/Authorized Dealer for **Procurement of 06(six) nos. of NPWT (Negative Pressure Wound Therapy) Machine, 03 nos. for Department of Orthopedics and 03 nos. for Department of General Surgery, AGMC & GBP Hospital, Agartala, West Tripura**, subject to certain terms & conditions through E-Procurement Website of Government of Tripura, https://tripuratenders.gov.in (NIT also should publish in AGMC website www.agmc.ac.in). The Tender fee (non-refundable) and Earnest money Deposit (Refundable) are to be paid electronically over the online payment facility provided in the portal, any time before bid submission end date using either of the supported payment modes like net banking / debit card / credit card. Last date of submission is up to 15/01/2026.

- The other details related e-Tender can be seen and obtained from the website http://tripuratenders.gov.in.
- Corrigendum/Addendum, if any, will be published only on the above website.

**Medical Superintendent (H.O.D.)**
**AGMC & GBP Hospital, Agartala.**

**ICA/C/3677/25**

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Regional Office, Gaya
Gaya-Nawada Road,
Gaya-823003

**BRANCH-DELHA,GAYA**

**{See Rule 8(1)} Possession Notice (For Immovable Property)**

Whereas,The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the **Union Bank of India,Delha Branch** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement Security Interest Act,2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules ,2002 issued Demand Notice dated **17-10-2025** calling upon the **Mr.Pradip Kumar(Borrower) & Smt.Baby Devi (Guarantor)** to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being **Rs.1203574.88(Rupees Twelve Lakh Three Thousand Five Hundred Seventy-Four and Eighty-Eight Paise Only)** plus interest within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said act read with Rule 8 on **30th day of December of the year 2025.**The Borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Union Bank of India for an amount of **Rs.1203574.88(Rupees Twelve Lakh Three Thousand Five Hundred Seventy-Four and Eighty-Eight Paise Only).**Borrower/Guarantor's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section(8) of Section 13 of the said Act,in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.**Description of the Secured Assets:-** All that piece and parcel of Land & Building in the name of **Mr.Pradip Kumar S/o Late Ishwari Dayal** R/o -Bairagi,Janta Colony,Gaya situated at Moh-Bhat Bigha Kharkhura,PS-Delha,Ward No.01,Dist.-Gaya bearing Thana No.01 bearing Khata No.121,Plot No.82 Old,70 New,Area-600 Sqft.**Boundary:**-N-Ram Nandan Yadav,S-Shrawan Kumar,E-12'Road,W-Pratima Devi.

**Date:02.01.2026,Place:Gaya** **Authorised Officer**

# Sriram makes an evocative plea for peace

Led by a breakout performance from Agastya Nanda, *Ikkis* succeeds as a thoughtful, tear-jerking homage to a warrior that values soul over spectacle

**FILM REVIEW**

**Anuj Kumar**

These are interesting times in popular Hindi cinema, as a battle of perspectives rages at the turnstiles. Filmmakers known for overtly jingoistic tentpoles are turning to dark espionage dramas to convey their political intent, while those celebrated for their noirish, intricate thrillers are turning to patriotic dramas with predictable plotlines, in what seems like a well-argued counterpoint.

After Farhan Akhtar took a break from his *Don* franchise to become the last man standing in the battle of Rezang La in *120 Bahadur*, this week, Sriram Raghavan turns to the Battle of Basantar to honour a real-life martyr and take a shot at peace at a time when the world seems to be warming up to war.

An intimate exploration of duty, loss, and the human side of conflict, the film's plea for empathy across borders is noble, emphasising the futility of war and the personal toll it exacts. It's not revolutionary, but its emotional sincerity and stellar acting elevate the experience.

Chronicling the short but heroic life of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, who earned the Param Vir Chakra for his valour in the 1971 India-Pakistan war, the film spans two timelines. On the one hand, it follows Arun (Agastya Nanda) on the battlefield. On the other, it tracks his father, M.L. Khetarpal (Dharmendra), on a trip to Pakistan, when the two neighbours took a diplomatic detour with 'Aman Ki Asha' after the Kargil conflict.

Raghavan doesn't rely on green screens to create the bloodstained enormity of war. As Centurion tanks make their way into Pakistan through a mine-filled Basantar river, his direction marks a refreshing departure from rhetorical patriotism seen in many war films. He opts for restraint, focusing on emotional and operational authenticity over spectacle. As a quote on the bulletin board of a school that is turned into a barrack in the film exhorts, Raghavan does what is right, and not what is easy.

A poster of *Ikkis*. MADDOCK FILMS

Anil Mehta's camera doesn't just follow the monstrous tanks; it also pauses to look back at the bodies they leave behind in their wake– sons and brothers soaked in blood and covered with flies.

The senior Khetarpal, who also served in the armed forces, is warmly welcomed by a Pakistani Brigadier Khwaja Mohd. Naseer (Jaideep Ahlawat). The brigadier holds a secret; his family feels a bit hesitant that the old man might not be able to take it, but Naseer wants to relieve himself of the burden he has been carrying for 30 years. As they take the road to Sargodha, the old wounds get fresh, and our eyes brim with emotion.

Alongside Raghavan, co-writers Pooja Ladha Surti and Arijit Biswas, tell us how a young boy transforms into a soldier. The romance (debutante Simar Bhatia stutters before finding her groove) around Ernest Hemingway's *When the Bell Tolls* is not as passionate as it aspires to be, but once it settles down, *Ikkis* creates a believable world within the cantonment, and the figures of speech begin to take hold.

Through the history, the poetry, the raging hormones and the urge to hit the battlefield, Raghavan traces the rise of the hero without putting a halo around his head. Like most of his protagonists, Arun is not a hero sans flaws. The film delineates the thin line between duty and loyalty for a young soldier.

In a breakout role, Agastya conveys the resolve, innocence, and restlessness of a young soldier through his deep, vulnerable eyes. Sometimes, in a single frame.

However, it is old warhorse Dharmendra who holds the film together, playing the grieving father with remarkable restraint and grace.

With a poignant *jugalbandi* between grief and guilt, duty and humanity, Jaideep and Dharmendra, literally and metaphorically, hold each other's hands in turn, taking us out of a rage-baiting atmosphere.

However, the peace between the neighbours is so brittle that the makers slip in a disclaimer in the end credits to remind the audience exiting the theatre that Naseer is an exception in a country that is relentlessly hostile to India.

Ikkis *is currently running in theatres.*

## Ikkis (Hindi)

**Director**: Sriram Raghavan
**Duration**: 147 minutes
**Cast**: Agastya Nanda, Dharmendra, Jaideep Ahlawat, Simar Bhatia, Sikandar Kher, Vivaan Shah
**Synopsis**: The dramatised story of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, India's youngest Param Vir Chakra recipient, who at age 21 displayed extraordinary bravery in the 1971 war, sacrificing his life while destroying enemy tanks.

**THE SPECIAL OFFICER AND COMPETENT AUTHORITY,**
**(UNDER KPIDFE - IMA & OTHER SCAM)**
3rd Floor, Podium Block, V.V Tower, Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru-560001

**NOTICE/INVITATION FOR E-AUCTION FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**

Pursuant to attachment of Immovable properties by the Government under the provisions of the Karnataka Protection of Interest of Depositors in Financial Establishments Act, 2004 (KPIDFE Act) and pursuant to the absolute attachment order by the Hon'ble Special Court, the Special Officer & Competent Authority is issuing notice for e-auction of the immovable property through e-auction on 'as is where is and whatever there is basis'.
The intending bidders will be required to furnish Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (as mentioned against each auction in the e-portal provided by the Service Provider/Karnataka Public Procurement Portal only).

**Short description of the Immovable Property (SPLOCA/AUC(2)/CR/18/2025-26)**
**Properties are free of all encumbrances and are in the name of Competent Authority appointed by Government and confirmed by the Special Court under KPIDFE Act, 2004. and Hon'ble High Court Of Karnataka has cleared the title (Khata stands in the name of Competent Authority and Auctioning Authority)**

| Sl. No. | DETAILS OF THE SCHEDULE PROPERTY (Clear Title by Court in order No. MISC No. 693/2019) | Minimum Bid Price (Rs) | EMD (Rs) | Bid Increase Value (Rs) |
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| 21st January 2026, 3 pm to 4 pm Place: O/o SPLOCA, 3rd Floor, Podium Block, Visveswariah Tower, Bengaluru-01 | 11th Febraury 2026 11:00am to 05:00pm | 16th February 2026 Before 5pm | 17th February 2026 11 am to 1 pm |

For Registration & Online Auction, you can login to: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in (Helpdesk No: 080-46010000, 080-68948777) The interested bidders who require auction related information can contact Assistant Commissioner, Office of the Special Officer & Competent Authority, 3rd Floor, Podium Block, Visveswariah Towers, Dr.Ambedkar Veedi, Bengaluru-560001, e-mail ID: splocaeauction@gmail.com or Contact Mob. No 9945515174.

Sd/-
**Date: 01-01-2026** **Special Officer & Competent Authority**
**Place: Bengaluru** **(Under KPIDFE –IMA & Other Scam) Bengaluru.**
DIPR/CP/4799/NR/2025-26

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**No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-70/3086/2025-26** **Date: 02.01.2026**

**SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER**
**(Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)**

Item Rate Tender under two cover bid system is invited for the work mentioned below as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Contractors who have got adequate financial resources, state of the art technology, suitable construction equipments, technical man power & sufficient past experience for the following work as per the schedule given below:

**Name of the Work : Part-A :** Establishing 2x31.5 MVA, 66/11kV Substation at KIADB Obalapura Industrial Area in Nelamangala Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District.
**Part-B:** Construction of 66kV Over Head Line by LILOing the under construction Dabaspete-Doddabelavangala line near Hadhihosahalli Village up to proposed 66/11kV Substation at KIADB Obalapura Industrial Area for a distance of about 1.636 Kms using drake conductor.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : **27.01.2026** upto **4.00 pm.**

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**

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I, Asit Rit, resident of 73/3, P Road, Belgachia, Howrah – 711108, hereby declare that my name has been wrongly recorded as Ashit Rit in my son Amit Rit's secondary and other school certificates. My correct name is Asit Rit.Both names refer to one and the same person.

**PERSONAL**
**CHANGE OF NAME**

**CHANGE OF NAME**
I, Arti Prasad w/o Rajaram Shaw R/o 5 Shibtala Lane, Tangra, Kolkata - 700015 shall be known as Arti Devi for all future purposes, affidavit dated 19/12/2025.

**PERSONAL**
**CHANGE OF NAME**

**CHANGE OF NAME**
I, Arindam Sarkhel son of Ratan Lal Sarkhel Residing at 1C, Sonu Paradise, Rajarhat Gopalpur Road, P.O.- Rajarhat Gopalpur, District- North 24 Parganas, Pin - 700136 West Bengal, India Shall henceforth be known as Aurindam Sarkhel as declared before the Learned Executive Magistrate at Howrah Court, Vide affidavit No.16917 dated 17/12/2025, Arindam Sarkhel and Aurindam Sarkhel both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**
I, Asmita Sarkhel Daughter of Arindam Sarkhel Residing at 1C, Sonu Paradise, Rajarhat Gopalpur Road, P.O.- Rajarhat Gopalpur, District- North 24 Parganas, Pin-700136, W.B. India Shall henceforth be known as Asmita Sarkhel d/o Aurindam Sarkhel as declared before the Learned Executive Magistrate at Howrah Court, Vide affidavit No. 16914 dated 17/12/25, Asmita Sarkhel D/o Arindam Sarkhel and Asmita Sarkhel D/o Aurindam Sarkhel both are same and one identical person.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**
I, Kumar Nitin Anand, S/o- Shambhu Kumar, R/o- Chiriatand, Budh Nagar Road No.-02, P.O.- G.P.O., P.S.- Kankarbagh, District-Patna, Bihar-800001, hereby solemnly affirm and declare that KUMAR NAKSH is my son and in his Birth Certificate No. B20251098658008557 2, issued on 26.12.2025, his date of birth is wrongly mentioned as 10.06.2022 instead of 10.05.2022 (correct) vide Affidavit No. 27, Dtd.01.01.2026.

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**EASTERN RAILWAY**

**E-Tender Notice No. SGW-272-252-T-62A, dated 31.12.2025.** Open e-Tender is invites by Chief Signal & Telecommunication Engineer/Project/HQ, Eastern Railway, 3rd floor, Fairlie Place, 17 Netaji Subhas Road, Kolkata-700001 from the experienced and established contractors having sufficient experience in similar work and satisfying minimum eligibility criteria on the prescribed form for the under noted work :- **Name of Work :** Appointment of Project Supervision Services (PSS) under the jurisdiction of Dy. CSTE/W/Howrah and Dy. CSTE/W/III/Sealdah. **Approximate cost of work:** ₹ 3,90,35,981.76. **Earnest Money to be deposited :** ₹ 3,45,200/- **Completion Period of the work :** 24 (Twenty four) Months. **Last date and time of online submission (closing) of tender document:** 30.01.2026 at 14.00 hrs. **Validity of Offer:** 120 days from the date of opening of tender. **Website address, time and date from which tender documents will be available :** On Indian Railway's website i.e. **www.ireps.gov.in** from 31.12.2025. **Date & Time of opening:** 30.01.2026 at 15.30 hrs. **Website where tender bid can be submitted :** (1) Bids are to be submitted online only. (2) Tenderer/s must register on Indian Railways E-Procurement System (IREPS) site i.e. **www.ireps.gov.in** for participating in e-tender system. Necessary changes, corrigendum/Addendum if required, would be posted on this site only. (3) Bidders will be able to submit their original / revised bids up to closing date and time only. (4) Manual bids/ offers are not allowed against this tender. Any manual offer received shall be ignored. (5) Electronic Reverse Auction (e-RA) for Works Contracts (Rs. 50.00 crores & above) is applicable as per Railway Board Letter No. 2017/Trans/01/Policy/Pt-S dated 28.03.2018.

CON-60/2025-26

**Tender Notice is also available at websites : www.er,indianrailways.gov.in / www.ireps.gov.in**

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बैंक ऑफ़ बड़ौदा Bank of Baroda

**POSSESSION NOTICE**
**(For movable property)**

**[As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the rule of the Security Interest (Enforcement), Rules, 2002]**

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Bank of Baroda under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (2) read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon the borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the receipt of the said notice.

The borrower(s)/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower(s)/mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the amount is hereby given to the borrower(s)/guarantor(s)/ mortgagor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said rules.

The borrower(s)/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of Bank of Baroda for the amount stated herein below and interest thereon.

**Name of Borrower/Guarantor & Description of Movable Property/ies**

| Branch/Name of the Borrowers & Guarantors/ Date of Demand Notice/Date of Possession/ Amount Outstanding | Description of the Movable Property/ies charged to Bank of Baroda |
|---|---|
| **Branch Address:- Line Bazar, Purnea** | |
| **Borrower:** Mr. Praveen Kumar, S/o Shri Krishnamohan Prasad, Add : At. Khazanchi Hat, Shiv Dham Nagar, Madhubani, Distt.- Purnea - 854301 (Bihar) **Demand Notice Date :** 01.09.2025 **Date of Possession Notice:** 30.12.2025 **Amount** -Rs.10,65,382.42 (Rupees Ten lakh sixty five thousand three hundred eighty two and paisa forty two only) + unapplied interest + other charges | All that part and parcel of the Car consisting Mortgage of Car in the name of :- Mr. Praveen Kumar, S/o. Shri. Krishnamohan Prasad, Add :- At. - Khazanchi Hat, Shiv Dham Nagar, Madhubani, Distt.- Purnea - 854301 (Bihar). **Details of Vehicle:-** **Type:** KIA India Private Limited **Model :** CARENS G 1.5 6MT Premium 07 **Reg. No. :** BR11BL1744 **Chassis No:** MZBGB814LRN183323 **Engine No:** 64FLRV799377 |

**Date: 30.12.2025**
**Place: Purnea**
Authorized Officer
Bank of Baroda

# Man suspected of being Bangladeshi, beaten up

**Press Trust of India**
MADHUBANI

A man was allegedly beaten up in Bihar's Madhubani district after being wrongly suspected of being a Bangladeshi national, police said on Friday.

Police swung into action after a video of the incident went viral on social media, showing a person being beaten up by two youths who presumed him to be an illegal Bangladeshi immigrant.

Madhubani SP Yogendra Kumar said, "The social media cell of the police investigated the matter and found that the incident took place in Chakda in the Rajnagar police station area. The two individuals who were seen assaulting the victim have been identified as residents of Rajnagar. The victim, who works as a mason, is a resident of Birpur in Supaul district."

A case has been lodged under the section that deals with attempt to murder, he added.

"Raids are being conducted to arrest both individuals," he said.

# Himachal college student dies after ragging, sexual assault; 3 women, professor booked

Will grill all accused, say police day after filing FIR into death of 19-year-old govt. college student; Oppn. seeks high-level probe, justice for victim; State Scheduled Castes Commission seeks report

**The Hindu Bureau**
CHANDIGARH

Three women students of a government college in Dharamshala in Kangra district have been booked for ragging and voluntarily causing hurt while a professor from the same institute has been booked for sexual harassment in connection with the death of a 19-year-old girl student last month, the police said on Friday.

The first information report (FIR) has been registered under Sections 75 (sexual harassment), 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 3(5) (common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and under Section 3 of the Himachal Pradesh Educational Institution (Prohibition of) Ragging Act, 2009, based on the statement of victim's father on Thursday, said an officer.

The complainant told the police that on September 18, his daughter was beaten and intimidated by the three students even as the professor engaged in obscene acts with her.

The incident left her deeply traumatised leading to a rapid deterioration in her health, stated the victim's father, adding that she was treated at multiple hospitals before succumbing during treatment on December 26.

Her father said they could not report the matter to the police earlier due to her deteriorating health and psychological distress.

Kangra Superintendent of Police (SP) Ashok Ratan said, "The matter is being investigated, and the accused will be questioned."

The police have launched a probe into the death of the student on December 26, nearly 100 days after the alleged assault. FILE PHOTO

### Uproar in State

The incident caused uproar after a purported video shot by the victim, in which she accused the professor of sexual misconduct and threats when she confronted him about the assault, surfaced online.

Former Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition in the Himachal Pradesh Assembly Jairam Thakur demanded a high-level and impartial investigation into the case, which he said was necessary to uncover all the facts and ensure justice for the victim.

A delegation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) met the Director General of Police and submitted a memorandum demanding an impartial probe by a senior officer.

The Himachal Scheduled Castes Commission Chairperson, Kuldeep Kumar, has reportedly sought a report in the matter from the Kangra SP.

A social activist, Ravi Kumar Dalit, sat on a dharna at the Ridge in Shimla on Friday demanding a judicial inquiry into the girl's death.

*(With inputs from PTI)*

# Chhattisgarh anti-mining stir: video of woman police officer attacked, stripped sparks row

**The Hindu Bureau**
RAIPUR

A video of a group of men assaulting and tearing the clothes of an on-duty woman constable during an anti-mining protest in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district has surfaced on social media, sparking a backlash.

### Another assault case

The incident allegedly took place on December 27 in the Tamnar block, when a protest by residents of 14 villages against a coal mining project turned violent. Earlier, another video of a woman police inspector being assaulted during the same protest had surfaced, and the police had said that several personnel were injured and police vehicles torched during the protest.

In the video that surfaced on Thursday, the victim is seen sitting in, what appears to be, a field. At least two men can be seen tearing her clothes and verbally abusing her as she cries and pleads for mercy.

**Two men have been arrested in the incident. Efforts are on to identify others, police officials said**

As the men ask her why she was there, the woman pleads with them, "*Nahin maarna bhai* [Don't hit me brother]".

In the same video, she says later: "*Nahin karungi* [I won't do it]" and "*Main kisi ko nahin maari hoon bhai* [I haven't hit anyone brother]".

One of the men then takes out a sandal and threatens to hit her with it as the woman is seemingly dragged away.

Two men have been arrested in connection with the incident so far, and efforts are being made to identify others involved in the crime, a senior police officer said on Friday.

The Opposition Congress has condemned the incident and alleged that public anger against the government and the police was growing since the BJP came to power in the State.

### Cong. demands action

"The brutal assault and indecency meted out to a female constable in Tamnar is a shameful incident. In this incident, a woman constable is assaulted by some men, her clothes torn, and she is seen pleading with folded hands to be let go, barely able to hide her body. This video is shameful and shocking. The Congress strongly condemns this entire incident and demands strict legal action against the guilty," said Chhattisgarh Congress president Deepak Baij.

He also demanded that an investigation be conducted to find out who was behind the assault and whether this was a conspiracy to defame the movement.

Notably, a day after the December 27 violence, the Raigarh administration said it had initiated the process to cancel a public hearing pertaining to the project.

# Zubeen's family to set up trust 'to safeguard his creative legacy, ideals'

**Press Trust of India**
GUWAHATI

The family of celebrated singer Zubeen Garg on Friday announced that they would set up a trust in his name to work for the society in accordance with his vision. The singer's wife Garima Garg and sister Palmee Borthakur made the announcement at a press conference in Guwahati.

"We have decided to set up a trust in the name of Zubeen Garg after consultation with family, relatives, well wishers, and those who were associated with him," Ms. Garima said. The trust will work closely with the Kalaguru Artists' Foundation, founded by Zubeen, and with Abhinaya: Jonkie Borthakur Performing Arts Academy, named after the singer's deceased sister, the family said. They said through this trust, they were aiming to safeguard his dreams, work, creative legacy, ideals and beliefs.

# Maharashtra primary teachers' body threatens Statewide boycott over online workload

**The Hindu Bureau**
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Rajya Prathamik Shikshak Samiti has warned of a State-wide boycott of online administrative work by primary schoolteachers, citing that mandatory tasks through multiple apps and portals are severely affecting classroom teaching.

In a letter to School Education Minister Dadaji Bhuse on December 30, the committee said teachers are "virtually held hostage" by the growing burden of online submissions for schemes, attendance, and surveys. "*Shikshakanna shikvu dya, vidyarthinna shiku dya* (Let teachers teach and students learn)," the letter said, urging the government to let teachers focus on academics.

The committee pointed out that rural schools face poor Internet connectivity and teachers' personal mobile phones are overloaded with apps including Vidya Samiksha Kendra (VSK), Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), and Shalarth. "Continuous online work leaves teachers with no time for students. The stress is eroding morale and mental health," the letter said.

Initially, the teachers had cooperated with online systems like UDISE+ and Shalarth to save time and reduce paperwork. However, the letter alleges that the situation has now spiralled into "unwritten compulsion" to use portals and apps for every administrative requirement, including daily nutrition beneficiary counts under the mid-day meal (MDM) scheme and attendance through VSK's Smart Presence chatbot.

The body also flagged concerns over private apps, calling them "flawed and misleading".

"Teachers have been handling responsibilities including mid-day meals, scholarships, and multiple schemes without complaint or extra pay for years. But the current policy has made their personal lives miserable," the letter said. The committee demanded that cluster-level data entry operators be appointed to handle administrative tasks. "If corrective steps are not taken, we will boycott all online work and launch a campaign against using personal mobiles for official duties," said committee president Vijay Kombe and general secretary Rajan Koragavkar.

# Civic body razes 'encroachments' in Chomu

**Press Trust of India**
JAIPUR

Illegal encroachments at around two dozen residences of those accused in a recent stone-pelting incident in Chomu were removed by the local municipal council on Friday, officials said.

"The action was taken on the encroachments made by those involved in the stone-throwing incident. Notices were issued to 23 encroachers, giving them until Wednesday to remove their illegal constructions. Following the deadline, the demolition action was carried out," a government official said.

Chomu SHO Pradeep Sharma said that security arrangements were made during the action along Imam Chowk and Pathan Mohalla area.

### Row over railings

The controversy began on December 25 night, when a dispute arose over the installation of iron railings outside a mosque near the Chomu bus stand.

During this, some people pelted stones at police, leaving six policemen injured. Due to the tense situation, Internet services were suspended in the town for two days.

**Timings**
**KOLKATA**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **SATURDAY, JAN. 03** | | |
| RISE | 06:17 | SET 17:05 |
| RISE | 16:59 | SET 06:08 |
| **SUNDAY, JAN. 04** | | |
| RISE | 06:17 | SET 17:06 |
| RISE | 18:08 | SET 07:07 |
| **MONDAY, JAN. 05** | | |
| RISE | 06:18 | SET 17:06 |
| RISE | 19:14 | SET 07:57 |

| Kolkata Weather | max | min |
|---|---|---|
| Ranchi | 24 | 08 |
| Imphal | 23 | 05 |
| Kolkata | 24 | 11 |

**Kolkata Today**
**23°C** The weather will be dry. Day will be pleasant. Night will be cool with haze and mist.

**Kolkata Tomorrow**
**22°C** Morning will be cool with fog and mist. Day will be pleasant. Night also will be cool. Dry weather to occur.

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THE HINDU
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Presents
THE HINDU LIT FOR LIFE 2026
THE SHARPEST LITERATURE FESTIVAL IN INDIA
In association with
CHRIST
NITTE

LITERARY TRIVIA CHALLENGE

1. Which popular Ruskin Bond novel was adapted into a children's film with the same title?
2. Which former Indian batsman, famed for his elegant square cut, collaborated with cricket writer R. Kaushik on the book Wrist Assured?
3. Which playwright introduced everyday English words like eyeball, swagger, lonely, and bedazzled into common usage?

*T&C apply.

Scan QR code or visit https://newsth.live/LFLQUIZ to take the quiz. Top 3 winners* every day win gift vouchers.

Answer to yesterday's quiz:
1. The Secret of Secrets | 2. Marcel Proust | 3. Love Story

Yesterday's Winners:
1. Nagendra Kumar, Chennai | 2. Vikas Remesh, Kannur
3. Charu Thakur, Pune

## INBRIEF

### 8 die in separate road mishaps in Jharkhand in 24 hours

Eight persons were killed and several others injured in road accidents in different parts of Jharkhand over the past 24 hours, officials said. Four persons, including a schoolgirl, were killed in a head-on collision between an autorickshaw and an oil tanker on Barhait- Barharwa road on Friday. Two persons were killed in Palamu and two others injured when the motorcycle they were riding skidded off the road. In Ranchi, a 26-year-old biker died near a fuel station at Birsa Chowk after being hit by a speeding car. In Godda, a youth died and another injured in a head-on collision between a car and a truck. PTI

### Hotel manager among 3 held for assaulting policemen in U.P.

A hotel manager and two more men were arrested for allegedly assaulting policemen during a New Year's eve raid in Bareilly, an officer said on Friday. The incident happened on December 31 night when the police asked the hotel management to shut the music system down which was on allegedly till after the stipulated time. Baradari Police Station SHO Dhananjay Kumar Pandey said the three men, and at least three more unnamed people, were booked on charges of attempted murder and assault. The three arrested were hotel manager Masi Alam, accountant Pavneshand Raghav Kapoor, a resident of Civil Lines area of Bareilly. PTI

# Civic polls: high drama as BJP workers lock candidate inside his house in Nagpur

34 BJP and Shiv Sena candidates win unopposed on last day of withdrawal of candidature; Shinde says saffron alliance set to hoist flag in Thane civic body; Fadnavis urges rebels to withdraw forms

**Snehal Mutha**
MUMBAI

High drama was reported across Maharashtra on Friday, the last day for the withdrawal of candidature for the January 15 civic polls, with parties trading accusations of bribing and threatening each other's candidates while trying to persuade their own rebel candidates to withdraw. While addressing a Marathi literary event on Friday, Chief Minister and senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Devendra Fadnavis urged rebel candidates to withdraw their forms. "I never answer calls from dais, but today I have to as rebel candidates won't withdraw without speaking to me."

Dissent among the BJP rank and file was reported from various parts of the State. In Solapur, two groups of BJP members vandalised the liaison office of former corporator Shankar Shinde. In Nagpur, Kisan Gawande and Vijay Hole received nomination forms from the BJP, only for the party to ask Mr. Gawande to step back, which caused his supporters to allegedly lock him inside his house.

**Colourful contest:** Campaign merchandise of various parties at a shop in Nagpur on Thursday. ANI

"I understand supporters' feelings, but party orders need to be followed," said Mr. Gawande after withdrawing his candidature. Fifteen BJP candidates won unopposed in the Kalyan-Dombivli Municipal Corporation. Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) city president Manoj Gharat withdrew his candidature and BJP candidate Mahesh Patil was declared the winner. Shiv Sena's Ram Repale won after the Congress candidate and the Independents withdrew from the polls. Nineteen Shiv Sena candidates won unopposed across three civic bodies.

Congratulating the winners, Shiv Sena chief and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said, "There is no doubt that the saffron alliance will hoist the flag on the Thane Municipal Corporation on the 16th (the day of counting). An unopposed election is a testament to the work done. Where the Opposition is sure of defeat, they retreat, and unopposed elections are held."

**'Candidate theft'**

Congress leader Atul Londhe criticised the Election Commission and the ruling Mahayuti for "candidate theft". "The ruling party, including Eknath Shinde, are threatening candidates from the Opposition parties and Independents to withdraw their candidature," Mr. Londhe alleged. MNS candidate in Panvel Yogesh Chile accused his Congress rival of offering ₹60 lakh to withdraw. Several Shiv Sena (UBT) candidates who did not receive nomination forms, including Chandrashekhar Wingankar, filed nomination as Independents.

Polling for 2,869 corporators in 29 municipal corporations will take place on January 15.

# Speaker meddling in nomination process for BMC poll: Cong.

**The Hindu Bureau**
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Congress president Harshawardhan Sapkal.

The Congress has sought action against Maharashtra Speaker Rahul Narwekar for "violating the model code of conduct (MCC)". Party's Maharashtra president Harshawardhan Sapkal on Friday wrote to the State Election Commissioner as a video went viral on social media purportedly showing the Speaker threatening an Opposition leader. Mr. Sapkal also demanded action against the officers and employees of the Speaker's office, alleging that they were involved in campaigning for his relatives.

Terming the alleged threat by Mr. Narwekar as "serious", Bharatiya Janata Party MLA from Colaba, the Congress demanded the registration of a criminal case against him. "As many as 70 officers and employees from his office are actively participating in election campaign of candidates who are his relatives. Cases should also be registered against all of them for violating the Model Code of Conduct and strict action should be taken," it said in a statement.

In his complaint, Mr. Sapkal alleged that three relatives of Mr. Narwekar have filed their nomination papers as BJP candidates.

"At the time of filing the nominations, Rahul Narwekar himself was present. Around 5 p.m., while the nomination process was under way, Rahul Narwekar allegedly, through the police, threatened Opposition candidates who were filing nominations against BJP candidates and prevented them from filing their papers," Mr. Sapkal wrote in his complaint.

The Speaker did not receive calls despite repeated attempts. After the complaint was sent to the State Election Commissioner Dinesh Waghmare, the panel sought a written report from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation Commissioner.

# Haryana expands monthly aid scheme to include more women, but with riders; Oppn. cries foul

**The Hindu Bureau**
GURUGRAM

The amendments made by the Haryana's Bharatiya Janata Party government to its monthly financial aid scheme for women has drawn sharp criticism from the Opposition for "imposing conditions after conditions" instead of offering it to all women as promised in the party's manifesto.

The government has announced to extend the benefits of the Deen Dayal Lado Lakshmi Yojana to women with annual income limit of up to ₹1.80 lakh, but with additional criteria of academic excellence and the health of their children.

The expansion of the scheme will benefit more than 1 lakh new women.

Besides the women with annual income of less than ₹1lakh currently being given ₹2,100 per month under the scheme, the Haryana government has now brought more beneficiaries under its preview integrating social development-linked eligibility criteria with the income-based eligibility. For the increased limit, only those women whose children are studying in government schools and have demonstrated academic excellence by securing more than 80% marks in Class 10 or 12 board examinations, or have achieved grade-level competency under the NIPUN Bharat Mission in Classes 1 to 4, will be considered eligible.

Cong.'s Kumari Selja said the policy shows a mindset aimed at humiliating women. FILE PHOTO

Similarly, mothers who have successfully rehabilitated their children from Severe Acute Malnutrition or Moderate Acute Malnutrition, as verified by the Women and Child Development Department, will also be covered under the scheme.

**'Deliberate conditions'**

Congress' Sirsa MP Kumari Selja has condemned the new sets of conditions saying, "This policy does not reflect women's empowerment, but rather a mindset aimed at humiliating women". Leader of the Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda stated that the government is deliberately imposing such conditions so that most women are automatically excluded from the beneficiaries list.

# Former AIADMK legislator Prabhakar joins Vijay's TVK

**The Hindu Bureau**
CHENNAI

Former legislator of Villivakkam and veteran AIADMK member, J.C.D. Prabhakar, joined the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam in the presence of party founder Vijay in Chennai on Friday.

Mr. Prabhakar, who was elected from Villivakkam on the AIADMK ticket in 1980 and 2011, met the TVK leader at his residence in Foreshore Estate here.

The 73-year-old leader, an alumnus of the Loyola and Law Colleges, defeated the firebrand legislator, K. Suppu, in 1980, and then sitting Finance Minister K. Anbazhagan in 2011.

In the mid-1980s, he was the AIADMK secretary of the composite Chengalpattu district. At the time of the AIADMK's split in 1988, he was with the faction led by Janaki Ramachandran and contested unsuccessfully in Villivakkam the next year.

Former AIADMK member J.C.D. Prabhakar with Vijay in Chennai

In 2016, then Chief Minister Jayalalithaa fielded him in Kolathur against the present Chief Minister M.K. Stalin.

At the time of the party's second split in 2017, Mr. Prabhakar stood by the party's former coordinator O. Panneerselvam. Five years later, he was expelled along with Mr. Panneerselvam and a few others. For about a year, he tried to bring about rapproachement among different groups of the AIADMK.

# Madras High Court imposes restrictions on Santhanakoodu Urus fest with 50 participants

**The Hindu Bureau**
MADURAI

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Friday directed the authorities of Hazrat Sultan Sikandar Badusha Dargah on the Thirupparankundram hill to conduct only the Santhanakoodu Urus festival and restrict the total number of participants to 50.

Justice S. Srimathy restrained the dargah authorities from carrying out animal sacrifice, carrying meat and non-vegetarian food, and cooking non-vegetarian food. The direction should be enforced from the foothills to the top, the court said.

The official respondents, including the district administration, were directed to strictly enforce the directions. The police were directed to maintain law and order.

The High Court ordered the official respondents, including the district administration, to strictly enforce the directions. FILE PHOTO

The court was hearing a petition filed by M. Manickamoorthy of Madurai, who sought a direction to the authorities to prohibit the dargah authorities from performing 'Kandhoori' on the hill.

The State government submitted that permission would be granted only for the Santhanakoodu festival scheduled for January 6. Permission was granted in 2023, and the same would be followed this year too. It also submitted that permission would not be granted for 'Kandhoori Mahautsav'. Animal sacrifice, carrying meat and non-vegetarian food, and cooking non-vegetarian food would not be permitted, it said.

The court posted the matter to January 20 for the filing of a counter-affidavit.

# How language issue led to one of Assam's most volatile conflicts

**Rahul Karmakar**
GUWAHATI

**Study revisits 1961 Silchar violence to examine how policy, identity and power shaped linguistic conflict**

Decades after blood was spilt on the streets of southern Assam's Silchar, a new academic study examines how language, power and identity converged to produce one of the State's most volatile conflicts.

The study, published in *Contemporary South Asia*, analyses the 1961 violence to argue that the crisis was not inevitable but the result of political choices, policy failures and deep-seated historical anxieties.

It contends that language in Assam has never been merely a means of communication but has functioned as a marker of belonging and, at times, a trigger for violence.

The authors of the study are Md. Chingiz Khan of the Centre for Comparative Religions and Civilisations at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, Ravi Shankar of the School of Global Affairs at B.R. Ambedkar University, Delhi, and Bharti Shokeen of Sri Karan Narendra Agriculture University, Jobner, Rajasthan.

The study traces the flashpoint to 1961, when the Assam government amended its Official Language Act to recognise Assamese as the sole official language, while allowing limited use of Bengali in parts of the Barak Valley. The decision triggered widespread protests across the region.

Firing by security forces at demonstrators in Silchar left 11 people dead on May 19, 1961, a moment that remains deeply etched in the collective memory of the Barak Valley.

The study argues that reducing the episode to an "Assamese versus Bengali" conflict obscures its deeper complexity. Assam, it notes, has long been a multilingual and multi-ethnic society, home to diverse communities, whose coexistence was disrupted by rigid language policies.

**Colonial policy**

"An intersectional approach, considering temporality, ethnicity, region, culture, and politics, offers a more nuanced understanding [of the issue]. Assam's identity has been shaped by centuries of migration, cultural exchange, and layered histories, making rigid categorisations reductive," the study observes.

The study underlines the decisive role of colonial policies in shaping linguistic hierarchies. British administrators classified and ranked languages through censuses and surveys, transforming fluid identities into rigid categories.

The imposition of Bengali as the language of administration in 19th century Assam marginalised Assamese speakers in courts and government employment. When Assamese later regained official status, the balance shifted, fuelling resentment among Bengali speakers, particularly in Bengali-majority regions such as Cachar.

According to the study, language became closely tied to access to power. Official recognition translated into employment opportunities, control over land records and political influence. Communities that felt excluded came to view language policy as an existential threat.

In Cachar, where Bengali speakers formed an overwhelming majority, the enforcement of Assamese was perceived as cultural domination. In the Brahmaputra Valley, concessions to Bengali speakers were seen as undermining Assamese identity.

The study notes that the violence of 1961 reflected both popular anger and institutional failure, with the Centre and the Assam government underestimating the depth of the crisis. Interim measures such as the Shastri Formula failed to address underlying tensions. Political parties were divided, bureaucracies were paralysed, and sections of the media, particularly newspapers published from Calcutta, were accused of aggravating the situation.

The study rejects the notion that the movement was communal in nature. Protesters on all sides included Hindus, Muslims and tribal groups, underscoring that language solidarity often cut across religious lines.

**'Recipe for unrest'**

The authors conclude that the fault lines exposed in 1961 continue to shape contemporary debates around citizenship, belonging and indigeneity, particularly in the context of the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The lesson, they argue, is that imposing monolingual solutions in a linguistically diverse society is a recipe for unrest.

# Odisha police arrest fraudster accused of swindling ₹120 crore

**The Hindu Bureau**
BHUBANESWAR

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha police arrested one Amit Mandal accused of defrauding investors to the tune of ₹120 crore from Odisha and West Bengal. Mandal was arrested from Bankura in West Bengal.

"The accused collected more than ₹120 crore from about 500 depositors from Odisha and West Bengal during the period from 2020-2024," said the EOW in a statement on Friday.

The police acted on a case registered on the written complaint by Sushant Kumar Das of Khordha district. It was alleged that the accused and his associates induced Mr. Das to invest with them in share trading for high returns in the range from 3.5% to 7% per month.

"In order to win the confidence, the accused executed agreement apart from issuing post-dated cheques. Mr. Das deposited ₹8.5 Lakhs during the period 2022-2024. The deposit was taken through the personal accounts of the accused Mandal," the complaint said.

Mandal was operating through the firm "Kalpana Financial Services". The accused paid investors some returns. However, he stopped it subsequently and absconded.

Published by Nirmala Lakshman at Arcadia Centre, 2nd Floor, 31, Dr. Ambedkar Sarani (Topsia Road South), Kolkata, West Bengal-700046 and Printed by Pratin Kumar Khanra at Saraswati Print Factory Pvt. Ltd., 789, Chowbhaga West, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal-700105, on behalf of THG Publishing Pvt. Ltd. Editor: Suresh Nambath (Responsible for selection of news under PRP Act).
ISSN 0971 - 751X

## INBRIEF

### Gold theft case: BJP leader calls for Central agency probe

Indicating his lack of confidence in the probe by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in the gold theft case linked to the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple, former Kerala BJP president K. Surendran has demanded an investigation by a Central agency "to nab the real culprits." Speaking at a press conference here on Friday, Mr. Surendran alleged that leaders of both the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) are involved in the theft.

### Phase- 2 of Kerala's medical insurance scheme deferred

The Kerala government has deferred the launch of Phase II of the Medical Insurance Scheme for State Employees and Pensioners (Medisep) because of technical issues. The phase one will continue for the time being. Phase II, with enhanced insurance coverage and increased premium rate, was to be launched on January 1. The launch was deferred because the Finance department is trying to get the scheme exempted from GST and a decision on it is yet to happen.

### Kerala Electricity Board to collect fuel surcharge in Jan.

The Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) will collect 7 paise per unit from bimonthly-billed consumers and 8 paise per unit from monthly-billed consumers as thermal fuel surcharge on electricity bills in January. The surcharge is meant to recover ₹18.45 crore spent additionally on power purchases in November 2025 on account of the price variations of fuel. The surcharge is on account of the variations in the spending from 18 generating stations.

# Spat between SNDP Yogam and CPI intensifies in Kerala

Vellappally Natesan accuses CPI of taking money from him for polls, says the party has been acting against the interests of Left front; Vishwam hits back saying he didn't accept 'illegal money'

**The Hindu Bureau**
KOCHI/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The spat between Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam general secretary Vellappally Natesan and Communist Party of India (CPI) State secretary Binoy Viswam intensified on Friday, with Mr. Natesan accusing the CPI of taking money from him.

The Ezhava community forms the support base of the SNDP Yogam.

Mr. Natesan also charged the CPI with taking stances inimical to the interests of the Left Democratic Front (LDF), citing its strident criticism of the government signing up for the PM SHRI scheme, which he alleged had created an impression of lack of unity within the alliance.

Vellappally Natesan and Binoy Viswam

Mr. Natesan's tirade against Mr. Viswam formed part of a series of exchanges triggered by the CPI's assessment that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's public bonhomie with Mr. Natesan damaged the Left front's prospects in the local body elections.

Responding to Mr. Viswam's remarks that he would not let Mr. Natesan board his car (as was done by Mr. Vijayan), Mr. Natesan said he did not want to get into Mr. Viswam's vehicle. "Why should I board his car? [CPI leaders] T.V. Thomas and M.N. Govindan Nair had travelled in my car many a time," he said, adding that he still remembers what CPI leaders said when they took the money from him.

**CPI leader's defence**

Rebutting the derisive comments, Mr. Viswam said while the CPI might have collected funds from Mr. Natesan for elections, it had not accepted any illegal money from him.

"Nobody has entrusted Vellappally with giving grades to parties in the LDF or judging who's right or wrong. Vellappally isn't the LDF... The Sree Narayana movement has an illustrious history, and those occupying its top post should remember that they are holding a position illuminated by stalwarts like Kumaran Asan," he said.

# Centre sets up panel to study water sharing issues between Telangana, A.P.

**The Hindu Bureau**
HYDERABAD

The Ministry of Jal Shakti, on Friday, announced the formation of a committee to study water sharing issues between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and suggest viable solutions.

The committee headed by the Chairman of the Central Water Commission (CWC), will comprise chairpersons of the Godavari and Krishna River Water Management Boards, representatives of the Telangana and Andhra Pradesh governments and other top officials.

**Report in three months**

It is mandated to submit its report within three months, said an official release.

The members of the committee from Andhra Pradesh's side are Special Chief Secretary (Water Resources department), Adviser of Water Resources department, Irrigation engineer-in-chief, chief engineer of water resources.

From the Telangana side, Adviser to Government on irrigation and water resources, Principal Secretary (Irrigation and CAD department), Special Secretary (Irrigation and CAD department) and Irrigation EnC. CWC Chief Engineers and National Water Development Agency (NWDA) are the other members.

The committee will address key issues concerning water management, study the outstanding concerns and suggest solutions to ensure equitable and efficient water sharing.

## WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday

TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.15 HRS)

**Forecast for Saturday:** Cold wave conditions likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. Dense/very dense fog likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh

| CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN | CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agartala | — | 17.2 | 12.5 | Kozhikode | — | 34.2 | 24.5 |
| Ahmedabad | — | 27.5 | 15.3 | Kurnool | — | 31.7 | 20.0 |
| Aizawl | — | 22.6 | 6.5 | Lucknow | — | 14.6 | 8.6 |
| Allahabad | — | 17.8 | 9.6 | Madurai | — | 33.0 | 23.6 |
| Bengaluru | — | 27.5 | 19.1 | Mangaluru | — | 31.2 | 22.1 |
| Bhopal | — | 23.8 | 10.6 | Mumbai | — | 29.8 | 19.4 |
| Bhubaneswar | — | 28.0 | 12.5 | Mysuru | — | 28.0 | 16.0 |
| Chandigarh | 13.7 | 13.0 | 9.5 | New Delhi | — | 17.4 | 9.1 |
| Chennai | 0.2 | 29.9 | 24.0 | Patna | — | 19.6 | 9.0 |
| Coimbatore | 0.2 | 30.4 | 21.6 | Port Blair | — | 29.2 | 22.7 |
| Dehradun | — | 21.3 | 7.7 | Puducherry | — | 30.2 | 23.8 |
| Gangtok | — | 16.1 | 6.7 | Pune | — | 30.8 | 16.9 |
| Goa | — | 30.6 | 20.4 | Raipur | — | 28.7 | 14.3 |
| Guwahati | — | 22.6 | 13.0 | Ranchi | — | 22.8 | 9.0 |
| Hubballi | — | 31.0 | 18.0 | Shillong | — | 16.0 | 5.0 |
| Hyderabad | — | 28.6 | 18.3 | Shimla | — | 19.0 | 6.0 |
| Imphal | — | 22.5 | 5.5 | Srinagar | — | 11.8 | 0.1 |
| Jaipur | — | 21.0 | 11.8 | Thiruvananthapuram | — | 32.0 | 23.8 |
| Kochi | — | 31.2 | 25.6 | Tiruchi | — | 30.7 | 22.6 |
| Kohima | — | 13.0 | 5.0 | Vijayawada | — | 29.4 | 21.0 |
| Kolkata | — | 24.2 | 12.0 | Visakhapatnam | — | 27.8 | 20.4 |

*(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)*

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

| CITIES | $SO_2$ | $NO_2$ | CO | PM2.5 | PM10 | CODE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ahmedabad | .55 | ..62 | 75 | ..... 65 | ...117 | ..... |
| Bengaluru | ...5 | ..14 | 25 | ... 175 | ...152 | ..... |
| Chennai | ...5 | ....5 | 46 | ... 113 | ....92 | ..... |
| Delhi | .19 | ..61 | 64 | ... 289 | ...367 | ..... |
| Hyderabad | ...9 | ..17 | 82 | ... 117 | ...131 | ..... |
| Kolkata | .12 | ..78 | 14 | ... 273 | ...206 | ..... |
| Lucknow | ...7 | ..39 | 58 | ... 307 | ...238 | ..... |
| Mumbai | ...7 | ..87 | 58 | ... 107 | ...115 | ..... |
| Pune | ..— | ..33 | 67 | ... 191 | ...136 | ..... |
| Visakhapatnam | .13 | ..35 | 50 | ... 285 | ...169 | ..... |

**Yesterday**

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Talcher, Odisha recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 380 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Damoh, Madhya Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 23

**Air Quality Code:** Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

**$SO_2$:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**$NO_2$:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

# Bengaluru jail radicalisation case: NIA files additional chargesheet

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday filed a supplementary chargesheet in the 2023 Bengaluru prison radicalisation case, charging three more accused, including an assistant sub-inspector and a psychiatrist deputed at the Central Prisons Hospital, Parappana Agrahara.

The case already has 12 accused, of which eight, including the prime accused, pleaded guilty in July, 2025.

The module was busted in July, 2023, by the Bengaluru City Police. It was led by a habitual offender and red sanders smuggler Junaid Ahmed, who had allegedly been radicalised by an alleged Lashkar-e-Taiba operative T. Naseer, an undertrial in several terror cases, lodged in the Parappana Agrahara Central Prison.

The police had recovered arms, ammunition, and digital devices, including hand grenades, but Junaid, said to be abroad, has been absconding since then. A probe into the case was taken over by the NIA, who claimed that investigations pointed to a plot to free T. Naseer, during transit to court.

Chan Pasha A., assistant sub-inspector, City Armed Reserve-South, one of those chargesheeted on Thursday, allegedly received illegal gratification from a prime accused in the case, Salman Khan, for sharing information about the escort details of T. Naseer with whom he had connections while he was on prisoners' escort duty.

## *Wooden wonders*

Enthusiasts get down to work at a 15-day wood carving workshop at the Lalbagh Botanical Garden in Bengaluru on Friday. K. MURALI KUMAR

# Kerala govt. launches house visits to collect feedback on progress

**The Hindu Bureau**
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Navakeralam Citizens Response Programme, a Kerala government initiative to collect feedback from the public to plan the future development of the State, kicked off on Thursday.

Across districts, volunteers began their house visits, handed over brochures and collected their feedback. The programme will help formulate public opinion on development by discerning the requirements of regions and plan accordingly, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said.

"Every individual would have a concept of the future and suggestions concerning it in accordance with their environment and aspirations. It is part of the democratic process to listen to such suggestions and compile them and plan accordingly," he said.

Apart from private residences, they will also be visiting workplaces, farmlands, flats, educational and health-care institutions, and commercial establishments.

# Leopard dead in suspected blast

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

A pregnant leopard was found dead on the outskirts of Bengaluru last week.

Karnataka Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre said the carcass of the leopard as found by the Forest department staff on December 27 in the Basavanatara forest area. "It is suspected that it died owing to a rock explosion in a nearby quarry," he said.

Yeshwantpur MLA S.T. Somasekar alleged that illegal mining had been taking place in the area and sought a ban.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA e-Procurement Notice
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, CENTRAL MINOR IRRIGATION CIRCLE, BHUBANESWAR
Phone-0674-2540559 ; Mail ID:cmic.bbsr@gmail.com
No.1580 /CMIC Date : 30.12.2025
The Additional Chief Engineer, Central Minor Irrigation Circle, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites online percentage rate tender through e-procurement for the works as detailed in the Annexure to this bid notice.
e- Procurement Notice - BID ID.No.ACE-CMIC-04/2025-26

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Name of the Work | As per Annexure to this bid notice |
| 2. | No. of Works | 02 (Two) Nos. |
| 3. | Estimated Cost | Approximately Rs.106.89 Lakh to Rs.125.31 Lakh. |
| 4. | Class of Contractor | B & A |
| 5. | Period of Completion | 7 (Seven) Calendar Months |
| 6. | Date and Time of Availability of Bid Documents and Receipt of Bid Cost on online Payment mode in Portal | From 05.01.2026 (10.00 A.M.) to 15.01.2026 (05.30 PM) in Website (www.tendersodisha.gov.in) |
| 7. | Last Date / Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal | 15.01.2026 (Upto 05.30 P.M.) through online only. |
| 8. | Date of Opening of Technical Bid | 11:00 AM Onwards on 16.01.2026 in the O/o - ACE, Central M.I. Circle, Bhubaneswar. |
| 9. | Name and address of OIT | Additional Chief Engineer, Central M.I.Circle, Bhubaneswar. Plot No.-A-8/2, Po:Bhoinagar, Bhubaneswar. PIN:751022, Dist: Khurda. Ph: 0674-2540559. |

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement market place : http://tendersorissa.gov.in
A-1215 : Additional Chief Engineer, Central M.I.Circle, Bhubaneswar.
OIPR-32047/11/0014/2526

# Delhi HC bars unauthorised use of Pawan Kalyan's image

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has protected the personality rights of popular actor and Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, restraining several websites and online platforms from using his name, image, and likeness without his consent.

Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora passed the direction on a plea by Mr. Kalyan seeking to restrain several defendants, including several e-commerce websites, from using his personality traits using artificial intelligence and deepfake technology, till the next date of hearing.

In the order passed on December 22, the court said, "The balance of convenience lies in favour of the plaintiff [Mr. Kalyan], and the continuing availability of the infringing content would cause him irreparable injury."

It further noted that Mr. Kalyan is a known public figure and the serving Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, and his images, voice, name, and likeness were being used by the defendant entities without his consent for selling merchandise for commercial gains, either directly or through e-commerce platforms.

Referring to Mr. Kalyan's apprehensions about fake social media accounts in his name, the court directed that such accounts specifically add a description mentioning "fan account" in their profiles.

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT
DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER, NEW PUBLIC OFFICES, NRUPATUNGA ROAD, BANGALORE-560 001, Phone : 080-22211086 / 22212137, Fax: 22210117
WEB SITE : (http://www.schooleducation.kar.nic.in)
No: DPI-CPI0PRO(OTH)/50/2025-PRO SEC E-2015323 Date: 02.01.2026
SHORT TERM REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL NOTIFICATION
Director (Primary Education), Office of commissioner, Department of School Education, Bangalore is invited request for proposal for the preparation of Detailed Project Reports on infrastructure improvement of Government Schools in the State of Karnataka by interested bidders.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | RFP Reference No. | DPI/2025-26/SE0419 |
| 2 | Date of Commencement of Download of RFP Document from Karnataka Public Procurement Portal website http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in | 02/01/2026 onwards |
| 3 | Last Date and Time for uploading Online Queries in Karnataka Public Procurement Portal. | 07/01/2026 5:30 PM |
| 4 | Date and time of Pre-bid Meeting | 08/01/2026 11:00 AM, at the following venue: Office of Commissioner, School Education, First floor, New public office Building, Nrupatunga road, K.R. Circle, Bengaluru. |
| 5 | Last Date and Time for uploading of RFP in Karnataka Public Procurement Portal | 16/01/2026 5:00 PM |
| 6 | Date and Time of Online Opening of RFP Applications | 17/01/2026 5:10 PM |
| 7 | Place of Opening of RFP Applications | Online at Karnataka Public Procurement Portal. |
| 8 | Date and time of presentation for methodology on the project | 20/01/2026 12:00 PM |
| 9 | Address for Communication | First floor, New public office Building, Nrupatunga road, K R Circle, Bengaluru -560001, Email: primarydpi@gmail.com, Contact: 080-22270072. |

1.Tender documents may be downloaded from the web site https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in
2. Other details can be seen in the tender documents.
Sd/-
Director (Primary Education)
DIPR/CP/JA/4815/2025-26

## Unenviable choice

### Growth-generating capital expenditure can affect fiscal targets

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue of ₹1.74 lakh crore in December 2025 confirms just how narrow the government's fiscal policy space is. The December data reflect the economic activity in November, the second month under the new, reduced GST rates. December's revenues were marginally higher than the ₹1.7 lakh crore collected in November. This was expected. Any belief that the rate reductions would lead to an immediate and sustained increase in demand, and hence GST collections, was pure optimism. In reality, people are more likely to use that extra money to pad up savings or pare down debt, with increased consumption a more medium-term outcome. This happened following the income-tax rejig in Budget 2025 too, when the government effectively exempted people earning up to ₹12 lakh a year from income-tax. The GST and income-tax decisions were both welcome relaxations. However, at least for this year, they are going to cause the government more pain than gain. The most recent data on the government's accounts reflect this. Total tax revenue stood at ₹13.9 lakh crore at the end of November 2025, 3.4% lower than in the same period of 2024-25. On the other hand, the Centre's capital expenditure stood at ₹6.58 lakh crore in the April-November 2025 period, 28% higher than in the same period of the previous year. This jump in capital expenditure was balanced out by a much slower growth in revenue expenditure of 2.1%. However, of the two types of spending, the government has much less discretion over revenue expenditure, which comprises expenses such as salaries, pensions and interest on loans. These cannot be kept subdued for long.

The government has valiantly tried to bolster its earnings through the new excise and GST rates on tobacco products, not to mention the health and security cess on the manufacture of pan masala. However, since all these new rates and cesses will come into effect only on February 1, their full benefit will be felt only in the next financial year. Yet, the troubles for the government's finances do not end there. The remarkably low levels of wholesale inflation this year – averaging -0.08% so far – have also meant that the size of the nominal GDP would likely be smaller than initially budgeted. This means that several ratios pegged to it, most pertinently the fiscal deficit and debt-GDP, would automatically come in larger than earlier estimated. The Centre has displayed commendable fiscal discipline over the last few years. However, this year, it has placed before itself the unenviable choice of either pulling back on growth-generating capital expenditure, or risking missing its fiscal targets.

## Dangerous turn

### Moscow and Kyiv must step back from escalation and push for peace

Russia's allegation that Ukraine launched a massive drone attack on President Vladimir Putin's country residence in the Novgorod region marks a deeply concerning moment in the nearly four-year-long war. Moscow claims that 91 long-range drones targeted the heavily fortified protected residence in northwestern Russia, a site previously used by Soviet leaders Joseph Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev. Russia has released a video of what it says is a downed drone and handed drone data to the U.S. claiming that it "proves" that Ukraine targeted Mr. Putin's home. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has dismissed the allegation as fabricated. American media have reported, citing CIA officials, that Ukraine did not target the residence. But the CIA is an ally of Ukraine in the war and its assessment may not be viewed as entirely impartial. Ukraine has previously carried out sabotage operations within and outside Russia. Take, for example, the bombing of the Nord Stream pipelines in September 2022. It was initially blamed on Russia but led to the arrest of Ukrainian nationals in Poland and Italy last year. At the same time, it is Russia's responsibility to present credible evidence that Ukraine targeted the residence. But regardless of where the truth lies, the damage is already done. The fact that such accusations are being made – and believed by some world leaders – signals that the war has entered an alarmingly volatile phase.

The timing of these allegations is also significant. Russia's claim came close on the heels of Mr. Zelenskyy's meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump in Florida during which Washington reportedly offered security guarantees to Ukraine as part of a peace agreement. Mr. Trump had initially proposed a 28-point plan to which Ukraine responded with a 20-point plan. There were marathon talks involving U.S., Russian, European and Ukrainian officials. The alleged Ukrainian attack in Novgorod has dealt a blow to the fragile peace effort. Moscow has already said it will harden its negotiating position. Meanwhile, on New Year's eve, three Ukrainian drones struck a cafe and a hotel in Khorly in the Russian-held Kherson region, killing at least 27 people, including a child, and injuring over 50 others. Russia has intensified its strikes on Ukraine in recent months, leaving the country facing severe power shortages at the peak of winter. Taken together, the escalating attacks and the controversy surrounding Mr. Putin's residence should serve as urgent reminders to all parties that de-escalation cannot be delayed. If the war spirals, it poses grave risks to Europe and the world given the involvement of nuclear powers on both sides. The U.S., which is driving the peace talks, must redouble diplomatic efforts while maintaining pressure on Moscow and Kyiv to step back.

# Transforming a waste-ridden urban India

**Akshay Rout**

is former Director General, Swachh Bharat Mission

At the 30th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP30), at Belem, in November 2025, host Brazil quite fittingly placed waste at the heart of the climate agenda. Sizeable funds were committed to a new global initiative, No Organic Waste, NOW, to cut methane emissions. The Conference noted Circularity as the way to inclusive growth, cleaner air, and healthier populations. COP30 called upon cities to accelerate circularity initiatives where waste is recognised as a resource. Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), espoused by India at COP26, in Glasgow in 2021, calling for "deliberate utilisation, instead of mindless and destructive consumption" was strongly premised on the idea of circularity as well.

**Urban India, its growing problem of waste**

Expanding cities and towns are an irreversible reality in growing India. The choice is between good and bad cities. Often, this choice gets translated into clean and pollution-free cities or waste-ridden, ugly urban areas. A number of studies suggest that Indian cities do not match up to global standards in providing a clean and healthy environment. Pollution is the talk of the town, posing questions to an aspirational India.

The National Capital Region (NCR) as well as many other cities in the country are also among the world's most polluted. Governments and regulators are at work, with courts also stepping in, but with limited effect. Citizen grievance is at its peak. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), that ended open defecation in India within a specific timeframe, has the active goal of making the cities clean and garbage free.

It is estimated that cities in India will generate 165 million tonnes of waste annually by 2030, and emit over 41 million tonnes of greenhouse gases. By 2050, as the urban population grows to about 814 million, the waste burden could rise to 436 million tonnes. Without early solutions, these will result in grave levels of emissions, and creating havoc with peoples' health, the economy and the overall climate. The goal of Garbage Free Cities (GFC) by 2026 is an existential necessity, not a matter of aesthetics.

Under SBM Urban 2.0, about 1,100 cities and towns have been rated free of dumpsites, if not exactly free of garbage. Complete freedom from garbage, fortified by sustainable waste management and resource optimisation, is possible when all 5,000 cities and towns adopt the circular economy model, which underlines waste as a resource. India needs to move away from a linear to circular mode of waste management, with the twin objectives of minimising waste and recovering energy and other resources.

> India needs to move away from a linear to a circular mode of waste management, minimising waste and also recovering energy and other resources

**Plastic, construction and demolition waste**

The good thing is that more than half of municipal waste is organic that can be managed through composting from a house to large bio-methanation plants. Compressed Biogas Plants (CBG) have created possibilities of generating green fuel from municipal wet waste, whereas complete combustion of this also yields power. More than a third of the waste piled in cities is dry, all of which is not recyclable. The demon in this category is plastic, posing a threat to the ecosystem and human health.

Plastic waste also poses the toughest challenge to waste management. Dry waste is dependent on the critical habit of efficient segregation at households before recycling is done through material recovery facilities, which need to be constantly augmented with the rise in the waste burden. Refuse derived fuel from dry waste, as a source of energy for cement and other industries, is still under consolidation. But there is much distance to cover for entrepreneurship and market linkages in these modes of circularity.

Construction and demolition waste – about 12 million tonnes is generated in a year – is a major city spoiler, as it causes pollution in urban centres. It is collateral damage from relentless construction, at times unplanned, in India's fast-growing economy. Unauthorised dumping of construction discards wherever there is space, by the roadside, or even city lanes, is a common sight in India.

Much of this waste can be reused or recycled as cost-efficient raw materials of substantial value. This will also cause less damage to the environment. Minor construction and demolition waste mixed up with other unsegregated household waste and dumped in waste bins do not help processing. The recycling capacity in India is rising but is not sufficient to match the rate of construction and demolition waste being generated.

What could help is ensuring more serious compliance with the Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, 2016, 2016 which seek to levy a charge on C&D generators of high volumes of Construction and demolition waste, besides setting out other parameters. The Environment (Construction and Demolition) Waste Management Rules, 2025 are to come into effect from April 1, 2026.

Wastewater is the other thread in waste management and circularity. Water and sanitation are state subjects and States need to take proactive steps to recycle wastewater and reuse it in agriculture, horticulture, and for industrial purposes. Water security in cities has a causal link with complete used water and faecal sludge management, as outlined under urban missions such as Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and SBM. With India's water stock inadequate to meet the needs of its population, recycling and reuse are the only ways out to meet increasing water demand.

**Hurdles before circularity**

The path to achieving circularity is not an easy one, considering the multiplicity of actors. The smooth functioning of segregation of waste at source, collection logistics and processing, and aggregation and distribution are far from ideal. Recycled products face quality issues, marketing challenges and consequential financial feasibility.

Besides infrastructure, there are shortfalls in testing and monitoring. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) has yet to extend to all categories of dry waste. Construction and demolition waste has issues of identification, tracing and tracking of its origin. This is an issue that has not been integrated in an ideal way with construction and building laws to ensure proper accountability. Inter-departmental coordination, stakeholder awareness, and incentive and penalty systems must vastly improve, with sharper focus to make meaningful circularity possible in city societies.

Resource shortfalls with municipalities for taking up circularity projects require early resolution. It is heartening that policymakers, experts and industrial houses deliberated on these issues at a national urban conclave in New Delhi recently while working out an agenda for urban rejuvenation. Last year, Asia-Pacific nations, at their meeting in Jaipur endorsed an Indian initiative of 'Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3)' for efficient knowledge and expertise sharing among cities and institutions of the region.

Citizens need to get a clear sense of profit and a true cause in order to be partners in the circularity movement. In a society that is becoming increasingly consumerist, the first R of the three Rs – 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' – looks a difficult proposition to achieve. With products and consumable items arriving in new incarnations each day, 'reuse' may become a tall order too. 'Recycling', aided by technology and private enterprise and with sound policy backup, could emerge as a pillar of circularity. It could also be an assured way of helping India's cities and towns move away from swamps of waste while adding to national resources.

*The views expressed are personal*

# Recasting sanitation with urban-rural partnerships

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**Jinal Chheda**

is Senior Research Associate, Center for Water and Sanitation, CRDF-CEPT University

When the Swachh Bharat Mission ('Clean India Mission') was launched in 2014, its vision was both simple and transformative; to ensure that every household in India had access to a toilet. In just a decade, this vision has become reality. More than 12 crore household toilets have been built in rural India, and every village has declared itself Open Defecation Free (ODF). This achievement has improved public health, reduced indignities faced by women and vulnerable groups, and marked a turning point in India's development journey.

**Focus on waste management**

Yet, the success of the sanitation mission has also revealed the next frontier. Toilets are only the starting point. The real challenge lies in managing the resultant faecal waste. In most rural households, septic tanks and pits serve as the primary form of containment. Over time, these fill up and must be desludged at regular intervals. Without safe systems for collection, transport, and treatment, the gains of the ODF movement risk being undermined. It is this challenge that defines the transition to Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), or SBM-G, Phase II, with its focus on ODF Plus.

ODF Plus goes beyond toilet construction to ensure the sustainability of outcomes through solid and liquid waste management, behavioural change, and safe sanitation service chains. The progress has been encouraging. As of October 2025, more than 5.68 lakh villages, nearly 97% of India's total, have been declared ODF Plus. But faecal sludge management remains one of the most critical gaps in the sanitation chain, especially in peri-urban and rural areas.

Maharashtra has been at the forefront of experimenting with innovative approaches to address this gap. The State has invested in more than 200 faecal sludge treatment plants in urban areas and encouraged co-treatment in 41 sewage treatment plants. These facilities are a backbone of treatment infrastructure to cities, but the challenge lies in extending their benefits to the villages that surround them. It is here that urban-rural partnerships show great promise.

> The model in Satara district in Maharashtra is an innovative experiment

**At the gram panchayat level**

In Satara district, Maharashtra, such a partnership was put into practice. Satara city's faecal sludge treatment plant, with a capacity of 65 kilo litres a day (KLD), was operating below full capacity. Recognising this, four villages, Jakatwadi, Songaon, Kodoli, and Degaon, have been brought under an arrangement that will allow them to access the city's treatment plant.

Their septic tanks, often never desludged or emptied only at exorbitant rates by informal operators, will be serviced at regular intervals and in a safe way. A private service provider is to be engaged by the gram panchayats, under a contract, to provide scheduled desludging services every five years.

The costs will be recovered through a modest sanitation tax levied by the gram panchayats, ensuring affordability and accountability. A formal agreement between the Satara Panchayat Samiti and the Satara Municipal Council will allow authorised desludging vehicles from the gram panchayats to access the faecal sludge treatment plant and treat the sludge at no cost , making the arrangement sustainable and mutually beneficial.

But not every village can be linked to a treatment system of a city. Some will have to treat their waste independently. An example is Mayani, a large village in Khatav taluka. With the high demand for desludging services, the gram panchayat has agreed to introduce scheduled desludging every five to seven years, managed by either a private operator or local self-help groups.

In addition, Mayani has been selected for the development of a cluster-level faecal sludge treatment plant under the SBM-G, designed to serve around 80 surrounding villages. This approach shows that rural clusters can pool resources to develop standalone treatment infrastructure that meets their needs, while remaining financially and technically viable.

The demonstration of urban-rural linkages and the standalone faecal sludge management business model in Satara district will promote the adoption and the institutionalisation of safe, sustainable sanitation services across rural Maharashtra. It also aims to show that sustaining the gains of ODF and effectively integrating faecal sludge management into rural sanitation require strong collaboration between urban and rural governments, private and public actors, and citizens and institutions.

**A model that can be scaled up**

If scaled up, such models have the potential to transform not only villages in Maharashtra but also rural communities across the country. By doing so, India can ensure that its sanitation gains are not only celebrated today but can be sustained for generations to come. The true measure of Swachh Bharat will not only be the toilets built but also the systems created to manage them – systems that protect peoples' health, preserve the environment, and uphold the dignity that this mission set out to achieve.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Learning and attendance**

I am a professor and found the article, "Mandating student presence, erasing learning" (Editorial page, January 2), thought-provoking. The refusal of stasis is the moot point to judge whether we are facilitating discovery or merely disseminating information. The question of curiosity versus compliance, quality of teaching and surveillance, coercion and dialogic encounters are bound to stir the mind. Ensure engagement of the mind.

**Udai Bhan Singh,**
Rae Bareli, Uttar Pradesh

As a college student, I found the reflections on transforming student attendance rules to be accurate and a refreshing take. I would not miss a day if classes were engaging and worth the time they take. The experience of my friends in other institutes echoes how physical presence seems to be the priority for the administration in colleges while learning takes a back seat and critical thinking is forgotten. My peers and I often spend lecture time studying from YouTube or finishing pending assignments. It would be transformative if more time was spent teaching students how to think, and not what to.

**Avvishi Saxena,**
Agra, Uttar Pradesh

**Contamination, right to life**

A state that fails to protect its water sources from contamination cannot credibly claim to uphold the right to life under Article 21. The Supreme Court of India has repeatedly held that this right includes access to clean water and a healthy environment. When these are compromised, the constitutional guarantee becomes illusory. The incident in Indore exposes the fragility of our executive machinery and the persistent disconnect between policy announcements and ground-level implementation. Flagship programmes such as the Jal Shakti Abhiyan, Swachh Bharat Mission and the National Water Mission risk being reduced to slogans in the absence of monitoring and accountability.

**Suchhanda Banerjee,**
Chandannagar, West Bengal

**Women's emancipation**

The judgment of the Supreme Court, in *Belide Swagath Kumar vs. State of Telangana & Another*, stating that financial dominance of a husband over his wife will not amount to cruelty and certain other findings will leave women in despair. Describing the situation of the wife, an engineer who was asked to resign and remain a housewife, and who had to plead with her husband to meet her daily needs, as a reflection of the "daily wear and tear of marriage", fails to recognise women's rights and constitutional guarantees. Further, to describe a man's total financial control of the wife as a mirror reflection of Indian society is refusing to see ground realities. The Court seems to be oblivious to the plight of the women and its refusal to come out of the past reinforces male chauvinism. To describe the actions of the wife seeking action against the husband as "a gateway or a tool to settle scores" is refusing to see the helpless nature of women whose emancipation the Constitution seeks.

**N.G.R. Prasad,**
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Villagers stage a protest demanding that the Aravallis be saved, at Kotputli in Rajasthan. R.V. MOORTHY

# The hills are shaken with the sound of machinery

A 2-billion-year-old range has been battered and bruised by mining, waste dumping, and encroachment, say environmentalists and those who live in its shadow. The Supreme Court order accepting the changed definition of the Aravalli hills caused further worry, though it has since been stayed. **Ishita Mishra** reports on the people living in the foothills, who believe that decisions about the Aravallis should involve and benefit communities

In December 2025, to cope with the bitter cold in Haryana's Nuh disrict, a group of young men tried to light a bonfire outside an Aadhar service centre in Jimrawat village. Nuh is part of the Mewat region, which is characterised by the rugged Aravalli hills, agrarian plains, and rural landscapes.

It was a windy day. Trucks carrying stones hurtled by every five minutes, kicking up clouds of dust. The men were unable to light the fire. One of them yelled at a driver to slow down; another immediately shushed him.

"They belong to the mining mafia who are busy cutting the Aravallis day and night," said Kasim Khan, a septuagenarian.

The Aravallis stretch about 650 kilometres across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. In 2009, the Supreme Court had ordered a blanket ban on mining and quarrying in the Aravalli hills of Haryana's Faridabad, Gurugram, and Nuh (Mewat) districts. "Despite the ban, these trucks fearlessly make the rounds here," Khan said.

Khan remembered the time when the Aravallis were surrounded by green forests, housing diverse fauna. He said he has witnessed how human greed has exploited the hills.

This 2-billion-year-old geological formation is endowed with sandstone, limestone, marble, granite, and minerals such as lead, zinc, copper, gold, and tungsten. Mining and quarrying in these hills is not new. Since the 1990s, the Union government has laid down restrictions on these practices on several occasions.

The same issue made it to the headlines once again after the Supreme Court of India, on November 20, 2025, upheld a definition of an expert panel constituted by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change. The panel said that an Aravalli hill had to rise at least 100 metres above local relief, while a range comprised hills, slopes, and hillocks that are within 500 metres of each other.

Environmentalists criticised the order and expressed worry. They alleged that the lower ranges would no longer have the environmental protection they currently enjoy. They said that the new rule would leave the doors open for reckless exploitation of the hills, which regulate the climate of the region; support the recharging of groundwater; and serve as the "lungs" for the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) by preventing sand and hot winds from the Thar Desert from spreading eastward. After widespread protests, the Supreme Court stayed its November order on December 29.

## Life and livelihood in the foothills

Mohd. Habib, 63, from Ghaghas village in Nuh, is passionate about writing. "*It* Dilli *ut* Agra...Nuh, Jaipur *aur* Bairat...*kalo pahad suhavano jaa ke saath base* Mewat (It's Delhi, then Agra...Nuh, Jaipur, and Bairat...Mewat lies along the foothills of the dark mountains)," he said, reciting the first poem he had penned about the Aravallis, his home and his source of living.

Rajuddin Meo, chairperson of the Mewat Right to Information (RTI) Manch, a citizen group that uses the RTI Act, 2005, to promote transparency in governance, said that most people in Nuh are either employed in agriculture or cattle farming. Niti Aayog has classified Nuh as one of the most backward districts of India.

> Mining has lowered the water level in the area and climate change has adversely impacted rains. Due to this, agricultural produce has reduced.
>
> **RAJUDDIN MEO**
> Chairperson, Mewat Right to Information Manch

"Mining has lowered the water level in the area and climate change has adversely impacted rains. Due to this, agricultural produce has reduced considerably in the region," he said.

Meo, who is part of one of the most marginalised groups in the area, added that rampant quarrying has left the hills deserted. He said no plant grows on it. This deprives animals of their grazing space and burdens the pockets of their masters. "If the Aravallis are not saved, over 100 villages in Mewat will have nothing to do for their survival," said Meo, who has written a letter to the Prime Minister, the President, and the Home Minister, to put a blanket ban on mining in the Aravallis.

Following the Supreme Court order of 2009, Mufisa, a resident of Nuh who is a mother of five, said her husband began working at an illegal mining unit, a practice that continues due to strong local lobbies and administrative apathy. He died during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With no farming land, Mufisa has revamped the backyard of her house, to make coal out of wood. She places wood inside 10-12 feet tall, round structures covered with mud. The wood is burnt under controlled temperatures until it turns into coal which is sold at ₹25-20 to hotels on the Haryana-Rajasthan highway. In December, the Delhi government banned the use of coal and wood in tandoors, to curb pollution.

"We are uneducated people," Mufisa said. "If there are no animals and no farming, what can we do to survive?"

Nuh, a region dominated by Meo Muslims, has seen communal clashes recently. The people of this area are afraid of sending their men to work in neighbouring NCR and Western Uttar Pradesh or even Rajasthan.

"No one can ensure the security of our children in the current environment. We have to keep them with us," said Shamima. Her son works as a daily wager and another takes animals to graze in the hills.

Arshad, from Baniyabaas Chaupra, is upset with the recent hue and cry over mining in the Aravallis. For years, he has been employed in a job that requires him to cut through the hills. Now, the forest department administration and the police remain on strict vigil after the matter became sub judice in the Supreme Court.

"I feel that the government should not give big tenders for mining in the Aravallis," Arshad said. "However, poor people like me should be allowed to cut stone. I sell one tractor of stones a day and earn merely ₹400-500. This is after the tractor rent, diesel charge, and labour charge are deducted. Most of my stone is either used by my own villagers or goes to the neighbourhood. It is our hill, why can't we use it."

Arshad added, "If we are not be allowed to cut the hills, our children will either become thieves or commit petty crime to earn their living."

Rajiv Saini, from Sammanwala in Naugaon, a cluster of nine villages which is emerging as a farmhouse hub due to its proximity to Delhi and Gurugram, disagreed. "The men of my village always did just one job and that was to break the Aravalli hills and sell stone. That risky job has left many dead, while several others have suffered permanent disabilities. All this was for a daily income of just ₹400-500. When we created awareness to stop mining in the hill, young men started studying. Many of them have recently got government jobs," he said.

## Covered in dust

The residents of Ajitpura Kalan and Kujota village in Kotputli district of Rajasthan had been sitting on an indefinite strike to save the Aravallis. Their protest had lasted 145 days.

Ajitpura Kalan is home to one of the biggest cement manufacturing companies in Rajasthan. Though spread over several acres, the factory appears dwarfed by the deep pits carved into hills.

"In some places, they have dug so deep that the pits are now filled with groundwater. They use heavy motors to empty the pits and let out the water in our fields, flooding them and rendering them useless. Most pits are of the height of 4-5 storey buildings. People are afraid to even go near these pits," said Netram Takhar, head of Ajitpura Kalan village.

Takhar alleged that the company blasts the hills, which leaves the entire area, with over 500 homes, shaken. At many places, he said the company asks people to vacate their homes before the blasting, which mostly occurs at night. "The houses which are close to the mining area have developed cracks. But if we complain to the company officials or administrative officials, they slap cases on us for 'disturbing law and order'," he said.

> India's oldest mountain range does not need 'sustainable mining' plans. It needs to be protected and conserved. No mining is sustainable.
>
> **NEELAM AHLUWALIA**
> Environmentalist

Anushka Kumari, a student of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya in Pawana Ahir village of Kotputli, said students remain awake through the night fearing that the school might collapse due to the continuous blasts. Her school was part of the government's initiative to provide free residential education, boarding, and lodging for adolescent girls from disadvantaged communities in rural and educationally backward areas.

In Alwar's Lalawandi village, the trees, which look snow clad but are actually covered in dust, bear testimony to the ordeal of the people. Tejwan Kumar, whose house is next to the village temple, said half the villagers were either suffering from respiratory diseases or skin allergies.

Rajasthan produces 70% of the country's sandstone. It has a high burden of silicosis cases, particularly in mining areas. In the State, more than 1,000 mining leases have been given in the Aravallis, according to government data. Environmentalists say if the new definition of the hills, as initially approved by the Court, is allowed to stay, only 1,048 Aravalli hills out of a total 12,081 in Rajasthan would meet the 100-metre elevation criteria, leaving the entire range exposed to miners.

"Many people have left their homes as there is no solution to our problems. Those who decided to stay only spend their days at doctors' clinics. No one here dares wear white as clothes turn grey from the dust within minutes," said Panni Lal from Lalawandi. He claimed that his phone sometimes shows an AQI of 800, nearly double that of the AQI in Delhi.

Sandhya, whose porch cracked after a recent blast, said that administrative officials blamed her for it, alleging that her home was made up of poor construction material. "Poor people's houses are built like this. If you destroy that as well, where will we go," she asked.

The villagers also said that mining units never help them in any way. They argued that the units simply exploit natural endowments, which belong to the people living around them.

"They never hire villagers to work in the factories of these mining units. They think locals will form unions and stop them from over-exploiting their resources," said Vineet.

## Fighting for rights

On December 29, due to a public outcry, the Court paused its order. It proposed the constitution of a high-powered committee to analyse whether "sustainable mining" or "regulated mining" within the newly demarcated Aravallis, notwithstanding regulatory oversight, would result in any adverse ecological consequences.

After its decision, members of the Aravalli Virasat Jan Abhiyan, a citizen-driven campaign aimed to protect the range, issued a statement. They said that whatever is left of the Aravallis must be declared an ecologically sensitive region and that no destructive activities should be allowed any more.

"India's oldest mountain range does not need 'sustainable mining' plans. It needs to be protected and conserved. No mining is sustainable. Plus, all the definitions which seek to limit the Aravallis need to be scrapped," said Neelam Ahluwalia, an environmentalist who is part of the people's movement to save the Aravallis.

The Aravalli Virasat Jan Abhiyan also demanded that the Supreme Court direct an independent, cumulative social and environmental impact study of the entire Aravalli range across four States to ascertain the damage caused by mining, real estate, encroachments, and waste dumping, and to evaluate its role as a critical water recharge zone, climate regulator, pollution sink, and wildlife habitat. They said that the study should also assess the extent of damage inflicted on the people's health and livelihoods across the range.

On December 30, the Aravalli Virasat Jan Abhiyan continued with its protests to save the hills. At Ambedkar ground in Kotputli, women held up placards demanding that the Aravallis be declared as Rashtriya Dharohar (a national asset). Some of them held the death certificates of their loved ones, who had succumbed to silicosis or accidents while mining. The People's Union for Civil Liberties and Rajendra Singh, known as the 'water man of India', also attended the protest.

"You all have seen how the Supreme Court stayed the Delhi High Court order granting bail to Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the Unnao rape case. The woman had protested for her rights. When all of you protest for your rights, the Court will meet our demands to save the hills," said Mahesh Yadav, a retired veterinary doctor, affiliated with the Congress, the Opposition party in Rajasthan.

## Preserving resources

Kailash Meena, 60, an environmentalist who led the protest in Kotputli, said India needs to learn how to protect its natural resources. "Only countries that have preserved their natural resources and found alternative construction methods, which are now considered synonymous with development, have truly become developed. In India, we are exploiting all our natural resources just for the pleasure of the 5-7% of rich people, while the rest of the country is struggling to survive," said Meena.

In his three-decades-long fight to save the environment, Meena said he has never felt so restless.

"*Mai chahta hu Dilli ka jitna dum ghute...tabhi Dilli ko samajh aayega humara dard* (I think only if Delhi gasps for breath will they understand our condition)," he said.

A protest at Kotputli in Rajasthan. The poster reads, "The Aravallis are our heritage and our breath." R.V. MOORTHY

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## From Page One

### Iran protests: Trump threatens to interfere

On Monday, Mossad, the Israeli spy agency, wrote on social media in Farsi encouraging Iranians to protest against the government.

"Go out together into the streets. The time has come," the Mossad wrote. "We are with you. Not only from a distance and verbally. We are with you in the field."

Iran's economy has faced sustained pressure ever since Mr. Trump, during his first term as President, unilaterally pulled the U.S. out of the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposed sanctions on Tehran. In June 2025, Israel bombed Iran's nuclear facilities, triggering a 12-day war between the two countries.

The U.S. had joined Israel in striking the nuclear plants, and Iran retaliated by attacking an American base in Qatar on June 23 before a ceasefire. Since then, Iran's economic situation has become worse.

In October, Iran's food inflation reached 64.2%, the second-highest level in the world after South Sudan, according to the World Bank. The rial has lost 60% of its value since the June war.

Mr. Trump, who claimed in June that he had "obliterated" Iran's nuclear facilities, threatened new attacks against Iran earlier this week after meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Florida. If Iran replenished ballistic missiles and rebuilt its nuclear programme, "we are going to have no choice but very quickly to eradicate that build up," Mr. Trump had said on December 29 in a joint press conference with Mr. Netanyahu.

The U.S. President's latest threat of intervention in Iran over protest crackdown has escalated tensions between the two countries.

"The American people should know – Trump started this adventurism. They should be mindful of their soldiers' safety," said Mr. Larijani in his response. Ali Shamkhani, a close aide of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said any interfering hand "will be cut off".

"Iranians know well the U.S. 'rescue' record – from Iraq and Afghanistan to Gaza. Any intervening hand approaching Iran's security under any pretext will be cut off with a response that induces regret. Iran's national security is a red line, not material for adventurist tweets," he said.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of Parliament, issued a statement saying Tehran would respond militarily to any U.S. attacks.

"The disrespectful President of America should know that with this official admission, all American centers and forces across the entire region will be legitimate targets for us in response to any potential adventurism," he said.

### Centre asks X to check misuse of Grok chatbot

The letter said that "compliance with the IT Act and the IT Rules, 2021 is not optional, and that the statutory exemptions under section 79 of the IT Act are conditional upon strict observance of due diligence obligations."

Pointing out that even outside the IT Act, acts of this nature "may independently attract penal action," the Ministry said X would have to "remove or disable access, without delay, to all content already generated or disseminated in violation of applicable laws, in strict compliance with the timelines prescribed under the IT Rules, 2021,without vitiating the evidence in any manner."

**'Send report'**

By Monday, the firm must send an action-taken report in response to these directions, the letter said. "It is reiterated that non-compliance with the above requirements shall be viewed seriously and may result in strict legal consequences against your platform, its responsible officers and the users on the platform who violate the law, without any further notice, under the IT Act, the IT Rules, the BNSS, the BNS and other applicable laws."

## ED arrests IAS officer over money laundering

**The Hindu Bureau**
AHMEDABAD

An Indian Administrative Service officer and former Collector of Gujarat's Surendranagar district, Rajendrakumar Patel, was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with a bribery-linked money laundering case, officials said on Friday. A senior police official said the ED took Mr. Patel into custody as part of its ongoing probe into alleged money laundering arising from bribery.

Mr. Patel, a 2015-batch IAS officer, was serving as the Surendranagar Collector until he was transferred without a new posting last week. The transfer came days after the ED arrested a deputy mamlatdar from Mr. Patel's office in the same case.

The Central agency is probing alleged money laundering involving the deputy mamlatdar, Chandrasingh Mori, and others, following the registration of an Enforcement Case Information Report under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The Gujarat Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has also registered an FIR against Mr. Patel and three others based on a complaint filed by the ED.

*(With inputs from PTI)*

# India has the right to defend itself against terrorism: Jaishankar

India cannot be a good neighbour to a country that supports terrorism; signing of Indus Waters Treaty was a gesture of goodwill, says Minister

**The Hindu Bureau**
CHENNAI

S. Jaishankar interacts with students during the inauguration of IITM Festival Fortnight at IIT Madras, Chennai, on Friday. R. RAGU

Launching a scathing attack on Pakistan on Friday, Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar said that India cannot be a good neighbour to a country that supports terrorism.

"You can also have bad neighbours... unfortunately we do. When you have bad neighbours... if you look to the one to the West – if a country decides that they will deliberately, persistently, unrepentantly continue with terrorism, we have a right to defend our people against terrorism," he said, while answering queries from the student fraternity at the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras after launching the IITM Global Research Foundation.

"We will exercise that right. How we exercise that right is up to us. Nobody can tell us what we should do or not," he added.

Mr. Jaishankar also spoke about the Indus Waters Treaty. "Many years ago, we agreed to a water-sharing arrangement. The belief was that it was a gesture of goodwill... but if you have decades of terrorism, there is no good neighbourliness and [in return] you don't get the benefit of good neighbourliness," he said. "You cant say... please share water with me but I will continue terrorism."

He also told the students that India was blessed with lot of good neighbours. He pointed out that during the pandemic, most neighbours got the first shipment of vaccine from India.

He then highlighted another example pertaining to the Ukraine conflict.

"Because of the Ukarine conflict, there were food shortages, fuel shortages and financial crises - we helped our neighbours with fuel, food and fertilisers. And in a sense, we were sharing what we had," Mr. Jaishankar said.

The Minister also said some neighbours went through exceptional stress, the notable example being Sri Lanka.

"They had an acute financial crisis and we stepped up with a package of $4 billion," he said.

## 'Hurried, unplanned SIR process claimed multiple lives in W.B.'

**Shrabana Chatterjee**
KOLKATA

Abhishek Banerjee

Trinamool Congress national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Friday said their party will win at least one more seat in the 2026 Assembly elections than their tally in 2021 in West Bengal. He also claimed the Bharatiya Janta Party was responsible for the "unplanned" special intensive revision (SIR) exercise that led to many deaths in the State.

"I have promised to increase the vote percentage and seats of AITC [Trinamool] in comparison to 2021. In 2021, we won 214 seats. We will have to win at least one more seat this time. You need to promise me that one seat will come from South 24 Parganas," Mr. Banerjee said while addressing a rally in Baruipur, South 24 Parganas.

The Lok Sabha MP and second-in-command in the Trinamool also threw a challenge to the Opposition leaders in BJP-ruled States. He said that if anyone can manage to start a scheme like the flagship Lakshmir Bhandar in any other State, he will quit politics. Lakshmir Bhandar is a direct cash transfer scheme where women from across West Bengal receive ₹1,000 a month from the government. Over 2.21 crore women benefit from this scheme. "CM Mamata Banerjee gives Lakshmir Bhandar without any criteria of eligibility to the women of Bengal," Mr. Banerjee added.

"Who will take the responsibility for the deaths due to unplanned SIR?" he asked, raising questions about the "hurried and unplanned" SIR process that, he claimed, led to multiple deaths across the State.

He also said they met Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and asked for the list of alleged "Bangladeshi nationals" who were found in the SIR process. This came after BJP had claimed that there were over one crore illegal immigrants in West Bengal who will be deleted in the SIR process.

On December 16, the Election Commission published the draft voter list, which saw around 58 lakh deletions including deceased, shifted, doubtful, and other voters.

## T.N. police ask 'X' to take down video of attack on Odisha man

**S. Vijay Kumar**
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Police have written to X Corp. (formerly Twitter Inc.) seeking the blocking of 22 Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) that contain visuals of the brutal assault on a migrant worker by four juveniles in Tiruttani on December 26, 2025.

In a communication to the social media platform, the Cyber Crime Wing (CCW) of the State police said the circulation of such videos could adversely influence the younger generation, promote violent behaviour and potentially disturb public harmony, police sources said on Friday.

The incident occurred near the railway quarters close to the Tiruttani railway station, where the juveniles attacked the victim with a sharp-edged weapons, causing severe cut injuries. The victim was later identified as Suraj, 34, a native of Odisha.

The accused, all hailing from Nemelli in Tiruvallur district, reportedly recorded the assault on their mobile phones and uploaded the video on social media. The footage soon went viral, drawing sharp condemnation from civil society, including politicians, journalists and social media influencers. The juveniles were detained by the local police.

Suraj was rushed to the Government Hospital, where he was treated and later discharged, the sources said.

"We act strictly in accordance with the law, not emotions. Steps have been taken to block the URLs as the content involves graphic violence and exposes the identities of juveniles," a police officer said.

## Chhattisgarh HC gives bail to Chaitanya Baghel in two cases linked to liquor 'scam'

**The Hindu Bureau**
RAIPUR

Chaitanya Baghel, son of former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel, was granted bail by the Chhattisgarh High Court on Friday in two cases related to the alleged liquor scam.

The liquor scam surfaced during Mr. Bhupesh Baghel's tenure as Chief Minister.

While the State Anti-Corruption Bureau/Economic Offences Wing (ACB/EOW) has been probing the liquor scam, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is investigating the alleged money laundering linked to the case.

ED counsel Saurabh Kumar Pande told *The Hindu* that Mr. Chaitanya Baghel was granted bail in both the cases.

Chaitanya Baghel

**ED claims Chaitanya personally handled nearly ₹1,000 crore in proceeds of crime generated from the alleged liquor scam**

According to the ED, Mr. Chaitanya Baghel was at the helm of the syndicate involved in the alleged liquor scam and personally handled nearly ₹1,000 crore in proceeds of crime-generated from it.

The ACB/EOW has claimed that, in addition to managing the proceeds of crime at a higher level, he received around ₹200-250 crore as his share.

Reacting to the court order that paved the way for his son's release, Mr. Bhupesh Baghel said it was a victory for truth.

"Truth can be troubled but not defeated. So this is a big relief from the High Court," the former Chief Minister said.

He added that both the Central and State governments had left no stone unturned to harass him.

"Whether it is the CBI or the ED or the EOW, there have been efforts to trouble us. But this happened because of the strength of the Congress party leaders, the support of party workers, and the logical arguments presented by the lawyers," he said.

## Trekking spots in J&K shut over security alert

**Peerzada Ashiq**
SRINAGAR

Popular trekking spots in Anantnag, Jammu and Kashmir, were declared out of bounds for tourists on Friday, following inputs from security agencies.

On the banned list are Margan Top, Chauhar Nag, and Sinthan Top. The areas are at an altitude of around 3,696 meters and have traditionally attracted adventure lovers to the high-altitude meadows and glacier lakes they are known for.

According to an order issued by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Kokernag, inputs from the police and security agencies indicated security vulnerabilities in certain high-altitude and forested areas falling under the sub-division.

"The order will remain valid for two months unless withdrawn or extended," it said.

## Assam CPI(M) flags 'verbal' order for voters' survey

**The Hindu Bureau**
GUWAHATI

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has flagged a "verbal" order on survey of voters across 115 Muslim-majority polling booths in western Assam's Bajali district.

In a letter on Friday to the State's Chief Electoral Officer, Suprakash Talukdar, Secretary of the party's Assam State Committee, said directing other government servants to carry out voter verification, bypassing the BLOs appointed under the rules of the Election Commission, amounted to the gross violation of special revision procedure.

## Ghaziabad police warn officer over intimidation during verification drive

**Mayank Kumar**
LUCKNOW

The Ghaziabad police on Friday issued a warning to the officer in charge of the Kaushambi police station after a video circulated on social media showing him allegedly intimidating the residents of a slum cluster while claiming to use a device to determine their nationality.

In the video, the officer is seen placing what appears to be a smartphone on the back of a man and questioning him about his nationality. "Are you a Bangladeshi? Put the machine. The machine shows that you are, doesn't it?" the officer is heard saying. The man responds that he is from Araria in Bihar.

**In the video, the officer is seen placing a device on the back of a man and questioning him about his nationality**

"A viral video has come to light through social media. Upon investigation, it was found that the video is from an area domination operation being conducted by the local police team in the Kaushambi police station area. During the area domination, residents living in temporary settlements and slums were being questioned and verified. The Kaushambi police station in-charge was speaking with the residents. The officer has been issued a strict warning to ensure such behaviour is not repeated. Further action is being taken after investigating all the facts," Abhishek Srivastava, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Indirapuram, said.

The police said the drive was not aimed at verifying nationality but was part of a routine exercise to identify suspected individuals in temporary settlements.

The Opposition Congress demanded judicial intervention in the matter.

## SC slams denial of bail to give 'taste of imprisonment as a lesson' to accused

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has said the presumption of innocence of an undertrial does not dissolve merely because a law enforcement agency says his alleged offence is "serious" or if he happens to be booked under a stringent law.

A Bench headed by Justice J.K. Maheshwari marked the court's disapproval of agencies resorting to ways to prolong the incarceration of undertrials without bail for the "purpose of giving him a taste of imprisonment as a lesson".

The judicial order reminded enforcement authorities that every accused who applied for bail before the top court was presumed innocent.

**'Bail is the rule'**

"Pre-trial incarceration cannot be allowed to degenerate into punishment without adjudication, and courts are constitutionally obliged to intervene where long custody becomes disproportionate, arbitrary or excessive," it said.

The court said the norm "bail is the rule and jail is an exception" was etched in the ethos of criminal jurisprudence.

"Generally an undertrial prisoner ought not be placed behind bars indefinitely unless there is clear threat to society, [possibility of] influencing witnesses/inquiry or he is a flight risk etc. This rule also ensures that the process is also not made a punishment by which a person is jailed for very many years pending trial. Bail is a qualified right of an accused before conviction, wherein the accused is not guaranteed bail, rather it puts onus on the prosecution to establish as to why the undertrial prisoner should not be enlarged on bail. Any deviation in the above proposition is constitutionally circumspect," the apex court observed. The order referred to precedents that had laid down that "once it is obvious that a timely trial would not be possible and the accused has suffered incarceration for a significant period of time, the courts would ordinarily be obligated to enlarge them on bail".

The observations were part of a recent order granting bail to Kapil Wadhawan, Managing Director of Dewan Housing Finance Limited (DHFL), and his brother Dheeraj Wadhawan in connection with the ₹34,000-crore bank fraud case registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation on a complaint by the Union Bank of India.

# Congress alleges 15 deaths in Indore as official toll stands at 5

Team of senior doctors will analyse media reports of deaths related to drinking water contamination and then update official figures, says Collector; two senior municipal corporation officials suspended as Congress calls for accountability

**Mehul Malpani**
BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh Congress has alleged that at least 15 people have died so far after drinking contaminated water supplied by the Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC), even as the BJP-led State government maintained the official death toll at five, including a woman who died on Friday.

Late on Friday night, following a Statewide review meeting, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav suspended two senior IMC officials and transferred the IMC Commissioner, as the Congress called for accountability and action to be taken against all those responsible.

"The State government will not tolerate negligence in the incident that occurred in Bhaagirthpura, Indore, due to contaminated drinking water. Strict decisions are being taken in this regard. The corporation's Additional Commissioner Rohit Sisoniya and the in-charge Superintending Engineer of PHE Sanjeev Shrivastava have been suspended. Instructions have also been given to remove Indore Municipal Corporation Commissioner Dilip Kumar Yadav," the Chief Minister said on X.

**Citizens' plight:** Family members of a victim mourn in Bhagirathpura, Indore on Friday. PTI

In a status report submitted to the M.P. High Court, the district administration and the State Health Department said that four people, all above 60 years of age, have died so far in Indore's Bhagirathpura due to water-related problems. Indore District Collector Shivam Verma later updated the death toll to five.

"The administration issues the figures on the basis of medical confirmation and so far, five deaths have occurred in the incident," Mr. Verma said.

"We have also constituted a team of senior doctors which will analyse the death figures which were received from other sources such as public representatives or media and then we will update our official death figure report. Till yesterday, 201 people were admitted; today, nine more people have been admitted, and the number has risen to 210."

Indore Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargav also told *PTI* that he has "received information of about 10 deaths due to this outbreak".

After a morning review meeting, the Chief Minister had directed Mr. Sisoniya's transfer to the agriculture department, relieved Mr. Shrivastava of the charge of the water distribution department, and issued a show-cause notice against Mr. Yadav.

**Cong. mounts charge**

After the morning transfer order against Mr. Sisoniya, the Madhya Pradesh Mahila Congress's recently appointed president Reena Bourasi termed the government's actions as "a mere cover-up" and alleged that those responsible were being protected.

"The government is trying to protect the accused in the case of the death of 15 people. This government did not take any action even on the demands of its own departmental Minister and the city's mayor," she said, adding that the transfer of one official is not enough to fix accountability for the tragedy.

# Kharge questions Modi's silence, says Centre failed to ensure clean water, clean air

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi kept trumpeting the Jal Jeevan Mission but was silent on deaths caused by contaminated water in Indore, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged on Friday.

In a post on X, the Congress chief claimed that the Modi government and the BJP failed to provide either clean water or clean air to the country.

"Narendra Modi ji, who never gets tired of trumpeting the Jal Jeevan Mission and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, is maintaining his silence on the deaths caused by drinking contaminated water in Indore," Mr. Kharge said.

"This is the same Indore city that has clinched the 'Cleanest City' title for the eighth consecutive time in the Central government's Swachh Sarvekshan survey. It's a shameful state of affairs that, due to the BJP's incompetence, people here are desperate for clean water," he added.

Mallikarjun Kharge

The Congress chief said for 11 years, "the country was fed nothing but long speeches, lies and deceit, empty promises, and boasts about the double-engine government".

**'Arrogance of power'**

"When Ministers are questioned, they resort to abuses and intimidation. Drunk on the arrogance of power, they turn the tables on the journalists. The entire machinery swings into action to cover up the misgovernance of BJP governments," he said.

Mr. Kharge alleged that all the government's schemes were mired in corruption, and said that 10% of the Jal Jeevan Mission fund was allocated for purifying contaminated water. "The Modi government and the BJP have failed to provide either clean water or clean air to the country," the Congress chief said.

His party colleague and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi accused the government of providing "poison instead of water".

"Not water, but poison was distributed in Indore, and the administration remained in deep slumber," Mr. Gandhi said in a post on X in Hindi.

"Every home is filled with mourning, the poor are helpless – and on top of that, BJP leaders are making arrogant statements. Those who lost their lives and livelihoods needed solace; the government offered arrogance," the Opposition leader said.

# BJP alleges 'maha jungle raj' in Bengal, says Mamata 'threatened' Amit Shah

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday alleged that there was "maha jungle raj" in Trinamool Congress-ruled West Bengal, and that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had threatened Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Addressing a press conference, BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said: "In West Bengal, we see how jungle raj is flourishing throughout under the patronage of Mamata Banerjee."

**Constitutional violation**

"A Chief Minister, who takes an oath to uphold the Constitution, threatens the Home Minister of India. She says 'if I do not want it, the Home Minister of India cannot enter West Bengal'," he claimed, adding that it was a "violation" of Article 19 of the Constitution. "And she says 'if I want, he cannot even come out of his hotel room. This means if a citizen, exercising their constitutional rights, wants to go and communicate and interact with people, if the Home Minister of the country wants to go, you are threatening him," he said.

"What is 'jungle raj', 'maha jungle raj', 'goonda raj' like? It is exactly like Mamata Banerjee...where she feels that the Rohingya, who are infiltrators, are her vote bank," alleged Mr. Bhatia.

"And since we are talking about West Bengal, and I mentioned the baseless allegations of vote theft that Rahul Gandhi repeatedly makes after losing elections. Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is a respected leader of the Congress... He says that in West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee does not steal votes, she commits vote dacoity," he said.

# Health scheme for ex-servicemen facing crisis due to govt. apathy, says Congress

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Accusing the Centre of weakening the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) through budget cuts and administrative curbs, the Congress on Friday announced a nationwide "Save ECHS" campaign to highlight pending medical bills of ex-servicemen and disruptions in medical treatment they face.

Colonel Rohit Chaudhry (retd), chairman of the AICC Ex-Servicemen Department, said ex-servicemen would start an agitation in the national capital unless the government released ₹14,000 crore for ECHS by January 30.

The scheme covers around 72 lakh beneficiaries, but medical bills of more than 20 lakh ex-servicemen were pending, with outstanding dues exceeding ₹9,000 crore, he said.

As part of the month-long campaign, the Congress would reach out to over 400 ECHS polyclinics across the country to gather data on unpaid bills and assess operational challenges, Mr. Chaudhry said at a press conference.

**Mounting backlog**

He said the scheme needed ₹13,500 crore in 2023-24 but got an allocation of ₹9,831 crore, despite an existing backlog of ₹3,500 crore. The backlog rose to ₹5,400 crore in 2024-25 and has touched nearly ₹6,000 crore in the current financial year, forcing several empanelled hospitals to stop providing treatment to beneficiaries, the Congress said.

The Congress demanded clearance of all pending bills immediately, restoration of ECHS's administrative powers, and bringing the scheme under the Chief of Defence Staff.

# Outrage over remarks by Minister's husband

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

A controversy has erupted over a recent statement made by the husband of an Uttarakhand Cabinet Minister over women in Bihar "being sold off in marriage" with both the Congress and the BJP outright condemning the remarks.

Speaking at a public event in Uttarakhand's Almora earlier this week, Girdhari Lal Sahu, husband of State Women and Child Development Minister Rekha Arya, said that "girls are sold for ₹20,000 to ₹25,000 in Bihar". While the Minister and Uttarakhand BJP are silent on the issue, the party's Bihar unit has demanded an apology from Mr. Sahu for disrespecting women of their State.

A video of the BJP leader making the comments at the event has gone viral on social media. In the conversation, he was trying to persuade some young BJP members, present in the audience, to get married at the "right time". "You are young now, when are you getting married? In old age? If you're unable to get married....we will bring a girl for you from Bihar. There, you get girls for ₹20,000-₹25,000.".

Bihar State Women Commission chairperson Apsara condemned his statement and said the board has taken *suo motu* cognisance and issued a notice seeking an apology.

# Political leaders target actor Shah Rukh Khan after KKR signs Bangladeshi player

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

Actor Shah Rukh Khan finds himself at the centre of an escalating controversy over the decision of his IPL team Kolkata Knight Riders signing Bangladeshi player Mustafizur Rahman with multiple parties speaking out – either slamming him or saying he was being targeted for his Muslim identity.

Leaders of the BJP and the Shiv Sena said they would not tolerate Mr. Rahman being part of the IPL given the atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh.

The Opposition Congress's Bhai Jagtap backed the star actor and said the controversy is evidence of the "BJP-RSS' double-faced policy" as India still plays cricket with Pakistan.

"In Bangladesh, Hindus are being tortured, killed, they are being thrown out of their homes, naked and beaten... Buying players from there is treason against the country. People like Shah Rukh Khan are traitors," BJP's Sangeet Som said.

Mustafizur Rahman

Shiv Sena leader Krishna Hegde said the party's stand has always been to not allow anyone who has committed atrocities against Hindus or is involved in a terrorist attack in India to play in India.

There were voices that spoke up in support of the *Chak De! India* star.

"Shah Rukh Khan is being targeted because he is Muslim; we still play cricket with Pakistani cricketers after Operation Sindoor. This is BJP-RSS' double-faced policy," Congress leader Mr. Jagtap said.

Shah Rukh, he said, does not select the team on his own. He added that everything is done with the concurrence of the ICC.

According to Trinamool spokesperson Kunal Ghosh, not every issue needs to be politicised.

"What will they achieve by targeting Shah Rukh Khan?" he asked.

Samajwadi Party leader Abu Azmi also questioned the brouhaha over the inclusion of the Bangladeshi player in KKR.

"The player he signed, has he ever harmed Hindus? If I say it bluntly, it is the governments that spread hatred," he said.

**TAMILNADU MINERALS LIMITED**
(An Undertaking of Government of Tamil Nadu)
No.31, Kamarajar Salai, Chepauk, Chennai - 600 005.
Phone No.044-28415003, 28511972
**NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER WITH FORWARD BIDDING**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Description | Sale of Certain Grades of Natural Graphite Flakes and D.E. Fines produced at Graphite Beneficiation Plant, Sivaganga, Tamil Nadu. |
| 2 | Tender No. & Date<br>Tender ID | 001/VAP-2/2026, Dated:02.01.2026<br>2026_TNMIN_638486_1 |
| 3 | Bid submission end date | 31.01.2026 upto 1600 hrs. |
| 4 | Technical bid opening date | 02.02.2026 at 1600 hrs. |
| 5 | Tender Fee<br>EMD amount | Rs.2,000/- (Rupees Two Thousand only) (Non-refundable)<br>As per annexure-3 of tender document |

Note: For further details please visit Tamilnadu e-tendering portal http://tntenders.gov.in
DIPR/006/TENDER/2026 GENERAL MANAGER (FINANCE)

**माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड, राजस्थान, अजमेर**
ई-निविदा सूचना
बोर्ड परीक्षा 2026 के लिए परीक्षा केन्द्रों एवं उत्तर पुस्तिका संग्रहण केन्द्रों पर Turnkey Basis पर Live CCTV Cameras/ IP based camera Surveillance system हेतु खुली निविदा जिसकी अनुमानित लागत 3 करोड़ रूपये है, दिनांक 01.01.2026 से दिनांक 21.01.2026 अपरान्ह 3.00 बजे तक आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा प्रपत्र विस्तृत विवरण बोर्ड वेबसाईट https://rajeduboard.rajasthan.gov.in. एवं राज्य सरकार उपापन पोर्टल https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in से डाउनलोड कर प्राप्त किये जा सकते है।
UBN NO - (SEB2526WSOB00028) सचिव

**TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS-TIRUPATI**
Office of the Chief Engineer **TENDER NOTICE**
ADV No.54/D3/CE/TTD/2025-26 & NIT No.913 & 914 /SE-II /TTD/ 2025 -26 dt:29-12-2025
**Name of work:1)** Providing Permanent Queue line from Batagangamma circle to GG Dam Circle with steel Foot-over bridges and Toilets along the outer ring road at Tirumala. **Amount 1200.00 Lakhs, Time for Completion:6 months.(2)** Improvements & Providing Granite flooring to Corridors and UPVC Windows in VSRH-I at Tirumala. **Amount 650.00 Lakhs, Time for Completion:12 months. NOTE:** For full details log on to the Website **https://www.tirumala.org.**
TTD-40021/10/2025-PRO SEC (Adv.No.342) Date:02-01-2026 **EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**The Kerala Minerals & Metals Ltd**
(A Govt. of Kerala Undertaking) Sankaramangalam, Kollam,-691583
Phone : +91-476-2651215 to 217, E-mail : md@kmml.com, URL: www.kmml.com
**TENDER NOTICE**
For more details, please visit E- Tendering Portal https://etenders.kerala.gov.in.or www.kmml.com

| No | Tender ID | Items |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | 2026_KMML_825037_1 | Manufacturing and Supply of Paper Valve Product Bags for KEMOX RC-800PG+, RC-813 and RC-822 |

Chavara. 02.01.2026 Sd/ Managing Director for The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd

**PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LIMITED**
(Regd Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala,
Website: www.pspcl.in)
Corporate Identification Number (CIN): U40109PB2010SGC033813
Contact Number: 9646123323
**Tender Inquiry No. PPR-01/2026** **Dated: 02.01.2026**
Chief Engineer/PP&R Organization, Shed No. D-3, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala invites E-Tender under three-part bid system for PSPCL for Appointment of Consultant for Load Forecasting Automation Solution. For detailed NIT & tender specifications please refer to **http://eproc.punjab.gov.in** from 02.01.2026 onwards.
**Note:** Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at **http://eproc.punjab.gov.in**
C 10/26 1079/12/2025-26/6732

**GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB**
**Municipal Corporation Amritsar**
**Tender Reference No. E-Tender Notice No. 127** **Date 31.12.2025**
The Department of : Municipal Corporation, Amritsar Invites Bid for Various Works.
Closing Date and Time : 16.01.2026 upto 03:00 PM
Opening of Technical Bid : 16.01.2026 upto 03:30 PM
EMD : 2% of Estimate Amount
For Detail log onto : **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in**
Note : Any Corrigendum(s) to the tender notice shall be published on the above website only.
**Superintending Engineer(c)**
**Municipal Corporation,**
**Amritsar.**
1596/12/2025-26/6703

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**
**OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF, RURAL WORKS, ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR**
Letter No.42335, Dated : 22.12.2025 Email i.d. : crew_bbsr@yahoo.com
**Notice inviting Request for Proposal under EPC Contract (RFP-Online - CE (Buildings & Bridges)-01/ 2025-26 dt. 22.12.2025)**
1. Name of the work : **As mentioned in NIT**
2. Total No. of Works : **02** (Two) no
3. Period of Completion : **30 Calendar Months**
6. Other details : **www.tendersodisha.gov.in**

| Procurement Officer | Bid Identification No. | No. of bridge works | Availability of Tender on-line for bidding | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | From | To |
| Chief Engineer, Buildings & Bridges, Rural Works,Odisha, Bhubaneswar | RFP-Online-CE-Buildings & Bridges-01/ 2025-26 | 02 (Two) Nos. | 06.01.2026 at 10.00 A.M | 28.01.2026 Upto 5.00 P.M |

Other details can be seen in the bidding documents, which will be available in website : **www.tendersorissa.gov.in.**
**Chief Engineer (Buildings & Bridges), Rural Works,Odisha, Bhubaneswar**
O-1885 : OIPR-25201/11/0001/2526

**PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**
Office of the Executive Engineer, PWD Bengaluru Division,
2nd Floor, PWD Annexure Building, K.R. Circle,
Bengaluru-01, Phone: 080-22133370
No. 47/2025-26 Date: 01.01.2026
**SHORT-TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION**
Item-rate tenders, for the work in The limits of Bengaluru Division, No.2, **North & Devanahalli Sub-Divisions** under this office noted below, are invited by the undersigned on behalf of the Governor of Karnataka in accordance with Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Rules 2000 and as per Standard Tender Documents for procurement of works from the contractors registered in K.P.W.D. as per KPPP. Tender Notification is Published for **05 works (Rs.10.00 to 950.00 Lakhs)** Details of the tender works can be obtained from the above Office during office hours on working days. **EMD & Tender processing fees are mentioned in KPP Portal http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**
**(1)** Tenders must be submitted online through KPP Portal **on or before 4.00 P.M. on: 08.01.2026 (2)** The opening of tenders through KPP Portal on: **09.01.2026 at 4.30 P.M.** or further date and time will be intimated. For more details contact this office.
**Sd/- Executive Engineer**
DIPR/DD-C.P/4798/KSMCA/2025-26

**Advertisement No. 118 / 2025**
Government of India
Public Enterprises Selection Board
invites applications for the post of
**Chairman & Managing Director**
**in**
**Yantra India Limited (YIL)**
Last date of submission of application by applicants is by 15.00 hours on
**19th January, 2026**
Last date of forwarding of applications by the Nodal officers to PESB is by **17.00 hours on 28th January, 2026**
for details login to website
**https://pesb.gov.in**

## INBRIEF

### BJP accuses New York Mayor of interfering in India's affairs

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday accused New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani of "interfering" in India's internal affairs after he wrote a note to jailed activist Umar Khalid. Addressing a press conference, BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said India would not tolerate such actions and questioned Mr. Mamdani's *locus standi* to comment on the country's internal matters. Mr. Bhatia said the people of India had complete faith in the country's judiciary and asserted that if India's sovereignty were challenged, the nation would stand united under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

### Kashmir cricketer faces probe for displaying Palestine flag

The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Friday initiated a 14-day preliminary inquiry against a Kashmiri cricketer who displayed a Palestinian flag on his helmet during a match in Jammu. The move has drawn criticism from several political parties. The inquiry has been instituted under Section 173(3) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita. The cricketer has been identified as Furqan Ul Haq, a resident of Tangipuna in Pulwama district. He was representing the JK11 team and was playing against Jammu Trailblazers during the ongoing Jammu and Kashmir Champions League.

# Centre has no plans to change land acquisition policy: Cabinet Secretary

Land acquisition a major issue in infrastructure development, says Somanathan; over 3,300 projects worth ₹85 lakh crore were taken up during review meetings under PRAGATI, he adds

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Land acquisition remained a major issue to resolve in infrastructure development, Cabinet Secretary T.V. Somanathan said on Friday.

He was briefing reporters after the 50th meeting of the Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI), a mechanism to review implementation of infrastructure projects, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Friday.

Mr. Somanathan said the Union government has no plans to change the existing land acquisition policy.

The Cabinet Secretary, Secretaries of various Ministries dealing with infrastructure development, and the Railway Board's Chairman said in their presentations to media that land acquisition was one of the major reasons for the pendency of various infrastructure projects across the country. Mr. Somanathan said PRAGATI reviewed over 3,300 projects worth ₹85 lakh crore. A total of 7,735 issues were raised during its meetings and 7,156 of them were resolved.

> There is no plan to change the land acquisition policy... All States, irrespective of the political dispensations, want to complete their projects and all chief secretaries have been very responsive in resolving issues
>
> **T.V. SOMANATHAN**
> Cabinet Secretary

**Timely monitoring**

Mr. Somanathan said though the government has not calculated the savings due to timely monitoring of the schemes, he said several projects, some started as early as in 1990s, got completed after the PRAGATI system system was launched. Of the 7,156 issues resolved, the Cabinet Secretary said, 35% were on land acquisition, 20% were on forest, wildlife and environment issues, 18% were right of use/way, and other projects were delayed due to law and order, construction, power utility approvals and financial issues.

"There is no plan to change the land acquisition policy," he said when asked if the government plans to change the law in the background of hurdles created by issues in land acquisition to infrastructure projects. "All States, irrespective of the political dispensations, want to complete their projects and all chief secretaries have been very responsive in resolving issues," he added.

Mr. Somanathan said initially issues are addressed at the Ministry level, while complex and critical issues are escalated through defined institutional mechanisms for higher-level review, culminating at Pragati meetings chaired by the Prime Minister.

"The escalation framework ensures coordinated inter-ministerial action, timely decision-making, and focused resolution of implementation bottlenecks in projects of national importance," he said, while adding that Pragati ensured coordination between Central Ministries, coordination between States, Centre and local governments and coordination within the State governments.

# Govt. to help teachers use AI; will ease open schooling framework

**Abhinay Lakshman**
NEW DELHI

**The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill will go a long way in making these changes possible**

The Union government plans to liberalise the country's open schooling framework, introduce guidelines to encourage the use of artificial intelligence in teaching, and draft technical education standards focused on ensuring employment and entrepreneurship for graduates. The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025, which aims to overhaul the regulatory framework for higher education, will go a long way in making some of these changes possible, Education Ministry officials said on Friday.

"There is a need to ensure that standards for technical education are set with a focus on centering it around equipping students with the skills to acquire jobs and start entrepreneurships. Similarly, in teacher education, artificial intelligence is something that must be accounted for," a senior Ministry official said.

The official said that such changes will be enabled through the overhaul proposed under the VBSA Bill, 2025, which will also subsume the functions of the National Council for Teacher Education.

The VBSA Bill was introduced in the 2025 Winter Session of Parliament and was met with objections from the Opposition, after which the government proposed that the Bill be sent to a joint committee of Parliament. While this committee is yet to be constituted, officials maintained that their hope was to bring the Bill for passage in the House by the end of this year's Budget Session.

The senior official added that a similar approach will be necessary for open schooling, which accommodates individuals of all age groups seeking to complete their secondary and higher secondary certifications. To this end, a second official said that talks are under way within the Education Ministry to "expand and liberalise" the National Institute for Open Schooling system.

# First mountain tunnel breakthrough achieved in bullet train project: Minister

**Snehal Mutha**
MUMBAI

The first breakthrough of a 1.5-km-long mountain tunnel of the bullet train project in Maharashtra's Palghar district. PTI

The first mountain tunnel breakthrough of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) project was achieved in Maharashtra's Palghar district, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced on Friday. The tunnel, at 1.5 km, is the longest among the seven planned in Maharashtra for the bullet train corridor.

"On completion, the project will reduce travel time between Mumbai and Ahmedabad to just 1 hour and 58 minutes. It has facilitated the generation of employment and will integrate the economies of major commercial centres," Mr. Vaishnaw said. He added that India is likely to get its first bullet train on August 15, 2027.

Calling it a "milestone", Mr. Vaishnaw said, "This is the first mountain tunnel of the project in the State. The breakthrough has been achieved in an approximately 1.5 km long mountain tunnel (MT-5), located between Virar and Boisar bullet train stations."

According to the official statement, "The MT-5 tunnel was excavated from both ends, and the excavation was completed within 18 months using a cutting-edge drill and blast method." The 508 km MAHSR project has an overall tunnel length of 27.4 km. Among this, 21 km is underground tunnels, while 6.4 km is surface tunnels. Overall, MAHSR has eight mountain tunnels, with seven tunnels alone in Maharashtra having a combined length of about 6.05 km, and one tunnel of 350 metres located in Gujarat.

# Two arrested for raping children of tribal labourers in Maharashtra

**Vinaya Deshpande Pandit**
MUMBAI

**The accused were arrested on December 30 and have been sent to judicial custody**

The Maharashtra Police have arrested two men for allegedly raping two minor girls, both children of migrant labourers belonging to the Gond community who had come from Chhattisgarh to Maharashtra's Beed to work in the sugar cane fields, on December 24.

Although the Beed police registered an FIR on December 29, the families are being pressured to withdraw the complaints, said activist Jeewan Rathore who is helping the families.

The accused, Ganesh Rajebhau Ghatul and Ashok Bhaskar Pawar, were arrested on December 30 and have been sent to judicial custody. The statement of the two girls will be recorded in the Majalgaon court on Saturday.

Mr. Rathore said that the two girls did not speak about the incident for four days as the two accused had threatened them with dire consequences.

The incident came to light when one of them needed medical attention after complaining of pain. Currently, the girls are in the custody of the Child Welfare Committee in Beed.

The police have evoked various sections of Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, POCSO, and Scheduled Caste Atrocities Prohibition Act in the complaint.

According to the FIR accessed by *The Hindu*, 14 people from the tribal community had come from Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon to Roshanpuri in Beed's Majalgaon, two months ago to work in the plantations. The two girls, aged 13 and 14, were part of the same group and accompanied their father and uncle respectively.

"They used to cook for the father and the uncle. They did not work in the fields. On December 24, the two accused youths - one a local shopkeeper, and the other a tractor driver who ferries labourers - came to their huts and dragged them to the fields. After raping them, they threatened the girls with dire consequences if they opened their mouths," said Ashok Tangade, president of the Child Welfare Committee, Beed.

Mr. Rathore, member of a union fighting for the rights of sugar cane workers and transporters, said that he has been threatened for helping the family.

"The family is under pressure. They are poor landless labourers belonging to the Gond community. They are being forced to withdraw the complaint. I was threatened by people from the dominant caste and told not to interfere in this matter, that the labourers are from outside the State, that they have no power, and that I will have to be here among these people (accused)," he told *The Hindu*. He said the labourers lack access to clean water, healthcare, and shelter, adding that more than 5,000 landless labourers from Chhattisgarh move to Beed every year to harvest sugar cane.

When asked about the incident, Beed Superintendent of Police Navneet said, "The children are in Bal Graha. The accused are in magisterial custody. We will make sure that they are fear-free. They have not given any complaint so far about any threat. We will do everything legally and ensure that justice is served."

# Kashmir chief cleric calls for dialogue to end conflict

**The Hindu Bureau**
SRINAGAR

Kashmir's chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq was barred from leading prayers at the Jama Masjid in Srinagar on Friday and delivered a sermon online, where he said "the Kashmir conflict continues to keep the region in an unsettled state".

In his sermon, the Mirwaiz reflected on the year 2025. "Despite making unilateral changes in 2019, the reality is that the Kashmir conflict continues to keep the region in an unsettled state that can erupt anytime. That is why wars are paused, not ended, and dialogue finds no takers," he said.

"I am committed to sincere efforts of dialogue. My path remains the same. Dialogue has worked elsewhere and our hope remains alive," the Mirwaiz added.

## TH CROSSWORD + 14682

(set by Gussalufz)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://crossword.thehindu.com*

SCAN TO PLAY

**Across**

1 Munch quietly on cold meat (5)
4 Glands prone to release second dash of rheum before end of sneezes (9)
9 Painter's angrier production (7)
10 Tandoori chicken cooked without onion had flopped, that's fair (7)
11 November observance organised in December and May, mistakenly (11,3)
12 Woman set out after pocketing diamonds (4)
13 Minor U.S. assets restricting one's source of tax breaks (9)
17 Drug havens minus dope? Bizarre! (5,4)
19 Pasta, pizza win British, Irish hearts (4)
22 Reject gnu clone after trial in synthetic habitat (8,6)
25 Leaving body writhing, in goes killing squad's leader (7)
26 Popular team, now called "WI", backed regularly (7)
27 Startles Slytherin insiders with honesty (9)
28 Pulls rank, replacing premier with unknown assistant, essentially (5)

**Down**

1 Hot garlic oil that can be smoky? (9)
2 Frightened gangster with weapon (7)
3 Some cameraman apparently capsized in canal (6)
4 Bird's role on hill (9)
5 Old review in old language (5)
6 Time to join race-fit running group (small one) (8)
7 Line up crosshairs and attack veganism occasionally (4,3)
8 Provide reference over the phone, for position (4)
14 Was beverage wrongly emptied jamming a sink? (5,4)
15 Mean behaviour is rising (partially lessened in September) (9)
16 Is this setter guy friendly? (8)
18 Smooth transformation that turns female into male? (4,3)
20 In Germany, radicals at extreme left have matured towards centre? (7)
21 English writer, upper-class, by and large boring attention-grabber (6)
23 Numbers filmed by Steven Spielberg (5)
24 Pointless wager over origin of artifact in tourist destination (4)

## SUDOKU

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

No.SS6750 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

**Solution to previous puzzle**

**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

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

## FAITH

### Andal shows us the way

Sri Koorathazhwan states that we commit mistakes and sinful acts in a moment, but it may take thousands of years to erase them. Only by the grace of God can these sins be removed and purified. Velukudi Sri Krishnan Swami said in a discourse that we need the grace of the Acharyas, for they recommend us to the Lord, seeking His acceptance and forgiveness. Liberation is possible only through surrender – self-effort alone cannot save us. Nammazhwar teaches that one should first offer obeisance to Vedic scholars and celestial beings, and only then worship the Lord.

In the 16th verse of Tiruppavai, Andal stands before the Dwarapalakas and Kshetrapalakas, requesting them to let her enter the house of Nanda Gopala to wake up Lord Krishna. Scriptures tell us that eight Dwarapalakas and eight Kshetrapalakas guard the abode. Andal, assuming the role of a simple cowherd maiden, reminds them that during the Rasa Krida, Krishna Himself invited the Gopikas to come to Him whenever they wished. With this assurance, she pleads that they should not stop her. She adds that she has come only to render service to the Lord, just as Thondaradippodi Azhwar once sang Tiruppalli Ezhuchi to awaken the Lord from His divine sleep.

The inner message behind Andal's humble plea to the Dwarapalakas is to convey that one can attain the Lord only through the guidance, support, and blessings of the Acharyas. Their recommendation paves the way to reach God. Andal's humble appeal shows us that reaching God is not merely by one's own effort; it becomes possible only through the grace of Acharyas and noble guides. Their blessings and recommendations open doors to the Divine.

## INBRIEF

### Maruti produces more than 22.55 lakh vehicles in CY2025

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. said it had produced more than 22.55 lakh units in calendar year (CY) 2025, its highest-ever production in a calendar year. "This is the second consecutive year that the company exceeded 20 lakh units in annual production," it said. The production includes vehicles for domestic sales, exports and OEM supplies. The top five models by production volume during the year were Fronx, Baleno, Swift, Dzire and Ertiga.

### LIC rolls out revival campaign for individual lapsed policies

The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has launched a special revival campaign for individual lapsed policies. Under the campaign, from January 1 to March 2, up to 30% concession will be extended on late fee for all non-linked insurance plans up to a maximum of ₹5,000 if they are eligible for revival. Policies in a lapsed condition during the premium paying term and not completed policy term are eligible to be revived.

### Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal can directly buy coal from CIL

State-owned CIL on Friday said buyers from neighbouring nations Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal can now join online coal auctions directly, skipping the Indian middlemen. The move will help in utilising the surplus coal resources better and promote transparency. Earlier, access to Coal India Ltd.'s (CIL) dry fuel by consumers across the borders was only through domestic coal traders who were allowed to buy and sell without any end-use restrictions. PTI

# MeitY okays 22 more firms for electronic part incentives

Projects approved amount to an investment of ₹41,863 crore; scheme is designed to push firms to be first to finish line to avail of the incentives

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) approved 22 new projects under the ₹22,919 crore Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS).

Under ECMS, companies making electronic parts will receive payouts based on incremental production and employment. The projects approved under Friday's tranche amount to a combined investment of ₹41,863 crore, the IT Ministry said.

**Electronic boost:** Small firms as well as established heavyweights would receive the incentives, says Vaishnaw. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Small firms in India as well as established heavyweights such as Tata Electronics Pvt. Ltd. would receive the incentives, according to IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

The payouts are likely to be a race, as the government will award incentives to firms who finish production roadmap first.

# NTPC exploring international collaborations for nuclear plans

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

NTPC is exploring multiple international collaborations in the area of technology and fuel to push its nuclear ambitions to diversify energy generation.

NTPC is looking to set up around 30 GW of company-owned nuclear projects across various locations in the country in line with the government's ambition of having 100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047.

Sources said the firm is eyeing 2 GW of nuclear capacity as early as 2032.

**Tech agreements**

For technology, NTPC has entered into non-disclosure agreements with global energy players Rosatom and EDF to explore collaboration on deploying large pressurised water reactor projects in India, they said. Besides, NTPC and Holtec International are exploring the deployment of small modular reactors (SMRs) in future nuclear projects.

SMRs offer potential advantages in terms of modular construction, enhanced safety and suitability for phased deployment. NTPC is also evaluating a minority equity investment in U.S.-based Clean Core Thorium Energy.

**Lacking lustre:** HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index fell from 56.6 in November to 55.0 in December. REUTERS

# Manufacturing PMI at 2-year low in Dec. on easing new orders

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Expansion in India's manufacturing performance slowed to a two-year low in December, with the rate of new business orders, production, and employment growth all slowing, as per a private sector survey.

The seasonally-adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index fell from 56.6 in November to 55.0 in December. The last time it was lower was in December 2023, when the index value had touched 54.9.

"The end of the 2025 calendar year was characterised by a loss of growth momentum across several measures tracked by the HSBC India Manufacturing PMI survey," HSBC India said in the report. "Positive demand trends continued to underpin sharp increases in new business intakes and production, but rates of expansion eased on the back of competitive pressures and subdued sales of specific items."

Specifically, the report said new work orders rose at the weakest pace since December 2023, output levels at the slowest pace since October 2022 while employment climbed at the slowest pace in the last 22 months.

"We have seen a steady spell of softer growth in new export orders," Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said. "In fact, the share of companies signalling higher international sales in December was about half of the average for 2025."

The data showed new export orders rose the least in 14 months in December 2025. The report added, in the few cases where growth was anticipated, the orders came from clients in Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

"Indian goods producers foresee an increase in output during 2026 relative to present levels, but the overall level of sentiment faded to its lowest in close to three-and-a-half years," the report said.

## MARKETS

### MARKET WATCH

| | FRIDAY | % CHANGE |
|---|---|---|
| Sensex | 85,762 | 0.67 |
| US Dollar | 90.20 | -0.24 |
| Gold | 1,39,440 | 0.80 |
| Brent oil | 60.26 | ------ |

### NIFTY 50

| | PRICE | CHANGE |
|---|---|---|
| Adani Enter | 2279.80 | 19.80 |
| Adani Ports | 1489.50 | 8.40 |
| Apollo Hosp | 7129.50 | 18.00 |
| Asian Paints | 2772.60 | 20.60 |
| Axis Bank | 1266.90 | -7.50 |
| Bajaj Auto | 9502.50 | -55.50 |
| Bajaj Finserv | 2038.40 | 1.40 |
| Bajaj Finance | 990.45 | 17.35 |
| Bharat Elec | 403.15 | 5.45 |
| Bharti Airtel | 2106.30 | -4.10 |
| Cipla | 1511.60 | 10.70 |
| Coal India | 427.90 | 27.45 |
| Dr Reddys Lab | 1256.10 | 2.70 |
| Hindustan Unilever | 40.20 | 0.00 |
| Eicher Motors | 7334.50 | -13.50 |
| Eternal Ltd. | 284.15 | 0.35 |
| Grasim Ind | 2856.40 | 4.70 |
| HCL Tech | 1640.20 | 5.70 |
| HDFC Bank | 1001.60 | 10.45 |
| HDFC Life | 754.85 | 4.75 |
| Hindalco | 925.70 | 30.75 |
| Hind Unilever | 2348.00 | 25.00 |
| ICICI Bank | 1355.40 | 17.40 |
| IntGlobeAvi | 5106.00 | -4.50 |
| Infosys | 1640.40 | 10.60 |
| ITC | 350.05 | -13.80 |
| Jio Financial Services Ltd. | 301.70 | 6.00 |
| JSW Steel | 1180.70 | 9.20 |
| Kotak Bank | 2195.10 | -22.70 |
| L&T | 4163.40 | 23.00 |
| M&M | 3802.40 | 41.40 |
| Maruti Suzuki | 16960.00 | 252.00 |
| Max Healthcare | 1062.60 | 13.20 |
| NestleIndia | 1279.70 | -15.30 |
| NTPC | 352.10 | 15.80 |
| ONGC | 241.46 | 3.52 |
| PowerGrid Corp | 270.95 | 4.15 |
| Reliance Ind | 1592.30 | 16.70 |
| SBI Life | 2067.40 | 27.00 |
| State Bank | 998.95 | 14.20 |
| Shriram Finance Ltd. | 1010.35 | -9.35 |
| Sun Pharma | 1728.00 | 6.90 |
| TataConsumerProduct | 1170.70 | -6.20 |
| Tata Steel | 182.88 | 0.99 |
| TCS | 3250.70 | 23.30 |
| Tech Mahindra | 1612.00 | 4.30 |
| Titan | 4051.70 | 2.40 |
| Tata Motors PV | 370.35 | 2.80 |
| Trent Ltd. | 4409.60 | 112.20 |
| UltraTech Cement | 11899.00 | -2.00 |
| Wipro | 269.00 | 1.65 |

### NHPC to raise ₹2,000 crore

NHPC announced plans to raise ₹2,000 crore via issuance of bonds in single or multiple tranches. The amount will be part of its borrowing plan for the ongoing financial year. PTI

# Export Promotion Mission: Govt. unveils 2 more credit-linked plans

**The Hindu Bureau**
**NEW DELHI**

The Government introduced two new components in the Export Promotion Mission (EPM) aimed at easing and reducing the cost of the credit-access process for exporters.

This comes days after the Ministry of Commerce and Industry notified guidelines for a market access scheme under the EPM. With Friday's announcement, three of the 11 schemes under the EPM have been operationalised.

The two schemes would entail an outlay of ₹5,181 crore over six years until 2030-31. The two schemes were under the Niryat Protsahan category, which is meant to lower the cost of credit for exporters.

**Export boost:** The two schemes would entail an outlay of ₹5,181 cr. over six years until 2030-31. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Interest Subvention for Pre- and Post-Shipment Export Credit scheme will reduce the cost of export finance and "strengthens MSME liquidity, improve competitiveness and supports India's integration into global value chains, while ensuring fiscal prudence and compliance," the Ministry of Commerce said in its announcement.

**Interest subvention**

"Eligible MSME exporters can avail interest subvention on rupee export credit (pre- and post-shipment) extended by scheduled banks, in accordance with RBI Master Directions," it added. The second subscheme – Collateral Support for Export Credit – is aimed at giving MSME exporters the ability to access bank credit even with limited collateral or third-party guarantees.

The scheme would be implemented through the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) on a pilot basis and be applicable to export-linked working capital loans.

MSME exporters exporting notified tariff lines will be eligible for the collateral support.

Micro & small exporters would be eligible for up to 85% guarantee, while medium exporters would be capped at a 65% guarantee.

# 'Anticipating risks before they surface'

**Lalatendu Mishra**
MUMBAI

The next phase of market development would be defined not just by scale, but by quality and sophistication, Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Friday.

"Our priorities include continued strengthening of corporate governance standards, promoting sustainable finance and long-term value creation, encouraging innovation while keeping investor protection at the centre and responsible use of technology and data in market operations and supervision,"

Tuhin Kanta Pandey

he said. "As markets evolve emerging technologies– particularly artificial intelligence– along with deeper global linkages, bring new efficiencies but also fresh complexities. The next frontier therefore lies in anticipating risks before they surface," he emphasised.

# 'Gig economy reflects systemic inequality'

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Days after the New Year's Eve protest by gig and delivery workers across the country, Zomato founder Deepinder Goyal on Friday said that the gig economy is a "reminder of systemic inequality", crediting it for purportedly "shattering" the "invisibility" of the poor's labour in India.

In what Mr. Goyal referred to as his "last one on the topic" in his series of statements on social media over December 31 protests, he argued this was the "first time in history at this scale" the working class and consuming class are

Deepinder Goyal

interacting face-to-face.

He went on to argue before gig work, "the rich could enjoy luxury without moral discomfort", adding that this "discomfort with our own selves is why we are uncomfortable about the gig economy". "Visibility is the price of progress", he posited.

भारत सरकार
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
पर्यावरण,वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS & CLIMATE CHANGE
क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय /Regional office

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F.no..A140261/ROCHN/NSC-RA&Consult/2025/1898
Dated the 17thDecember 2025

**VACANCY NOTIFICATION NO.04/2025**

**Sub:** Advertisement for the engagement of (i) **Research Associate** and (ii) **Consultant 'A'** (Non Scientific Consultant) on contractual basis in **Sub Office Vijayawada**, under Regional Office, Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Chennai

Applications are invited for engagement of each one post of **(i) Research Associate and (ii) Consultant 'A'** (Non Scientific Consultant) on contractual basis at **Sub Office Vijayawada**, under Regional Office. Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Chennai on payment of consolidated monthly fee Rs. 40,000/- for Research Associates, Rs.60,000/- for Consultant 'A' (Non Scientific Consultant). Full details of the vacancy circular are available on Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change website **www.moef.nic.in** under the link Circular.

Interested applicants may submit applications as per the Proforma at Annexure-I. The applications are to be sent to

**The Assistant Inspector General of Forests (Central)
Sub Office Vijayawada,
Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate change,
Green House, Gopalareddy Road, Vijayawada,
Andhra Pradesh 520010**

The last date of receipt of application is **21 days** from the date of publication of this advertisement in the Newspaper.

(एस.युवराज /S. YUVARAJ)
उप वन महानिदेशक & कार्यालयाध्यक्ष/
**Deputy Inspector General of Forest (C) & Head of Office.**

**CBC13134/11/0006/2526**

**BENGALURU WEST CITY CORPORATION**
**Malleshwaram Zone,
Office of the Executive Engineer, Rajajinagara Division,
BWCC Building, No.161, 1st Floor, 19th Main, 2nd Block,
Near Old Navarang Bus Stop, Rajajinagara, Bengaluru - 560010.**

**No:EE(RNR)/KPPP/TEND/02/2025-26/Call-2 Date: 02-01-2026**

**INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER (IFT)**
**(Two Cover System) (Through GOK KPP Portal only)**

Executive Engineer, Rajajinagara Division, BWCC, Bengaluru invites Tender from eligible Tenderers registered in BBMP or equivalent registration with PWD / CPWD or any State Government Organization for the Work detailed below.
**(Standard Tender Documents - KW-4)**

| Sl. No. | Name of the Work |
|---|---|
| 1 | Comprehensive Developments of Roads, Drains, Footpath and Providing Street Light for Selected Arterial and Sub Arterial Roads in Rajajinagara Constituency. **(Package No-02-RNR-2025-26). (Call-2) - Amount Put to Tender (Excluding GST) (Rs. in Lakhs): 1412.00, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 15,00,000/-** |

**Calendar of Events: 1)** Tender documents may be downloaded from the GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in from 03-01-2026, 17.30 Hours onwards. 2)** Date of Pre Bid Meeting on **05-01-2026 at 16.00 Hours. 3)** Last Date and Time for Uploading the Tender Documents: **22-01-2026 upto 17.00 Hours. 4)** Date of Opening of Technical Bid: **23-01-2026 at 17.30 Hours. 5)** Date of Opening of Financial Bid: **Will be intimated through KPP Portal.** Further details can be had from the above office.

**Sd/- Executive Engineer, Rajajinagara Division, Malleshwaram Zone, BWCC.**

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Or write to us at
**customercare@thehindu.co.in**
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**BENGALURU CENTRAL CITY CORPORATION**
Office of the Superintending Engineer, Zone-2,
4th Floor, Annex Building-3, Bengaluru-560 002.

No:SE/BCCC/Z-2/TEND/02/2025-26 Date: 02-01-2026

**CORRIGENDUM-01**
**website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

**Tender Reference:**
1) Tender Notification No.SE/BCCC/Z-2/TEND/02/2025-26, Dated: 05.12.2025
2) Name of Work: Collection of Parking Fees for Various Roads in Bengaluru Central City Corporation, Zone-2.

With reference to the above-mentioned tender, the Minimum Reserve Annual License Fee for the below-mentioned packages has been revised. Accordingly, the qualification criteria have also been revised in the line with the revised Annual License Fee. The said modifications have been uploaded individually on the KPP Portal.

| Sl. No. | Name of the Work: |
|---|---|
| 1. | Collection of Parking Fees Commercial Street (Kamaraj Road) to OPH Road, Main Guard Road from Safina Plaza to Dispensary Road & Dickenson Road. **Revised Minimum Reserve Annual License fee (in ₹.): 95,62,000.00.** |
| 2. | Collection of Parking Fees Dispensary Road (OPH Road) to Kamaraj Road & Ibrahim Sahib Street Road. **Revised Minimum Reserve Annual License fee (in ₹.): 1,19,02,000.00.** |
| 3. | Collection of Parking Fees for Millers Road Junction, Planetarium Road, St. John's Church Road & St. John's Road. **Revised Minimum Reserve Annual License fee (in ₹.): 1,41,52,000.00.** |
| 4. | Collection of Parking Fees for 2nd Temple Road in Dattatreya Temple Ward, Sampige Road, Railway Parallel Road & BVK Iyengar Road. **Revised Minimum Reserve Annual License fee (in ₹.): 1,20,12,000.00.** |
| 5. | Collection of Parking Fees for Mavalli Tank Bund Road, DVG Road in Sunkenahalli Ward, Shankarmatt Road & PMK Road. **Revised Minimum Reserve Annual License fee (in ₹.): 1,36,73,000.00.** |
| 6. | Collection of Parking Fees for Vani Vilas Road, Vasavi Temple Street, Kanakapura Road, Diagonal Road, Patalamma Road & T. Mariyappa Road. **Revised Minimum Reserve Annual License fee (in ₹.): 1,52,93,000.00.** |

**For all above works Period of Tender: 3 Years + 2 years of extension. Calendar of Events: (1)** Last date for submission of tenders has been extended up to **10.01.2026 till 4:00 p.m. (2)** The Technical Bids will be opened on **12.01.2026 at 4:30 p.m.** All other terms and conditions of the tender remain unchanged.

**Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Zone-2, BCCC.**

SEOUL

## Kim Jong-un's daughter makes public visit to state mausoleum

AFP

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's daughter, Ju Ae, who is likely being prepared as his successor, accompanied her parents on her first public visit to the Kumsusan mausoleum to pay respects to former leaders. Ms. Ju Ae has been making increasingly prominent appearances in state media over the past three years. REUTERS

COLOMBO

## Sri Lanka launches probe over English syllabus' gay website link

AFP

Sri Lanka launched a criminal investigation on Friday after a government syllabus for 11 and 12-year-olds directed pupils to a gay chat website to improve their language skills. The Grade Six English syllabus suggested pupils could find a pen-pal to improve their language skills via *buddy.net* — an online chat website. AFP

KARACHI

## Pakistan permits Biman Airways to start direct flights to Karachi

AP

Pakistan's aviation authorities have issued permission to the Bangladesh national airline, Biman Airways, to start direct operations on the route of Dhaka-Karachi. According to a report on Friday in the *Jang* newspaper, permission has been given on a test basis for a period that will last until March 30. PTI

KYIV

## Ukraine's Zelenskyy names spy chief Budanov as new top aide

AFP

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday named military intelligence chief Kyrylo Budanov as the new head of his office, after his previous top aide resigned in November over a corruption scandal. Mr. Budanov, 39, said he had accepted the nomination and would "continue to serve Ukraine". AFP

# Pak. court awards life sentences for scribes, YouTubers, ex-army officers

The anti-terrorism court sentences seven persons to life for inciting violence and spreading hatred against state institutions during the 2023 riots; they were tried and convicted in absentia; rights groups and media organisations condemn verdict

**Associated Press**
ISLAMABAD

A court in Pakistan's capital sentenced seven persons, including three journalists, two YouTubers and two retired army officers, to life imprisonment on Friday, after convicting them of inciting violence during riots in 2023 and spreading hatred against state institutions.

An anti-terrorism court judge, Tahir Abbas Sipra, announced the verdict in Islamabad after completing trials held in absentia.

None of the accused were present in court. They have been living abroad after leaving the country in recent years to avoid arrest.

Journalists protest against 'curbs on press freedom' and 'excessive control of the digital landscape', in Karachi, in January 2025. REUTERS

Those convicted include former editor Shaheen Sehbai; two other journalists, Sabir Shakir and Moeed Pirzada; YouTubers Wajahat Saeed Khan and Haider Raza Mehdi; and retired army officers Adil Raja and Akbar Hussain.

According to the court order, the charges against the men stemmed from the violent unrest that erupted in May 2023 following the arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan in a graft case.

At the time, thousands of Mr. Khan's supporters attacked military installations, torched government property, ransacked the residence of a senior army officer and damaged the state-run *Radio Pakistan* building.

Mr. Khan was also indicted in 2024 on charges of inciting violence against military and government targets. He has denied the allegations. He was ousted from power by his political opponents through a no-confidence vote in Parliament in April 2022.

According to the prosecution, the seven men, who are known for publicly supporting Mr. Khan, had incited people to violence during the riots on May 9, 2023, when demonstrators targeted military installations, because Mr. Khan repeatedly blamed his removal on the United States and Pakistan's military.

The U.S. government, the Pakistani military and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who replaced Mr. Khan after his ouster, have denied the allegations.

Human rights defenders and representatives of journalists' unions say freedom of speech is shrinking in Pakistan.

# UAE-backed separatists in Yemen hit by Saudi strikes

**Associated Press**
ADEN

Saudi warplanes have reportedly struck on Friday forces in southern Yemen backed by the United Arab Emirates, a separatist leader says.

This comes as a Saudi-led operation attempts to take over camps of the Southern Transitional Council, or STC, in the governorate of Hadramout that borders Saudi Arabia.

Tensions between Saudi Arabia and the UAE rose after the STC moved last month into Yemen's governorates of Hadramout and Mahra and seized an oil-rich region. The move pushed out forces affiliated with the Saudi-backed National Shield Forces, a group aligned with the coalition in fighting the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen.

Supporters of the UAE-backed separatist Southern Transitional Council during a rally in Aden, Yemen, on Thursday. REUTERS

Meanwhile, the Saudi ambassador to Yemen accused the head of the STC of blocking a Saudi mediation delegation from landing in Aden.

The STC deputy and former Hadramout governor, Ahmed bin Breik, said in a statement that the Saudi-backed National Shield Forces advanced toward the camps, but the separatists refused to withdraw, apparently leading to the air strikes.

Mohamed al-Nakib, spokesperson for the STC-backed Southern Shield Forces, said Saudi air strikes caused fatalities, without providing details.

The Saudi-led coalition demands the withdrawal of STC forces from the two governorates. The STC has so far refused to hand over its weapons and camps.

# Ukraine says it only hits 'military targets' after Kherson strike

**Agence France-Presse**
KYIV

The Ukrainian army said on Friday it only hit "military targets", a day after after Russia accused Kyiv of firing drones at a hotel and cafe in Kherson killing 27.

Russian-installed authorities in Ukraine's southern Kherson region said those killed were revellers celebrating the New Year and that two of the dead were children, describing the incident as a "terrorist act".

A source in Ukraine's defence forces confirmed a strike took place, but said the attack targeted a military gathering that was closed to civilians.

The hotel where Moscow says the strike took place lies in Khorly, a Black Sea resort town that the Russian army has occupied since early 2022.

Ukrainian army spokesperson Dmytro Lykhoviy accused Russia of repeatedly resorting to "disinformation and false statements".

# Swiss authorities rush to identify victims after New Year's blaze rips through bar

**Agence France-Presse**
CRANS-MONTANA

Swiss investigators raced on Friday to identify victims of a ski resort fire at a New Year's celebration that killed some 40 people and injured around 115 more, in one of the country's worst tragedies.

It is not yet clear what set off the blaze at Le Constellation, a bar popular with young tourists, on Thursday.

Swiss police warned it could take days or even weeks to identify everyone who perished, an agonising wait for family and friends.

Mourners gather near the site of a fire that ripped through a bar in Crans-Montana, during a New Year's celebration, on Friday. AFP

"Given the international nature of the Crans resort, we can expect foreign nationals to be among the victims," police commander Frederic Gisler said.

The exact number of people who were at the bar when it went up in flames remains unclear.

Le Constellation had a capacity of 300 people, plus another 40 people on its terrace, according to the Crans-Montana website.

Guy Parmelin, who became Swiss President on Thursday, called the fire "a calamity of unprecedented, terrifying proportions" and announced that flags would be flown at half-mast for five days.

Authorities have declined to speculate on what caused the tragedy, saying only that it was not an attack.

# Maduro holds out olive branch to U.S., suggests serious talks

**Reuters**
MADRID

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro has extended an olive branch to U.S. President Donald Trump, proposing serious talks on combating drug trafficking and offering U.S. companies ready access to Venezuelan oil.

Mr. Maduro said Venezuela was a "brother country" to the United States and a friendly government. He noted that when he and Mr. Trump last spoke in November, the U.S. President had acknowledged his authority by addressing him as "Mr. President".

The comments represent a shift in Mr. Maduro's tone towards the United States since the latter launched a large-scale military build-up in the southern Caribbean.

Mr. Trump has accused the "illegitimate" Maduro of running a narco-state and threatened to remove him from power. Mr. Maduro has vehemently denied links to crime.



# Women's cricket is evolving fast, says former Lanka pacer Ratnayake

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

He bowled Sri Lanka to its first-ever Test victory. That was in 1985, but four decades later, Rumesh Ratnayake still remembers how he got the better of a world-class Indian batting line-up that boasted the likes of Sunil Gavaskar, Dilip Vengsarkar and Mohinder Amarnath at Colombo.

The quick, who used to wear a white headband, took four for 76 and five for 49 to lead Sri Lanka to a historic 149-run win in the second Test at Colombo. The islanders went on to win the three-match series 1-0.

"For that series, we had wickets that were conducive to pace," said Ratnayake in an exclusive interview with *The Hindu*. "That was our strategy, but we probably would not have made pitches like that if we were playing Pakistan, though."

Ratnayake. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Gavaskar had chosen to bat in the middle-order in that series, in which K. Srikkanth, debutant Lalchand Rajput and Ravi Shastri were the openers. "India had a great batting line-up those days, with Gavaskar, Amarnath and Vengsarkar, who had such a lazy elegance to his batting," said Ratnayake during Sri Lanka's women's T20I series against India. Incidentally, the final match in the series here was his last as the coach.

He had taken over when the team was going through a rough patch, some three years ago. Under him, the Lankan women beat South Africa in T20I series in South Africa and England and stunned India in the Asia Cup final.

"I was absolutely new to women's cricket and I accepted the job only after the then coach Hashan Tillakaratne, my friend, joined the Bangladesh team," said the man who took 149 wickets from 23 Tests and 70 ODIs.

"I saw potential in the team and I gave them confidence. I wasn't harsh on them when they made mistakes, like dropping a catch. In the very first match we played, against South Africa at the 2023 T20I World Cup, we won."

He believes women's cricket is evolving fast. "Some of the sixes you see in women's cricket today are almost as big as the ones that were scored by the men 30 years ago," he said.

# Easy starts for Divyanshi and Ritvik

TABLE TENNIS

**Press Trust of India**
VADODARA

Defending champion Divyanshi Bhowmik, who had won the U-15 and U-17 girls' singles titles last year, opened her under-17 campaign by beating compatriot Neeza Kamat 11-4, 11-1, 11-2 in the Group 1 opener at the WTT Youth Contender on Friday.

In the boys' U-17 category, top seed Ritvik Gupta defeated Dhruva Malikarjunan 11-9, 11-5, 11-5 and then got the better of Shreyas Mankeshwar 13-11, 11-6, 11-7.

In the U-13 boys' category, Shaurya Goyal and Divija Paul posted wins.

# Man City charge stalls at Sunderland, Liverpool held goalless by Leeds

PREMIER LEAGUE

**Agence France-Presse**
LONDON

Manchester City trails Arsenal by four points at the top of the Premier League after failing to end Sunderland's unbeaten home record in a 0-0 draw on Thursday, while Liverpool was also held similarly by Leeds.

In a goal-shy start to 2026, three of the four New Year's Day fixtures ended without a goal as Tottenham also played out a 0-0 draw on Thomas Frank's return to Brentford.

City had won eight consecutive games to end 2025 and cut the gap on the Gunners to just two points.

A draw extended Leeds' unbeaten run to six games and takes it seven points clear of relegation zone.

**Stupendous show:** Roefs was in inspired form to deny Gvardiol. REUTERS

Fourth-placed Liverpool edged three points ahead of Chelsea and Manchester United in the battle for a place in next season's Champions League.

Crystal Palace boss Oliver Glasner said his depleted side is in "survival mode" after a 1-1 draw against Fulham extended its winless run to six games.

**The results:** Brentford 0 drew with Tottenham 0; Crystal Palace 1 (Mateta 39) drew with Fulham 1 (Cairney 80); Liverpool 0 drew with Leeds 0; Sunderland 0 drew with Manchester City 0.

THE MIX

## Markram to lead SA in T20 WC; De Kock and Nortje included

FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

South Africa announced its 15-member contingent for the ICC T20 World Cup. **The squad:** Aiden Markram (Capt.), Quinton de Kock, Tony de Zorzi, Dewald Brevis, David Miller, Donovan Ferreira, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Kagiso Rabada, Kwena Maphaka, Lungi Ngidi, Jason Smith, George Linde, Corbin Bosch, and Anrich Nortje.

BETTER NEWS

## 'Positive signs' on hospitalised Martyn, says Gilchrist

FILE PHOTO: S. SUBRAMANIUM

Former Australia Test batter Damien Martyn is showing "positive signs" after being hospitalised in an induced coma with meningitis, ex-teammate Adam Gilchrist said. "He's still in hospital. There'll be more details coming out as they come to hand but certainly in the last 24 hours there are some positive signs," Gilchrist said.

ANTI-DOPING WATCHDOG

## Neeraj, Sachin only Indians in AIU's Registered Testing Pool

FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

Javelin throwers Neeraj Chopra and Sachin Yadav are the only Indian athletes to figure in the Registered Testing Pool of World Athletics' anti-doping watchdog Athletics Integrity Unit for the first quarter of this year. While two-time Olympic medal-winning Neeraj has been a regular on this list, Sachin is a new entrant.

WILDCARD ENTRY

## Venus, 45, set to become oldest woman to play at Australian Open

AP

Venus Williams was handed a wildcard to the Australian Open aged 45 on Friday, becoming the oldest woman ever to play at the season-opening Grand Slam. The American will compete in the main draw for the first time since 2021. "I'm excited to be back in Australia and looking forward to competing," said Venus.

# Royals hand Soorma third straight loss

Rutuja draws first blood for the Ranchi outfit while Sakshi's strike six minutes from time seals the deal; Madhuri saves a penalty stroke

**Opening salvo:** Rutuja showcased superb skill to put Royals ahead. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

WOMEN'S HIL

**Sports Bureau**

Ranchi Royals defeated JSW Soorma Hockey Club 2-0 in their Women's Hero Hockey India League encounter in Ranchi on Friday. Rutuja Pisal (30) and Sakshi Rana (54) found the mark as Royals notched up their second win while Soorma slumped to its third loss in a row.

Soorma showed great attacking intent in the opening quarter.

It won the first penalty corner of the evening, but Penny Squibb's shot was stopped by the first rusher.

In the 25th minute, Royals' Ishika committed a foul inside the circle, giving away a penalty stroke. However, Squibb was denied by Madhuri Kindo. With seconds left in the first half, Royals drew first blood. Agostina Alonso played a powerful pass into the circle from midfield and Rutuja showcased superb skill to poach the ball perfectly and deflect it in.

Royals doubled the lead with a superb field goal as Sakshi unleashed a powerful strike from a tight angle into the top right corner of the goalpost with six minutes remaining.

# Marijne returns as India women's coach

**Uthra Ganesan**
NEW DELHI

Indian hockey would be hoping to turn over a new leaf in the new year after Hockey India on Friday officially confirmed former chief coach Sjoerd Marijne's return to the national women's team.

This comes a month after Harendra Singh had quit following complaints of harassment and ineffective training by the players.

Marijne, who led the Indian women to a historic fourth place finish at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, had been spoken of as a possible replacement even before Harendra's resignation came through.

The Dutchman will have the unenviable task of repeating his magic in three months, when the women participate in the Hyderabad World Cup qualifiers in March. More interesting, however, is the support staff he will be bringing with him in his second term with the team, which will officially be till the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics as per the contract.

Former Argentina defender and Olympian Matias Vila will join as the analytical coach, while Wayne Lombard, widely credited with the Indian team's impressive fitness standards four years ago, will come on board as the head of athletic performance. Lombard will be assisted by South Africans Rodet Yila and Ciara Yila as scientific advisors.

Sjoerd Marijne. FILE PHOTO

### Fresh energy

"It's great to be back. After nearly four and half years, I return with fresh energy and a clear vision to support the team's growth and help the players achieve their full potential on the world stage," Marijne said in a statement.

He is scheduled to arrive on January 14 and take immediate charge with the preparatory camp beginning January 19.

Hockey India, meanwhile, is also on the lookout for a new junior women's team coach following the exit of Tushar Khandker after similar accusations of sexual, mental and physical misconduct.

# Ideal platform to showcase talent, feel HIL captains

**The big prize:** The captains pose with the trophy on Friday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

**K. Keerthivasan**
CHENNAI

*You don't inspire your teammates by showing them how amazing you are. You inspire them by showing them how amazing they are – Adventure racer and motivational speaker Robyn Benincasa.*

For the eight Indian captains of the Hockey India League (HIL), which begins at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium here on January 3, the league offers an ideal platform to do exactly that – bring out the best in their teammates, both Indian and foreign.

The Chennai leg of the league will conclude on January 9, after which the action shifts to Ranchi (January 11 to 16) and Bhubaneswar (January 17 to 26).

For Harmanpreet Singh, captain of India and JSW Soorma HC, expectations are understandably high. Whether representing club or country, the objective is to win, he said.

"There is no added pressure, to be honest. On the contrary, it's good that one gets the opportunity to play with juniors, and it's good for them too," he said.

The captains were unanimous in their view that the HIL provides a crucial opportunity for youngsters to showcase their talent and push for national selection, with major tournaments such as the FIH Pro League, Asian Games and World Cup on the horizon.

"This is a very important step for us and HIL will help identify the best players," said Manpreet Singh, captain of Ranchi Royals.

"In the next few months we will have major International tournaments including the World Cup (August) and Asian Games (September). So we will try, and field our best team for the two big events."

Manpreet also underlined the importance of spreading the league across multiple venues. SG Pipers features the highest number of players – four – who took part in the Junior World Cup held in Tamil Nadu last month.

# Gill set to return; Kishan in the race

**Amol Karhadkar**
MUMBAI

Shubman Gill is set to return as India's ODI captain, while his deputy Shreyas Iyer is likely to remain on sidelines when the national senior selection committee finalises the squad for the three-match series against New Zealand.

The selection panel is scheduled to meet online on Saturday. *The Hindu* understands that Gill, who missed the recent ODI series against South Africa after suffering a neck spasm during the opening Test, will also attend the first official selection committee meeting of the calendar year.

Gill's return is expected to result in Dhruv Jurel – who was drafted in as a reserve batter for the South Africa series – making way for the opener. Shreyas, out of action since hurting his abdominal muscles in the third ODI in Australia in October, had been targetting a comeback, but delay in his rehabilitation means that the middle-order batter is yet to receive medical clearance from the BCCI Centre of Excellence.

The only other possible change could be the return of Ishan Kishan in place of Rishabh Pant as the reserve wicketkeeper-batter. Kishan has already been recalled to India's squad for the five-match T20I series against the Kiwis later this month, as well as the T20 World Cup starting on February 7.

Gill. FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

It is understood that the selection panel feels that, apart from having proven his credentials in the 50-over format during the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy, Kishan should also be given sufficient time to resettle into the Indian dressing room following a two-year absence.

The bowling department is unlikely to see any changes, with the spin and pace units having delivered consistently across the six ODIs so far this season.

# Fit-again Nagal hopes for a golden reset in the new year

**N. Sudarshan**
BENGALURU

On December 30, Sumit Nagal put out on X a photograph of him getting out of a car and captioned it: "Thanks for the bumpy ride, 2025".

It aptly reflected a period during which he did not win a single title and slid from being inside the top-100 in January to No. 277 by December.

In a sense, his whole career has been one long bumpy ride. Injuries, illnesses and below-par form have ensured that he has completed very few seasons without breaking down.

The 28-year-old, however, is hoping that 2026 would be different. He has tweaked his training and preparation methods by closing his 2025 campaign earlier than normal and giving himself a sufficiently long pre-season.

"It is one of the best preseasons I have had," Nagal told select media ahead of the Bengaluru Open ATP 125 Challenger which begins on Monday. "It was five-six weeks long and we worked a lot on my body and tennis."

The jam-packed ATP calendar doesn't give a player enough space between tournaments. This aspect appears to have hindered Nagal from building on his highs.

**Rectify and revise:** Nagal closed his 2025 campaign earlier, to tweak his training and preparation. FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

At the 2024 Australian Open, he beat World No. 27 Alexander Bublik. Then, he won the 2024 Chennai Challenger to break into the top-100.

And at the 2024 Monte Carlo Masters, he dragged World No. 7 Holger Rune to three sets. But the follow-up acts in 2025 never materialised.

"I'm not very gifted with height [to get a big serve in]. So I need to work a lot on my points. This could be one reason that the body gets tired," Nagal opined.

"So we are going to do small training blocks throughout the year so that I don't lose the base [level of fitness and tennis skill]. Earlier, I would play as many tournaments as I could. I am not going to make that mistake again," he added.

At 28, tennis careers tend to plateau. But Nagal feels he still has a lot left.

"I would love to compete for the next six, seven years at the high level, where I am playing Slams," he said. "If I don't [play Slams], I don't really know. But as of now at least till 35."

In that quest, a repeat of his title-winning run in the Garden City from 2017 will signal a golden reset.

## SNAPSHOTS

### Bashir, Potts included for the final Ashes Test

Seamer Matthew Potts and spinner Shoaib Bashir were included in the 12-member England squad announced on Friday for the fifth Ashes Test against Australia to be played in Sydney from Sunday.

**The squad:** Ben Stokes (Capt.), Shoaib Bashir, Jacob Bethell, Harry Brook, Brydon Carse, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Matthew Potts, Joe Root, Jamie Smith, Josh Tongue.

### Greece too good for Japan; Argentina topples Spain

Stefanos Tsitsipas found his winning touch on his return to action from injury as he led Greece to a 3-0 win over Japan in group play at the ATP-WTA United Cup in Perth on Friday. Earlier, Sebastian Baez and Solana Sierra led Argentina to a 3-0 defeat of Spain.

**The results: Group A: Argentina bt Spain 3-0** (Sebastian Baez bt Jaume Munar 6-4, 6-4; Solana Sierra bt Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 6-4, 5-7, 6-0; Maria Carle & Guido Andreozzi bt Yvonne Reimers & Inigo Cervantes 7-6(6), 6-2).

**Group E: Greece bt Japan 3-0** (Maria Sakkari bt Naomi Osaka 6-4, 6-2; Stefanos Tsitsipas bt Shintaro Mochizuki 6-3, 6-4; Sakkari & Tsitsipas bt Nao Hibino & Yasutaka Uchiyama 6-3, 6-3).

### PWL auction today

Several top wrestlers, including Aman Sehrawat, Antim PanghalYui Susaki, Yusneylis Guzman Lopez and Iryna Koliadenko, will be among 250-plus grapplers who will go under the hammer at an auction in New Delhi on Saturday for the Pro Wrestling League, scheduled from Jan. 15.

**First strike:** Baez starred in Argentina's win over Spain with a victory against Munar. AFP

Khawaja with wife Rachel and daughters Aisha and Ayla. AP

# Khawaja calls it a day, hits out at racial stereotypes

**Associated Press**
SYDNEY

Veteran Australia batter Usman Khawaja has announced he will retire from international cricket after the fifth Ashes Test beginning on Sunday at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

The Pakistan-born Khawaja, who was the first Muslim to play for Australia, used his retirement announcement to criticise the "racial" stereotyping he experienced.

It will be the 39-year-old Khawaja's 88th and final Test – played at the ground where he began his first-class career.

Khawaja said he felt he was treated "a little bit different, even to now," because of his Pakistan and Muslim background.

## INBRIEF

### New Chelsea boss McFarlane braces for Man City clash

Chelsea interim boss Calum McFarlane was officially introduced to the squad on Friday after a "crazy 24 hours" following Enzo Maresca's exit, with Manchester City looming. "It's been a crazy 24 hours, a whirlwind, as you can imagine but also really enjoyable, really exciting, so I can only feel positive about this," under-21s boss McFarlane told reporters on Friday.

**LIVE TELECAST**

**Vijay Hazare Trophy:** JioHotstar, 9 a.m.

**Serie A:** DAZN, 5, 7.30, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Sunday)

**Premier League:** SS Select 1 & JioHotstar, 6, 8.30 & 11 p.m.

**LaLiga:** FanCode, 6.30, 8.45, 11 p.m.& 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)

**HIL:** (Women), Sony Sports Ten 1 & LiV, 5 p.m. & Men: 7.30 p.m.

**The Ashes:** 5th Test, day 1, Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar 5 a.m. (Sunday)

# SMAT title biggest moment in my career, says Anukul

The quintessential team man, who played a key role in Jharkhand's maiden triumph in the T20 championship, has been in fine form both with the bat and ball in the Hazare Trophy as well

**CRICKET**

**M.R. Praveen Chandran**
AHMEDABAD

For Anukul Roy, personal milestones are always secondary to his team's success.

Whether with the bat or ball, the 27-year-old believes in delivering his best for the team. A quintessential team man, Anukul was one of the heroes for Jharkhand in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) triumph, with 303 runs, 18 wickets and nine catches.

**Game-changing knock**

In the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy, Anukul has already played a game-changing knock with the bat – an unbeaten 98 against Pondicherry – and has tied down the batters in the middle overs with his disciplined bowling.

**On the ball:** Anukul says that he tweaks his game according to match situations. FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

"You can't court success without hard work. For me it began in the pre-season camp we had before the Buchi Babu Trophy.

"I know my role in the team and I tweak my game according to match situations. I stick to the basics and bowl to the field.

"While batting I ensure that I don't get bogged down and don't mind taking the odd risk.

"We were in a spot against Pondicherry. But credit to (captain Kumar) Kushagra for making it easier for me. I knew I had the shots to finish the innings on a high," said Anukul.

"It has been a great season for Jharkhand. The icing on the cake was definitely the SMAT title win. It was easily the biggest moment in my career.

**The bonus**

"The Player-of-the-Series award was a bonus. But we still have some unfinished business to do this season. For me I would like to play regularly in (the) IPL.

"Right now I am the second- or third-choice spinner in my IPL team (Kolkata Knight Riders), but I want to be the premier spinner and will work hard to reach that level," said the former India under-19 player.

# Sai Sudharsan out for a few weeks

**Sports Bureau**
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu batter B. Sai Sudharsan will be out of action for at least a few weeks after suffering a rib injury during the Vijay Hazare Trophy game against Madhya Pradesh last week.

The southpaw is now at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, where he is undergoing rehab. Sai Sudharsan injured himself when he dived to complete a run during his knock of 51. He retired hurt, came back to bat again towards the end, and was the last TN batter dismissed in that game, which his side lost by two wickets. Earlier last year, Sai Sudharsan made his Test debut and has featured in six games for India.

Meanwhile, TN, which has lost three of its four matches, will be strengthened for the next two games, with Washington Sundar and Varun Chakaravarthy set to feature against Rajasthan (Saturday) and Tripura (Tuesday). The BCCI has asked the duo to play these games ahead of the white-ball series against New Zealand, which starts on January 11.

**VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY — SATURDAY'S FIXTURES**

**Elite: Group A (Ahmedabad):** Rajasthan vs. Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand vs. Kerala, Madhya Pradesh vs. Pondicherry, Karnataka vs. Tripura.
**Group B (Rajkot):** Jammu & Kashmir vs. Uttar Pradesh, Baroda vs. Vidarbha, Chandigarh vs. Hyderabad, Assam vs. Bengal.
**Group C (Jaipur):** Punjab vs. Sikkim, Chhattisgarh vs. Himachal Pradesh, Goa vs. Uttarakhand, Maharashtra vs. Mumbai.
**Group D (Bengaluru):** Railways vs. Saurashtra, Andhra vs. Gujarat, Haryana vs. Odisha, Delhi vs. Services.
**Plate (Ranchi):** Bihar vs. Mizoram, Manipur vs. Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh vs. Nagaland.

# Gill to appear for Punjab in a closed-door affair

**Shayan Acharya**
JAIPUR

India's Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill will turn up for Punjab in a Vijay Hazare Trophy fixture against Sikkim on Saturday, but the match will be played behind closed doors.

Last week, more than 20,000 spectators had turned up at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium to watch Rohit Sharma in action for Mumbai. However, Punjab will play at the Jaipuria Vidyalaya Ground, where there are no facilities for the spectators.

Situated inside the school premises, the ground has no proper seating arrangements for the spectators.

"The fixtures were decided much in advance, and back then, there was no clarity about the availability of the international players," D.D. Kumawat, the convenor of the ad-hoc committee for the Rajasthan Cricket Association, told *The Hindu*.

# East Bengal routs Nita FA, goes top

**All smiles:** Gokulam Kerala players celebrate their goal against Garhwal United. DEBASISH BHADURI

**IWL**

**Sports Bureau**
KOLKATA

Defending champion East Bengal FC drubbed Nita Football Academy 5-0 in a fifth-round match of the Indian Women's League (IWL) at the Kalyani Stadium to reach the top of the standings, here on Friday.

The top-of-the-table clash turned out to be a lopsided affair. Sulanjana Raul put East Bengal in the lead in the sixth minute before Soumya Guguloth, Ugandans Resty Nanziri and Fazila Ikwaput, and substitute Priyangka Devi Naorem scored to complete the tally. East Bengal took its tally to 12 points from four straight wins.

In a match played at the AIFF National Centre of Excellence, former champion Sethu FC routed debutant Sesa Football Academy 5-0. Martina Thokchom, Kaviya Pakkirisamy, Lisham Babina Devi, Lynda Kom Serto and Ruchi found the target to give Sethu its second successive win. Sethu has 10 points from five matches and is placed second on the table.

Kickstart FC of Bengaluru rallied to beat Sribhumi FC 2-1 and ended its losing streak. Gokulam Kerala FC and Garhwal United FC played out a 1-1 draw.

**The results: At Kalyani:** East Bengal FC 5 (Sulanjana Raul 6, Soumya Guguloth 42, Resty Nanziri 50, Fazila Ikwaput 63, Priyangka Devi Naorem 88) bt Nita Football Academy 0; Kickstart FC 2 (Loveth Njideka Edeh 81, Babysana Devi 85-pen) bt Sribhumi FC 1 (Yumnam Kamala Devi 12-pen).
**At NCE, Kolkata:** Sethu FC 5 (Martina Thokchom 24, Kaviya Pakkirisamy 27, Lisham Babina Devi 35, Lynda Kom Serto 65, Ruchi 72) bt Sesa Football Academy 0; Gokulam Kerala FC 1 (Shilji Shaji 21) drew with Garhwal United FC 1 (Deepika Pal 52).

# Xabi Alonso's pivotal week in the Madrid hot seat

Managerial life in the Spanish capital can be challenging when the results dry up, as Alonso is discovering. Despite a promising beginning, a form slump has led to the 44-year-old dealing with boardroom drama, superstar egos and fickle fan sentiment. Given club president Florentino Perez's impatience with managers, Alonso's future hinges on how his side starts the new year

**Reuters**
**Agence France-Presse**

When Xabi Alonso was unveiled as the manager of Real Madrid in May last year, there was palpable excitement not just in the Spanish capital but also across the football world at large.

This, after all, was a former Bernabeu midfield general, loved by Madridistas for his trophy-laden playing years. As emotional arcs go, there are few more popular than a club legend's return.

## Building a reputation

Moreover, after retiring, Alonso – coached by Pep Guardiola, Jose Mourinho and Vicente del Bosque among others – had quickly earned the reputation of being an elite manager.

He guided Bayer Leverkusen to a historic German league and cup double in 2023-24 in his first full season after taking over. His team became the first to complete a Bundesliga campaign unbeaten, disrupting powerhouse Bayern Munich's monopoly.

Alonso also demonstrated his prowess as an adroit tactician. Having to combat a Bayern side with more accomplished players and richer resources, he fashioned inventive solutions. His ideas were modern and progressive, bolstered by a rigorous structure.

In short, Alonso's move to Madrid appealed to the partisan, the neutral and the 'tactico'. But charged with reviving a Real side that ended last season without a major trophy, how would he fare? Amid the excitement, there were also reservations. Coaching Real Madrid involves navigating high-stakes boardroom politics, superstar egos and fickle fan sentiment. Carlo Ancelotti managed it with great success, winning 15 trophies in two spells, but even he faced criticism in 2024-25. His methods were thought to have outlived their utility.

Alonso's stint began promisingly. Although his side was knocked out of the semifinals of the Club World Cup in the summer, he showed tactical flexibility, utilising both a four-man and three-man defence, whereas his predecessor Ancelotti was criticised for not being adaptive enough. By contrast Alonso was keen to adjust things during matches, including where his players were positioned and how they pressed.

He spoke of playing an "ambitious" game with "emotion and energy", and when the season began, the results were encouraging. Madrid won 13 of the first 14 games, including a Clasico conquest of bitter rival Barcelona. After four consecutive defeats to Barcelona across competitions last season, Madrid entered the match desperately in need of a statement win to validate Alonso's project and it duly snapped its losing streak.

> My mood doesn't change from one day to the next. We need to improve in several areas. We need to give the game a different intention and rhythm, and combine control with verticality
>
> **XABI ALONSO**

GETTY IMAGES

But things took a turn in November and December. After a win over Valencia, which established Madrid firmly on top of LaLiga, Alonso's side failed to win four of the next seven games, allowing Barcelona to displace it. It also lost Champions League games against Liverpool and Manchester City, as the Basque coach began to feel the heat. Speculation was rife that Alonso would be shown the door, with reports questioning whether he would survive till Christmas.

Two successive wins in the league have ensured Alonso will stay in the hot seat when Madrid faces Real Betis on Sunday, its first match of the new year. But his situation remains perilous, with *ESPN* reporting recently that Madrid was considering its options. The club, under president Florentino Perez, is known to be impatient when the results dry up: the number of coaches who have lasted between three months and just under a year is in double digits.

## Growing frustration

If reports from the Spanish capital are to be believed, the upcoming week could prove pivotal for Alonso's future. After the Betis fixture, Madrid travels to Saudi Arabia to face city rival Atletico in the semifinals of the Super Cup. Anything other than a win could put the cat among the pigeons. As recent whistles from the Bernabeu stands have shown, the frustration in Madrid is growing.

One of Alonso's primary tasks when he took charge was to find the balance that Ancelotti failed to achieve last season following Kylian Mbappe's arrival from PSG. He needed to put together a formula for Mbappe and Vinicius Jr. to work together without sacrificing too much out of possession, given their disinclination to repeatedly press and track back in defence.

Indeed, it was always going to be interesting to see whether Alonso could get his superstars to buy into his system. Madrid managers have tended to allow the individual to supersede the collective. The sheer quality of talent at the club has made this work. But in the modern game, where the spaces are more intensely contested, this isn't a consistently reliable method, as Madrid found out last season. Ancelotti was at times exasperated with his forward line's unwillingness to work hard enough for the sake of the team as a whole.

"What I am certain of is that we need and want everyone to defend – the 11 players on the pitch have to be involved defensively," Alonso said before the season started, but it's fair to say he hasn't cracked it just yet. If anything, this requirement has contributed to some bad blood in the dressing room.

While Mbappe's scintillating form – 29 goals in all competitions – has carried the side, the Alonso-Vinicius relationship has not been straightforward.

Alonso has left Vinicius out of the starting lineup on occasion and subbed him off on others, most notably in the Clasico. The Brazilian's outburst has contributed to gossip that the manager has lost the dressing room.

> Here even if you win matches, no one is really happy, there are few teams like that. I am positive that Xabi is very good. You have to give him time and stay calm, but this is difficult at Madrid
>
> **TONI KROOS**

Francesco Mauri, former assistant coach to Ancelotti, refuted this idea. "Xabi's situation isn't ideal, but I don't think it has anything to do with his relationship with the players," Mauri told *Diario AS*. "It isn't easy to coach Madrid and change concepts. It's intelligent not to be stubborn with an idea if it isn't working. It's about finding the system that makes you win, because if you win everything else becomes easier. It's nonsense to say players try to get a coach sacked. It's an exaggeration. Madrid is like that. Xabi is right now the best possible coach for Madrid."

It must also be mentioned that Alonso has had to contend with an injury crisis, at times missing up to 11 first-team players – Mbappe's knee injury couldn't have come at a worse time.

## Madrid's unique pressure

Madrid legend Toni Kroos threw his weight behind Alonso, speaking on Brazilian great Romario's YouTube channel. "Here even if you win matches, no one is really happy, there are few teams like that," he said. "The coach has little time. You can't think about how you want to play in a year or two, you need results. I am positive that Xabi is very good. He already knew this could happen. You have to give him time and stay calm, but this is difficult at Madrid."

Alonso, for his part, knows he needs to stick to his process and trust that the results will come. "We need to improve in several areas: when we don't have the ball and when we do have it, we need to give the game a different intention and rhythm, and combine control with verticality," he said. "My mood doesn't change from one day to the next. I'm also critical in a constructive way, but I put it in context with where we've come from and what's coming in January."

# STACKING UP

### ATP Men's Top 15

| # | Player | Age | Points | Events |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Carlos Alcaraz | 22 | 12,050 | 19 |
| 2 | Jannik Sinner | 24 | 11,500 | 18 |
| 3 | Alexander Zverev | 28 | 5,110 | 24 |
| 4 | Novak Djokovic | 38 | 4,820 | 20 |
| 5 | Felix Auger-Aliassime | 25 | 4,190 | 28 |
| 6 | Taylor Fritz | 28 | 4,085 | 23 |
| 7 | Alex de Minaur | 26 | 4,080 | 23 |
| 8 | Lorenzo Musetti | 23 | 3,990 | 23 |
| 9 | Ben Shelton | 23 | 3,960 | 23 |
| 10 | Jack Draper | 24 | 2,990 | 17 |
| 11 | Alexander Bublik | 28 | 2,845 | 29 |
| 12 | Casper Ruud | 27 | 2,825 | 21 |
| 13 | Daniil Medvedev | 29 | 2,710 | 24 |
| 14 | A. Davidovich Fokina | 26 | 2,585 | 26 |
| 15 | Holger Rune | 22 | 2,580 | 21 |

**Top Indians ▶**

Sumit Nagal
Rank 277 ▲ No change

Aryan Shah
Rank 402 ▲ 1 spot

### WTA Women's Top 15

| # | Player | Age | Points | Events |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Aryna Sabalenka | 27 | 10,870 | 21 |
| 2 | Iga Swiatek | 24 | 8,395 | 21 |
| 3 | Coco Gauff | 21 | 6,763 | 21 |
| 4 | Amanda Anisimova | 24 | 6,287 | 23 |
| 5 | Elena Rybakina | 26 | 5,850 | 23 |
| 6 | Jessica Pegula | 31 | 5,583 | 23 |
| 7 | Madison Keys | 30 | 4,335 | 21 |
| 8 | Jasmine Paolini | 29 | 4,325 | 19 |
| 9 | Mirra Andreeva | 18 | 4,319 | 19 |
| 10 | Ekaterina Alexandrova | 31 | 3,375 | 26 |
| 11 | Belinda Bencic | 28 | 3,119 | 21 |
| 12 | Clara Tauson | 23 | 2,770 | 23 |
| 13 | Linda Noskova | 21 | 2,641 | 25 |
| 14 | Elina Svitolina | 31 | 2,606 | 16 |
| 15 | Emma Navarro | 24 | 2,515 | 25 |

**Top Indians ▶**

Sahaja Yamalapalli
Rank 330 ▲ 1 spot

Shrivalli Bhamidipaty
Rank 480 ▲ 1 spot

### English Premier League Standings

| # | Team | GP | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | PTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Arsenal | 19 | 14 | 3 | 2 | 37 | 12 | 25 | 45 |
| 2 | Man. City | 19 | 13 | 2 | 4 | 43 | 17 | 26 | 41 |
| 3 | Aston Villa | 19 | 12 | 3 | 4 | 30 | 23 | 7 | 39 |
| 4 | Liverpool | 19 | 10 | 3 | 6 | 30 | 26 | 4 | 33 |
| 5 | Chelsea | 19 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 32 | 21 | 11 | 30 |
| 6 | Man. United | 19 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 33 | 29 | 4 | 30 |
| 7 | Sunderland | 19 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 20 | 18 | 2 | 29 |
| 8 | Everton | 19 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 20 | 20 | 0 | 28 |
| 9 | Brentford | 19 | 8 | 3 | 8 | 28 | 26 | 2 | 27 |
| 10 | Crystal Palace | 19 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 22 | 21 | 1 | 27 |
| 11 | Fulham | 19 | 8 | 3 | 8 | 26 | 27 | -1 | 27 |
| 12 | Tottenham | 19 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 27 | 23 | 4 | 26 |
| 13 | Newcastle | 19 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 26 | 24 | 2 | 26 |
| 14 | Brighton | 19 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 28 | 27 | 1 | 25 |
| 15 | Bournemouth | 19 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 29 | 35 | -6 | 23 |
| 16 | Leeds United | 19 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 25 | 32 | -7 | 21 |
| 17 | N. Forest | 19 | 5 | 3 | 11 | 18 | 30 | -12 | 18 |
| 18 | West Ham | 19 | 3 | 5 | 11 | 21 | 38 | -17 | 14 |
| 19 | Burnley | 19 | 3 | 3 | 13 | 20 | 37 | -17 | 12 |
| 20 | Wolves | 19 | 0 | 3 | 16 | 11 | 40 | -29 | 3 |

### Italian Serie A Standings

| # | Team | GP | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | PTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Inter Milan | 16 | 12 | 0 | 4 | 35 | 14 | 21 | 36 |
| 2 | AC Milan | 16 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 27 | 13 | 14 | 35 |
| 3 | Napoli | 16 | 11 | 1 | 4 | 24 | 13 | 11 | 34 |
| 4 | Roma | 17 | 11 | 0 | 6 | 20 | 11 | 9 | 33 |
| 5 | Juventus | 17 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 23 | 15 | 8 | 32 |
| 6 | Como | 16 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 22 | 12 | 10 | 27 |
| 7 | Bologna | 16 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 24 | 14 | 10 | 26 |
| 8 | Lazio | 17 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 18 | 12 | 6 | 24 |
| 9 | Sassuolo | 17 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 22 | 21 | 1 | 22 |
| 10 | Atalanta | 17 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 20 | 19 | 1 | 22 |
| 11 | Udinese | 17 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 18 | 28 | -10 | 22 |
| 12 | Cremonese | 17 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 18 | 20 | -2 | 21 |
| 13 | Torino | 17 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 17 | 28 | -11 | 20 |
| 14 | Cagliari | 17 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 19 | 24 | -5 | 18 |
| 15 | Parma | 16 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 11 | 18 | -7 | 17 |
| 16 | Lecce | 16 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 11 | 22 | -11 | 16 |
| 17 | Genoa | 17 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 17 | 27 | -10 | 14 |
| 18 | Verona | 16 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 13 | 25 | -12 | 12 |
| 19 | Pisa | 17 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 12 | 24 | -12 | 11 |
| 20 | Fiorentina | 17 | 1 | 6 | 10 | 17 | 28 | -11 | 9 |

### Spanish LaLiga Standings

| # | Team | GP | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | PTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Barcelona | 18 | 15 | 1 | 2 | 51 | 20 | 31 | 46 |
| 2 | Real Madrid | 18 | 13 | 3 | 2 | 36 | 16 | 20 | 42 |
| 3 | Atletico Madrid | 18 | 11 | 4 | 3 | 33 | 16 | 17 | 37 |
| 4 | Villarreal | 16 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 31 | 15 | 16 | 35 |
| 5 | Espanyol | 17 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 22 | 17 | 5 | 33 |
| 6 | Real Betis | 17 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 29 | 19 | 10 | 28 |
| 7 | Celta Vigo | 17 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 20 | 19 | 1 | 23 |
| 8 | Athletic Club | 18 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 16 | 24 | -8 | 23 |
| 9 | Elche | 17 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 23 | 20 | 3 | 22 |
| 10 | Sevilla | 17 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 24 | 26 | -2 | 20 |
| 11 | Getafe | 17 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 13 | 22 | -9 | 20 |
| 12 | Osasuna | 17 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 17 | 20 | -3 | 18 |
| 13 | Real Mallorca | 17 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 19 | 24 | -5 | 18 |
| 14 | Alaves | 17 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 14 | 20 | -6 | 18 |
| 15 | Rayo Vallecano | 17 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 13 | 20 | -7 | 18 |
| 16 | Real Sociedad | 17 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 21 | 25 | -4 | 17 |
| 17 | Valencia | 17 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 16 | 26 | -10 | 16 |
| 18 | Girona | 17 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 15 | 33 | -18 | 15 |
| 19 | Real Oviedo | 17 | 2 | 5 | 10 | 7 | 26 | -19 | 11 |
| 20 | Levante | 16 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 17 | 29 | -12 | 10 |

### German Bundesliga Standings

| # | Team | GP | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | PTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Bayern | 15 | 13 | 2 | 0 | 55 | 11 | 44 | 41 |
| 2 | Dortmund | 15 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 26 | 12 | 14 | 32 |
| 3 | Leverkusen | 15 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 33 | 20 | 13 | 29 |
| 4 | RB Leipzig | 15 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 30 | 19 | 11 | 29 |
| 5 | Hoffenheim | 15 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 29 | 20 | 9 | 27 |
| 6 | Stuttgart | 15 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 25 | 22 | 3 | 26 |
| 7 | Eintracht | 15 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 30 | 30 | 0 | 25 |
| 8 | Union Berlin | 15 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 20 | 23 | -3 | 21 |
| 9 | SC Freiburg | 15 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 25 | 26 | -1 | 20 |
| 10 | Werder | 15 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 18 | 28 | -10 | 17 |
| 11 | Cologne | 15 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 22 | 24 | -2 | 16 |
| 12 | M'gladbach | 15 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 18 | 24 | -6 | 16 |
| 13 | Hamburg | 15 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 16 | 25 | -9 | 16 |
| 14 | Wolfsburg | 15 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 23 | 28 | -5 | 15 |
| 15 | FC Augsburg | 15 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 17 | 28 | -11 | 14 |
| 16 | St Pauli | 15 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 13 | 26 | -13 | 12 |
| 17 | Heidenheim | 15 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 13 | 34 | -21 | 11 |
| 18 | Mainz | 15 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 13 | 26 | -13 | 8 |

### Test Batting

| # | Player | Rating | Career best |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Joe Root | 867 | 932 |
| 2 | Harry Brook | 846 | 898 |
| 3 | Kane Williamson | 822 | 919 |
| 4 | Travis Head | 816 | 884 |
| 5 | Steve Smith | 811 | 947 |
| 6 | Kamindu Mendis | 781 | 784 |
| 7 | Temba Bavuma | 775 | 806 |
| 8 | Yashasvi Jaiswal | 750 | 858 |
| 9 | Saud Shakeel | 734 | 787 |
| 10 | Shubman Gill | 730 | 807 |

### Test Bowling

| # | Player | Rating | Career best |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Jasprit Bumrah | 879 | 908 |
| 2 | Noman Ali | 843 | 853 |
| 2 | Mitchell Starc | 843 | 852 |
| 4 | Pat Cummins | 841 | 914 |
| 5 | Matt Henry | 836 | 853 |
| 6 | Marco Jansen | 825 | 825 |
| 7 | Scott Boland | 810 | 810 |
| 8 | Kagiso Rabada | 807 | 902 |
| 9 | Josh Hazlewood | 783 | 864 |
| 10 | Nathan Lyon | 760 | 812 |

### ODI Batting

| # | Player | Rating | Career best |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Rohit Sharma | 781 | 882 |
| 2 | Virat Kohli | 773 | 909 |
| 3 | Daryl Mitchell | 766 | 782 |
| 4 | Ibrahim Zadran | 764 | 764 |
| 5 | Shubman Gill | 723 | 847 |
| 6 | Babar Azam | 722 | 898 |
| 7 | Harry Tector | 708 | 767 |
| 8 | Shai Hope | 701 | 802 |
| 9 | Charith Asalanka | 690 | 725 |
| 10 | Shreyas Iyer | 679 | 710 |

### ODI Bowling

| # | Player | Rating | Career best |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Rashid Khan | 710 | 799 |
| 2 | Jofra Archer | 670 | 683 |
| 3 | Kuldeep Yadav | 655 | 761 |
| 4 | Maheesh Theekshana | 647 | 686 |
| 5 | Keshav Maharaj | 646 | 741 |
| 6 | Bernard Scholtz | 645 | 648 |
| 7 | Mitchell Santner | 636 | 657 |
| 8 | Josh Hazlewood | 628 | 727 |
| 9 | Abrar Ahmed | 624 | 630 |
| 10 | Matt Henry | 619 | 691 |

### T20I Batting

| # | Player | Rating | Career best |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Abhishek Sharma | 908 | 931 |
| 2 | Phil Salt | 849 | 881 |
| 3 | Tilak Varma | 805 | 845 |
| 4 | Pathum Nissanka | 779 | 794 |
| 5 | Jos Buttler | 770 | 794 |
| 6 | Sahibzada Farhan | 752 | 776 |
| 7 | Travis Head | 713 | 885 |
| 8 | Mitchell Marsh | 684 | 694 |
| 9 | Tim Seifert | 683 | 727 |
| 10 | Dewald Brevis | 680 | 685 |

### T20I Bowling

| # | Player | Rating | Career best |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Varun Chakaravarthy | 804 | 818 |
| 2 | Jacob Duffy | 699 | 750 |
| 3 | Rashid Khan | 694 | 828 |
| 4 | Abrar Ahmed | 691 | 703 |
| 5 | Wanindu Hasaranga | 687 | 809 |
| 6 | Adil Rashid | 686 | 747 |
| 7 | Akeal Hosein | 675 | 726 |
| 8 | Mustafizur Rahman | 665 | 718 |
| 9 | Nathan Ellis | 660 | 678 |
| 10 | Adam Zampa | 655 | 746 |

FIDE

> I normally do not regret what I did. So I enjoy who I am right now. But at the same time, I have to admit, yes, if I spent those years on chess, I believe I should have been stronger

# The world is huge, right? It's not just a chessboard and pieces

As a child prodigy, a dominant World champion and a university professor, Hou Yifan has lived many lives — and she is just 31. Still the top-ranked woman, she intends to study neuroscience to understand the connection between the brain and chess patterns. She continues to awe the sport's fans from time to time, like she did at the Global Chess League recently. She opens up in this conversation about her unique relationship with the game

INTERVIEW

## *Hou Yifan*

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**

Hou Yifan became the women's World chess champion at 16 and abdicated her crown seven years later. In all her title matches, she never lost a game. She is the second-strongest female player of all time, behind Judit Polgar. Chess may no longer be her only interest in life: she is a professor at Peking University and is planning to pursue a PhD in neuroscience.

But Hou still remains the women's No. 1. She occasionally reminds the world of that fact. Like she did recently in Mumbai, where she played a stellar role in Alpine SG Pipers' triumph in the Global Chess League. She won her last four games in the league phase to help her team make the final. Excerpts from an exclusive interview Hou gave *The Hindu*:

**You have been a regular at the Global Chess League.**

This league is very important for the chess world, no matter the format, which is innovative. It is not just the world's top male players, there are women and juniors. In an elite event, girls and juniors usually don't get the chance. There is the entertainment aspect of chess too, while keeping intact the professionalism of the sport. This was my second time with SG Pipers, and it was nice being a teammate of players like Fabiano Caruana, Anish Giri and R. Praggnanandhaa.

> Chess for me represents not just the results. For instance, there is the beauty and philosophy of chess. That I find is more attractive than winning a game

**And how did you find working with coach Pravin Thipsay?**

He is an experienced Grandmaster and has really good theoretical knowledge. We were surprised by some of his understanding of the position, especially the endgame. We later found out that Mumbai is his hometown. This is my first visit and I have liked the city, the hotel, the location and the food.

**You don't play as often as you used to.**

Chess is not my entire life now. I have the passion for it, but it is mainly like a hobby instead of a profession. I am trying to participate in the events in the way I can. Sometimes you miss the game and also you miss the people.

**Do you miss that winning feeling as well?**

Not really. Personality-wise, if you're not talking about chess, I think I am not that competitive. Of course, when I play, I fight for that win, but outside the chess world, I am not like that. Chess for me represents not just the results. For instance, there is the beauty and philosophy of chess. That I find is more attractive than winning a game. Imagine if you luckily win a couple of games, when the position was not winning. So you win by chance, or luck. Let us imagine you are a professional player and you play chess for decades. You won maybe half of them. You didn't win half of them. That is suffering. Yes, I have relatively attained a certain level in my career. I have won most of the games.

**You never lost a game in a World title match. After winning your first championship, in the knockout format, you won three title matches without dropping a single game.**

Yes, actually I was surprised. All my three matches, yes. And I finished the match even before all the games had to be played.

**You have not just been the World champion but one of the best of all time. So stepping away from that, when you were still in your prime and very young and beginning a new career... How did you find that transition?**

It is not difficult. I am just following my heart to make the decision at the moment I want. Let us say I know that chess is part of my life, but I also understand that my life could not be lived only with chess. That is why I felt like, you should remember first you are a human, then you are a chess player. The world is huge, right? It is not just a chessboard and the pieces. I do not want, you know, when you visit a place, when you think about something, when there are some stories, you connect only with chess. I know some of the others may not be like that, and I fully respect them, but I enjoy this kind of lifestyle more.

**Do you remember when you made that decision? Was lack of motivation after winning successive World titles a factor?**

A bit, but I think I didn't really reach my maximum potential. My rating could have been higher. I just thought that I should get a certain education and explore. Maybe that had also something to do with my family background. But I didn't think making such decisions were hard because I always kept in mind that if I wanted, I could come back to the chess world at any time. I normally do not regret what I did. So I enjoy who I am right now, pretty much. But at the same time, I have to admit, yes, if I spent those years on chess, I believe I should have been stronger; my peak should have been at least a bit higher.

**Why international relations?**

I am interested in diplomacy. So I thought that international relations, when it connected with geopolitics and negotiations, maybe there was something in common. But later I did my Masters in public policy. Now I am working for the physical education department. And I am actually applying for my PhD in neuroscience. I know it is a little cross-field. The subject I want to research is the connection between the brain and chess patterns. If you wanted to find something scientifically connected with chess, this is one of the obvious parts. As a chess player, I felt such research could be beneficial to the players, too.

**How do you look back at your first World title?**

The first title is always more meaningful and exciting. It was something special for me. More so because I broke the [32-year-old] record of Maia Chiburdanidze as the youngest champion. And she was a legend who inspired a lot of girls. But I didn't really aim for the record, but the coach and my team kept telling me about it. I thought, OK, if I can try, that is good, but that is not easy, to be honest, because most of the players, if you want to achieve it at 16 or 17, it means you study chess for about 10 years. So that is why I thought D. Gukesh was amazing, because to win in the open section at a very young age is even much more difficult. Before my World Championship, I had played a rapid match with Anatoly Karpov in China, and he said I could win the World title. Coming as it did from a legend, it was very inspiring.

**In 2011, you beat Koneru Humpy in the match to defend your World title.**

That match was the toughest. Not just rating-wise, Humpy was at her peak. She had a very good home preparation, because I remember most of the games, after the opening, I was really in trouble. But I think I was lucky, I tried my best to fight back in the middle game.

**Are you surprised that Humpy hasn't won the classical World Championship yet?**

Yes, she is one of the strongest players not to have won the World title. But she still has chances. She is playing the next Candidates [in March/April], isn't she?

## GAME THEORY

### The year that was: best in Tests

Mitchell Starc and Shubman Gill led the way with ball and bat respectively during the year in Test cricket. A look at the top performers in the game's classical format in 2025:

Mitchell Starc

Mohammed Siraj

**MOST WICKETS IN 2025**

| Player | Team | Tests | Wkts | Ave | SR | 5-fors |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mitchell Starc | Australia | 11 | 55 | 17.32 | 28.4 | 3 |
| Mohammed Siraj | India | 10 | 43 | 27.20 | 43.5 | 2 |
| Blessing Muzarabani | Zimbabwe | 10 | 42 | 26.80 | 42.8 | 3 |
| Ben Stokes | England | 9 | 33 | 23.12 | 40.9 | 2 |
| Taijul Islam | Bangladesh | 6 | 33 | 26.57 | 52.8 | 2 |
| Josh Tongue | England | 6 | 33 | 27.15 | 37.9 | 2 |
| Scott Boland | Australia | 6 | 32 | 15.00 | 30.2 | 1 |
| Jasprit Bumrah | India | 8 | 31 | 22.16 | 47.1 | 3 |
| Simon Harmer | South Africa | 4 | 30 | 14.30 | 34.3 | 2 |
| Noman Ali | Pakistan | 4 | 30 | 17.50 | 30.8 | 3 |

Shubman Gill

**MOST RUNS IN 2025**

| Player | Team | Tests | Runs | Ave | SR | 100s |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shubman Gill | India | 9 | 983 | 70.21 | 63.7 | 5 |
| Travis Head | Australia | 11 | 817 | 40.85 | 79.4 | 2 |
| K.L. Rahul | India | 10 | 813 | 45.16 | 48.5 | 3 |
| Joe Root | England | 10 | 805 | 50.31 | 57.7 | 4 |
| Harry Brook | England | 10 | 771 | 45.35 | 82.5 | 2 |
| Alex Carey | Australia | 11 | 767 | 47.93 | 75.9 | 2 |
| Ravindra Jadeja | India | 10 | 764 | 63.66 | 53.5 | 2 |
| Yashasvi Jaiswal | India | 10 | 745 | 39.21 | 66.2 | 3 |
| Ben Duckett | England | 10 | 735 | 40.83 | 88.2 | 2 |
| Devon Conway | NZ | 5 | 697 | 87.12 | 61.3 | 3 |

Travis Head

SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO.COM

## PICTURE THIS

### Cycling steeplechase

In cyclo-cross, riders race over several laps of a 2.5-3.5km course which can have sections of pavement, grass, inclines, wooden trails, ditches, very deep mud, and even obstacles.

Described as 'the steeplechase of cycling', it severely tests a rider's aerobic endurance, physical strength and bike-handling skills.

Given the harshness of the conditions, riders are allowed to change bicycles and receive mechanical assistance from a pit crew during the race. They are also permitted to dismount, carry their cycles over or around a hurdle, remount and continue racing.

Cyclo-cross bicycles are light, with fairly narrow tyres and drop handlebars. The tyres are tubular and use knobby tread for traction. The braking mechanism involves disc brakes.

Although not a traditional snow or ice sport, a large part of the competitive season unfolds during winter, which means races can be held on icy or snowy ground.

Many of the best riders cross-train — and often compete — in other cycling disciplines.

But cyclo-cross has grown to such a level that many specialise in it.