

CS calls for coordinated action in road safety

Chief Secretary calls for coordinated action, strict enforcement, faster emergency response to reduce accidents statewide

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: A high-level review meeting on the road safety scenario in Chhattisgarh concluded with a strong emphasis on coordinated efforts, public participation, and strict enforcement to prevent road accidents and improve traffic management across the state. Chairing the meeting, Chief Secretary Mr. Vikasheel directed all concerned departments to work in close coordination to strengthen road safety mechanisms. The Chief Secretary instructed the Health Department to ensure



Chief Secretary Mr. Vikasheel chairing high-level review meeting on the road safety scenario on Wednesday here.

the timely arrival of 108 ambulances at accident sites and asked senior officials to closely monitor response times. He also stressed strengthening trauma centers to ensure proper and immediate treatment of accident victims. Emphasizing community involvement, he called for maximum partici-

pation of youth in road safety awareness and voluntary traffic management initiatives. District Collectors were directed to continuously monitor road safety and regularly convene meetings of District Road Safety Committees. At the outset, Transport Secretary Mr. S. Prakash presented an overview of departmen-

FACTFILE

- Focus on black spot correction, ambulance response, helmet use, youth participation to improve road safety.

tal initiatives, while Mr. Sanjay Sharma, Chairman of the Inter-Departmental Lead Agency (Road Safety), shared updates on inter-departmental progress. Of the 152 identified accident black spots, improvement work has been completed at 102 locations, with instructions issued to expedite corrective measures at the remaining 50.

16 State Police Service Officers promoted

RAIPUR: In a morale-boosting move on the last day of the year, the Chhattisgarh government has granted promotions to 16 officers of the State Police Service (SPS). Acting on the recommendation of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and through the special initiative of Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma, the Home (Police) Department issued promotion orders, describing the decision as being in the interest of police personnel and an encouraging step for the department. Based on the recommendations of the Departmental Promotion and Screening Committee, these officers, who were drawing senior scale pay, have been provisionally promoted from the rank of DSP to ASP.

Briefs

BEST OF THE REST

PROPERTY DETAILS

State Government employees directed to submit immovable property details by January 31



RAIPUR: All officers and employees of the Chhattisgarh state government have been directed to submit their annual statement of immovable property by January 31, failing which action may be taken as per rules. In this regard, the General Administration Department (GAD) has issued detailed instructions to all Additional Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, Secretaries, and Special Secretaries. According to the letter issued by the GAD, under Rule 19(1) of the Chhattisgarh Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1965, it is mandatory for every government servant to submit an

annual return detailing immovable property owned by them. This provision aims to ensure transparency and accountability in public service. The department has further informed that from January 2026 onwards, all officers and employees of the Secretariat Service will be required to submit their annual immovable property statements online through the SPARROW portal (epar.cg.gov.in), which is operated by the National Informatics Centre (NIC). The online submission will cover immovable property held during the calendar year from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025.

PRACTICAL EXAMS

Class 10 and 12 Practical Exams begin from today: No re-examination for absentees



RAIPUR: Practical examinations for Class 10 and Class 12 students will commence from January 1 across Chhattisgarh. The Board of Secondary Education (BSE) has made it clear that students who remain absent from the practical examinations will not be given any second opportunity under any circumstances. The board examinations for Classes 10 and 12 are scheduled to begin from February 20,

due to which the practical examinations have been advanced by about ten days this year. As per the BSE schedule, practical exams will be conducted between January 1 and January 20. According to the guidelines issued by the Board, principals of high schools and higher secondary schools have been given the flexibility to conduct practical examinations within the stipulated dates as per their convenience. However, the presence of all students is mandatory, and ensuring their attendance will be the responsibility of the head of the institution. The practical examinations will be conducted strictly in the presence of external examiners appointed by the BSE. Schools have been clearly instructed that they cannot appoint external examiners on their own.

RIISING DRUG ABUSE

Bhagwat should question BJP Govts, not just give speeches on Drug abuse: Deepak Baij



RAIPUR: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat's recent remarks expressing concern over rising drug abuse among the youth have triggered sharp criticism from the Chhattisgarh Pradesh Congress Committee (CPCC). State Congress President Deepak Baij on Tuesday said that mere expressions of concern would

not address the growing menace and urged the RSS chief to hold BJP governments accountable. Baij pointed out that the Bharatiya Janata Party, which he described as an affiliate of the RSS, is in power both at the Centre and in Chhattisgarh, as well as in several other states. "If drugs are entering states like Chhattisgarh from across international borders and narcotics are being sold openly in streets and neighbourhoods, then it reflects a complete failure of BJP governments," he said. Referring to large drug seizures, Baij alleged that when narcotics worth thousands of crores reach ports like Mundra in Gujarat and no effective action follows, the RSS leadership should question the Central government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.


TALENT FELICITATION CEREMONY

Chhattisgarh Marar Patel Samaj holds state-level talent felicitation event




RAIPUR: The Chhattisgarh Marar Patel Mahasangh Karamchari Sangh organised a state-level Pratibha Samman Samaroh (Talent Felicitation Ceremony) at the Shaheed Smarak Bhavan in Raipur, during which meritorious students, youths and community members with outstanding contributions in various fields were honoured. The programme was attended as chief guest by Katghora MLA Premchand Patel, while Mahasangh president Barat Ram Patel presided over the function. Chhattisgarh Gaushala Commission chairman Visheshar Patel was present as the special guest, and Mahasangh con-

venor Rajendra Nayak Patel attended as a distinguished guest, along with several office-bearers and prominent members of the community. Employees' Cell convener Lilar Singh Patel said students and youths of the community who excelled in education, sports, art, literature and social service were felicitated on the occasion. Meritorious students who secured 80 per cent and above marks in Classes 10 and 12 in the academic session 2024-25 (2025 pass-outs), college-level achievers, and students who brought laurels to the community at the state and national levels were honoured with the "Udaan Award".




भारत सरकार
GOVERNMENT
OF INDIA




ATTENTION MANUFACTURERS


of Chewing tobacco, Jarda scented tobacco & Gutkha



CAPACITY-BASED EXCISE DUTY to apply from 1st February, 2026



The Central Excise Duty on Chewing Tobacco, Jarda Scented Tobacco and Gutkha, when manufactured with the aid of packing machine and packed in pouches, will be levied on the basis of capacity of production
w.e.f. 1st February, 2026




No need for new Central Excise registration for already registered taxpayers.


A Declaration in prescribed format regarding details of machines in the premises as per Rules shall be filed by such manufacturers with the Jurisdictional Deputy/Assistant Commissioner of Central Excise, between **1st February, 2026 to 7th February, 2026**


S.No.	Compliance	Due Date
1.	Central Excise Duty Payment for a month	06 th day of the same month
2.	Central Excise Statement for a month	10 th day of the same month


In other cases such as tin, the duty will be paid on the assessable value calculated on the basis of Retail Selling Price (subject to abatement).


For more information please refer to notification No. 04/2025-Central Excise dated 31st December, 2025


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CBC 15502/13/0048/2526

Cabinet approves 50% Road Tax rebate for Raipur Auto Expo

Major financial reforms greenlit at meeting held under the chair of CM

Central Chronicle News

Cabinet confirmed the implementation of the Police Commissionerate System in the Raipur Metropolitan Police from January 23.



RAIPUR: In a move set to delight vehicle buyers across the state, the Chhattisgarh Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, has announced a 50% rebate on lifetime road tax for vehicles purchased during the upcoming 9th Auto Expo. The Expo is scheduled to take place at the Science College Ground in Raipur from January 20 to February 5, 2026. This one-time concession will be applied at the time of registration for all vehicles sold at the event. Beyond the relief for motorists, the Cabinet meeting at Mantralaya (Mahanadi Bhavan) resulted in several landmark decisions aimed at fiscal discipline, tribal welfare, and administrative restructuring. The Cabinet approved a budgetary provision of Rs 55.69 crore to fully repay loans taken by the Chhattisgarh Rajya Antyavasayi Sahkari Vitt Evam Vikas Nigam from five national corporations. Repayments cover loans from corporations dedicated to Scheduled Castes,

Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Minorities, and Divyang (persons with disabilities) development. Once cleared, a government guarantee liability of Rs 229.91 crore will be terminated. Similarly, the Government guarantees have been approved for 2026 loans to ensure the procurement of tendupatta at the rate of Rs 5,500 per standard bag.

Cabinet also gave approval for the proposals related with Millet promotion. Working capital was approved for the procurement and processing of Kodo, Kutki, and Ragi. A Rs 30 crore interest-free loan was granted to the Minor Forest Produce Federation for the marketing and value addition

of non-nationalized forest products. The incentive for Usna rice milling has been doubled from Rs 20 to Rs 40 per quintal. To qualify, the required milling period has been reduced from three months to two. For rice millers providing bank guarantees for paddy procurement, stamp duty has been slashed from 0.25% to 0.05%.

Major Reforms in Industrial Development Policy 2024-30

Chhattisgarh State Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, has approved significant amendments to the State's Industrial Development Policy 2024-30. These revisions aim to make the policy more competitive, transparent, and investment-friendly compared to other states, thereby strengthening prospects for industrial growth, expansion of the service sector, and the creation of new employment opportunities. The primary objective of the Cabinet's decision is to ensure sustainable and quality employment for the domiciles of the state. In this direction, new provisions have been introduced relating to Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) reimbursement and employment generation incentives. Under the revised policy, MSME units in special sectors such as pharmaceuticals, textiles, food processing, electronics, artificial intelligence, and information technology that generate employment for more than 50 persons will also be eligible for wage-linked incentives for employing local residents of Chhattisgarh. Expanding the scope of the service sector, the Cabinet has also included computer-based testing infrastructure, e-commerce and app-based aggregators, and NABL-accredited diagnostic laboratories under the policy framework. These institutions will now be eligible for incentives and benefits as prescribed under the Industrial Development Policy. To accelerate growth in tourism and healthcare infrastructure, incentive-based amendments have been approved for the establishment of five-star hotels in Raipur, Durg, and Bilaspur, and three-star hotels in other districts. Similarly, the policy also promotes the establishment of large private multi-speciality hospitals across the state.

Governor's prior approval mandatory for posting of University Registrars

Central Chronicle News

The order has sparked a stir within the state government circles, as it extends the Governor's oversight not only to appointments but also to disciplinary actions.

The Governor's office has clarified that no appointment or posting of a Registrar can proceed without the Chancellor's explicit approval. Furthermore, the directive states that any departmental action or inquiry-based proceedings against university officers and employees will also require prior consent from the Raj Bhavan.

Formal letters outlining these instructions have been dispatched to the Secretaries of Higher Education, Medical Education and Agriculture, as these departments oversee the various state-run universities.

According to sources within the Raj Bhavan, the decision follows a formal proposal passed by the Executive Council of Bilaspur University. The council had advocated for a mandatory approval process for Registrar appointments, prompting the Governor to issue state-wide

FASTFACTS

● According to sources within the Raj Bhavan, the decision follows a formal proposal passed by the Executive Council of Bilaspur University.

instructions to ensure uniformity and transparency.

The move is being viewed by some within the state government as an intervention in executive functions. Discussions are reportedly underway regarding the potential impact of this decision on the autonomy of the state government in managing state administrative postings within the university system.

This directive is expected to bring a new layer of scrutiny to university administration in Chhattisgarh, ensuring that the highest office of the state is directly involved in key personnel decisions of academic institutions.

IAS Officer Shehla Nigar promoted to Principal Secretary

RAIPUR: In a significant bureaucratic reshuffle on the final day of the year, the Chhattisgarh government has promoted senior Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Ms. Shehla Nigar to the rank of Principal Secretary.

The promotion comes as part of the state's year-end administrative updates. Ms. Nigar, a seasoned officer, will now take on responsibilities in the higher echelons of the state administration.

Alongside this high-level promotion, the state government has also cleared the orders for five IAS officers from the 2017 batch to receive the Junior Selection Grade (Junior Pay Scale).

The officers receiving the updated pay scale include Akash Chhikara, Rohit Vyas, Mayank Chaturvedi, Kunal Dudawat and Chandrakant Verma.

These orders were officially issued on Wednesday, marking a transition in the administrative hierarchy as the state moves into the new year. These changes are expected to streamline various departmental functions and reinforce the leadership across different districts and sectors in Chhattisgarh.

PRSU women's yoga team departs for Inter-University Championship



Central Chronicle News

The team will depart on January 1 to participate in the All India Inter-University Yoga (Women) Championship 2025-26.

RAIPUR: The women's yoga team of Pandit Ravishankar Shukla University (PRSU) is all set to showcase its prowess on the national stage. The prestigious national event is being hosted by the Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana (S-VYASA) in Bengaluru and will run from January 5 to January 9, 2026.

The university has selected a talented group of athletes to compete across individual, rhythmic and group categories including Aakriti Tiwari in Individual Category whereas in the Rhythmic Category, Sakshi Verma, Group Event Team: Neelam, Chetna, Timesh-wari, Bhineshwari, Janvi Gupta and Suniti Pradhan.

The team is being led by Puridar, who is serving

FASTFACTS

● the team's preparation and wished them success in bringing laurels to the institution.

as the Yoga Coach and Ms. Upasana Vishwakarma, the Team Manager.

Prior to their departure, the team received a warm send-off and encouragement from the university's top officials. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Sachchidanand Shukla expressed confidence in the team's preparation and wished them success in bringing laurels to the institution. Other prominent faculty members who extended their best wishes include Prof. Reeta Venugopal (Director, Department of Physical Education), Prof. Rajeev Choudhary (Chairman, School of Studies in Physical Education) and Prof. C.D. Agashe.

The championship is expected to feature over 230 universities and more than 2,500 participants, making it one of the largest competitive yoga gatherings for women in the country.

NEWSLINE

JAMBOREE

Chgarh to host 1st National Rover-Ranger Jamboree



RAIPUR: Cabinet Minister Gajendra Yadav chaired a high-level review meeting at his Nava Raipur residence to finalize preparations for the 1st National Rover-Ranger Jamboree. The mega event is scheduled to take place from January 9 to January 13 at Village Dudhli in the Balod district. The five-day national event will be officially inaugurated by the Governor of Chhattisgarh, Ramen Deka. The gathering is expected to see the participation of Union Ministers, Members of Parliament, the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, and various other state ministers and public representatives.

This Jamboree serves as a massive platform for youth exchange, featuring more than 10,000 participants including Rovers and Rangers from approximately 45 states across India. Youth delegations from Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Nepal are also expected to attend.

BHORAMDEO CORRIDOR

Bhumipoojan of Bhoramdeo Corridor today

RAIPUR : CM Vishnu Deo Sai, along with Union Minister for Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, will perform the bhumipoojan of the Bhoramdeo Corridor in Kabirdham district on January 1. The Central Government has approved Rs. 146 crore for this ambitious project under the Swadesh Darshan Yojana 2.0. The initiative aims at the integrated development of the historic and religious Bhoramdeo Temple complex and its surrounding heritage sites.

The bhumipoojan ceremony to be held at the Bhoramdeo Temple premises will be attended by Deputy Chief Ministers Arun Sao and Vijay Sharma, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Dr. Raman Singh, Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu, Tourism and Culture Minister Rajesh Agrawal, Commerce and Industry Minister Lakhn Lal Dewan-gan, Member of Parliament Santosh Pandey, MLA Smt Bhawana Bohra, Chairman of Chhattisgarh Tourism Board Neelu Sharma, along with several former legislators, chairpersons of boards and commissions, and other public representatives.

| MOBILE MEDICAL UNIT |

Remote Tribal regions get a new Health Lifeline

Central Chronicle News

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai flags off 57 Mobile Medical Units.



RAIPUR: Healthcare services are now set to reach the doorsteps of people living in remote and densely forested tribal regions of Chhattisgarh. Under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) scheme, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Wednesday flagged off 57 Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) vehicles at Nava Raipur. With the rollout of these Mobile Medical Units, preparations are now complete to ensure regular healthcare services for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Keeping in view the difficulties faced by communities in reaching hospitals from remote areas, the

government believes that this initiative will deliver essential health services directly to villages and habitations. The deployment of these MMUs will ensure regular healthcare coverage for more than 2,100 villages and habitations across 18 districts of the State. Over two lakh people belonging to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups are expected to benefit directly from this initiative. Sai stated that families living in hilly and inaccessible regions will now have access to medical examination and treatment facilities within their

own villages. He described the initiative as a "strong foundation for comprehensive participation and health security of tribal communities."

Calling it a proud day for Chhattisgarh, CM said that the most socially, economically and educationally marginalized sections of society belong to the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups. Out of the state's population of nearly three crore, around 2.30 lakh PVTG individuals reside across 2,100 habitations in 18 districts. These Mobile Medical Units will prove to be a boon for

FASTFACTS

● Regular healthcare services to reach over 2,100 villages and habitations across 18 districts

them. Through the 57 fully equipped MMUs, healthcare delivery in such areas will become significantly easier. Each unit will have a doctor, nurse, laboratory technician and local volunteers. The units will offer 25 types of diagnostic tests and provide 106 types of medicines free of cost.

Speaking on the occasion, Health Minister Shyam Bihari Jaiswal stated that the Mobile Medical Units are meant for remote forest areas where access to healthcare has remained limited. Dedicating all 57 MMUs to the state, he said the initiative will help realize the vision of the Prime Minister.

| NIKSHAY POSHAN MITRA ABHIYAN |

AIIMS-R distributes food packets to 500 TB patients

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: In a significant step towards achieving the national vision of a TB-Mukt Bharat, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Raipur successfully conducted a Food Packet Distribution Programme for 500 tuberculosis (TB) patients under the Nikshay Poshan Mitra Abhiyan, with support from the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), Bhilai. The programme was organized in the august



presence of Lt. Gen. Ashok Jindal (Retd.), Executive Director & CEO, AIIMS Raipur; Ajay Kumar Chakraborty, Executive Director, SAIL Bhilai; Dr. Eli Mohapatra, Dean (Academics); Dr. Renu Rajguru, Medical Superintendent; Lt. Col. Dharveer Singh, Deputy Director (Administration); Dr. Ajoy Kumar Behera, Zonal TB Forum (ZTF) Chairman; and fac-

ulty members from the Department of Pulmonary Medicine. The Nikshay Poshan Yojana and Nikshay-Poshan Mitra Abhiyan,

Nutritional support is essential for effective TB management. Lt. Gen. Ashok Jindal (Retd.)

Executive Director & CEO, AIIMS Raipur.

implemented under the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP), aim to enhance TB treatment outcomes by addressing malnutrition—one of the key factors contributing to disease severity, delayed recovery, and poor treatment adherence. Through the Nikshay Poshan Mitra framework, public sector undertakings, institutions, and individuals collaborate with the government to provide sustained nutritional and psychosocial support to TB patients.

Seminar highlights Socio-Economic vitality and conservation of Wetlands

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: A high-level seminar on "Wetlands of Chhattisgarh" was organized by the Chhattisgarh branch of the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) on Wednesday at the Circuit House, Raipur. The event featured a comprehensive lecture by renowned expert Prof. (Dr.) ML Nayak, highlighting the critical role wetlands play in the state's ecological and economic security. The session was presided over by



Suyogya Mishra, former Chief Secretary of Chhattisgarh and attended by senior administrative officers, environmentalists, and prominent citizens. During the lecture, Dr. Nayak revealed a major milestone, the Kopra Reservoir in Bilaspur district has been officially

included in the Ramsar List, making it the state's first internationally recognized wetland.

Dr. Nayak warned that the depletion of these water bodies poses a severe challenge to the survival of the state's entire ecosystem and human life.

Yearender



As the New Year ushers in, and a new dawn is set to be explored, make sure to keep your family at the top priority. No one in this world stays with you as your family does. Family is wealth!

2026 AND ALL THE LESSONS AND ROADS TO FOLLOW

Be genuine One was tender another was thunder



If one had to summarise Hindi cinema in 2025, contrast would be the defining word. The year belonged to two films that could not have been more different in tone, scale, or storytelling approach, yet both rewrote box-office rules in their own way. Saiyaara, released on July 18, arrived quietly, driven by emotion, music, and debutant faces, while Dhurandhar, which hit theatres on December 5, came armed with star power, scale, and a narrative with espionage and gang wars in Pakistan at the centre. Together, they framed a year in which audiences proved that there was room for both tenderness and thunder on the big screen. Both the movies give us insights into how to tackle life.

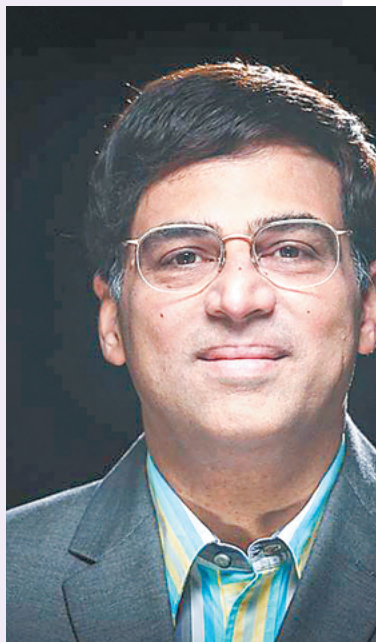
The debut matters

A popular folk singer, Maithali Thakur made a successful debut by winning the Alinagar seat in Bihar on a BJP ticket, becoming the youngest MLA to be elected in the process. A powerful debut from a humble upbringing. The real dreamers sleep less!



'Vishy's Children On The loose'

"Vishy's children are on the loose" is a famous quote by chess legend Garry Kasparov, referring to the incredible rise of young Indian chess prodigies. That remained the theme of Indian Chess in 2025 as well. This was the year when the talk was not about the future of Indian chess, but about the present - loud, messy, thrilling, and occasionally uncomfortable. There were historic wins and global validation and the ones who set examples in 2025, were D. Gukesh, Divya Deshmukh, Praggnanandhaa T and others. More power to integrity and resilience!



Talk loud - The Right to Disconnect Bill

Indian lawmaker, Supriya Sule, this month introduced the "Right to Disconnect Bill, 2025" in Lok Sabha, which proposes to establish an employees' welfare authority to confer the right on every employee to disconnect from work-related telephone calls and emails beyond work hours and on holidays. The bill proposes right to refuse to answer calls and emails outside work hours and for all matters connected therewith. According to the bill, no employee can face disciplinary action for refusing to respond to all forms of communication like phone calls, texts, emails, video calls; etc. The proposal also suggests a penalty of 1 per cent of the total employee remuneration for organisations that violate this right. We need to talk for our rights!

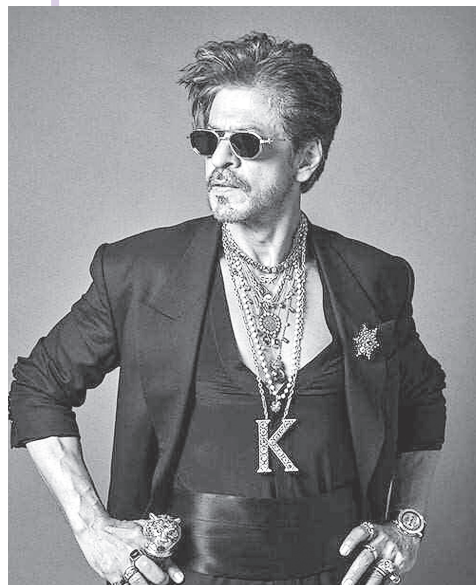


Farah Khan & Dilip

Choreographer, director, judge of a reality show, host, you have seen her in diverse roles on diverse platforms. But when she came to the YouTube screen, she owned it, and scored a sixer. Throughout her journey, her cook Dilip played like a pro and formed an enduring partnership. Farah Khan's YouTube channel bio says, "Picture abhi baaki hai mere dost!" Boasting 2.51 million followers and 306 videos, Farah Khan's vlogs make all the right noise. From cooking to home tours to her camaraderie with cook Dilip, with a big dose of celebrity quotient, Farah's vlogs are the IT content of 2025. Set trends and don't follow the crowd!



Stand apart ShahRukh Khan at Met Gala



Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan dialled his stardom up a notch when the 'King' descended on the blue floral carpet of the Met Gala 2025, one of the biggest fashion extravaganzas of the year when creativity and celebrity come together to champion philanthropy. Dressed in an all-black Sabyasachi ensemble, the actor made more headlines for humbly introducing himself at the gala than his costume. Stand apart and good as King Khan

Eat Healthy India - Idli



Idli- This steamed South Indian delicacy is made from fermented rice and urad dal batter and is a staple breakfast dish in many parts of India and is often paired with chutney or sambar, topped the most loved food chart for Indians. Eat healthy India



Humanity thrives A priceless gesture

A video of a heart-warming moment went viral in June when a 93-year-old villager, dressed in a traditional white 'dhoti-kurta' and a cap, stepped into a jewellery shop in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar. At first, the staff mistook his humble appearance for someone seeking help. But when he expressed the wish to buy a 'mangalsutra' (sacred necklace worn by married women) for his wife, the shop owner was left speechless. Overwhelmed by the nonagenarian's gesture of love, the shop owner gave it to him for a "token" amount Rs 20. Humanity let it linger more!

Be alive - Mandate on Women's Representation in Bar Councils



The Indian Supreme Court directed the Bar Council of India (BCI) to ensure 30% reservation for women in the upcoming State Bar Council elections, upholding the "constitutional ethos" of mandated representation. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was hearing two public interest petitions, highlighting the severe under representation of women and other marginalised groups in Bar Council bodies nationwide. Women be joyful in 2026.

All is well that ends well

Pandwani singer Teejan Bai was recently in the news due to her health problems (liver and paralysis) and the non-receipt of her pension. After PM Narendra Modi spoke to her family, and the Chhattisgarh government assured her of treatment and financial assistance, which has improved her condition, and she has started receiving her pension. Teejan Bai has been ill for some time, suffering from problems such as paralysis and high blood pressure, which have left her unable to walk or speak. The Chhattisgarh government has formed a medical team to take responsibility for her treatment and has assured the release of her pension and financial assistance (50,000), which is gradually improving her condition. Old is gold. Culture is priceless!



Drug abuse ends only when society, enforcement and families act together, ensuring vigilance, awareness and responsible choices, especially among youth.

Chandan Tripathi
Korea Collector



Bilaspur Region

Millions wasted on an abandoned dream

Many buildings were constructed under the RIPA project which are now becoming useless.



Central Chronicle News

MAINPUR: The RIPA (Rural Employment and Production Scheme) project, designed to create employment opportunities and empower women in rural areas, has become a massive waste of resources in Chhattisgarh's Gariaband district. Built at a cost of crores of rupees, the infrastructure and machinery installed for the scheme now lie abandoned, turning into scrap. The building in Bhatigarh, constructed

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● The state government has to take a stand in restarting this project.

at an estimated cost of one crore rupees, stands as a symbol of unrealized potential. What was once intended to provide employment to local youth and women, particularly in small-scale industries, is now an empty, deteriorating structure.

Under the previous

Congress government, the RIPA scheme aimed to establish a Rural Industrial Park, specifically in Mainpur Janpad Panchayat's Bhatigarh, to offer small workshops for rural women. These workshops were planned to support activities like pickle making, honey production, and maize processing, providing women with economic independence. It also intended to create small-scale industries for youth, such as cow dung paint production, tire retread-

ing, and plastic recycling. The overall objective was to promote self-reliance in rural areas, providing both income and empowerment. However, after the government changed, the scheme came to a halt. The machinery worth crores of rupees, including equipment for maize processing and other activities, has rusted and remains unused. Large buildings, roads, boundary walls, and other infrastructure were built, but the lack of operational support has rendered them useless.

District crosses 10 lakh quintal milestone in paddy procurement

KORBA: The Chhattisgarh government is procuring paddy from farmers at 65 procurement centers in the Korba district during the Kharif season of 2025-26. Farmers are satisfied with the government's procurement at the minimum support price (MSP). The district administration has ensured smooth procurement processes, including online token distribution, availability of gunny bags, use of electronic weighing machines, and prompt payments.

District administration frees land for proposed Bhulsidih medical college

KORBA: In accordance with instructions from Collector Mr. Kunal Dudawat, Tehsildar Mr. K.K. Lahre, along with the revenue team, carried out an operation to clear government land allotted for a medical college in Part-2 of Bhulsidih village. As a result, 18.00 acres out of the total 28.00 acres of land were successfully freed from illegal encroachments, with valuable cooperation from the Sarpanch and local villagers.

Briefs

BEST OF THE REST

COLLECTOR HOLDS 'JANDARSHAN' IN OPEN' Collector Mrs. Chandan Tripathi sets new standard for public accessibility



KOREA: Korea district Collector Mrs. Chandan Tripathi conducted the final public grievance redressal program of 2025 on the Collectorate premises, under the open sky, amidst the pleasant sunshine. The event saw numerous petitioners from Baikunthpur, Patna, Sonhat, and Podi-Bachra, who submitted their applications concerning various issues. The Collector carefully

reviewed the petitions and instructed the concerned officers to address them promptly and effectively. The program, held near the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in the Collectorate premises, was attended by all district-level officers. Mrs. Tripathi took the opportunity to listen to the grievances of the citizens and provide necessary instructions for their timely and lawful resolution.

SIR

Collector issues public appeal for photo electoral roll verification

MUNGELI: In accordance with the instructions from the Election Commission of India, a special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral roll is being conducted in 12 states, including in the district. Collector and District Election Officer Kundan Kumar has appealed to all voters in the district to verify their names in the electoral roll. He emphasized that voters should compulsorily check their names, as any omissions can be addressed through claims and objections, which can be submitted until January 22nd. The Collector urged all eligible citizens to take the time to ensure their names are included in the list.

Deputy District Election Officer Ms. Nishtha Pandey Tiwari informed that voters can check their names either by visiting their respective Gram Panchayat's Booth Level Officer (BLO) or through available online platforms. She highlighted the importance of verifying the name early to avoid any complications in the future. As of now, no claims or objections have been filed.

Voters can check and update their details through the ECINet app or by visiting the Voter Portal.

CHIRAYU SCHEME

Chirayu scheme for health and wellbeing of children aged 0-18

MUNGELI: The government's Chirayu scheme, part of the National Child Health Program, offers free treatment to children aged 0-18 years suffering from various diseases and deformities, including cleft lip, cataracts, crooked limbs, and hearing impairments. Under the guidance of Collector Kundan Kumar, the Chirayu team quickly provides treatment and assistance in such cases.

Dr. Sheela Saha, Chief Medical and Health Officer, shared that under the scheme, a successful surgery was performed on 3-month-old Tanya Patel for her congenital cleft lip. Tanya's condition was detected during a routine health check-up by the Chirayu team. Following the identification, the team informed Tanya's father, Charan Patel, about the surgery and treatment process. After obtaining consent, the family took Tanya to a hospital in Bilaspur, where specialists recommended surgery. With the coordination of District Program Manager Dr. Girish Kurre, Tanya was admitted, and the surgery was successfully performed. The operation was safe and successful, restoring Tanya's smile and bringing relief to her family.

CYBER FORENSIC WORKSHOP HELD SP directs one-day cyber forensic workshop



MUNGELI: A one-day training workshop on cyber forensics was held on Monday at the Reserve Police Lines, organized under the direction of Superintendent of Police Bhojram Patel. The workshop aimed to equip police officers and personnel with the skills necessary to address the increasing challenges of cybercrimes and enhance their investigative capabilities in other criminal cases, making them proficient in forensic investigations.

Dr. Vikrant Singh Thakur, Senior Scientific Officer from the State Forensic Science Laboratory, Raipur, conducted the workshop. He provided training to police officers on essential topics such as digital security, data col-

lection, social media analysis, mobile forensics, and monitoring techniques. The workshop's primary goal was to train participants in handling various cybercrimes, collecting electronic evidence, presenting cases in court, and understanding the IT Act to ensure successful convictions.

The session also covered laws and regulations related to cybercrimes, including information on government portals. Special emphasis was placed on the process of investigating and prosecuting cybercrimes. Officers were trained on the latest tools and techniques for combating cybercrimes, identifying cybercriminals, understanding their methods, and taking legal action.

| REVIEW MEETING HELD FOR SIR |

High-level review of special intensive electoral roll revision 2026 conducted

Central Chronicle News

MCB: In compliance with the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) program for the photo electoral roll, a review meeting was held in the Collectorate meeting hall on January 1, 2026, under the chairmanship of Mohammad Kaiser Abdulhaq, Roll Observer for the Manendragh-Chirmiri-Bharatpur district. The meeting was organized in line with the instructions from the Chief Electoral Officer, Chhattisgarh, Raipur. Attendees included the District Election Officer, Deputy District Election Officer, Electoral Registration Officer, Assistant and Additional Electoral Registration Officers, political party representatives, and other concerned officers.

The purpose of the meeting was to review the progress of the ongoing SIR process for

FACTFILE

● Updates were taken as to how the work on SIR was being conducted.

Assembly Constituencies 01 (Bharatpur-Sonhat) and 02 (Manendragarh). It was reported that the enumeration phase began on November 4, 2025, and concluded on December 18, 2025. During this phase, pre-filled enumeration forms were distributed to 3,19,441 voters across 466 polling stations, and the completed forms were digitized via the BLO App. The list of deceased, transferred, and duplicate voters was prepared with the assistance of political party representatives and Booth Level Officers (BLOs).

A total of 31,721 voters were removed from the rolls due to non-sub-

Observer orders fix for voter deletion errors

During the meeting, the Observer emphasized that voters whose names were mistakenly deleted from the electoral roll should be encouraged to fill and submit Form 6 to rectify the error. He also requested the cooperation of public representatives to ensure smooth processing. The issue of delays in issuing notices was discussed, and the Observer issued clear instructions that all notices must be sent within the stipulated time frame. It was stressed that notices should be delivered to every concerned voter through Booth Level Officers (BLOs) after issuance. The Observer further directed that no notice should remain pending with the BLOs and that no voter should be deprived of critical information.

mission of enumeration forms. The preliminary publication of the revised electoral roll took place on December 23, 2025. As of that date, 1,67,864 voters were registered in Bharatpur-Sonhat, and 1,19,856 voters in Manendragarh, totaling 2,87,720 voters in the district.

According to the revised schedule, the claims and objections

period is from December 23, 2025, to January 22, 2026, with the hearing and verification phase scheduled to end by February 14, 2026. The final publication of the photo electoral roll is set for February 21, 2026.

The Observer also emphasized that families should not be split between different polling stations.

“On the occasion of the New Year, incidents of young people consuming alcohol and driving at high speeds and recklessly come to light, and strict action should be ensured in such cases.”

Mrs. Chandan Tripathi
Collector

| ANTI-DRUGS CAMPAIGN |

Collector outlines mission to eradicate drug abuse

Central Chronicle News

KOREA: A review meeting regarding the Drug-Free India campaign and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act was held on Tuesday in the Collectorate meeting hall, chaired by Collector Mrs. Chandan Tripathi. During the meeting, Mrs. Tripathi sought detailed information from the concerned departments about the



ongoing efforts to prevent the sale and use of narcotic substances such as cannabis, opium, and other illegal drugs. She issued clear instructions that the sale of these substances should be strictly prohibited, and urged

authorities to identify and regularly inspect suspected locations.

The Collector emphasized the importance of continuous monitoring of medical stores to prevent the sale of banned drugs and directed that narcot-

Tea-selling baba who turned spirituality into business

Acharya Narendra Nayan Shastri has viciously attacked Bageshwar Baba and Pradeep Mishra.

Central Chronicle News

Fact File: Acharya Shastri has stated that Bhagwat Katha is now becoming a big business.

KHAIRAGARH: In Khairbana village, located about 15 kilometers from the district headquarters, a week-long musical Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana Gyan Yagya is being held under the patronage of the royal family.

This event, which will continue until January 3rd, has become a center of devotion, attracting devotees from Chhattisgarh and other states. Every day, there is a discourse at 1 PM and a divine court at 9 AM, making it a significant religious gathering. However, the event has gained additional attention due to the outspoken remarks of Acharya Narendra Nayan Shastri, also known as the ‘Tea-Selling Baba’, whose comments have sparked a new direction in religious discourse across the country. In a conversation with journalists, Acharya Shastri questioned the state of Sanatan Dharma in the country, stating that it is “floating in the air.” He emphasized the need



Predictions on national and state politics awaited after calculation

In response to political predictions, Acharya Narendra Nayan Shastri claimed he had already foreseen events such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s re-election and the selection of the Chief Minister in Chhattisgarh. When asked about a potential change in the state’s Chief Minister, he stated he would provide an answer after further calculation.

to differentiate between religion and hypocrisy. While once, when only a hundred people listened to a discourse, it inspired spirituality, today millions may be listening, but spirituality isn’t awakening. Shastri criticized the trend where listening to

religious discourses has become more of a performance, with ostentation taking the place of true spirituality. He also questioned the claims of many religious speakers who assert that they do not charge fees, even though the events involve

huge crowds, air travel, five-star arrangements, and crores of rupees in sponsorships. For Shastri, these extravagances contradict the idea of offering services for free. He stated that merely making statements about Hindutva or criticizing other religions to gain popularity doesn’t advance the cause of Sanatan Dharma. Shastri was also vocal about the tradition of halting discourses to welcome politicians, calling it an insult to the Vyasa Peeth (the seat of the speaker). According to him, this practice compromises the sanctity of religion. He argued that religion should guide politics, not the other way around, as politics is increasingly encroaching upon religion. Further, the Acharya criticized the use of bouncers, security cordons, and VIP culture around saints, saying that such ostentation goes against the essence of true asceticism. He also directed a sharp attack at Pandit Pradeep Mishra, accusing him of turning religious discourse into a business. Shastri condemned Mishra for canceling an entire discourse because of a fee dispute, calling it unspiritual. He claimed that such behavior is against the traditions of Sanatan Dharma.

Chhattisgarh Skill Authority inks MoU with Sathya Sai Trust



RAIPUR: On the last day of 2025, a MoU was signed between Chhattisgarh State Skill Development Authority & Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Health & Education Trust in the presence of the Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai. Vijay Dayaram K, Chief Executive Officer, Chhattisgarh State Skill Development Authority and Dr. C. Sreenivas, Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai Health & Education Trust signed the MoU. Dr. C.Sreenivas apprised the salient features of the Skill Institute to Guru Khushwant Saheb, Minister for Skill Development & Technical Education.

Police Commissionerate System from Jan 23 in Raipur

Central Chronicle News

Cabinet clears Police Commissionerate system for Raipur from January 23 to strengthen law and order.



FACTFILE

● **Commissioner to get magisterial powers enabling faster decisions, improved policing efficiency and enhanced public safet.**

RAIPUR: In a major administrative decision aimed at strengthening law and order in the state capital, the Chhattisgarh Cabinet has approved the implementation of the Police Commissionerate system in Raipur from January 23. The decision was taken in the last cabinet meeting of the year, chaired by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, and was announced by Deputy Chief Minister Arun Sao. Notably, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai had announced the intro-

duction of the Police Commissionerate system for Raipur during his Independence Day address. The cabinet’s approval now paves the way for its formal implementation, marking a significant shift in the policing and administrative framework of the

capital city. The Police Commissionerate system is already operational in several major Indian cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bhopal, and Indore. Under this system, the overall command of the city is vested in a senior IPS officer, generally of the rank of Director General (DG), Additional Director General (ADG), or Inspector General (IG). The rank of the appointed Commissioner is decided by the state government, keeping in view factors such as population size and crime patterns. With the introduction of the Commissionerate system, the Police Commissioner will be empowered with several magisterial powers that currently lie with the District Collector or Executive Magistrate.

| HEARINGS TO CONTINUE TILL FEBRUARY 14, 2026 |

SIR process for Electoral Roll revision in CG underway

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: The process of Special Intensive Revision (SIR)-2026 of electoral rolls is progressing steadily across Chhattisgarh in accordance with the directions of the Election Commission of India (ECI). As part of this process, the draft electoral roll was published on December 23, 2025. Following the publication, the period for claims and

objections has been fixed from December 23, 2025, to January 22, 2026. During this period, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) have been issuing notices to voters whose names could not be matched with the 2003 SIR electoral roll during the enumeration phase or where discrepancies were detected. Such voters are required to submit any of the 13 prescribed documents recognized by the



ECI before the concerned ERO or Assistant ERO for verification. According to official data, the number of unmapped voters in the

state stands at 6,40,145. By December 31, 2025, notices had been generated for about 5,68,804 voters across the state. All voters who have received notices are required to appear for hearings within the stipulated timeframe and submit the necessary documents. After verification and hearing, the ERO will decide on the inclusion or exclusion of names from the electoral roll.

Annual Horoscope 2026

Aquarius
2026 brings renewal and progressive thinking for Aquarius. Creativity and innovation flourish, especially in technology, research, and social initiatives. Career opportunities emerge between March and May, demanding practical execution. Finances improve gradually but need careful budgeting. Relationships test emotional honesty. Managing stress through routine, collaboration, and mindful balance ensures sustained growth and meaningful transformation.

Gemini
2026 is dynamic and intellectually stimulating for Gemini. Career prospects expand in communication, education, and media, though focus is essential. Income fluctuates but creative ventures pay off. Relationships thrive through cultural exchange, requiring clear communication. Health needs regular rest and stress control. Depth and direction transform ideas into progress.

Cancer
2026 emphasizes emotional growth and family focus for Cancer. Career stability outweighs sudden change, with creative rewards later in the year. Financial gains favor property and home-related matters. Relationships deepen as past issues resurface for resolution. Health benefits from gentle routines and emotional balance. Inner strength builds lasting foundations.

Leo
2026 highlights leadership and creative expression for Leo. Career growth peaks mid-year, especially in management and creative roles. Finances improve but demand restraint in spending. Relationships flourish through generosity and shared attention. Health requires avoiding overexertion and caring for heart health. Humility strengthens Leo's influence and success.

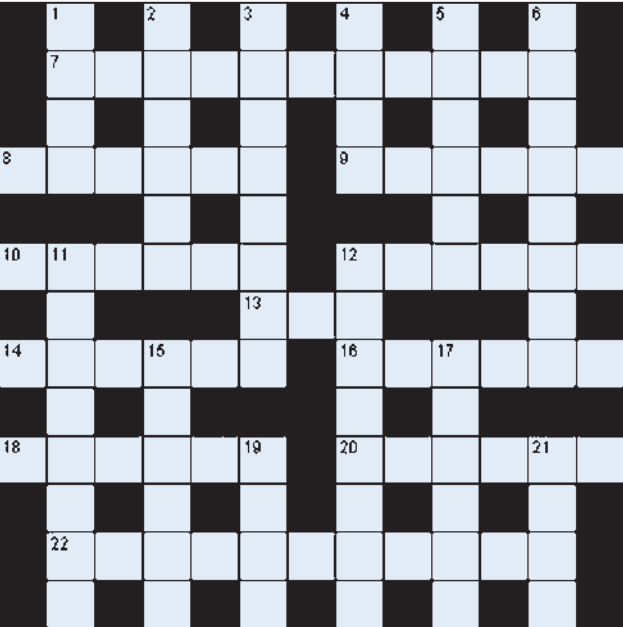
Virgo
2026 brings transformation and restructuring for Virgo. Career progress emerges through research, planning, and strategic shifts. Financial stability improves via partnerships, demanding flexibility. Relationships intensify, requiring emotional clarity and boundaries. Health benefits from sustainable routines over perfectionism. Accepting change helps Virgo achieve renewal and deeper personal growth.

Libra
2026 challenges Libra to assert identity and boundaries. Career opportunities grow through diplomacy, leadership, and communication. Financial planning becomes vital amid shared-resource changes. Relationships undergo tests, strengthening balanced bonds while ending unequal ones. Health improves with structured routines. Authentic choices guide Libra toward stability and confidence.

Scorpio
2026 empowers Scorpio through strategic transformation. Career success comes from collaboration, research, and calculated risks. Financial prospects strengthen via investments and partnerships. Relationships demand emotional honesty and shared values. Health improves through disciplined exercise and emotional release. Scorpio learns that true power lies in clarity, self-mastery, and purposeful renewal.

Sagittarius
2026 blends expansion with responsibility for Sagittarius. Career growth demands discipline but builds long-term credibility. Financial gains arise through education, travel, or publishing, requiring caution. Relationships deepen through shared beliefs and sincerity. Health thrives with outdoor activity and rest. Structure supports Sagittarius' freedom and sustained progress.

Capricorn
2026 marks a significant professional phase for Capricorn. Career opportunities strengthen steadily, peaking in the second half. Financial stability improves through disciplined planning and traditional investments. Relationships need attention amid work pressures. Health requires joint care and stress management. Balancing ambition with wellbeing ensures lasting achievement and fulfillment.



CROSSWORD - 1

- Across**
- 7 Twinkle, sparkle (11)
 - 8 In words (6)
 - 9 Assemble (6)
 - 10 Receive willingly (6)
 - 12 Current (6)
 - 13 Small bird (3)
 - 14 Artist's workshop (6)
 - 16 Become visible (6)
 - 18 Game bird (6)
 - 20 Sleepy (6)
 - 22 Fine penmanship (11)
- Down**
- 1 Small island (4)
 - 2 Take small bites (6)
 - 3 Long dagger (8)
 - 4 Work hard (4)
 - 5 Deposit that forms on teeth (6)
 - 6 Brown sugar (8)
 - 11 Waterfall (8)
 - 12 Flag (8)
 - 15 Twice the amount (6)
 - 17 Punctual (6)
 - 19 Prepare for publication (4)
 - 21 Mythical river of the underworld (4)

SUDOKU

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

Little Thinkers Hub

MORAL STORY



A lonely elephant was wandering the forest looking for friends. He came across a monkey and asked him, “Will you be my friend, monkey?” The monkey replied, “You are too big and cannot swing on trees as I do. So, I cannot be your friend”. The elephant then came across a small rabbit and asked him if he could be his friend. The rabbit replied, “You are too big to fit inside my burrow. How can you be my friend?”. Next, the elephant met a tiny frog and asked if he could be his friend. The frog replied, “You are too big and heavy and cannot jump like me. I am sorry, but we cannot be friends”.

IT’S QUIZ TIME

- 1) In Chacha Choudhary comics from which planet does Sabu hail from?
- 2) Kavaratti is the capital of which Indian union territory?
- 3) Which rank in the Indian Air Force corresponds to Brigadier in the Indian army?
- 4) Which Hindi film comedian's real name is Badruddin Qazi?
- 5) Which state in India literally means “The land of dawn lit mountains”?
- 6) With which sport does one associate Dipika Pallikar, Joshna Chinappa, Bhuvneshwari Kumari?
- 7) Which state in India has only four districts North, South, East and West?

Answers-

- (1) Jupiter (2) Lakshadweep
- (3) Air Commodore (4) Johnnie Walker
- (5) Arunachal Pradesh (6) Squash
- (7) Sikkim

ANIMAL KINGDOM



An eastern bluebird perches on a branch, patiently watching the ground below. Suddenly it spots a beetle. The bird spreads its bright blue wings, flies to the ground, and gobbles up the small insect. Then the colourful flier returns to its perch to wait for its next snack. Eastern bluebirds can be found in the eastern parts of North and Central America from southern Canada into the country of Nicaragua. The bird has a round belly, long wings, and short legs. Its black bill is short and straight. Male eastern bluebirds are easily identified by their bright blue heads and wings. Their diet consists of beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, and caterpillars. These birds are skilled fliers with incredible vision. They can spot an insect on the ground from 60 feet away. Eastern bluebirds often sing, using their voices to stay in touch with flock members.

HOME WORK HELP

Make a super ball!

What makes something bounce? Here's an experiment for finding the bounce in a combination of ingredients.

STEP ONE

Make borax solution. Combine two tablespoons of warm water and 1/2 teaspoon of borax powder. Stir to dissolve the borax. Add food coloring, if desired. You'll have enough to make seven or eight balls.

STEP TWO

Use a different bowl for each ball. Pour in one tablespoon of glue. Add 1/2 teaspoon (2.5 mL) of the borax solution and one tablespoon of cornstarch. Do not stir. Allow the ingredients to interact on their own for ten to fifteen seconds.

STEP THREE

Then stir them together to fully mix. Once the mixture becomes impossible to stir, take it out of the cup and start molding the ball with your hands.



WHAT'S GOING ON?

Polymers are molecules made up of repeating chemical units. (By the way, a single one of those units is called a monomer.) Glue contains the polymer polyvinyl acetate (PVA), which cross-links to itself when it reacts to being combined with borax.

Gig workers nationwide strike



Gig workers pick up orders outside a grocery store amid strike call by unions on New Year's Eve, in Marine Lines, Mumbai, Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2025.

‘Indian economy set for strong growth despite global volatility’

RBI Financial Stability Report highlights resilient economy, robust banking system, stable inflation and strong domestic consumption amid global uncertainties

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Indian economy is projected to register high growth, driven by strong domestic consumption and investment despite a volatile and unfavourable external environment, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said on Wednesday. “Maintaining financial stability and strengthening the financial system remains our north star,” Malhotra said in his foreword of the RBI Financial Stability Report. According to him,

financial sector regulators recognise that financial stability is not an end in itself and promoting innovation and growth, protecting consumers, a pragmatic approach to regulation and supervision that improves financial system efficiency are equally important. “The most important contribution the policy-makers can make is to foster a financial system that is robust and resilient to shocks, efficient in providing financial services and promotes responsible innovation,”

NUMBER

07

● Despite a volatile and unfavourable external environment, the Indian economy is projected to register high growth.

he said. Malhotra noted that the Indian economy and the financial system remain robust and resilient supported by strong growth, benign inflation, healthy balance sheets of financial and non-financial firms, sizeable buffers

and prudent policy reforms. “Despite a volatile and unfavourable external environment, the Indian economy is projected to register high growth of above 7 per cent, driven by strong domestic consumption and investment. Nonetheless, we recognise the near-term challenges from external spillovers and continue to build strong guardrails to safeguard the economy and the financial system from potential shocks,” he said. Meanwhile the Indian

economy is likely to maintain strong growth, underpinned by robust domestic demand, benign inflation, and prudent macroeconomic policies despite an uncertain and challenging global economic backdrop, the Reserve Bank said in a report on Wednesday. The health of commercial banks (SCBs) remains sound with strong capital and liquidity buffers, improved asset quality and robust profitability, the Reserve Bank said in its Financial Stability Report (FSR).

Govt rolls out Rs 4,531-cr market access support for exporters



Press Trust Of India

Scheme supports trade fairs, buyer-seller meets, MSMEs, amid US tariff pressure and global uncertainty.

NEW DELHI: The government on Wednesday launched Rs 4,531 crore market access support for exporters under which financial support will be provided to participate in activities such as international fairs and exhibitions. It will help exporters at a time when they are facing a steep 50 per cent tariff by the US. The measure is a part of the Rs 25,060-crore export pro-

motion mission, which is aimed at enhancing competitiveness of Indian exporters. It has 11 components. Market Access Support (MAS) is the first component of the mission that has been operationalised from Wednesday and the remainder will be rolled out by January-end, Director General of Foreign Trade Ajay Badhoo said. Under this, Rs 4,531 crore is being allocated for six years (2025-31). Out of this, Rs 500 crore is for clearing dues of the Market Access Initiative (MAI), which functioned as a standalone scheme until the last financial year.

AI can turn blue-collar into gold: Anand Mahindra

Press Trust Of India

AI will elevate hands-on skills into premium assets, transforming blue-collar work into respected gold-collar careers.

NEW DELHI: Artificial intelligence is not a threat but a catalyst that will elevate practical skills into premium assets, offering income, dignity and transforming factory work into long-term relevance and a lucrative gold-collar profession, Mahindra Group Chairman Anand Mahindra said on Wednesday. In his New Year message to employees of the group, he disagreed with the fear of disruption that many people have as AI reshapes industries. “When technology amplifies skilled hands,



those hands can become as rewarding, if not more rewarding, than traditional white-collar work. AI can turn blue collar into gold,” Mahindra noted. As AI reshapes industries, he said, “Many fear disruption. I respectfully disagree. I believe AI is an accelerator, not a threat”. Elaborating his point, Mahindra said, “As intelligent systems take over routine tasks, practical skills, accelerated by AI, will become premium assets, offering income, dignity and

FACTFILE

● Anand Mahindra says AI accelerates skilled labour, boosting dignity, income and long-term relevance of factory jobs.

raising blue collar work to a new level of long-term relevance”. “AI will bring about a fundamental shift in the value of ‘hands-on’ skills: a technician who can work confidently alongside AI, a machinist who understands digital tools, and a craftsperson whose intuition is enhanced by data will change the world of shop floor work.” Mahindra predicted that “we will rediscover the value of people who can build, craft, repair, and operate real machinery of life”. “I am proud that we are walking the talk in this domain,” he wrote to the group employees.

| LAST TRADING SESSION |

Rupee plunges 5 pc in 2025 amid foreign fund outflows

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI: The rupee slumped 5 per cent in 2025 as persistent capital outflows from foreign investors, alongside heightened dollar demand from importers, making it one of the worst-performing Asian currencies. On the last trading session of 2025, the rupee depreciated

13 paise to close at 89.88 (provisional) against the US dollar as month-end demand and FPIs’ dollar buying kept it lower. The domestic currency has exhibited a negative bias throughout the year, making it Asia’s worst-performing currency in 2025, with foreign portfolio investors pulling out USD 16.5 billion from equities this year, fur-



ther denting investor sentiments, forex traders said. At the inter-bank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 89.89 against the dollar and touched an intra-day

low of 89.95 and a high of 89.84 against the American currency. At the end of Wednesday’s trading session, the rupee was quoted at 89.88 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a fall of 13 paise over its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee rose 23 paise to close at 89.75 against the greenback. On a year-on-year

basis, the rupee has plunged 4.95 per cent. It was quoted at 85.64 on December 31, 2024. “Since the Trump Administration took over, the rupee has been the worst performing currency in the Asian Region, depreciating by more than 5 per cent during 2025, marking its highest depreciation in the last three years,” said.

BizBriefs BEST OF THE REST

HOW THE MARKET’S BEHAVE TODAY?

Stock markets rally nearly 1 pc on last trading session of 2025; Nifty jumps 10.50 pc annually



MUMBAI: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty jumped nearly 1 per cent on Wednesday, the final trading session of 2025, driven by sustained buying by domestic institutional investors and strong gains in Reliance, Tata Steel and Kotak Bank. Following a subdued trend in equity markets recently, value buying emerged in energy, PSU banks, metal and consumer durable counters, which pushed indices higher, traders said. After five days of decline, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 545.52 points, or 0.64 per cent, to settle at 85,220.60. During the day, it surged 762.09 points, or 0.90 per cent, to 85,437.17. A total of 2,799 stocks advanced, while 1,413 declined and 162 remained unchanged on the BSE. The

50-share NSE Nifty soared 190.75 points, or 0.74 per cent, to end at 26,129.60 after four days of decline. From the 30-Sensex firms, Tata Steel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, Titan and Trent were among the biggest gainers. However, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Bajaj Finance and Sun Pharma were the laggards. “Indian equity benchmarks rebounded sharply on Wednesday, snapping their recent losing streaks as strong buying in metal stocks lifted overall sentiment. Sentiment was further aided by a mild decline in crude oil prices, which helped ease inflation concerns, and a cooling in volatility, with India VIX slipping below 9.5.

STAR-LABELLING MANDATORY

Star ratings mandatory for refrigerator, TV, LPG stove from January 1

NEW DELHI: The government has made energy efficiency star-labelling mandatory on a host of appliances, including refrigerators, televisions, LPG gas stoves, cooling tower, and chillers from January 1. According to a gazette notification issued by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, the new regulation for energy efficiency star-labelling will also apply on deep freezers, distribution transformers and grid connected solar inverter. Earlier, star labelling was voluntary on these items like frost-free refrigerators, direct cool refrigerators, deep freezers, RAC (cassette, floor standing tower, ceiling, corner AC), colour televisions and ultra-high definition televisions. An official on condition of anonymity said the list of mandatory appliances for star labelling is updated from time to time. The draft regulation for these appliances was introduced in July 2025 for public feedback and these changes are based on the response received from stakeholders.

BULLION MARKET

Gold, silver futures plunge as traders book profits on weak global cues



NEW DELHI: Gold and silver prices plunged in futures trade on Wednesday as investors booked profits at elevated levels amid weak global trends and appreciation in the US dollar. Declining on the final day of 2025, the yellow metal for February delivery decreased by Rs 1,098, or 0.8 per cent, to Rs 1,35,568 per 10 grams, on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). Similarly, silver futures for the March 2026 contract opened sharply lower and tanked by 7.48 per cent, or Rs 18,784, to hit the lower circuit limit of Rs 2,32,228 per kg. Later, the white metal recovered part of the losses and was trading at Rs 2,37,568 per kg, down by Rs 13,444, or 5.36 per cent.

DEMANDING BETTER PAY AND WORK CONDITIONS E-com, food delivery services largely unaffected by gig workers’ strike

NEW DELHI: A section of gig workers on Wednesday stopped work demanding better pay and work conditions but the agitation had little impact on services on e-commerce and online food delivery platforms that saw robust business on New Year Eve. While at some places gig workers staged demonstrations, firms like Zomato, Swiggy offered more incentives to delivery partners, a standard practice on festive periods, to ensure minimal disruptions in services on New Year’s Eve.



Telangana Gig and Platform Workers’ Union (TGPWU) and Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT) have claimed that lakhs of workers are set to join the nationwide strike to demand better payouts and improved working conditions. While the workers’ bodies claimed that many of their members, who are associated with food delivery and quick commerce firms like Zomato, Swiggy, Blinkit, Instamart, and Zepto, have stayed away from work, company insiders said it is business as usual for them on New Year’s Eve. Amid the strike call, Zomato offered delivery partners payouts of Rs 120-150 per order during peak hours between 6 pm and 12

am on New Year’s Eve. The platform has also promised earnings of up to Rs 3,000 over the course of the day, subject to order volumes and worker availability, people in the know of the development said. In addition, Zomato has temporarily waived penalties on order denials and cancellations, they said, however, stressing that it was a standard operating protocol followed during high-demand festive and year-end periods.

‘Ram’s ideals guided Operation Sindoor’

Singh was addressing a gathering after hoisting a flag at the Annapurna Temple

Press Trust Of India

AYODHYA: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday described the Ram temple movement as a “grand narrative” that laid the foundation for the future, and said India acted in accordance with Lord Ram’s ideals in Operation Sindoor. Singh was addressing a gathering after hoisting a flag at the Annapurna Temple in the Ram Temple complex here and joined prayers on the occasion of the second anniversary of Pran Pratishtha, the consecration of Ram Lalla’s idol. The senior BJP leader said despite repeated attempts by foreign invaders to erase Sanatan traditions, the saffron flag now fluttering atop the Ram temple stood as a message of civilisational continuity. Referring to Operation Sindoor, the defence minister said India had acted in accordance with Lord Ram’s ideals. “Ram is humble. Ram is virtuous. Ram is compassionate. But where necessity arises... Ramji takes on the role of vanquishing the wicked there as well. During Operation Sindoor, we worked under that same inspiration of Lord Ram,” he said. Under the military operation, India launched a series of precision missile strikes on nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir in the early hours of May 7 eliminating at least 100 terrorists in response to



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath offers prayers during the 'Pran Pratishtha Dwadashi'.

the horrific Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 innocent civilians. After Pakistan’s military retaliation, India inflicted heavy damage to a number of key Pakistani

military installations. “Just as Lord Ram’s objective was not the destruction of Ravana but the end of adharma, our aim was to teach terrorists and their patrons a lesson

through restrained, focused and purposeful action,” Singh said, adding that modern India remained committed to “maryada” even in conflict.

‘Ram temple reflects PM’s vision for next millennium’

“The consecration ceremony that took place two years ago was not merely the consecration of Ramlala’s idol; it was a spiritual reawakening that occurred in the hearts and minds of the Indian people after a long time,” the minister said. He said the Ram temple embodied Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision that

HIGHLIGHT

● Rare privilege to witness the culmination of a centuries-long struggle.

● Devotee influx makes Ayodhya a global religious tourism hub.

actions taken today would lay the foundation

for the next thousand years.

Calling the present generation fortunate, the defence minister said it was a rare privilege to witness the culmination of a centuries-long struggle. “For all of us, the greatest satisfaction will be that we saw Lord Ram seated in Ayodhya with our own eyes,” he said.

Customer-centric initiatives

RAIPUR: “The year 2025 saw some landmark customer-centric initiatives that will go a long way in making life insurance a central intervention in the delivery of universal social welfare support. The year started with the change in surrender value norms and continued its developmental path with the GST exemption and the launch of the Bima Sugam portal.

Currently, demand for life insurance is spread across mainly over protection, annuities and savings product. As more households prioritise protection and retirement solutions, we will continue to witness these products providing financial security. Consequently, 2026 may well see insurers innovating to offer better and more robust products.

The next year may see more international players entering the market following the relaxation of the FDI norms. More players entering the market will enable the industry to harness synergy and deliver life insurance solutions more efficiently. The positive regulatory environment, advancement in digital technology and increased consumer awareness will enable sustained and healthy growth in life insurance in 2026.”

Puri temple administration stops sale of calendars

Press Trust Of India

SJTA explained that the photograph, which featured in the 2026 calendar, was a copy of a century-old artwork on a palm leaf manuscript.

BHUBANESWAR: The Jagannath temple authorities in Odisha’s Puri on Wednesday tendered an apology to the public and stopped the sale of calendars with a picture of the sibling deities in wrong positions on the ‘Ratna Singhasan’ in the 12th-century shrine. The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) explained that the photograph, which featured in the 2026 calendar, was a copy of a century-old artwork on a palm leaf manuscript, collected from the Odisha State Museum. “This is the work of a painter of that time. It is hoped that Shree Jagannath lovers will not misunderstand it,” the SJTA said in a statement. Amid state-wide outrage over the picture of deities- Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath - in wrong positions on the ‘Ratna Singhasan’ (Jewelled throne), the chief administrator of the temple has asked officials concerned to “suspend the sale of the calendars and issue an apology for this unintentional mistake”, the SJTA said. The BJD termed the change of position of the deities in the calendar picture as “extremely unfortunate”. “In the illustrations, Lord Balabhadra has been placed in the position of Lord Jagannath, while Lord Jagannath appears in Balabhadra’s position. As a result, Goddess Subhadra is shown with Lord Jagannath

FASTFACTS

● BJD calls deity calendar change “extremely unfortunate.”

● Erroneous image has reportedly been printed on table and wall calendars.

on her right side and Balabhadra on her left, which is contrary to tradition,” BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty told reporters. He said the erroneous image has reportedly been printed on table and wall calendars, and in diaries released by the temple administration. He alleged that the SJTA did not consult intellectuals before using the old painting in the calendar. “Such mistakes reflect a lack of sensitivity towards Shree Jagannath culture and Odia Asmita,” the BJD leader alleged. The opposition party also claimed that the chariots were shown in the wrong order in the calendar picture. “As per established norms, the correct order during Rath Yatra is Lord Balabhadra first, Goddess Subhadra in the middle and Lord Jagannath last. These inaccuracies in a publication issued by the SJTA have caused strong resentment in cultural and intellectual circles,” the BJD said. The Congress also criticised the SJTA and the BJP government in the state over the issue.

“It is deeply disturbing that the newly released Puri Srimandir calendar contains grave inaccuracies in the depiction of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and even the sacred order of the Rath Yatra,” Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das said in a X post.

NEWSLINE

NEW DELHI

Union govt’s calendar

From the success of Operation Sindoor to initiatives taken in the farm and the service sector, the government’s calendar for 2026 seeks to highlight India’s transformation under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister L Murugan said on Wednesday.

Murugan, the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, released the Government of India calendar with the theme “Bharat@2026: Sewa, Sushasan and Samridhhi” (Service, Good Governance and Inclusive Prosperity). The calendar captures the spirit of national confidence rooted in people-centric governance, strengthened service delivery and reforms that are designed to simplify processes and enhance trust between citizens and the State, Murugan said. “The calendar is not merely an annual publication of dates and months but a medium that reflects India’s journey of transformation, highlights the priorities of governance and renews the collective resolve towards the goal of a Viksit Bharat by 2047,” Murugan said. Speaking on the occasion, Information and Broadcasting Secretary Sanjay Jaju said the design of the calendar is very carefully curated, and it really spells out the priorities of the government and evolved as its communication instrument.

Jaju said the calendar spells out the priority of the government and has evolved into a powerful communication instrument reflecting the nation’s priorities and values.

‘Students from NE protest against Chakma’s killing’

NEW DELHI: Students from the Northeast on Wednesday staged a protest at the Jantar Mantar here demanding justice for Tripura student Anjel Chakma, who died of a stab injury in Dehradun recently. Hundreds of students from the Northeast participated in the protest organised under the banner of Northeast Students’ Society of Delhi University (NESSDU) and other organisations, demanding a thorough investigation into Chakma’s killing. Chakma (24) from Unakoti district in Tripura was attacked by a group of six people when he objected to racial slurs hurled at him and his younger brother in Dehradun on December 9. He succumbed to his injuries



N-E students union members hold placards during a protest against the killing of Tripura student Angel Chakma, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi.

at a hospital on December 26. Dehradun police have arrested five of the six accused. One of them, Yagaraj Awasthi, a resident of Kanchanpur district in Nepal, is absconding. Speaking to PTI, NESSDU president Pointing Thokchom said, “We demand the case be transferred to the CBI and the family be compensated properly. There should be a law to protect students from

the Northeast from racial abuse and attacks.” Bipul Chakma, vice-president of the All India Chakma Students’ Union, alleged that the Uttarakhand administration delayed the investigation, prompting the students to gather at the Jantar Mantar demanding justice. “I went to Dehradun on December 11 after Anjel Chakma’s father called me since nobody was helping. I have been

a victim of racial abuse myself at DU. We want this vicious cycle of racial abuse

and attacks against Northeast students to stop,” he said.

CHANGE OF NAME
IT IS INFORMED TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT I
VIJAY KUMAR KESHARWANI
S/O SAGARMAL
KESHARWANI RESIDENCE
OF H2/106, NARMADA
NAGAR, BILASPUR, C.G.
495001 HAVE CHANGED MY
OLD NAME VIJAY KUMAR
KESHARWANI S/O
SAGARMAL KESHARWANI,
SO IN FUTURE I SHOULD BE
RECOGNIZED BY MY NEW
NAME VIJAY KESHARWANI
S/O SAGARMAL
KESHARWANI IN ALL
GOVERNMENT AND OTHER
DOCUMENTS.
VIJAY KESHARWANI
H2/106, NARMADA NAGAR,
BILASPUR, C.G. 495001

नाम परिवर्तन सूचना
सर्व साधारण को सूचित किया
जाता है कि मैं पुराना नाम संजय
गुप्ता पिता/पति स्व. बसंत लाल
गुप्ता अपना पुराना नाम को बदल
कर नया नाम संजय कुमार गुप्ता
पिता/पति स्व. बसंत लाल गुप्ता
निवासी / पता प्लैट नंबर 411,
वसुंधरा पार्क रेसीडेंसी, फेज 4,
सत्तीपारा, अम्बिकापुर, सरगुजा
छत्तीसगढ़ 497001 रख लिया हूँ
अतः अब मुझे भविष्य में समस्त
शासकीय, अर्द्धशासकीय व अन्य
दस्तावेजों में नया नाम संजय कुमार
गुप्ता पिता/पति स्व. बसंत लाल
गुप्ता से जाना एवं पहचाना जाय।
संजय कुमार गुप्ता

punjab national bank
पंजाब नैशनल बैंक

CO-SAM: BILASPUR, RING ROAD NO.-2, GAURAV PATH,
BILASPUR- 495001, (C.G) PH. No.-07752310118/19/32

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Properties)
Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Punjab National Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of Powers conferred under Sub-Section (12) of Section 13 read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002, issued Demand Notices as below mentioned calling upon the Borrower to repay the amount mentioned in the notices and interest thereon within 60 days from date of the receipt of the said notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amounts, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under sub section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 said rules on the date mentioned below. The borrowers & guarantors in particular and the Public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of Punjab National Bank for amount mentioned below and interest thereon.
The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Sl No.	Branch Name / Name & Add. of the Borrower/Guarantor/ Legal Heirs	1)Date of Demand Notice & 2)Date of Possession	Outstanding Amount	Description of Immovable Properties
1.	Branch: Naila, Dist.- Champa 273100 Borrower- M/s Shree Ram Rice Mill Prop: Shri Ram Kumar Chandel, Guarantor- Late Shri Shekhar Chandel, Legal Heir Of Guarantor- Mr. Divyansh Chandel, Miss Tushika Chandel & Smt Shweta Chandel	(1) 06.09.2025 (2) 31.12.2025	Rs. 1,55,74,838.94/- + Intt. & Other Charges as on 31.08.2025	Property No.1) Equitable Mortgage of Leasehold property land and double story residential building survey no. 582/20, Area: 35.00 Dis i.e. 15260.00 Sqft, village- Naila, RHN-42, Teh- Janjgir Champa, Chhattisgarh Vide Registered Lease Deed dated 26/02/2008, Document no 4219. Owner- Late Shri Shekhar Chandel. Boundaries as per Deed no 4219:- North: Road, South: Land of shekhar chandel, East: Land of Bhawan, West: Land of Rajaram. Property No.2) Equitable Mortgage of Land and Double story building Kh No. 49/14, Diverted House no. 10, Ward no. 10, Akaltara Road, Shivram Colony, Mouza- Janjgir, P.H.No. 47, RNM- Janjgir, Teh- Janjgir, Dist: Janjgir Champa, Chhattisgarh, Area: 1.76 dis i.e., 810.00 sqft vide registered Sale Deed Dated 02/05/2017. Deed no. 4152. Owner- Late Shri Shekhar Chandel. Boundaries as per Sale Deed no 4152:- North: Land of Rakesh Gupta, South: Land of Naresh Dubey, East: 25ft road, West: Land of Gajandhar Pallwal. Property No.3) Equitable Mortgage of Land and Double Story Building Kh No. 4011/5, Nahariya Baba Mandir Road, Near Shiv Mandir Ward no. 8, Teh: Janjgir Champa, Chhattisgarh, Area: 0.12 Dis i.e. 5232.00 sqft. Registered Sale deed dated 28/10/2016, Document no. 7508 registered in name of Late Shri Shekhar Chandel. Boundaries as per Sale Deed no 7508:- North: Road, small Canal, South: House of Thakur, East: House of T.I. Khutia, West: Land of Khairwar

Date : 01.01.2026, Place: Bilaspur Authorised Officer, Punjab National Bank

CORRIGENDUM
GSAO, CO: Bilaspur, GAURAV PATH, BILASPUR (C.G.) 495001
It is hereby notified to the General Public that the last date for submission of complete proposals, duly sealed and signed, for the requirement of Premises for an ATM, as published in Central Chronicle, Bilaspur on 27/12/2025, has been extended from 15.01.2026 to 15.01.2026. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.
Sd/- Authorised Officer

NAME CHANGE
It is informed to the general public that I, Kiran Lakra, Father's Name - Ashish Dan, have changed my Old name to the New name - KIRAN TIRKEY, Wife of Shailesh Anurag Tirkey, Resident of Shiv Vihar Mehmand, Bilaspur (Chhattisgarh), Hence, in future, I should be known and identified by my new name KIRAN TIRKEY, Wife of Shailesh Anurag Tirkey in all government, semi- government and other documents.
Deponant
Kiran Tirkey,
W/o Shailesh Anurag Tirkey,
Shiv Vihar, Mehmand,
Bilaspur (Chhattisgarh)

FORM NO. [See Regulation 32(2)]
By Regd. A/D, Dastli failing which by Publication
OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER - I/II DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL JABALPUR
NOTICE FOR SETTLING A SALE PROCLAMATION UNDER RULE 53 OF THE SECOND SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961 READ WITH THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS & BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1993
RC/237/2025 10-12-2025
CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA VERSUS MRS. GEETA SONI W/O MR. RAJESH SONI
To
1. (CD 1) MRS. GEETA SONI W/O MR. RAJESH SONI Soni, Khajur Para, Ashirwad Villa, Bramha Road, Ambikapur, Surguja (C.G.) 497001-497001
2. (CD 2) MR. RAJESH SONI S/O SHRI VISHWANATH SONI, Khajur Para, Ashirwad Villa, Brahma Road, Ambikapur, Surguja (C.G.) 497001
Whereas upon the MRS. GEETA SONI was ordered by the Presiding Officer of DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL JABALPUR who had issued the Recovery Certificate dated 13/09/2025 in OA/932/2023 to pay to the Applicant Bank(s)/Financial Institution(s) Name of applicant, the sum of Rs. 11021887.60 (Rupees One Crore Ten Lakhs Twenty One Thousands Eight Hundred Eighty Seven And Paise Sixty Only) along with pendente lite and future interest @ 9.55% w.e.f. 11/08/2023 till realization and costs of Rs 113000 (Rupees One Lakh Thirteen Thousands Only), and whereas the said has not been paid, the undersigned has ordered the sale of undermentioned immovable/Immoveable property.
2. You are hereby informed that the 04/02/2026 at 10.30 A.M. has been fixed for drawing up the proclamation of sale and settling the terms thereof. You are requested to bring to the notice of the undersigned any encumbrances, charges, claims or liabilities attached to the said properties or any portion thereof.
Specification of Property:
All part and parcel of property (as per valuation report Triple Storey Commercial Building) Khadra No. 1177/11, admeasuring 0.06 acre at Hariom Plaza, Ward No. 28, Sahid Bhagat Singh Ward, School Road, Gudri Bazar Market, Tehsil- Ambikapur, District- Surguja (C.G.) property in the name of Mrs. Geeta Soni W/o. Shri Rajesh Soni.
Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal, on this date: 10/12/2025.
Recovery Officer DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, JABALPUR

JANA SMALL FINANCE BANK (A Scheduled Commercial Bank) Registered Office: The Fairway, Ground & First Floor, Survey No.10/1, 11/2 & 12/2B, Off Domlur, Koramangla Inner Ring Road, Next to EGL Business Park, Challaghatta, Bangalore-560071. Branch Office: Malay Heights 1st Floor, Above IDBI Bank, In Front of RBI, Mahadevghat Road, Sundar Nagar, Raipur (C.G.)-492001.

E-AUCTION NOTICE
PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE THROUGH E-AUCTION UNDER THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT (SARFAESI ACT) 2002, READ WITH PROVISIO RULE 8(6) & 9 OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES 2002.
The undersigned as authorised officer of Jana Small Finance Bank Limited has taken possession of the following property in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(4) of the SARFAESI ACT. The Borrower in particular and public at large are informed that online auction (e-auction) of the mortgage property in the below mentioned account for realisation of dues of the Bank will be held on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" on the date as prescribed as here under.

Sr. No.	Loan Account Number	Name of Original Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor	Date of 13-2 Notice	Date of Possession	Present Outstanding balance as on	Date & Time of Inspection of the property	Reserve Price in INR	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in INR	Date and Time of E-Auction	Last Date, Time & Place for Submission of Bid
1	45099420000351	1) Mr. Rishabh Mitra, S/o. S. B. Mitra, 2) Mrs. Sujata Mitra, W/o. S. B. Mitra	19.05.2023	01.08.2025	Rs.27,66,576.90 (Rupees Twenty Seven Lakh Sixty Six Thousand Five Hundred Seventy Six and Ninety Paise Only) as of 12.12.2025	10.01.2026 09.00 AM to 05.30 PM	Rs.21,64,320.00 (Rupees Twenty One Lakh Sixty Four Thousand Three Hundred Twenty Only)	Rs.2,16,432/- (Rupees Two Lakh Sixteen Thousand Four Hundred Thirty Two Only)	17.01.2026 @ 11.00 AM to 02.00 PM	16.01.2026 before 05.00 PM Jana Small Finance Bank Limited, Malay Heights, 1st Floor, Above IDBI Bank, In front of RBI, Mahadevghat Road, Sundar Nagar, Raipur (C.G.)-492001.
Property Description/ Schedule: All that R.C.C. super structure comprising Flat No.B-201, on Second Floor, total built up area of 666 Sq.ft. (61.985 Sq.mtrs.), in the multi-storeyed building known as "Geetanjali Apartment", constructed on the diverted land bearing Sheet No.9, Plot Nos.190 & 191, Part of Kharsa No.565/5, 565/4, P.H. No.36, situated at Pt. DeendayalUpadhyay Nagar, Ward No.16, Mouza Juna Bilaspur, within the limits of Nagar Nigam Bilaspur, R.N.M. Bilaspur, Vikas KhandBilha, Tehsil & District Bilaspur (M.P.). Bounded by: East by: Flat No.B-202, West by: Open Sky, North by: Open Sky and South by: Flat No.A-205.										
2	31399420000066 31399430000082 & 31399410000040	1) Mr. Dilip Mandal, S/o. Sonmani Mandal, 2) Mrs. Sangeeta Devi, W/o. Dilip Mandal	17.03.2025	17.06.2025	Rs.35,99,775.31 (Rupees Thirty Five Lakh Forty Thousand One Hundred Sixty Six and Thirty Nine Paise Only) as of 06.12.2025	10.01.2026 09.00 AM to 05.30 PM	Rs.20,33,708.00 (Rupees Twenty Lakh Thirty Three Thousand Seven Hundred Eight Only)	Rs.2,03,370.80 (Rupees Two Lakh Three Thousand Three Hundred Seventy and Eighty Paise Only)	17.01.2026 @ 11.00 AM to 02.00 PM	16.01.2026 before 05.00 PM Jana Small Finance Bank Limited, Malay Heights, 1st Floor, Above IDBI Bank, In front of RBI, Mahadevghat Road, Sundar Nagar, Raipur (C.G.)-492001.
Property Description/ Schedule: All that piece and parcel of Diverted land bearing Land Survey Nos.936/11, 938/11, 939/11, total admeasuring area of 121.56 Sq.mtrs., (0.03 Acre), out of total land area 0.012 Hectare, together with construction thereon, P.H. No.09, situated at Dewangan Para Mohalla, Durpa Road, Ward No.04, Gram Korba, R.N.M. Korba, within the limits of Nagar Palik Nigam Korba, Block/ Tehsil & District Korba (C.G.). Bounded by: East by: Road and House of J.K. Mandal, West by: House of Mohd. Shabir, North by: House of Mohd. Altaab and South by: Land of Aas Mohammad.										

The properties are being held on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" & "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and the E-Auction will be conducted 'On Line'. All payments relating to purchase of above said property to be made in favour of Jana Small Finance Bank. The auction will be conducted through the Bank's approved service provider M/s. 4 Closure at the web portal <https://bankauctions.in> & www.foreclosureindia.com. For more information and For details, help, procedure and online training on e-auction, prospective bidders may contact M/s. 4 Closure; Contact Mr. Vikas Ketele, Contact Numbers: 8712637550, Email id: info@bankauctions.in / vikas@bankauctions.in. For further details on terms and conditions to take part in e-auction proceedings and any for any query relating to property please contact Jana Small Finance Bank officers Mr. Ranjan Naik (Mob. No.6362951653). To the best of knowledge and information of the Authorised Officer, there are no encumbrances on the properties. However the intending bidders should make their own independent inquiries regarding the encumbrances, title of property put on prior to submitting their bid. No conditional bid will be accepted. This is also a notice to the above named Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Mortgagees about e-auction scheduled for the mortgaged properties. The Borrower/ Guarantor/ Mortgagee are hereby notified to pay the sum as mentioned above along with up to date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of auction, failing which the property will be sold and balance dues if any will be recovered with interest and cost.

Date: 01.01.2026, Place: Bilaspur Sd/- Authorized Officer, Jana Small Finance Bank Limited



“And now we welcome the new year. Full of things that have never been.”

[Rainer Maria Rilke]

| OUR VIEW |

India Surpasses Japan: Growth With Responsibility

India has closed 2025 with a historic milestone: overtaking Japan to become the world’s fourth largest economy, with a GDP of \$4.18 trillion. This achievement is more than a statistical triumph—it signals India’s arrival as a global economic heavyweight. Yet the celebration must be tempered with reflection. Economic size alone does not guarantee prosperity for all citizens. India’s growth story has been powered by technology, services, manufacturing, and a surge in infrastructure investment. But beneath the headline figures lie persistent challenges: unemployment among youth, widening inequality, and environmental degradation. For millions, the promise of growth remains distant from lived reality. Japan’s economic journey offers lessons. Once a post war miracle, it now grapples with demographic decline and stagnation. India’s youthful population is its greatest advantage, but also its greatest responsibility. Harnessing this demographic dividend requires sustained investment in education, skill development, and healthcare. Without these, the numbers risk becoming hollow. The milestone also carries geopolitical weight. India’s rise reshapes the balance of power in Asia. As the world’s largest democracy, it is expected to champion inclusive growth and regional stability. Yet questions remain: can India translate economic clout into diplomatic influence without alienating neighbours? Can it balance national security priorities with social welfare needs? The timing is symbolic. As global markets end 2025 on record highs, India’s ascent reflects optimism about emerging economies. But optimism must be matched by governance. Severe air pollution in Delhi, agrarian distress in rural states, and uneven access to basic services remind us that GDP rankings do not capture the full picture of national well being. India’s surpassing of Japan is a moment of pride, but also a call to action. Growth must be inclusive, sustainable, and anchored in democratic accountability. The challenge for policymakers in 2026 and beyond is clear: to ensure that India’s rise is not only measured in trillions of dollars, but in the dignity and opportunity afforded to every citizen.

| GUEST VIEW |

AI Chatbots: Convenience or Risk?

AI-powered chatbots have become an integral part of daily life, offering information, services, and even emotional support to some users. However, alongside their rapid adoption, concerns are growing within medical and mental health communities about their potential impact on psychological well-being. Experts warn that excessive reliance on chatbots—especially by vulnerable individuals—may increase the risk of distorted thinking, emotional dependence, and difficulty distinguishing between virtual interactions and real-world relationships. Mental health professionals caution that people already experiencing anxiety, depression, or other psychological conditions may be particularly susceptible. Chatbots designed to mimic human responses can unintentionally reinforce delusional thoughts or weaken users’ engagement with reality. While these systems are intended to assist, their effects vary widely among individuals, making unregulated or prolonged use a matter of concern rather than convenience. At the same time, it would be inaccurate to portray AI chatbots as inherently harmful. With responsible design, limited use, clear warnings, and human oversight, they can support access to information and help reduce stress. The real challenge lies not in the technology itself but in how it is used and regulated. AI should complement—not replace—human expertise, empathy, and professional care, ensuring that technological progress does not come at the cost of mental health.



Dr Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, Hyderabad

Comment

Tarique Rahman’s Return and Bangladesh’s Uncertain Future

After seventeen years in political exile in London, Tarique Rahman, acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), has returned to Bangladesh at a time of deep political uncertainty. His homecoming follows the August 2024 uprising that ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and brought an interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus to power. Tasked with restoring law and order and preparing the ground for free and fair elections, that administration has failed on both fronts. Instead of stability, Bangladesh today faces escalating violence, growing polarisation, and a steady erosion of institutional credibility—casting serious doubt on whether the February 2026 elections can truly reflect the will of the people.

A Tainted Electoral Field

The Election Commission’s decision to bar Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League from contesting the polls has fundamentally altered the political landscape. Disqualifying the party that led Bangladesh’s Liberation War is not merely controversial—it raises troubling questions about the moral and democratic legitimacy of the entire electoral process. With the Awami League excluded, the BNP has emerged as the strongest contender. Yet its chairperson, Khaleda Zia, remains critically ill and unlikely to assume office. This has thrust Tarique Rahman into the spotlight as the party’s de facto prime ministerial face. His ascent carries regional implications. While the Awami League has long maintained close ties with India, the BNP’s relationship with New Delhi has historically been uneasy. Moreover, during past BNP governments, Bangladesh’s Hindu

minority faced repeated bouts of persecution—an issue India cannot afford to overlook. Rahman’s return, therefore, is not simply an internal political development. It signals a potential reordering of Bangladesh’s foreign policy orientation and places India-Bangladesh relations under renewed scrutiny.

Violence and the Collapse of Order

The fragile political atmosphere took a darker turn following the murder of Sharif Osman Hadi, a leader of the National Citizen Party (NCP) and a prominent student activist, just one day after the Election Commission announced the election schedule on December 11. Hadi later died in Singapore on December 18. Public outrage was inevitable. What followed, however, was deeply disturbing.

Protests quickly morphed into a campaign infused with anti-India and anti-Hindu rhetoric. Rather than calming tensions, the Yunus administration appeared to legitimise them. Yunus attended Hadi’s funeral, declared a government holiday, lowered the national flag to half-mast, and portrayed Hadi as a martyr whose “sacrifice” should inspire future generations. Even more troubling were official insinuations linking the Awami League to the murder and a Foreign Ministry statement warning India against granting asylum to the perpetrators—an irresponsible move that implicitly cast India as complicit.

That narrative soon collapsed. Hadi’s own brother accused the interim government of failing to ensure security and went further, alleging that state-level conspiracies were being engineered to sabotage the elections.

By then, the damage was done.



Rahul Gokhale, political commentator

A wave of violence swept across the country, targeting Awami League properties and Hindu citizens alike. The brutality was chilling. Deepu Chandra Das, a 27-year-old Hindu man, was lynched after false allegations of blasphemy. He was stripped, hanged, and burned alive as bystanders cheered and recorded the killing. Investigators later confirmed there was no evidence of blasphemy. Soon after, another Hindu youth, 29-year-old Amrit Mandal, was murdered. These incidents expose how completely mob rule has begun to replace the rule of law. Yet the interim government continues to insist it will “fulfil Hadi’s dreams.” This raises an unavoidable question: which dreams? Hadi was known for virulent anti-India rhetoric, misogyny, fundamentalist leanings, and open support for mob justice. Elevating such symbolism while failing to protect citizens reflects a dangerous moral vacuum at the heart of the current regime.

The India Question Ahead

With the Awami League excluded, three political forces remain in contention: the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, and the NCP. Jamaat-e-Islami—openly fundamentalist and pro-Pakistan—was unbanned under the Yunus administration. Although it governed in alliance with the BNP between 2001 and 2006, it is contesting independently this time. This offers limited reassurance. Jamaat’s growing influence is evident: its student wing recently secured a landslide victory in Dhaka University elections, far outperforming the BNP’s student organisation. Given the university’s historic role in shaping national politics, this surge cannot be dismissed as symbolic. The NCP, despite emerging from last year’s protests, appears

to lack broad electoral appeal. All indications suggest that the BNP will emerge as the largest party, making Tarique Rahman the central figure in Bangladesh’s next political chapter. Rahman has sought to recalibrate his image, coining the slogan “Neither Delhi nor Pindi; Bangladesh First.” While he has criticised India over issues such as the Teesta water-sharing dispute, he has also kept visible distance from Pakistan. He may adopt a hard line on Sheikh Hasina’s extradition, but he cannot afford to alienate India—a neighbour and strategic partner deeply intertwined with Bangladesh’s economic stability and security. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent public expression of concern over Khaleda Zia’s health and his offer of medical assistance underscore an enduring reality of diplomacy: governments change, geography does not. Modi’s meeting with Zia during his 2015 visit to Bangladesh, when she led the opposition, further reinforces this continuity.

A Test of Leadership

Tarique Rahman’s return has brought Bangladesh’s shifting political equations into sharp focus. A “Tarique Rahman era” now appears imminent, but its direction remains uncertain. Whether this moment becomes a stabilising turn or a missed opportunity will depend on decisions taken in Dhaka—particularly its reading of regional geopolitical realities and its approach toward India. New Delhi has been a consistent and reliable friend, but friendship cannot be sustained through ambiguity or antagonism. A clear commitment to democratic norms, regional stability, and a mature understanding of India as a strategic partner will ultimately determine whether Tarique Rahman passes—or fails—his India test.

Yashwant Dada: The Titan of Gujarati Children’s Literature

His dedication to creating engaging stories for children has earned him a special place in Gujarati literature



Vinod Chandrashekhar Dixit, Freelance journalist, writer and cartoonist



Symbolic

Yashwant Mehta, affectionately known as Yashwant Dada, is a literary giant with over 500 books to his credit. A tireless advocate for children’s literature, he has penned novels, story collections, and articles, as well as edited and translated numerous works. Despite his advanced age, Yashwant Dada remains engaged in literary pursuits, inspiring generations with his simplicity, selflessness, and vast knowledge. Like literary giants Narmad, Govardhanram, Jaybhikh, and Gunvant Shah, Yashwant Dada chose early retirement (at 50) to pursue writing full-time. He’s authored travel books like “Chalo Duniyani Safare” and “Akhi Duniyano-Prvaas Karo”, despite being a homebody. His travels are limited to South India, Mumbai, and Delhi – no international trips.

Mehta believes children are the embodiment of God and has been writing for them since he was 13. Mehta connects children’s literature to Indian values like brotherhood, truth, and non-violence, urging readers to avoid superstition and promote logical

thinking. He appeals to publishers to produce more affordable children’s literature and encourages youngsters to work towards national unity, shedding caste divisions.

His science fiction collection, ‘Chiranjivi Ane Biji Vignankathao’, was published on October 28, 2025. He is known for his juvenile adventure stories and biographies. He has written over 500 books, including around 100 juvenile adventure stories. ‘Yugyatra’ (1984) is his notable long science adventure story. He has been honored with the ‘Shri Dhanji Kanji Gandhi Suvarnachandrak’ (2006), ‘Bal Sahitya Puraskar’, and ‘Rashtriya Sahitya Akademi’ (2010) awards. Yashwant Dada’s writing style is a masterclass in simplicity, social relevance, and connecting with young readers. He’s established the Children’s Literature Academy (1994) and edited ‘Jagmag’ and ‘Sahaj Balanand’ magazine. His humility and dedication have earned him the affectionate nickname “Yashwant Dada” – an inspiration to writers, educators, and literature lovers. It is rightly said that

“Literature gives order to human experience as it explores cultural values. One such well-known Gujarati author Yashwant Mehta has contributed immensely to Gujarati children’s literature. He has worked in all forms of children’s literature. That effort has yielded rich results, and its fruits have reached crores of children in Gujarat.

No literary institution in Gujarat took children’s literature seriously, so Yashwant Mehta, along with his friends, established the Children’s Literature Academy on April 30, 1994. This academy is doing remarkable, effective, and purposeful work. Any institution can be run with government or societal funding, but doing continuous and valuable work for over 25 years in a neglected field like children’s literature is no small feat. This renowned novelist and children’s writer was the first Gujarati author to receive the Children’s Literature Award from Delhi Sahitya Akademi. Being the first Gujarati author to receive this award is a remarkable honour, highlighting his pioneering work in Gujarati

children’s literature and his national recognition. He has also received the National Rajaji Award and the ‘Navchetan’ Novel-Chandrak for novel writing. He has been awarded the prestigious D.K. Gandhi Suvarna Chandrak of the Gujarat Sahitya Sabha for the year 2006. He has also received the Rs. 50,000 Children’s Literature Award of the National Sahitya Academy in 2010. He is the first Gujarati writer to receive this honour.

With six decades of meaningful journalism and a vast experience of writing about 500 books, Yashwant Mehta edited the children’s newspaper ‘Jagmag’ for about a decade and a half, then was the editor of the monthly ‘Bal Anand’ from August 1999 to 2018. He was the president of the Gujarati Writers’ Association from 2003 to 2014 and was on the editorial board of the association’s booklet series ‘Lekhak and Lekhan’. Yashwant Mehta’s dedication to creating engaging stories for children has earned him a special place in Gujarati literature. His contributions continue to inspire young readers and authors alike.

YOUR LETTERS

Well –Deserved Success

Hats off to Aaryan Zishan Ahmed, a brilliant young mind from Rangia, Assam, who has discovered two new asteroids. This remarkable feat enriches planetary science and showcases the immense potential of India’s youth. To expand the universe’s frontiers at such a young age is extraordinary. Recognition from NASA underscores the global merit of his work. His achievement is a source of honour, making the nation proud and inspiring future generations. Vive La Zishan!

Kyamudin Ansari,Mumbai

A New Year, A New Resolve

As we welcome the New Year, it is time to reflect on our responsibilities as citizens. Beyond celebrations, let us resolve to uphold civic harmony, protect the environment, and support those less fortunate. The year ahead should be marked not only by personal success but by collective progress and compassion. May 2026 bring peace, prosperity, renewed commitment to democratic values, and a spirit of unity. Together, we can make this year truly meaningful and inspiring.

Pratham Roy, Kolkata

Send your articles (600-650 words) and letters (70-8 0 words) for this page on: editorialcc007@gmail.com The letters can be edited or rewritten for clarity.



Trying to follow my father's footsteps of being low-profile, accessible to all: Nabin.

Nitin Nabin
BJP National Working President

Briefs
BEST OF THE REST

UNFORTUNATE DECISION

‘Opposition to lamp lighting in Thirupparankundram is politically motivated’

MADURAI: The opposition to lighting the lamp atop the Thirupparankundram hill was politically motivated and lacked understanding of the cultural significance, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Wednesday.

Terming the state government's opposition as “unfortunate,” he said the Thirupparankundram hill shrine of Subrahmanya Swamy was an integral part of the state culture.

“It is unfortunate to do all the unethical things when the (Madurai Bench of the Madras) High Court has categorically given a decisive judgment that Hindus can light the lamp. The opposition to it is politically motivated. People find the opposition as unfortunate,” the Minister told reporters after offering prayers at the ancient Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple here. When pointed out that the authorities objected to lighting the lamp on Karthigai Deepam on a pillar located close to a dargah, as it would lead to sectarian conflict, the Minister shot back, “can Thirupparankundram



be effaced?”

“Can you deny the existence of Ramanathapuram or Madurai Meenakshi Ma or Siva from Tamil Nadu? Can you remove the cultural ethos of the Tamil language and literature or the Thirukkural (a masterpiece authored by Thiruvalluvar) from the society?” he asked.

“Those who propagate this theory are foolish. They have misunderstood. Let Lord Siva forgive them,” Pradhan, who had come to the state for the valedictory of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam event in Rameswaram, said.

ALERTNESS

Lt Gen Sharma reviews preparedness of troops in Ladakh

LEH: Army's northern commander Lt Gen Pratik Sharma on Wednesday visited forward areas in Union Territory of Ladakh and reviewed operational preparedness of deployed troops, officials said.

The General Officer Commanding-in-chief, northern command, visited Tagyarmale sector of eastern Ladakh and was briefed about the security situation by the field commanders, the officials said.

“Lt Gen Sharma reviewed operational preparedness of our valiant troops deployed in Tagyarmale sector of eastern Ladakh.

“With profound pride, he lauded their exemplary professionalism, steadfast resolve and selfless devotion to national security while urging all ranks to nurture this soul-stirring excellence,” Army's northern command said in a post on X. The Army commander also extended his heartfelt greetings for a bright and prosperous New Year 2026. **PTI**

WORD OF CAUTION

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan cautions against attempts to hijack Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy



VARKALA: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday cautioned against attempts by some vested interests to distort and hijack the philosophies of saint-social reformer Sree Narayana Guru.

He urged people to be vigilant against such efforts to confine Narayana Guru within the boundaries of a particular religion or community.

The chief minister was speaking after inaugurating the 93rd Sivagiri pilgrim conclave at Sivagiri Math, founded by Guru, at Varkala here.

The Sivagiri pilgrimage is being held this year amid concerns over attempts by certain forces to distort and hijack the philosophy of Narayana Guru, he said while addressing the gathering.

“We must remain vigilant against covert efforts to confine the Guru within the boundaries of any single caste or religion. Sree Narayana Guru is the true world teacher who showed humanity the path of humanism, unity, brotherhood, and friendship, transcending caste and religious con-

siderations,” he said. Describing Guru as a spiritual luminary whose philosophical greatness offered a vision for the liberation of the entire world, Vijayan said his vision had a profound influence on the making of modern Kerala. The chief minister further cautioned that fragmented mobilisation of various caste and religious groups would weaken democratic and secular ideals, speakers said here on Sunday.

He also stressed the need to integrate the message of Narayana Guru with the vision of progressive forces to safeguard the country's constitutional values. He said the survival of a democratic and secular constitutional framework depends on harmonising the Guru's teachings with uncompromising progressive ideals that uphold equality and social justice.

Vijayan also called for collective efforts to resist attempts to divide people on the basis of identity and to strengthen democratic and secular traditions rooted in the teachings of Sri Narayana Guru. **PTI**

Elected unopposed

THANE: Even before the first ballot is cast for the Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC) elections in Maharashtra's Thane district, two BJP women candidates have secured victory in the absence of a contest.

Rekha Chaudhary, who had been a corporator for over a decade, and Asawari Kedar Navare have been declared winners unopposed from Ward No. 18 (Kachore) and Ward No. 26(A), which covers the Savarkar Road area, respectively, said officials.

State BJP chief Ravindra Chavan described the victories as the “ultimate civilian award” from the people. “It is the recognition of ten years of solving problems on the ground, of being there for every citizen in Kachore. People have spoken by staying silent. They knew their leader had already won their hearts,” he said.

Navare, who comes from a family with RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) roots, is a new face in the municipal arena.

Chavan made a video call to Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis to convey the development.

“A victory is a victory. But an unopposed victory is a message of trust. Let this energy fuel our journey towards a better Kalyan-Dombivli,” said Fadnavis during the video call.

DECORATED OFFICER |

26/11 hero Sadanand Date appointed DGP of Maha

Press Trust Of India

A 1990 batch IPS officer, the 59-year-old Date will succeed Rashmi Shukla, who retires on January 3.



DGP Sadanand Vasant Date.

MUMBAI: Sadanand Vasant Date, a soft-spoken yet tough taskmaster and a decorated officer of the 26/11 terror attacks, was on Wednesday appointed as the new Director General of Maharashtra Police (DGP).

A 1990 batch IPS officer, the 59-year-old Date will succeed Rashmi Shukla, who retires on January 3.

He will have a fixed tenure of two years as the head of the over two lakh strong Maharashtra Police force. Date's appointment follows his recent prema-

ture repatriation from central deputation where he was heading the National Investigation Agency (NIA). Date is widely hailed as one of the heroes of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

On the fateful day of November 26, 2008, known as 26/11 terror attacks, Date was serving as the Additional Commissioner of Police (Central Region) in 2008.

He had led a police team that pinned down Lashkar-e-Taiba terror-

HIGHLIGHT

● Date is hailed as one of the heroes of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

● He was honoured with the President's Police Medal for Gallantry.

ists Ajmal Kasab and Abu Ismail on the rooftop of Cama Hospital and despite being severely injured by grenade splinters, he continued to engage the terrorists. He was later honoured with the President's Police Medal for Gallantry.

Even today, Date carries metallic splinters from that night embedded in his body, especially one near his eye and he describes them as

“medals” from a war zone rather than injuries. The officer brings a wealth of experience across state and central agencies as he has served in the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and the first Commissioner of Police for Mira-Bhayandar, Vasai-Virar. Date also served the Mumbai Police as Joint Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) and Crime. He has also served as DIG in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and IG (Operations) in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). A doctorate in Economic Offences from Pune University, Date takes charge at a crucial time for the state's law and order machinery when local body elections are being held.

Shah outlines BJP action plan for Bengal polls

Shah sought to project a unified front, while indicating former state president Dilip Ghosh as one of the main faces of the saffron camp for the elections.

Press Trust Of India

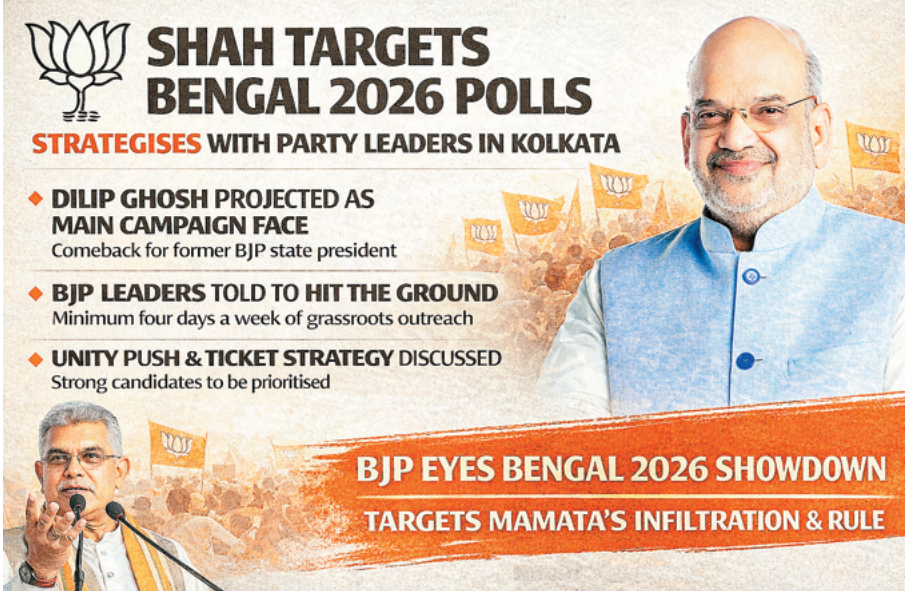
KOLKATA: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday outlined an action plan for the BJP's West Bengal unit while reviewing its preparedness for the assembly polls due early next year.

Addressing the party's public representatives, both past and present, Shah sought to project a unified front, while indicating former state president Dilip Ghosh as one of the main faces of the saffron camp for the elections.

Ghosh, who has largely stayed away from the forefront of the BJP's activities in the state over the past several months, was also invited to the closed-door meeting attended by the party's MPs, MLAs, civic body councillors and organisational portfolio holders.

Shah held the meeting to take stock of the BJP West Bengal unit's preparedness for the assembly polls next year.

He reportedly held a separate meeting with Ghosh, alongside another former state president Sukanta Majumdar, incumbent Samik Bhat-tacharya, and the state's



leader of the opposition, Suwendu Adhikari, indicating bridging of gaps between the party's old guns and the newer ones.

“I can't say much, but you will see an active Dilip Ghosh in the 2026 polls. I was called to listen to my experiences and opinions,” Ghosh told reporters while leaving the venue.

Besides the state leaders, the meeting was also attended by the party's central observers for Bengal like Sunil Bansal, Bhupendra Yadav, Biplab Deb and Amit Malviya.

According to a leader who attended the meet-

ing, Shah instructed the public representatives to spend “at least four days a week and attend at least five street corner meetings daily” to strengthen their public outreach.

The leaders must prove their worth to the party in the next two months to gain eligibility for tickets for the upcoming state elections, the leader said. Shah, considered the BJP's chief poll strategist, also listened to the party's 2024 Lok Sabha poll candidates about the advantages and difficulties they faced during their campaigns, and the factors contributing to

their wins and losses, he said.

The union home minister advised them to share their understandings of the assembly seats under their respective parliamentary constituencies during the run-up to the polls, the leader said.

About inviting Dilip Ghosh, who was perceived to have been pushed to the party's “back bench” after visuals of him meeting Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at the inauguration of the Jagannath Temple complex in Digha earlier this year were splashed across TV screens.

SC refusal

NEWDELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a habeas corpus plea alleging illegal arrest of a businessman from Haldwani in Uttarakhand by Uttar Pradesh Police but granted him the liberty to approach the high court for appropriate relief.

A vacation bench of justices MM Sundresh and Prashant Kumar Mishra asked advocates Anand Kumar and Aditya Giri, appearing for petitioner Umang Rastogi, to approach the Allahabad High Court for relief after noting that a similar plea regarding his father's arrest was pending before the Delhi High Court.

“You have already approached the high court (in the other matter from which this case has emanated). Ideally, the high court should deal with this matter also... that will be appropriate for you,” the bench observed.

SCATHING ATTACK |

‘Congress creating ‘mini Bdesh’ in Karnataka’

Press Trust Of India

BENGALURU: Leader of the Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka on Wednesday accused the Congress government of creating ‘mini Bangladesh’ in the state due to its appeasement politics.

Launching a scathing attack on the Congress government after visiting the eviction site at Kogilu layout in Yelahanka, Ashoka alleged that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah

was encouraging large-scale encroachment and illegal settlements.

The Congress government came under severe criticism from Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) for demolishing houses for the minorities. Alarmed by it, the Congress high command too intervened and directed the state government to be compassionate to the minorities.

The state government



has announced that it will provide alternative housing arrangements for those genuine residents among them. The BJP flayed the government for taking a U-turn on the issue, saying that this was ‘appeasement politics’.

CM accused of promoting illegal encroachments.

R Ashoka
LoP in Assembly

Speaking to reporters during his visit to the demolition spot, Ashoka said the state was witnessing an alarming trend after the change in government and questioned the identity and origin of those residing on encroached govern-

“What a mad year it’s been! Life is truly an up-and-down roller coaster! I learned more in 2025 than I have in the last ten years! Phew! Thankful for the lessons, the love, and the light, and I can’t wait for 2026. Wishing you all the best of all your hearts’ desires let’s rock and roll, baby!!!!”

Shruti Haasan

Final season brings ultimate showdown



&Glitters

CLOSE UP

Bollywood comebacks that Stole 2025: Akshaye Khanna, Madhuri Dixit, Aamir Khan shine

The actress opens up on backlash surrounding Housefull 5 and women’s limited roles.

Central Chronicle News

Sonam shares her perspective on navigating Bollywood as a female actor in ensemble films.

2025 proved to be a year of cinematic reunions, as some of Bollywood’s most cherished actors made comebacks that reminded audiences why they were missed. From Akshaye Khanna to Madhuri Dixit and Aamir Khan, the year offered performances blending nostalgia with fresh energy, proving that talent only grows stronger with time.

Rajat Bedi reemerged in the spotlight with Aryan Khan’s directorial debut on Netflix. His intense portrayal reaffirmed his commanding presence on screen, earning praise from critics and fans alike, and reminding audiences of his versatility and charm.

Akshaye Khanna’s understated yet powerful performance in Dhurandhar went viral, with viewers applauding his ability to convey deep emotion effortlessly. His return highlighted why he remains a benchmark for nuanced acting in contemporary Bollywood.

Madhuri Dixit, always a style and performance icon, surprised fans with her role in Mrs Deshpande.



The comebacks we loved this year



Directed by Abhi-jeet Shirish Deshpande and backed by Rajkamal Entertainment, Camera Take Films and Roaring Rivers Productions, the film traces V. Shantaram’s extraordinary journey from silent films to the

evolution of sound and colour, and his enduring cultural impact. Chaturvedi, last seen in Dhadak 2, also has Do Deewane Seher Mein and Dil Ka Darwaaza Khol Na Darling lined up for release next year.



| HOLLYWOOD |

Loki returns bigger than ever as Tom Hiddleston teases Avengers: Doomsday

Central Chronicle News

HIGHLIGHT

● **Loki’s journey comes full circle as Tom Hiddleston teases Avengers: Doomsday.**

Tom Hiddleston is set to return as Loki in Avengers: Doomsday, scheduled for release next December, marking nearly 15 years since he first appeared as the mischievous Asgardian in Thor. In a recent interview, the actor opened up about his enduring bond with the character and what Loki’s next chapter represents. Hiddleston shared that stories centered on redemption have always shaped his approach to Loki. Drawing from films and theatre he encountered in his youth, he spoke about his fasci-

nation with narratives that offer second chances. For him, Loki’s appeal lies in the possibility of change the idea that flawed characters can evolve without erasing who they once were. This theme became central in the Disney+ series Loki, where the character confronts the consequences of his past actions. By the end of the show, Loki transforms from a self-serving trickster into the keeper of the



Tom Hiddleston as Loki in ‘Loki’ season 2



multiverse’s timelines. Hiddleston described this shift as Loki finally taking responsibility and gaining control over his own story, rather than being driven by fate or fear. Filming for Avengers: Doomsday has already wrapped for the actor, and he hinted that the film will surprise

audiences. Calling it “monumental,” Hiddleston said the story’s scale and emotional core are unlike anything Marvel has attempted before. With changes in the franchise’s long-term direction, Loki is now positioned as a key figure in shaping the future of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Outside Marvel, Hiddleston continues to balance blockbuster roles with diverse projects. He recently returned to the West End stage, starred in The Life of Chuck, and took on the role of Edmund Hillary in Apple TV’s Tenzing.

CineBriefs

BEST OF THE REST

Web Series

Ekta Kapoor hits out at Zee TV over Pavitra Rishta

Ekta Kapoor has strongly criticised Zee TV for reusing the iconic title Pavitra Rishta for its upcoming romantic drama without her consent. Calling the move unethical, Ekta said creators who fail to build original intellectual property resort to exploiting existing legacies. In a sharp Instagram post, she remarked there was “nothing pavitra” about the decision, accusing the makers of intellectual bankruptcy. The 2009 show, starring late Sushant Singh Rajput and Ankit Lokhande, remains deeply cherished by audiences. Although the new series is unrelated, the reused title has sparked backlash, with fans questioning originality and creative ethics in television.

Bollywood pairs

Hina Khan shares what keeps love alive after years



Television star Hina Khan recently shared a heartfelt reflection on what intimacy truly means to her after 13 years with husband Rocky Jaiswal. Vacationing in the Maldives, the actress revealed how love notes, small gestures, and emotional presence define their bond today. Hina explained that while physical intimacy may ebb with time, stress, or responsibilities, emotional intimacy keeps relationships alive. Choosing each other daily, mutual respect, trust, and unwavering support matter most to her. She credited Rocky for being her constant pillar, best friend, and safe space, adding that true intimacy lies in feeling deeply seen, valued, and loved again and again.



Fashion

Madhuri Dixit swaps trousers for skirt in chic power look

Madhuri Dixit once again proves that timeless style can evolve without losing its essence. In her latest fashion outing, the actor reimagined the classic pantsuit by replacing trousers with a flowing skirt, creating a silhouette that felt both powerful and feminine. She wore a chocolate-brown co-ord set featuring a structured blazer paired with a matching maxi skirt, softening sharp tailoring with fluid movement. A subtle hint of leopard print added playful contrast, while minimal gold jewellery and black Chelsea boots kept the look refined. Styled with modern glam, Madhuri’s ensemble highlighted how classic power dressing can be reinvented with confidence and personality.

Trending on Insta

@rashmika_mandanna

Rashmika Mandanna celebrates 9 years with heartfelt gratitude

Rashmika Mandanna celebrated nine years in cinema, expressing gratitude for her 26 films and the “family” she’s found along the way. Fans flooded her with love, making her milestone deeply special and heartfelt.



Stranger Things trailer trailer dropped

Netflix has dropped the final Stranger Things trailer, teasing an epic showdown as Hawkins faces Vecna’s wrath. Fans are emotional and excited, bracing for the two-hour finale streaming this New Year’s Eve.



Ananya Panday screams during Kapil Show

Ananya Panday and Kartik Aaryan appeared on The Great Indian Kapil Show’s New Year special, sharing laughs and insights on modern relationships before a spooky twist had Krushna Abhishek scare them as Manjulika.



Shrey Mittal joins Colors TV show

Shrey Mittal returns to TV with Colors’ Mangal Lakshmi–Lakshmi Ka Safar, joining amid major cast changes. Fans are eager to see his fresh avatar and how his character will impact Lakshmi and Karan’s evolving storyline.



Malcolm in the Middle returns this April

Hulu and Disney+ released the trailer for Malcolm in the Middle: Life’s Still Unfair, reuniting Frankie Muniz, Bryan Cranston, and the original cast, following Malcolm’s chaotic return to family life this April.



Ek Deewane Ki Deewaniyat now on ZEE5

After its theatrical run, Roshan Mathew and Zarin Shihab’s Malayalam romantic drama Ithiri Neram is set for an OTT premiere on Sun NXT from December 31, 2025, exploring lost love, chance encounters, and unresolved emotions.



Art & Culture

NEW YEAR RITUALS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES

Whimsical New Year rituals from different cultures that spark hope and abundance

New Year isn't just a moment it's a mindset charged with hope and possibility.

New Year's Eve has always been about more than countdowns and champagne. Across the world, people mark the moment with rituals that feel half-belief, half-play small acts meant to nudge the universe in the right direction. As 2026 approaches, these traditions remind us that manifesting doesn't have to be serious. Sometimes, it's supposed to be fun.

Grapes under the table (Spain)

At midnight, twelve grapes, twelve wishes. In recent years, the ritual got a viral upgrade: eating them under a table. It's private, slightly ridiculous, and deeply symbolic a quiet promise to yourself, made while the world celebrates above you.

The midnight suitcase walks (Latin America)

In many Latin American homes, empty suitcases roll out onto streets or balconies at midnight. The message is clear: travel isn't a dream, it's a decision. Acting as if adventure is already booked turns hope into motion.

Pomegranates at the



New Year traditions from around the world.



Circles of luck (Philippines)

Twelve round fruits fill the table, echoing coins and continuity. Polka dots often make an appearance too, wrapping the celebration in symbols of steady wealth and balance, month after hopeful month.

Leaps and liquid wishes (Denmark & Russia)

In Denmark, people jump off chairs at midnight, physically leaving the old year behind. In Russia, wishes are written, burned, mixed into champagne and swallowed before the final chime belief taken literally.

Different cultures, same instinct: start the year with faith, intention and a little courage. Because sometimes, the future listens best when you meet it halfway.

HIGHLIGHT

● Around the world, playful New Year rituals turn belief into action for luck and love.

doorstep (Turkey & Greece)

Few rituals make an entrance like smashing a pomegranate at the door. The burst of red seeds symbolises abundance, joy and prosperity spilling into the year ahead. The mess is intentional good fortune rarely arrives neatly.

Forget T Rex these creatures had sharper teeth

When we picture razor-sharp teeth, giants like Tyrannosaurus rex or the monstrous Megalodon usually come to mind. But science tells a far stranger story. The sharpest teeth on Earth belonged not to massive predators, but to conodonts tiny, eel-like creatures that swam ancient oceans over 500 million years ago. These jawless animals looked unremarkable, yet their tooth-like structures, called elements, were astonishing under a microscope. Measuring just about two microns at the tip, they were sharper than any known vertebrate teeth. Long before dinosaurs ruled land or sharks dominated seas, conodonts quietly perfected nature's sharpest bite.

MASTERPIECE

The Himalayan flower that waits decades to bloom



High in the harsh, wind-lashed reaches of the eastern Himalayas grows Sikkim Sundari, a plant that feels almost unreal. Known scientifically as Rheum nobile, this rare Himalayan wonder spends decades growing silently before blooming just once. Thriving at altitudes between 4,000 and 4,800 metres, it belongs to a group called "glasshouse plants." Its tall, translucent bracts act like natural greenhouses, shielding delicate flowers from freezing temperatures and intense UV rays. When it finally blooms, the plant glows against the rocky landscape like a pale tower and soon after, having completed its life's purpose, it quietly withers and dies.

| ORNAMENTS TELL STORIES OF CULTURE |

Ornaments tell stories of culture, emotion and creativity across civilisations

Central Chronicle News

Long before paintings filled galleries and sculptures stood in museums, art found a home on the human body. Ornaments were among the earliest forms of creative expression simple shells, stones and bones shaped by hand and worn with meaning. They were not just beautiful objects, but symbols of belief, identity and emotion. As time passed, ornaments grew more detailed and meaningful. In India, jewellery reflected temple art and stories from mythology. In ancient Egypt, gold symbolised power and

HIGHLIGHT

● From shells and stones to gold and gems, ornaments have always told human stories.

eternity. Across cultures, ornaments quietly told stories about who people were, what they believed in and how they wished to be remembered. During the Renaissance, jewellery became even more expressive, combining metal and gemstones to represent love, protection and personal strength. At the heart of every ornament is craftsmanship. A jeweller works with patience and imagination, shaping



From past to present, jewellery inspires all generations



metal and stones the way an artist works with paint or clay. Techniques like engraving and stone setting are passed down through generations, keeping tradition alive while allowing room for new ideas.

Modern jewellery speaks a simpler, more personal language. People now choose pieces that reflect their own stories birthstones, initials or designs linked to special memories. Colour adds emotion, from soft pastels to bright gemstones. Designs have also become lighter and more comfortable, showing that elegance can be easy to wear.

Ornaments are no longer saved only for weddings or celebrations. They are part of everyday life, blending art with routine. Sustainable and ethical designs add deeper value, making jewellery thoughtful as well as beautiful.

Cultural Hues

Along ship breaking finds artistic voice

Himanshu Jamod's powerful paintings on the Alang Ship Breaking

Yard emerge as a standout at the sixth Kochi-Muziris Biennale. Drawing from a childhood spent around ports and dockyards in Gujarat, the Bhavnagar-born artist deconstructs myths surrounding the world's largest ship-dismantling hub. His large-scale works explore the anatomy and final journey of ships, portraying Alang not as a graveyard, but as a living world shaped by labour, memory and transformation..



Iconic great wave fetches record price

Hokusai's iconic woodblock prints The Great Wave off Kanagawa has set a new auction record after being sold in Hong Kong, underlining its lasting global influence. Created in the early 19th century as part of the Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji series, the artwork captivated collectors with its dramatic wave and delicate balance. The record-breaking sale highlights the growing demand for historic Japanese art and reaffirms Hokusai's status as one of the most influential artists in art history....



Keeladi unearthed: South India's lost civilization

Keeladi, discovered in Tamil Nadu, is reshaping India's understanding of ancient urbanisation. Dated to the Sangam era, the site reveals advanced brick structures, ring wells, and artefacts, challenging the idea that South India passively inherited northern technologies. Beyond archaeology, it has become a cultural and political symbol, fueling debates over heritage and history. Sowmiya Ashok's new book explores Keeladi's significance, linking literary Sangam references to tangible evidence while highlighting the broader politics surrounding India's past.



2,400-year-old Hjortspring Boat sheds New light

Around 2,400 years ago, warriors attacked the Danish island of Als, and their wooden plank boat was ceremoniously sunk in Hjortspring bog. Excavated in the 1920s, the Hjortspring boat is Scandinavia's oldest known plank vessel. Recent research shows it may have come from the Baltic region, carried up to 80 warriors, and was waterproofed with pine pitch. A rare human fingerprint on its caulking offers unique insight into Iron Age craftsmanship, seafaring, and the region's sophisticated, interconnected political and military networks.



Ancient Pharaoh's statues stand tall again

After more than 3,000 years, the Colossi of Memnon two towering statues of Pharaoh Amenhotep III have been restored at his funerary temple in Luxor. Standing over 40 feet tall, they depict the pharaoh seated with ceremonial beards and reliefs of his wife Tiye. Excavated from scattered pieces over two decades, the restoration revives one of Egypt's most important landmarks, highlighting the grandeur of the New Kingdom and demonstrating the country's commitment to preserving its rich archaeological and cultural heritage.



Lasers reveal ancient details on Roman Column

Archaeologists in Rome are using lasers to clean the 1,800-year-old Column of Marcus Aurelius, a 154-foot-tall marble monument in Piazza Colonna. Built between 180-193 C.E., the column depicts over 2,000 figures spiraling around it, illustrating the emperor's battles. Lasers provide a precise, fast, and safe way to remove centuries of grime, complemented by traditional cleaning methods. The restoration, led by Marta Baumgartner, reveals intricate details of Roman warfare and daily life, offering fresh insights into the empire's history.



Sarfaraz blitz powers Mumbai victory

A brutal batting display lit up Jaipur as Sarfaraz Khan’s record-breaking knock powered Mumbai to a commanding victory in the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Press Trust Of India

Mumbai piled up 444 runs and sealed their fourth straight group victory, tightening grip on quarter-final qualification.

JAIPUR: Sarfaraz Khan signed off 2025 in spectacular fashion, hammering a sensational 157 off just 75 balls to guide Mumbai to an emphatic 87-run win over Goa in a Group C Vijay Hazare Trophy match on Wednesday. His innings, studded with nine fours and 14 towering sixes, included a 56-ball century, his third in List A cricket. Mumbai posted a massive 444 for eight, riding on late fireworks from Musheer Khan, Hardik Tamore, Shams Mulani, Tanush Kotian and skipper Shardul Thakur. Sarfaraz took particular liking to spinners Lalit Yadav and Darshan Misal, clearing the ropes repeatedly. In reply, Goa were always behind the asking rate despite half-centuries from Lalit Yadav and Deepraj Gaonkar, and a century by Abhinav Tejrana. Shardul Thakur’s disciplined spell ensured Mumbai’s dominance continued.

Sarfaraz slams 14 sixes in explosive 157 off 75 balls as Mumbai beat Goa by 87 runs

Sarfaraz Khan's knock of 14 sixes and 9 fours powered Mumbai to a colossal total of 444/8

● Musheer Khan, Hardik Tamore, and Tanush Kotian contributed to Mumbai’s total, ensuring their fourth consecutive group stage win



Chhattisgarh Thrash Sikkim by 229

JAIPUR: In a one-sided contest of the Senior Men’s Vijay Hazare One Day Trophy 2025, Chhattisgarh crushed Sikkim by 229 runs at Jaipur on December 31. After Sikkim won the toss and chose to field, Chhattisgarh piled up a massive 355 for three in their 50 overs. Vikalp Tiwari starred with a blistering unbeaten 112 off just 57 balls, registering his maiden century of the tournament with nine fours and six sixes. Ayush Pandey (86) and skipper Amandeep Khare (83 not out) provided strokng support, while Mayank Verma added 36. Chasing 356, Sikkim collapsed to 126 in 34 overs despite Gurinder Singh’s 47 and Palzor’s 43. Debutant Dev Aditya Singh and Ajay Mandal claimed four wickets each.

Pant falters as Delhi lose big

ALUR: Delhi’s unbeaten run in the Vijay Hazare Trophy ended abruptly as Odisha handed them a comprehensive 79-run defeat in a fourth-round Group D match on Wednesday. Chasing a manageable 272, Delhi’s batting collapsed to 193 in 43.3 overs, with skipper Rishabh Pant managing only 24. Pacers Debabrata Pradhan (3/28) and Sam-bit Baral (3/34) triggered the slide after Odisha posted 272 for eight, built around Biplab Samantray’s 72. Delhi slumped to 35 for five after losing both openers cheaply, and despite resistance from Harsh Tyagi (43) and Hrithik Shokeen (32), recovery proved impossible. Odisha moved atop the table on better net run rate.

Afghanistan recall Naveen, Naib for T20 World Cup; Rashid to lead

Press Trust Of India

Afghanistan recalled key players as Rashid Khan leads a balanced squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup.

KABUL: Afghanistan on Wednesday recalled pacer Naveen-ul-Haq and all-rounder Gulbadin Naib in a 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup to be held across India and Sri Lanka from February 7.

Star spinner Rashid Khan will continue to lead the side, with Ibrahim Zadran named as his deputy.

Naveen returns after recovering from a shoulder injury. He last featured in an international match in December 2024.

Naib, meanwhile, was left out of Afghanistan’s white-ball tour of Bangladesh in October as was the experienced left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi, who has also been included in the squad.

“We had good discussions over the past few days and finalized the squad. Gulbadin Naib is a big-match player, and his return boosts our team. We are also pleased to have Naveen Ul Haq back, which enhances the quality of our fast bowling,” chief selector Ahmad Shah Sulimankhil said.

The squad also fea-



EASTFACTS

● Naveen-ul-Haq and Gulbadin Naib return, strengthening Afghanistan’s pace and all-round depth.

● Afghanistan grouped with New Zealand, South Africa, UAE and Canada; open campaign in Chennai.

tures off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman. His inclusion has pushed mystery spinner AM Ghazanfar to the reserves.

Afghanistan enjoyed

their best-ever run in an ICC event at the previous edition of the T20 World Cup in 2024, where they reached the semifinals.

This time, they have been drawn in a group alongside New Zealand, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and Canada.

Afghanistan will open their campaign against New Zealand on February 8 in Chennai.

The same squad will also play a three-match T20I series against the West Indies in the UAE ahead of the World Cup starting January 19.

| LIGUE 1 RACE |

Lens and PSG resume Ligue 1 title battle with Marseille waiting to pounce

Press Trust Of India

Lens and PSG restart Ligue 1 with Marseille closely watching any slip-ups.

PARIS: Lens start the new year one point clear of defending champions Paris Saint-Germain as Ligue 1 resumes with a far tighter title race than recent seasons. PSG, dominant winners in recent campaigns, have already dropped points through defeats and draws,



keeping the chase alive. Lens travel to Toulouse on Friday, while PSG host Paris FC on Sunday in the capital’s first

intercity derby since 1990. Third-placed Marseille could benefit from any stumble when they host Nantes. Elsewhere, Monaco face Lyon in a crucial clash between inconsistent rivals, while Nice look to stabilise after a coaching change under Claude Puel. Lyon midfielder Pavel Šulc and loanee Endrick remain players to watch. PSG will miss Achraf Hakimi and Ibrahim Mbeye due to AFCON duties, adding intrigue to an increasingly competitive title battle.

Roberto Carlos undergoes heart surgery, condition stable

Press Trust Of India

Brazil legend Roberto Carlos is recovering after successful heart surgery while vacationing at home.

MADRID: Former Brazil and Real Madrid defender Roberto Carlos has undergone surgery to address a heart-related issue, according to Spanish sports daily Diario AS. The 52-year-old, currently



a Madrid ambassador, was on holiday in Brazil when

medical tests detected a heart dysfunction. Initially seeking treatment for a minor blood clot in his leg, a full-body MRI revealed the underlying cardiac problem. Doctors decided to insert a catheter during a procedure that was expected to be brief but lasted nearly three hours due to complications. The surgery was ultimately successful, and Carlos is reported to be out of danger.

Packed calendar, high stakes for India in 2026

Press Trust of India

Three cricket World Cups, Asian Games, and global championships make 2026 a decisive year for Indian sport.

NEW DELHI: Exciting, demanding, and laden with consequence, 2026 is set to be one of the most intense years in Indian sport. With world titles on offer, Olympic qualification pathways opening for the 2028 Los Angeles Games, and several marquee events hosted on home soil, the year will stretch athletes, administrators, and fans alike.

January-March: Cricket leads the charge

The year begins with cricket firmly in the spotlight. Three World Cups in the opening quarter ensure that the nation’s favourite sport dominates attention. The Under-19 50-over World Cup in Zimbabwe and Namibia from mid-January will showcase the next generation, with teenagers aiming to follow

the path once taken by icons like Virat Kohli.

Almost immediately after, the senior men begin their T20 World Cup title defence at home, with a few matches also scheduled in Sri Lanka. The tournament, running from February to early March, will test squad depth and adaptability in familiar conditions.

Beyond cricket, the Australian Open tennis championships retain their traditional January slot, though Indian expectations remain modest. Badminton, however, regains focus in March at the All England Championships, where a fit-again P V Sindhu will lead India’s rebuilding effort after a disappointing previous season. Football fans, too, have reason for optimism as India feature in the AFC Women’s Asian Cup in Australia, marking a significant return to continental prominence.

April-June: Multi-sport momentum

The second quarter

broadens the sporting canvas. Chess takes centre stage with the Candidates Tournament in Cyprus, which will decide the challenger to reigning world champion D Gukesh. Alongside, the Asian Boxing Championships and the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Ahmedabad underline India’s growing stature as a host nation.

Badminton’s Thomas and Uber Cup, world team table tennis championships in London, and a highly anticipated women’s T20 World Cup in June add further intensity. Led by Harmanpreet Kaur, the women’s cricket team will aim to extend their dominance after their ODI World Cup triumph.

Athletics also gathers pace with the Diamond League circuit. All eyes will be on Neeraj Chopra, whose performances will set the tone ahead of major multi-sport events. Internationally, the French Open, Wimble-



don, and the FIFA World Cup in North America ensure global sporting engagement.

July-September: Medals and Olympic pathways

A trimmed-down Commonwealth Games from late July brings mixed emotions. While athletics, boxing, and weightlifting remain, the absence of shooting and wrestling reduces India’s traditional medal avenues.

August, however, offers redemption. India hosts the World Badminton Championships in Delhi, reinforcing its ambition to stage elite global events. Simultaneously, the Hockey World Cup in Europe and a World Athletics Continental Tour event in Bhubaneswar elevate the country’s international profile.

September marks the competitive peak with the Asian Games in Japan. Beyond medals, the Games carry immense Olympic significance, with direct

qualification spots available in disciplines like hockey and shooting. The Chess Olympiad in Tashkent, following India’s historic double gold in 2025, adds further prestige.

October-December: Championships and finales

The year’s final quarter sustains momentum with the World Wrestling Championships in Bahrain, World Weightlifting Championships in China, and the ISSF World Championship in Doha, where Olympic quotas will again be at stake.

December culminates with the World Chess Championship, the ultimate intellectual showdown, as India’s recent rise in the sport continues to command global respect.

Awaited announcements Some dates remain unconfirmed, including Neeraj Chopra’s NC Classic and the World Boxing Cups. Yet even without these details, one thing is clear: 2026 will be relentless.



“Finland is prepared for security challenges of various kinds, and we respond to them as necessary.”

Alexander Stubb
Finnish President

Auckland kicks off 2026 celebrations with fireworks

Auckland became the first major city to welcome 2026, launching 3,500 fireworks from the Sky Tower, though rainy weather led to the cancellation of smaller community events across the North Island.

Press Trust Of India

WELLINGTON: Auckland rang in 2026 with a downtown fireworks display launched from New Zealand’s tallest structure, Sky Tower, making it the first major city to greet the new year at a celebration dampened by rain.

South Pacific countries are the first to bid farewell to 2025. Clocks strike midnight in Auckland, a population of 1.7 million, 18 hours before the famous ball drops in New York’s Times Square.

The five-minute display involved 3,500 fireworks launched from various floors of the 240-metre Sky Tower. Smaller community events were cancelled across New Zealand’s North Island on Wednesday due to forecasts of rain and possible thunderstorms.

Australia’s east coast welcomes 2026 two hours after New Zealand, but in Sydney, the country’s largest city, celebrations will be held under the pall of Australia’s worst mass shooting in almost 30 years. Two gunmen targeted a Hannukah celebration at Bondi Beach on December 14, killing 15 and wounding 40.

A heavy police presence monitored the thousands who thronged to the downtown waterfront



Fireworks burst over the Sydney Harbour Bridge as New Year’s celebrations begin in Sydney, Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2025. | Photo: AP

on Wednesday to watch a fireworks show centred on the Sydney Harbor Bridge. Many officers openly carried rapid-fire rifles, in a first for the annual event.

An hour before midnight, the massacre victims will be commemorated with one minute of silence while images of a menorah are projected

HIGHLIGHT

● While celebrations continued on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the city marked the new year with a minute of silence and menorah projections to honor the 15 victims of the December 14 Bondi Beach mass shooting.

on the bridge pylons. The crowd has been invited to show their solidarity with Australia’s Jewish community by shining their phone torches across the harbour. New South Wales Premier Chris Minns urged Sydney residents not to stay away through fear, saying extremists would interpret smaller crowds at New Year’s Eve

festivities as a victory.

“We can’t be in a situation where this horrible, criminal, terrorist event changes the way we live in our beautiful city,” Minns told reporters on Wednesday. “We have to show defiance in the face of this terrible crime and say that we’re not going to be cowed by this kind of terrorism,” he added.

Sea of humanity pours in for Khaleda Zia’s funeral

DHAKA: Tens of thousands of mourners from across Bangladesh converged to pay their final respects to three-time prime minister Khaleda Zia at the Manik Mia Avenue in Dhaka on Wednesday. Zia, who dominated Bangladesh’s politics for decades, died on Tuesday. Soon after the news of the death of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson spread, people from all walks of life started pouring in the capital by buses, trains, or even metro services, for her funeral.

Scenes of deep sorrow were visible with thousands of mourners seen weeping openly, said state-run news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS).

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar traveled to Dhaka to represent India at the funeral of former PM Khaleda Zia, delivering a personal letter of condolence from PM Narendra Modi to her son, Tarique Rahman.

DHAKA: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday handed over to Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader Tarique Rahman a letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi as thousands of people bid farewell to former prime minister Khaleda Zia at her funeral.

Shortly after landing

| ZIA FUNERAL JAISHANKAR |

EAM Jaishankar hands over PM Modi’s letter to BNP’s Tarique Rahman



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Riaz Hamidullah during his visit for the funeral of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, in Bangladesh. | Photo: PTI

in Dhaka, Jaishankar met Rahman, the acting chairman of BNP and the eldest son of Zia, and conveyed India’s deepest condolences over the death of the iconic leader who dominated the country’s politics for over three decades. The top BNP leader died on Tuesday following a prolonged illness. The external affairs

minister is representing India at Zia’s funeral.

“Handed over to him a personal letter from Prime Minister @narendramodi. Conveyed deepest condolences on behalf of the Government and people of India,” Jaishankar said on social media.

“Expressed confidence that Begum Khaleda Zia’s vision and values will

FACTFILE

● Despite recent “frosty” relations between India and the interim Bangladeshi government, Jaishankar expressed confidence that Zia’s legacy would continue to guide the bilateral partnership.

guide the development of our partnership,” he said. On Tuesday, PM Modi condoled Zia’s death and recalled his meeting with her during his visit to Dhaka in 2015.

“Deeply saddened to learn about the passing away of former Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia in Dhaka. Our sincerest condolences to her family and all the people of Bangladesh.

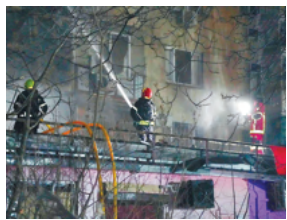
| RUSSIA UKRAINE WAR |

Russian drones blast Ukraine’s Odesa, injure 6

Press Trust Of India

KYIV: Russian drones blasted apartment buildings and the power grid in the southern Ukraine city of Odesa in an overnight attack that injured six people, including a toddler and two other children, officials said Wednesday.

Four apartment buildings were damaged in the bombardment, accord-



ing to regional military administration head Oleh Kiper. Power company DTEK said two of its energy facilities suffered significant damage. The company said that 10 sub-

“The overnight Odesa strikes ‘are further evidence of the enemy’s terror tactics, which deliberately target civilian infrastructure.”

Oleh Kiper
Regional military administration head

stations that distribute electricity in the Odesa region were damaged in December alone.

Russia has this year escalated its long-range attacks on urban areas of Ukraine. In recent months, as Russia’s invasion of its neighbour approaches its four-year milestone in February, it has also intensified its targeting of energy infrastructure, seeking to

deny Ukrainians heat and running water in the bitter winter months.

From January to November this year, more than 2,300 Ukrainian civilians were killed and more than 11,000 were injured, the United Nations said earlier this month. That was 26 per cent higher than in the same period in 2024 and 70 per cent higher than in 2023, it said.

Briefs

BEST OF THE REST

BULGARIA EURO

Bulgaria to become 21st country to join euro, deepening EU ties despite fears



SOFIA: On New Year’s Day, Bulgaria becomes the 21st country to join the euro currency union, furthering its integration into the European Union. But the historic milestone arrives amid political instability and scepticism among ordinary people fuelled by fears of price rises.

Supporters of switching to the euro from the old currency, the lev, are praising the move as one of the greatest achievements since the 1989 transition from a Soviet-style economy to democracy and free markets. They hope it will make the country more attractive for investors and strengthen its orientation toward wealthier Western Europe.

But many people are uneasy, in a

country where corruption is rife and trust in the authorities is low. One fear is that merchants will round prices up or otherwise use the changeover to worsen inflation, at a time when inflation has rebounded to 3.7 per cent. An EU Eurobarometer poll from March showed that 53 per cent of 1,017 people surveyed opposed joining the eurozone, while 45 per cent were in favour.

A separate Eurobarometer poll, taken between October 9 and November 3 on a similar sample, showed that about half of Bulgarians opposed the single currency while 42 per cent were in favour. The margin of error was about plus or minus 3.1 percentage points for the March poll. **PTI**

TURKIYE ISLAMIC STATE

Turkiye detains 125 more ISIS suspects in nationwide sweep

ANKARA : Turkish authorities on Wednesday pressed ahead with nationwide operations against suspected Islamic State members, detaining 125 people in simultaneous raids across 25 provinces.

In the past week, police have taken hundreds of Islamic State (IS) suspects into custody in nationwide raids aimed at preventing possible attacks during Christmas and New Year festivities.

Members of a suspected IS cell opened fire on police carrying out one such raid in the northwestern province of Yalova on Monday. Six IS suspects and three police officers were killed in the clash, while eight other officers and a night guard were wounded when security forces stormed a house used as a hideout.

Authorities said all of the militants were Turkish citizens. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said Wednesday’s raids were coordinated by police and gendarmerie forces and were carried out in cities including Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa and Yalova. **PTI**

IRAN BANK GOVERNOR

Iran appoints new central bank governor amid currency crash and protests

TEHRAN: Iran on Wednesday appointed a new governor to the central bank after the former one resigned following a record currency fall against the US dollar that sparked large protests. The plummeting of the rial, Iran’s currency, sparked the largest protests in the country in three years, with rallies that began Sunday and continued until Tuesday.

A report by the official IRNA news agency said President Masoud Pezeshkian’s Cabinet appointed Abdolnasser Hemmati, a former economics minister, as new governor of the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He replaces Mohammad Reza Farzin, who resigned on Monday. Experts say a 40 per cent inflation rate led to public discontent. The US dollar traded at 1.38 million rials on Wednesday, compared to 430,000 when Farzin took office in 2022. Many traders and shopkeepers closed their businesses and took to the streets of Tehran and other cities to protest.

The new governor’s agenda will include a focus on controlling inflation and strengthening the currency, as well as addressing the mismanagement of banks, the government’s spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani wrote on X. **PTI**

MALAYSIA PLANE SEARCH

Latest deep-sea search for missing Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 gets underway



HANOI: A deep-sea search for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 began in the Indian Ocean on Wednesday, reviving efforts to solve one of aviation’s greatest mysteries more than a decade after the jet vanished with 239 people on board.

Malaysia’s Transport Ministry said Wednesday that a search vessel, the Armada 86 05, arrived at a designated search area with two autonomous underwater vehicles. The location of the search area was not disclosed in the statement. It said the vessel had prepared for the search in Fremantle Port in Western Australia.

The government did not specifically mention Ocean Infinity, the company that helmed a previous search and had

long been slated to lead the new one. But the craft that the government specified by number has been widely identified by maritime and aviation websites as belonging to Ocean Infinity. Earlier in December, the Malaysian government said that the Texas-based marine robotics firm would begin searching targeted areas of the seabed under a renewed “no-find, no-fee” agreement. Ocean Infinity has confirmed it was resuming the search for MH370 but refused to comment further, citing the “important and sensitive nature” of the operation. Ocean Infinity previously searched the seabed in 2018, under a similar contract but found no trace of the plane. **PTI**